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Tonino Pencarelli · Fabio Forlani *Editors*

The Experience Logic as a New Perspective for Marketing Management

From Theory to Practical Applications in
Different Sectors



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Le seul véritable voyage, le seul bain de Jouvence, ce ne serait pas d'aller vers de nouveaux paysages, mais d'avoir d'autres yeux, de voir l'univers avec les yeux d'un autre, de cent autres, de voir les cent univers que chacun d'eux voit, que chacun d'eux est; et cela, nous le pouvons avec un Elstir, avec un Vinteuil; avec leurs pareils, nous volons vraiment d'étoiles en étoiles.

Marcel Proust
La Prisonnière, 1923, p. 69

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Introduction to the Experience Logic: Key Concepts and Contents



Tonino Pencarelli and Fabio Forlani

Abstract Over last two decades, the experiential perspective to business analysis has been strongly affirmed and has become a “topic of interest” in managerial literature. In fact, over these period, the experiential perspective has been adopted in various ways: in the general re-interpretation of economic phenomena and of the enterprise–market relationship (experience economy), in the rethinking of marketing approaches (experiential marketing), in managing touristic or territorial systems, in customer management and brand management. The chapter shows how it is desirable to consider the customer’s experience at the center of value creation processes in a managerial marketing approach that the authors define “experience logic”. This introduction also provides a brief description of the contents of each chapter and the conceptual key to reading the entire text, providing a short overview of application cases and of the ways in which the adoption of experience logic can revitalize marketing perspectives and stimulate novel approaches to the value creation.

In the economic–managerial literature the experience perspective approach to business model analysis (Pine and Gilmore 2016) has been affirmed and has also become a “topic of interest” in managerial literature as well (Kranzbühler et al. 2017; Pencarelli and Forlani 2016; Homburg et al. 2015; Ferreira and Teixeira 2013; Tynan and McKechnie 2009). In fact, over the last two decades, *experience logic* has been adopted in various ways, whether in the general re-interpretation of economic phenomena and of the enterprise–market relationship (experience economy; Pine and Gimore 1998), in the rethinking of marketing approaches (experiential marketing; Schmitt 1999), in the management of touristic (Pencarelli and Forlani 2002) or territorial systems (Lorentzen 2009), or in consumer process

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management (customer experience management; Schmitt 2003; customer experience creation; Verhoef et al. 2009) or brand management (Brakus et al. 2009), to name but a few of the themes that have gained the widest consensus.

The literature review conducted in the Forlani, Buratti, and Pencarelli chapter has, first of all, confirmed how customer experience (CE) (Kranzbühler et al. 2017; Palmer 2010; Gentile et al. 2007; Carù and Cova 2007) has occupied a central place even in academic debate, as highlighted by Kranzbühler et al. (2017: 4) who state: “The ‘emerging excitement’ label is confirmed by the Marketing Science Institute, which listed CE as one of its biennial research priorities for the third consecutive time in 2014 (MSI 2014).” Moreover, it has underscored how this debate has raised the bar for scientific rigor (Palmer 2010; Gentile et al. 2007), thereby overcoming the methodological limitations of consultancy-style approaches (Tynan and McKechnie 2009; Carù and Cova 2007).

The analysis has also shed light on the fact that, with all due consideration of the importance of these first steps forward, this field of study is still in a “pre-paradigmatic” phase (Kuhn 1970). This point is underlined also by Kranzbühler et al. (2017: 14) who observes: “We identify a high level of heterogeneity in the scope and conceptualization of the CE construct. Specifically, we argue that CE has developed into a broad umbrella construct (Hirsch and Levin 1999).”

In the present work, we choose from among the various current definitions of *customer experience* to mention—both for completeness and for scientific rigor—and therefore adopt the one put forth by Gentile et al. (2007: 397):

The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Shaw and Ivens 2005). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial physical, and spiritual) (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Schmitt 1999). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer’s expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-point (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Shaw and Ivens 2005).

In this scenario, several authors have attempted to adopt a unifying framework to define the various approaches that link customer experience and customer experience management (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; du Plessis and de Vries 2016; Homburg et al. 2015; Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013; Palmer 2010; Verhoef et al. 2009). Starting from the concept of customer experience (CE)—the domain of consumer behavior scholars—the debate begun in management studies has led to the stream of customer experience management (CEM). The latter was originally defined by Schmitt (2003: 17–18) as “The process of strategically managing a customer’s entire experience with a product or a company” and, further:

CEM is a truly customer-focused management concept (not a “marketing” concept). It is a process-oriented satisfaction idea (not an outcome-oriented one). In addition, CEM goes far beyond CRM by moving from recording transactions to building rich relations with customers.

Nonetheless, while CEM has been favored by its practitioners, Homburg et al. (2015: 377) point out that, although it has been 15 years since its conceptualization:

In research, however, the notion of CEM is not well understood, is fragmented across a variety of contexts, and is insufficiently demarcated from other marketing management concepts.

In an effort to bridge this gap, Homburg et al. (2015: 398) interviewed 52 managers and, from the analysis of their opinions, made the following observations:

We introduced CEM as a higher-order resource that entails cultural mindsets toward CEs, strategic directions for designing CEs, and firm capabilities for continually renewing CEs, with the goals of achieving and sustaining long-term customer loyalty.

In the wake of the strong and widespread interest in experiential approaches to management, the present work aims to contribute to the debate on these topics, enriching it with additional reflections and insights, both theoretical and practical. Specifically, the text is divided into two parts. The first, with a theoretical focus, offers a review of the international literature followed by conceptual reflections on the experiential perspective with suggestions as to how adoption of the experience logic can be a new driver for the management of marketing processes in firms, within the contest of the experience economy. Experience logic constitutes the framework for the contributions of the second part of the book, which span an array of perspectives from the macro, in systemic-territorial views referred to as experiences applicable to various sectors (tourism, commerce, culture, trade shows), to the micro, referred to as company-specific experiences.

There are two conceptual aspects that form the basis for the work's proposal of a new key for reading the various processes of designing, creating, communicating, and delivering value to and with clients:

- (1) the change in marketing approaches are evolutionary and not revolutionary in nature; in this work, we start from the paradigm of the marketing concept applied to goods and services contexts, and this paradigm is then viewed from the experience economy perspective, to then arrive at experience logic and thus create an innovative vision of marketing in which consumer experience can be interpreted in an integrated way, combining the demand and the supply-side views;
- (2) the change in enterprise management brought about by this new vision must take place, first and foremost, on the level of philosophy and culture and with the view that from a goods and service logic one becomes oriented to an experience logic.

With reference to the first point, the concept of marketing has, in fact, changed and shifted over time. It has gone from a production and product orientation (in the 1950s and 1960s), to a sales orientation (in the 1970s), and, recently, to market and customer orientation, until it assumed a holistic relational approach, involving all the company stakeholders (Gummesson 1999; Kotler et al. 2012; Lambin et al. 2012; Mattiacci and Pastore 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2015).

Subsequently, with the rise of the immaterial economy, services become increasingly important for the creation and delivery of customer value. The emerging and wide-ranging debate surrounding this issue leads to both the preliminary service logic perspective (Grönroos 2011) and, more recently, the service dominant logic approach (Vargo and Lush 2004, 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2009; Lush and Nambisan 2015; Greer et al. 2016), albeit with different emphases (Grönroos and Gummerus 2014), to highlight some distinctive features of service marketing: (1) a product usually has no value in itself (Gummesson 2008); therefore, the customer is always a co-creator of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Vargo and Lush 2008; Cova et al. 2011); (2) the concept of customer value refers not so much to the exchange value, as to the contextualized use value, alluding to categories such as value-in-use and value-in-context, cited by Gummerus and Grönroos (2014), or to the experiential value (Greer et al. 2016); (3) the company has to interact with the customer's value creation process in order to generate value (Vargo and Lush 2008; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014; Greer et al. 2016), i.e., it has to plan and manage the platform of interactions in order to support value creation for and with the customer (Grönroos and Strandvik 2008; Valdani 2009).

An evolution of these perspectives brings about a vision in which the supply processes are no longer central in managerial practices and theoretical analysis and there is a diffusion of a broader and customer-centric vision (Customer Dominant Logic). As cited by Heinonen et al. (2010), this vision aims to understand and to deepen how the value emerges for the customer and how the customer builds the value and sense experience before, during, and after use of the service. Marketing gradually shifts the focus, from the perspective of supply, service processes, and enterprise, implicit in service marketing approaches, to the customer's perspective and his/her overall experience. Marketing paradigms take into account that modern consumers are not satisfied by simply having goods and services available, but they are continuously looking for experiences, emotions, and sensory involvement, which can deeply captivate and amaze them (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Florida 2002; Pencarelli and Forlani 2002; Resciniti 2004; Addis 2007; Walls et al. 2011; Sundbo and Sorensen 2013).

Current marketing approaches assume that we are shifting from a service economy to an economy of experiences, which enriches the value of all goods and services, leading to the birth of a new economic sector: the experiences industry (Nilsen and Dale 2013: 65). Experiences define and distinguish the new behavior patterns of consumer consumption, orienting the traditional paradigm of consumer satisfaction towards the emerging paradigm of consumer sensations and sense-making, where the experiential consumption is based on social, symbolic, emotional, and psychological benefits rather than on functional benefits. Consequently, companies need to innovate their marketing approach; they must renew their offer, transforming products from simple outputs with a predominantly functional content into solutions with an increasing amount of immateriality and experiential value.

In this context, service marketing theories have progressively been enriched by the contributions from the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2013;

Boswijk et al. 2012; Sundbo and Sorensen 2013) and experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999, 2003). What is progressively emerging is the importance of the consumption experience value (Palmer 2010; Stampacchia et al. 2016), which is an experiential value (value-in-experience) rooted in the concepts of value-in-use (Vargo and Lush 2004), value-in-possession (Richins 1994), and, in more recent formulations, of value-in-context (Vargo and Lush 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2009).

Scholars point out the need for marketing processes within the economy of experiences to focus on customers' experiences rather than on goods or services; in fact, the experiential approaches recognize that customers make their consumption choices guided by emotions and feelings as well as by rational thinking.

In this view, and by employing a marketing perspective, Schmitt (1999) stated that experiences are personal events that occur in response to stimulation and involve the entire being as a result of observing or participating in an event. Taking the perspective of experiential consumption and of the experiential marketing, Schmitt (1999, 2003) suggests that companies should develop an "experiential" platform capable of offering an experiential value promise (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006) that focuses on customers' experience (Carù and Cova 2007; Schmitt 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) identify the *experience* as something more than a category of attributes to enrich and differentiate traditional products (raw materials, goods, and services). According to their model, experience is a new and different offer category for which a specific and new marketing approach, called experiences marketing (Fortezza and Pencarelli 2011; Same and Larimo 2012), is needed. Experiences marketing is nothing more than an approach applied to highly immaterial and highly experiential products, which we may also call experience-products, of which tourism products are prime examples (Pencarelli and Forlani 2002; Sørensen and Jensen 2015). The experiences economy model explains that companies may be considered to be operating in the experiences business (where the supply of experiences is of higher value than that of goods and services, according to an economic value progression path), when experiences are staged for a fee. Therefore, if the experiences are offered as add-ons to goods and services or are free, following a differentiation strategy, the supply form may be included in the experiential logic, but the firms will not be seen as acting in the "experiences business." When a company does act in the experiences business, the marketing model should aim to understand the types of experiences sought by customers and, consequently, to set up experiential solutions to meet their needs. Tour packages are good examples of experiential value propositions, which tourists may decide to purchase or to self-produce.

With reference to the second point, therefore, managers may refer to a new marketing model based on the logic of the experience (experience logic), as suggested by Pencarelli et al. (2015) and Pencarelli (2017). A marketing approach based on experience logic embraces what is proposed by the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Pencarelli and Forlani 2002; Pencarelli et al. 2015), as well as by the experiential marketing model (Schmitt 1999, 2003; Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006; Addis 2007), integrating them with the literature inspired by the

service logic (Grönroos 2011; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014) and the service dominant logic (Vargo and Lush 2004, 2008).

According to the experiential perspective, managerial processes are asked to arrange for new activities in order to create value. Such activities should not ignore service processes, but use them to set up higher value offers, such as experiences. Thanks to the integration of service and experience economy perspectives, an innovative conceptual approach to “experience driven logic” marketing may be adopted.

In short, this work aims to show how the experience logic can be used to renew the most widely known marketing perspectives, by directing them toward new management approaches, which, starting from the customer experience, can find new ways to create, communicate, and deliver value. The authors’ intent is to reflect on a new vision of marketing, starting from the traditional goods logic, then discussing services marketing contributions, and ending with the experiential and experience marketing theories. We discuss the differences between experiential and experience marketing approaches, in order to move toward a new common vision: the concept of experience logic. Understanding the experience logic of marketing can provide new managerial insights into the role the company plays in creating customer value. The new perspective can find application in multiple contexts, albeit with different practical solutions, and not remain confined to the typically experiential sectors (tourism, events, sports, the arts, etc.). In fact, Bille (2010) observes that the experience economy “can act at all levels of economic activity: from product to company, to region, country, and world economy.”

The book is comprised of two parts. The first entails two theoretical contributions that aim to offer a review of customer experience management, experience economy, and experiential marketing literature; it also frames the conceptual model of the experience logic, a unifying theme of the various contributions in this volume. Part one contains the following two contributions:

1. **The experiential perspective in the management literature, a systematic review** (Forlani, Buratti, and Pencarelli). The first contribution describes the evolution of the state of the art of the experiential perspective or approach in managerial literature, an approach that uses the concept of customer experience management (CEM) in a variety of ways. Through a systematic review of the literature, the authors classify articles, authors, and journals of reference in ExP/CEM. By analyzing citations, the authors measure the notoriety of the articles and their authors, in an attempt to assess whether and how their impact dwindles inside the “small world” of ExP/CEM or whether, instead, it extends to a wider radius that includes management literature. Last, the authors define the areas of application (areas of interest, or sectors) where the concept has found its widest application.
2. **Marketing in an experiential perspective: from goods and services logic to experience logic** (Pencarelli and Forlani). The chapter illustrates the conceptual model that allows the shift from goods and services logic to experience logic

and highlights the principal differences between the two approaches. In addition, the contribution describes the main managerial implications of efficaciously implementing experience logic in marketing decision-making. The work also sheds light on the challenges that this new key brings to marketing processes that will have to deal with the economic changes and trends on the horizon once the current experience economy phase has passed.

The second part is made up of contributions that are encompassed in the experience logic stream, characterized by a systemic-territorial perspective or, in other words, they refer to specific contexts. Part two contains the following contributions:

3. **The tourist offer of the destination in the experience logic perspective** (Forlani and Pencarelli). The aim of the chapter is to propose an application of the experience logic and, in particular, the theatrical model to organize the tourist offer for the destination. According to the theatrical model inspired by Pine and Gilmore, when they underline that each business can be considered a show business, in order to be wholly efficient, the marketing activities must be geared toward the various internal (cast) and external subjects within the organizational system, whether it is a company or a destination. Assuming the prospect of selling experiences, it emerges that there must be the indispensable presence of a director (governing body in a systemic approach), to which we refer in our proposal for possible tourist destination market-oriented management tools. We propose applying the experience concept and the theater model to tourist destinations with all due conceptual caution, in undertaking to shift into territorial contexts paradigms and tools that were developed with reference to business organizations.
4. **Sustainable management of events in an experiential perspective** (Gregori, Pencarelli, Temperini, Splendiani, and Forlani). By way of premise, events are complex value proposals created by specialized subjects to satisfy a range of different needs linked to people's leisure time and entertainment. They are products with a highly intangible and experiential content to which application of the experience logic is particularly apropos. The chapter aims to describe the role played by events in the experience economy for territories involved in sustainable tourism strategies. The authors also propose a model for event impact analysis and evaluation. Starting from the idea that tourist destinations represent a stage on which tourism products can be displayed so as to satisfy the demands of travelers seeking engaging experiences, the importance of the role played by destination management in managing the events is further underlined. The contribution proposes, also, to redefine the experiential perspective of a set of indicators that are useful in holistically evaluating the performance of events.
5. **How marketing works in the experience economy: The case of the experience gift box providers** (Fortezza, Dusi, and Pencarelli). The chapter deals with a particular segment of the experience economy sector, i.e., experience gift

box providers. The analysis is based on Wish Days, a former Italian company that, in 2016, was acquired by the international market leader Smartbox. This is an interesting field because such companies act as value net integrators that set up and offer a wide range of life experiences that are then “packaged” and put “on a shelf” just like any other product. The marketing approach performed by these companies is mainly based on networking and emotional engagement.

6. **Experience economy and the management of shopping centers: The role of entertainment** (Savelli). The chapter applies the experience logic perspective to the retail industry by analyzing the role and the management of entertainment strategies in the shopping center format. The purpose is twofold: (i) proposing a conceptual classification of entertainment based on the existing literature; (ii) examining the influences of entertainment strategies on shopping centers’ market performances to provide suggestions about the effectiveness of such strategies. After a short description of the shopping center industry, the study analyzes the changing role of the format occurred over the last decades, and proposes a classification of entertainment. Changes occurring in the areas of entertainment—alongside those concerning the market performance indicators of shopping centers—are explored by discussing the results of a qualitative study focused on 16 Italian shopping centers over a three-year period.
7. **The importance of being earnest: Enhancing the authentic experience of cultural heritage through the experience-based approach** (Cerquetti). The chapter contributes to the scientific research on cultural marketing, by analyzing the application of the experience-based approach to the management of cultural heritage and museums. After discussing some of the main marketing innovations of the last 20 years, the multidimensionality of the museum experience is examined in depth. Particularly, the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is discussed as a way to widen the value of museum experiences, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, a model is provided based on value co-creation through: (1) the enhancement of cultural heritage as unique and non-fungible resources inherited from the past (*authenticity*); (2) the active involvement of visitors (*interaction*); (3) the effective communication of the value of cultural heritage to different audiences in accordance with their skills and resources (*storytelling*).
8. **Experience logic: The new challenge for trade fairs** (Pencarelli, Cioppi, Curina, and Forlani). The chapter applies the experience logic to the trade show (TS) sector by analyzing the role of the different stakeholders’ categories (exhibitors, organizers, visitors) in the transformation of trade shows into interactive and experiential platforms. The starting objective of the work is to outline, through a review process, the main trends emerging from the recent (2010–2017) business and management international literature devoted to trade shows (TSs) and trade fairs (TFs). Subsequently, the attention is focused on one of the trends identified by the literature review (the growing importance of the entertainment and experiential component in the TS management) and the main tasks, *performed* by the different categories of TS actors, *are explored* by

discussing the review's outcomes. The results provide different contributions to TS literature and to business management.

9. **The experiential approach in the cosmetics industry: The Eva Garden case study** (Conti). The work proposes a new management approach toward analyzing the management processes of cosmetics companies in the experience logic and tests such a model on Eva Garden Srl, an Italian company specialized in the production and commercialization of makeup. Starting from the analysis of the customer experience and moving on to the incentivization of employees in experience logic marketing, she describes five managerial processes that could help marketing managers in the cosmetics industry to understand and improve customer experience: designing the experience; staging the experience; communicating the experience; monitoring the perceived quality of the experiential offer; training and motivating employees in the experiential perspective. The author aims to propose a new interpretation of the value creation processes in the cosmetics industry, which is intrinsically experiential (like cultural or food-related experiences), and describe the peculiarities of the experience logic approach in this industry.
10. **Marketing of traditional-local products in the experiential perspective** (Pencarelli, Forlani, and Dini). The chapter analyzes the business of *traditional-local* products utilizing the experience logic perspective. In line with this vision, the authors suggest that the producers of traditional-local goods could abandon the conservative strategy that rests upon the defense of traditional means of production and embrace instead an experiential logic marketing approach. In this way, manufacturers could offer an integrated portfolio, inclusive of both traditional agro-industrial items and new experiential products, such as themed events, carrying higher added value. The chapter adopts a qualitative approach and case study analysis as the research method. Despite the limitations of the research related to the use of a single case study, the work proposes the experience logic as a conceptual model to observe and interpret the food and wine business as well as the businesses involved in the new post-modern consumption processes, in which there is demand for strong experiential content, authenticity, and low standardization of the offer.

We are aware that, as with any research, even those exposed in this work contain some limitations, mainly due to the preliminary attempt to formulate a new conceptual proposal, a new vision aimed at unifying the many and varied contributions in terms of CEM and experiential marketing that we have defined “experience logic.”

As with any elaboration in its embryonic phase, our study can be considered a “work in progress,” susceptible to further refinements and improvements. We hope therefore that other scholars can share our approach and propose theoretical and empirical studies able to provide further stimulus and make our vision more complete and rigorous, thus contributing to the enlargement of the toolbox of marketing managers.

However, we are also convinced that the theoretical considerations proposed here and the various application contributions referring to experience logic can as well provide a useful contribution both to marketing scholars and to managers, highlighting how managerial processes can be improved by making decisions inspired by experience logic. It is necessary to take into account the overall customer experience, from the search for information to the complete use of the product, which implies taking into consideration the fact that the customer contributes to the creation of value, by himself, or interacting with the supplier or other actors of the value ecosystem and, above all, he/she qualifies the meaning of the value as a contextualized use value. In this way, companies can increase their competitiveness and also improve their economic performance (economic value), which remains one of the traditional purposes of marketing: creating value for the company by creating value for and with customers and the other stakeholders.

In the meantime, at the end of this introduction, we would like to thank all the colleagues who have believed and participated in this editorial project, providing valuable applicative contributions to the model of experiential logic. Thanks also to the two anonymous referees, for their valuable advice and observations, which have allowed us to improve the book's structure.

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Part I
Theoretical Contributions

Experiential Perspective in Management Literature: A Systematic Review



Fabio Forlani, Andrea Buratti and Tonino Pencarelli

Abstract The first chapter describes the evolution of the state state-of-the-art of the experiential perspective (ExP) approach in managerial literature, an approach that uses the concept of customer experience management (CEM) in a variety of ways. Through a systematic review, the chapter provides a structured overview of the main studies that use the experiential perspective; this overview is instrumental to in the conceptual scheme of the book developed in the chapter Marketing in an experiential perspective: from “goods and services logic” to “experience logic.” To describe the various approaches in which the authors classify articles, authors, and journals of reference in experiential perspective and customer experience management (ExP and CEM), the authors measure the notoriety of the articles and their authors, in an attempt to assess whether and how their impact dwindles inside the “small world” of ExP and CEM, or whether, instead, it extends to a wider radius that includes management literature. Lastly, the authors define the areas of application (areas of interest, or sectors), where the concept has found its widest application. The chapter, recognizing that the experiential logic is assuming centrality in marketing studies, indicates the need to construct a key to understanding and a conceptual basis of synthesis capable of integrating the various contributions that emerged in the literature into a unified framework.

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1 Introduction

In the economic and managerial literature, the experiential perspective has been a topical issue (Kranzbühler et al. 2017; Homburg et al. 2015; Ferreira and Teixeira 2013; Tynan and McKechnie 2009). The question of customer experience (CE) (Kranzbühler et al. 2017; Palmer 2010; Gentile et al. 2007; Carù and Cova 2007) has acquired increasing importance in the academic debate on marketing and management. In this regard, Kranzbühler et al. (2017: 4) underlines that

The “emerging excitement” label is confirmed by the Marketing Science Institute, which listed CE as one of its biennial research priorities for the third consecutive time in 2014. (MSI 2014)

In the last few years, this academic interest has been confirmed by attempts to scientifically define the notion (Palmer 2010; Gentile et al. 2007), with the objective to overcome the limitations in methodology of a sector mainly managed by consultancies (Tynan and McKechnie 2009; Carù and Cova 2003, 2007).

As Tynan e McKechnie (2009: 503) put it

There is a fairly extensive but fragmented literature on experience marketing. However, much of the work published by consultants, practioners and self-help gurus is of limited worth. [...] It could be argued that the books are published to support the credibility of the author in the tough marketplace of the consultant and to sell consultancy services rather than to promote dissemination of any deeper understanding of experiential approaches.

On the one hand, the management literature has acknowledged the importance of the contributions of these consultancy works (Pine and Gilmore 1998, 1999; Schmitt 1999a, b) on making client experience the focus of the debate and on the realization by marketers that

Co-creation experiences as the basis for value creation” and “high-quality interactions that enable an individual to co-create unique experience with the company are the key to unlocking new source of competitive advantage. Value will have to be jointly created by both the firm and the consumer. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004: 7)

On the other hand, a number of definitions have been created. These definitions are free of the constraints of the consultancy approach and offer a better understanding and better marking out of the research field associated with customer experience. Among these definitions, the work of Gentile et al. (2007: 397) is to be noted for its thoroughness and accuracy

The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Shaw and Ivens 2005). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial physical and spiritual) (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Schmitt 1999b). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer’s expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moment of contact or touch point. (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Shaw and Ivens 2005)

Though the authors take into account the advances of the sectorial literature, Kranzbühler et al. (2017: 14) underline that this is only the beginning

Building on a systematic in-depth analysis of the literature, we identify a high level of heterogeneity in the scope and conceptualization of the CE construct. Specifically, we argue that CE has developed into a broad umbrella construct. (Hirsch and Levin 1999)

Customer experience has been studied from different points of view and with different objectives (Kranzbühler et al. 2017; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Homburg et al. 2015; Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013). In a purely managerial context, these studies have resulted in the creation of a subsector, customer experience management (CEM), which is defined as followed by Schmitt (2003: 17–18)

Customer experience management (CEM) is the process of strategically managing a customer’s entire experience with a product or a company ... CEM is a truly customer focused management concept (not a “marketing” concept). It is a process-oriented satisfaction idea (not an outcome-oriented one). In addition, CEM goes far beyond CRM by moving from recording transactions to building rich relations with customers.

CEM has had great success among professionals, as underlined by Homburg et al. (2015: 377), who have collected the opinions of 52 managers from different sectors, 15 years after CEM’s conceptualization

We introduced CEM as a higher-order resource that entails cultural mindsets toward CEs, strategic directions for designing CEs, and firm capabilities for continually renewing CEs, with the goals of achieving and sustaining long-term customer loyalty.

At the same time, the authors also remind us that

In research, however, the notion of CEM is not well understood, is fragmented across a variety of contexts, and is insufficiently demarcated from other marketing management concepts.

In addition to Schmitt’s writing, the pioneering work “Welcome to the experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1998) has doubtlessly given a fundamental impulse to the discussion of the concept of experience in management (Ferreira and Teixeira 2013). Today, Pine and Gilmore (2017: 61) underline that

To see how the experience economy is playing out in the world of business, we examined the state of experiences in popular business literature and across myriad enterprises to see how businesses are incorporating experiences into their operations. We determined that there are five arenas in which enterprises were using the term and concept of experiences.

The five-experience arena by Pine and Gilmore (2017: 61) is defined as

In-name-only experiences (establishments named “experience” that are anything but); user experience (experience of using human–computer interfaces, and increasingly any physical offering); experiential marketing (marketing messages, positionings, materials, and events designed to engage potential customers experientially); customer experience (sum total of customer interactions with a brand or offering, generally designed to be nice, easy, and convenient); experiences as distinct economic offerings (memorable events that engage each individual in an inherently personal way; the fourth level in the progression of economic value after commodities, goods, and services).

Ultimately, as underlined by Homburg et al. (2015: 398)

Practitioners have begun appraising CEM as one of the most promising marketing approaches to address the challenges of today's and tomorrow's consumer markets. However, research lacks a clear understanding, generalization, and demarcation of this concept.

Considering that customer experience management is a rich and important research field but is not yet clearly defined (Homburg et al. 2015; Du Plessis and De Vries 2016; Palmer 2010; Tynan and McKechnie 2009) and characterized (Kranzbühler et al. 2017), this work defines the field in its extended acceptance of “experiential perspective of marketing and management.”

2 Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this work is to observe the current situation of the management literature within an experiential perspective (ExP), which develops the concept of customer experience management (CEM) in order to provide a structured overview of the main studies that use this perspective.

To achieve this goal, the systematic review was built through the following research questions:

- RQ1: Which are the reference articles, authors, and journals of the ExP/CEM and how many are there? Is this literature growing from a quantitative and qualitative point of view?
- RQ2: Is the notoriety of the articles and authors most cited limited to the “little world” of ExP/CEM or does it extend to a larger literature on business and management?
- RQ3: What are the main research lines of the experiential approach?
- RQ4: What is the scope of application (zones of interest or sectors) in which the concept has been most applied?

In order to answer these research questions, we will use a systematic literature review (Transfield et al. 2003; Denyer and Transfield 2009), so as to ensure that the review process is transparent and reproducible. Moreover, the systematic review allows us to build a database of publications to which we can then apply specific coherent analysis techniques for each research question.

Our two first research questions call for a bibliometric analysis of citations in the database itself. The hypothesis being that the number of citations indicates the level of recognition and the quality of the paper (Kraus et al. 2012; Bornmann and Daniel 2008; Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Garfield 1979), the reference universities, articles, authors, and journals will be ranked in decreasing order. After this, it will be necessary to understand if the ongoing citations have been collected solely from economic-managerial publications, or if they also come from other sectors of research, so as to evaluate their influence on the scientific debate (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003).

To answer the third and fourth research questions will require inductive content analysis (Vaismoradi et al. 2013), via studying the database in the title sections and keywords. Through the identification of the subject of the article via keywords, a manual content analysis will help in determining the principal experiential themes and the sectors (e.g., food, tourism, events, etc.) in which various ExP/CEM experiential approaches have been principally applied.

3 Literature Review Method and Data Extraction

To analyze the publications on our subject, we opted to conduct a literature analysis by means of a “systematic review” (Tranfield et al. 2003; Denyer and Tranfield 2009).

An analytical review scheme is necessary for the systematic evaluation of the contributions in a given body of literature (Crossan and Apaydin 2010). Systematic reviews are conventionally understood to have specific characteristics: an explicit study protocol, addressing (a) pre-specified, highly focused question(s); explicit methods for searching for studies; appraisal of studies to determine their scientific quality; and explicit methods, including descriptive summary or meta-analysis (when appropriate), to combine the findings across a range of studies (Dixon–Woods et al. 2006). Although this methodology is not without challenges, such as the synthetization of data from various disciplines, insufficient representation of books, and large amounts of material to review (Pittaway et al. 2004), we felt it was important to have a methodology that could allow us to conduct the review in a solid way.

Systematic reviews use an explicit algorithm to perform a search and critical appraisal of the literature. They thus improve the quality of the review process and outcome by employing a transparent and reproducible procedure (Tranfield et al. 2003).

We followed the three-stage procedure described by Tranfield et al. (2003: 214): (1) planning; (2) conducting; (3) reporting and dissemination.

During the **planning stage**, we defined the objectives of the research and identified the key data source. Our research objectives are already laid out in detail in the research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4).

While fully aware of its limitations (Mingers and Leydesdorff 2015; Bakkalbasi et al. 2006), the authors chose to use the SciVerse Scopus because it has a wide and acknowledged database of business and management journals (Mingers and Yang 2017; Mingers and Leydesdorff 2015). The analysis does not have a start date and ends on 31 December 2016.

The **second stage** of our systematic review process ensures a high degree of objectivity, transparency, and replicability. To this end, we followed a five-step procedure: identifying initial selection criteria (keywords and search terms); selection of studies; study quality assessment; data extraction; data synthesis. The first three steps pertain to the collection and organization of the data, and the last two steps involve data processing and analysis.

I. Identifying Initial Selection Criteria (Keywords and Search Terms).

A comprehensive search differentiates a systematic review from a traditional narrative review (Tranfield et al. 2003). In order to identify and define the reference universe of this research, a preliminary analysis of the literature has been carried out, on the basis of the terminology used by the classical literature on experiential management. It emerged that the association of the term “experience” to management logic (not a study of the experience of the client but the management of this experience) started at the end of the 1990s thanks to publications such as “Marketing practitioners and consulting gurus” (Tynan and Mckechnie 2009: 503); Carbone and Haeckel (1994), Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999), Schmitt (1999a, b).

Carbone and Haeckel (1994) had already introduced the concept of “engineering customer experiences”

Engineering an experience begins with the deliberate setting of a targeted customer perception and results in the successful registration of that perception in the customer’s mind. Systematically designing and orchestrating the signals generated by products, services, and the environment is the means to that end. Creating customer experiences is not new. Occasional purposeful design of these experiences by intuitive individuals also is not new. But rendering the design and execution of experiences as a management discipline with principles, tools, and techniques is new.

This first concept has been further developed by Schmitt (Schmitt 1999a, b: 53) who defines “experiential marketing” as follows

I contrast traditional marketing with a new approach to marketing called experiential marketing and provide a strategic framework for experiential marketing. Traditional marketing views consumers as rational decision makers who care about functional features and benefits. In contrast, experiential marketers view consumers as rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1998: 97) have also coined the concept of “experience economy,” considering the experiences of the clients as real products per se, as different from services as services are from goods

Economists have typically lumped experiences in with services, but experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods. Today we can identify and describe this fourth economic offering because consumers unquestionably desire experiences, and more and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them. As services, like goods before them, increasingly become commoditized – think of long-distance telephone services sold solely on price – experiences have emerged as the next step in what we call the progression of economic value.

As Ferreira and Texeira (2013: 8) underline, from these early contributions, the evolution of the literature has brought forth other definitions of customer experience, linked with different types of analyses and sectors of study: customer experience management (Schmitt 1999a, b, 2003, 2011); customer experience management (Gentile et al. 2007); retail customer experience (Verhoef et al. 2009); brand experience (Brakus et al. 2009); experience marketing (Tynan and Mckechnie 2009; Same and Larino 2012); customer experience quality (Lemke et al. 2011).

In their critical analysis of the experiential literature, Tynan and Mckechnie (2009) also speak of the experience as “the result of a scripted interaction between customer and employee” (Grove and Fisk 1997) and think of these notions as of “new ideas of service-dominant logic” (Vargo and Lusch 2004), highlighting the contribution of the co-creation experiences to the management discussion: “Co-creation experiences as the basis for value creation.”

The recent reviews of the literature published on this subject (Homburg et al. 2015; Du Plessis and De Vries 2016; Kranzbühler et al. 2017) confirm a focus on the concept already identified.

This research was conducted using the SciVerse Scopus database for the following search strings: “Customer experience management,” “experience economy,” “progression of economic value,” “experiential marketing,” “experience marketing,” “engineering customer experiences,” “co-creation experience,” “retail customer experience,” “brand experience,” “customer experience quality,” “customer experience design,” “customer experience innovation,” “measuring customer experience,” with no limitations whatsoever regarding language, research area, or type of source.

II. Selection of studies. 635 papers have been extracted through the research software supplied by the website Scopus.

III. Study quality assessment. Abstracts of all the papers have been read, so as to verify their pertinence for this research. Fifty publications have been rejected by this process because: (1) they did not exhibit the search strings (they were extracted by mistake by the software because of a misreading of the markings); (2) they use the terms and search strings in a sense that is not coherent with the concept hereby studied.

This left the researchers with 585 papers. This initial set was then fixed as the basis for all future analyses.

IV. Data extraction. Different techniques of data extraction have been used to answer the four research questions:

- RQ1: A first descriptive analysis, taking into account the timing of the publication of the papers, authors, journals, and branches to which these publications belong. A citation analysis has thus been used to define the papers and authors most cited.
- RQ2: To determine the influence of our subjects on the scientific debate, an analysis of the citations used in the 585 papers has been carried out. This has allowed us to identify the number of paper quotes, the journals in which they were published, and the sectors concerned.
- RQ3: In order to identify the principal lines of research within the identification of the experiential approaches (experience economy; experiential marketing, customer experience management, brand experience, etc.), we set up an inductive content analysis on the title and keywords.
- RQ4: An inductive content analysis on the title and keywords was also used to determine the field of application.

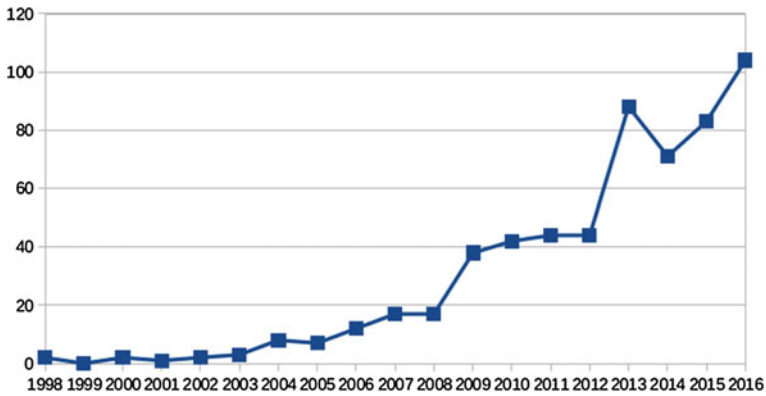


Fig. 1 Papers by year of publication

V. Data synthesis. First, the timing of publication of the 585 papers has been analyzed.

The result, easily readable in Fig. 1, highlights a significant growth of the number of studies using the experiential concepts or referring to the necessity of managing the experience of the consumer. In the Scopus database, the first publications to consciously use the concepts studied here appear at the end of the 1990s, with “Welcome to the experience economy” by Pine and Gilmore (1998). The contributions of the early period of 1998–2002 (seven papers in total, four of which by Pine and Gilmore) present and use abundantly the concept of experience economy.

The appeal of the subject remains relatively low until 2005, never reaching 10 publications a year. The pace starts picking up between 2006 and 2009. In this period, the number of yearly contributions goes from a few to about 40. If we look at the data emerging from the citation analysis, we note that this period not only saw a quantitative growth but also a qualitative one. Nine of the most cited publications within the 585 articles studied were indeed written in 2009. The success of the publications of that year probably partly explains the higher level of interest in the experiential approach in the following years. The number of publications on the subject would indeed rise to 80 (in 2013) then 100 (2016).

Table 1 shows the most prolific authors of the complete period observed. Among them, we see Schmitt (10 publications), Rahman (8), Fiore (7) Pine and Gilmore (6), and Sundbo (6) emerge.

Table 2 shows the research fields in which the subject of customer experience management has expanded and developed. The result indicates clearly how pertinent CEM is to the researchers in the fields of business and management. More than 71% of the papers studied (417 out of 585) have indeed been published in journals in the business, management, and accounting section. The field of social science follows, with 23% (137/585), and then economics, econometrics, and finance (58/585).

Table 1 Authors who have published more articles

No.	Author	Articles	No.	Author	Articles
1	Schmitt B.	10	11	Joško Brakus J.	5
2	Rahman Z.	8	12	Rahman M. S.	5
3	Fiore A. M.	7	13	Füller J.	4
4	Gilmore J. H.	6	14	Ko H. T.	4
5	Pine B. J.	6	15	Merrilees B.	4
6	Sundbo J.	6	16	Klaus P.	4
7	Garg R.	5	17	Shobeiri S.	4
8	Jeong M.	5	18	Stone M.	4
9	Khan I.	5	19	Walls A.	4
10	Zarantonello L.	5	20	Lorentzen A.	4

Table 2 Subject area of the journals

No.	Subject area	No.	%
1	Business Management and Accounting	417	71.28
2	Social Sciences	137	23.42
3	Economics Econometrics and Finance	58	9.91
4	Computer Science	43	7.35
5	Engineering	33	5.64
6	Arts and Humanities	31	5.30
7	Environmental Science	29	4.96
8	Psychology	28	4.79
9	Decision Sciences	20	3.42
10	Medicine	12	2.05
11	Agricultural and Biological Sciences	10	1.71
12	Other	34	5.81
	Total field assignments	852	
	Total articles	585	

A deep analysis of the journals that published a relevant number of articles (five or more, Table 3) shows that the six first ones are all in the “business and management” section: *Journal of Business Research* (21 articles); *Journal of Brand Management* (14); *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (13); *Journal of Marketing Management* (13); *Journal of Product and Brand Management* (12); *Journal of Retailing* (11). The first journal outside of this reference field is *European Urban and Regional Studies* (social sciences—urban studies), in the seventh position with 10 articles published. Among the 19 journals considered, there is only one other that deals with social science, geography, planning, and development: *European Planning Studies*.

Table 3 Journals that have published more articles (>7): field of study

No.	Source title	Articles	Field of study	Sb area 1	Sb area 2
1	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	21	Business, Management, and Accounting	Marketing	
2	<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	14	Business, Management, and Accounting	Strategy and Management	Marketing
3	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	13	Business, Management, and Accounting	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	
4	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	13	Business, Management, and Accounting	Strategy and Management	Marketing
5	<i>Journal of Product and Brand Management</i>	12	Business, Management, and Accounting	Strategy and Management	Management of Technology and Innovation
6	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	11	Business, Management, and Accounting	Marketing	
7	<i>European Urban and Regional Studies</i>	10	Social Sciences	Urban Studies	Environmental Science
8	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	10	Business, Management, and Accounting	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	Strategy and Management
9	<i>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</i>	10	Business, Management, and Accounting	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	Marketing
10	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	9	Business, Management, and Accounting	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	Marketing
11	<i>European Planning Studies</i>	7	Social Sciences	Geography, Planning, and Development	
12	<i>Service Industries Journal</i>	7	Business, Management, and Accounting	Strategy and Management	Management of Technology and Innovation

Table 4 analyzes the quality of the journals through an evaluation made using the bibliometric approach on the Scopus classification and percentile. This table shows that the business and management journals are of excellent quality. The average percentile was actually 80.76 (first sectorial indication) and 78.1 (second sectorial indication). This means that the journals in question are, on average, within the 20% best of their field (Table 4).

An analysis of the subcategories was achieved by extending the number of journals to include all those that have published three articles or more. It resulted in that the main reference academic sector is marketing, with 135 papers published, followed by tourism, leisure, and management (94), then strategy and management (75).

The marketing field also turns out to be the leading one in terms of quality of the journals (Table 5), with an average percentile of 74.75, followed by “tourism” (64.17) and “strategy” (59.9).

The lowering of the threshold of published article from five to three has enabled the expansion of the journals observation range. It is interesting to note that this has led to a lowering of the percentile. This appears to indicate that the experiential subject matters are treated more regularly by quality journals in the business and management branch.

Finally, the descriptive analysis of the 585 papers selected has brought into light the fact that CEM is not limited to a single field but involves academics from the entire world (Tables 6 and 7). From the quantitative perspective, 737 authors are concerned. The countries most represented (with the most authors) are clearly the United States (151, which amounts to 20.49%), followed by the United Kingdom (73.9, 91%) and Taiwan (53, 7.19%). In a second group are found Australia (36, 4.88%), Denmark and South Korea (31, 4.21%), India (28, 3.80%), Italy (27, 3.66%), China (23, 3.12%), and France (21, 2.85%).

The universities from which originate the higher number of authors are Roskilde Universitetscenter (12, Denmark), Iowa State University (11, US), Aalborg Universitet (8, Denmark), Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (8, India), University of Leeds (7, UK), Columbia Business School (7, US), Griffith University (7, Australia).

The citation analysis orders articles by the number of times they were cited by other publications in scientific journals. This allows us to gauge the notoriety and to evaluate, up to a certain point, how appreciated the papers were by the scientific community.

The 585 papers selected were quoted 8.569 times in 5.999 articles. The significant increase of the number of citations, as illustrated in Fig. 2, confirms the trend identified by the timing of article publication, underlining the growing interest of CEM/ExP within the academic world.

More specifically, the blue line shows the number of citing papers, and the red line shows the number of citations. The average number of citations per quoting article is 1.43, with an upward trend. The number of citations by paper is thus growing.

Table 4 Bibliometric quality of the *Journals in Business, Management and Accounting* that have published more articles (>3)

No.	Source title	Articles	Sb area 1	Perc.	Sb area 2	Perc.
1	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	21	Marketing	89		
2	<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	14	Strategy and Management	74	Marketing	67
3	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	13	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	89		
4	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	13	Strategy and Management	80	Marketing	75
5	<i>Journal of Product and Brand Management</i>	12	Strategy and Management	76	Management of Technology and Innovation	70
6	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	11	Marketing	90		
7	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	10	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	91	Strategy and Management	89
8	<i>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</i>	10	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	74	Marketing	69
9	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	9	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	88	Marketing	83
10	<i>Service Industries Journal</i>	7	Strategy and Management	66	Management of Technology and Innovation	61
11	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management</i>	6	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	79	Marketing	76
12	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	6	Marketing	65		
13	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism</i>	6	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	55		
14	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	5	Marketing	98	Business and International Management	98
15	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	5	Marketing	82		
16	<i>Journal of Service Management</i>	5	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	98	Strategy and Management	93
17	<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	5	Marketing	79		
	Total	158		80.76		78.1

Table 5 Bibliometric quality of the journals in marketing that have published more articles (>3)

No.	Source title	Articles	Sb area	Percentile
1	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	21	Marketing	89
2	<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	14	Marketing	67
3	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	13	Marketing	75
4	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	11	Marketing	90
5	<i>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</i>	10	Marketing	69
6	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	9	Marketing	83
7	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management</i>	6	Marketing	76
8	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	6	Marketing	65
9	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	5	Marketing	98
10	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	5	Marketing	82
11	<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	5	Marketing	79
12	<i>International Journal of Bank Marketing</i>	4	Marketing	71
13	<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	4	Marketing	90
14	<i>Journal of DB Marketing and Customer Strategy Management</i>	4	Marketing	nd
15	<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	3	Marketing	82
16	<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	3	Marketing	87
17	<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	3	Marketing	58
18	<i>Marketing Theory</i>	3	Marketing	88
19	<i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	3	Marketing	76
20	<i>Qualitative Market Research</i>	3	Marketing	70
	Total	135		74.75

Table 6 Country of origin of the authors

No.	Country	No. authors	%	No.	Country	No. authors	%
1	United States	151	20.49	11	Spain	19	2.58
2	United Kingdom	73	9.91	12	Malaysia	17	2.31
3	Taiwan	53	7.19	13	Germany	16	2.17
4	Australia	36	4.88	14	Norway	16	2.17
5	Denmark	31	4.21	15	Canada	12	1.63
6	South Korea	31	4.21	16	Netherlands	12	1.63
7	India	28	3.80	17	Turkey	12	1.63
8	Italy	27	3.66	18	Sweden	11	1.49
9	China	23	3.12	19	Others	148	20.08
10	France	21	2.85	Total author		737	

Table 7 Universities to which the authors are affiliated

No.	University	Country	Articles
1	Roskilde Universitets	Denmark	12
2	Iowa State University	US	11
3	Aalborg Universitet	Denmark	8
4	Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee	India	8
5	University of Leeds	UK	7
6	Columbia Business School	US	7
7	Griffith University	Australia	7
8	University of Innsbruck	Austria	6
9	Chinese Culture University Taiwan	China	6
10	Brunel University London	UK	6
11	National Chengchi University	Taiwan	6
12	School of Hotel and Tourism Management Hong Kong	Hong Kong	6
13	Multimedia University	Malaysia	5
14	Copenhagen Business School	Denmark	5
15	Università Bocconi	Italy	5
16	Hanyang University	South Korea	5
17	San Francisco State University	US	5
18	University of Queensland	Australia	5
19	Rosen College of Hospitality Management	US	5
20	Griffith University Gold Coast	Australia	5

The relation between the number of citing papers and the number of cited papers is 10.25. It thus appears the fields concerned by the works studied greatly exceed that of the papers themselves and entails that the articles on experience management have also interested researchers who do not directly deal with these questions (or at least those who do not cite them in the title, keywords, or abstract). Among the papers studied, 161 are cited at least 10 times. We can therefore deduce that a large part (about 25%) of these works has been of interest for contributions that do not belong to the experiential field itself.

Table 8 shows the papers that have been cited at least 70 times in contributions found in the Scopus database by the end of December 2016. They are ordered by decreasing number of citations.

The table shows also that, with 979 quotes (11.39% of the total), “Welcome to the experience economy” of Pine and Gilmore is the article that has most attracted the attention of the scientific world, followed by “Brand experience: What is it? how is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?” by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, with 517 citations (6.02%) and “Customer experience creation: Determinants, dynamics and management strategies,” by Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros and Schlesinger, with 398 quotes (4.63%).

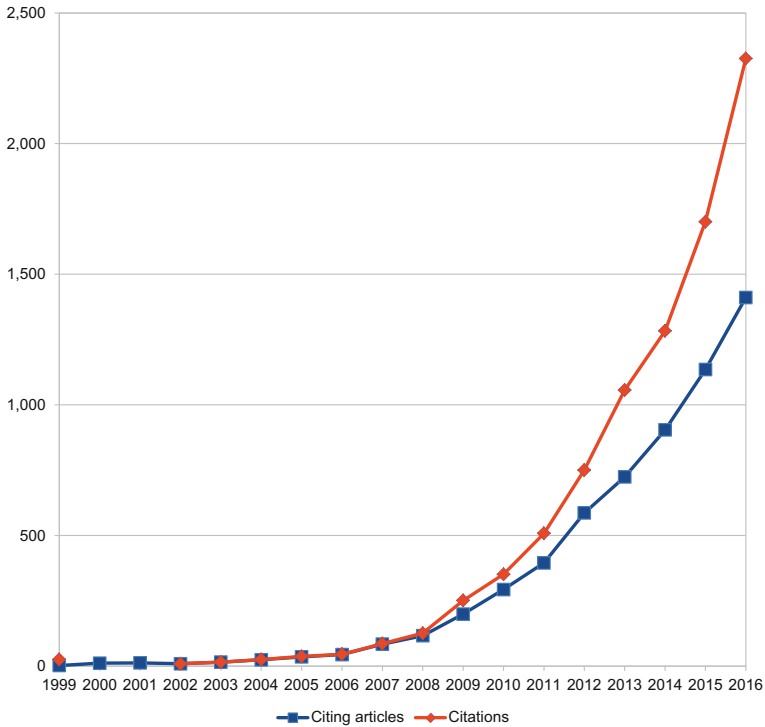


Fig. 2 Number of times the 585 papers studied were cited

Following this imaginary podium, if by a large distance we find: “Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process” by Puccinelli, Goodstein, Grewal, Price, Raghurir, and Stewart with 211 citations (2.46%); “Drivers of brand extension success” by Volckner and Sattler with 192 citations (2.23%); “Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications” by Oh, Fiore and Jeoung with 182 citations (2.12%); “Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process” by Grewal, Levy and Kumar with 169 citations (1.97%); “Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects” by Kozinets, Sherry, DeBerry-Spence, Duhachek, Nuttavuthisit, and Storm with 153 citations (1.78%); “Consumer empowerment through Internet-based co-creation” from Fuller, Muhlbacher, Matzler and Jaweckı with 146 citations (1.7%); “Who benefits from store brand entry?” from Pauwels and Srinivasan with 135 citations (1.57%). The other articles gather less than 1.5% of the total number of citations.

An analysis of the journals that published the 10 most-cited articles reveals that four of them appeared in *Journal of Retailing*, two in *Journal of Marketing*, and one in each of the following: *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Marketing Science*.

Table 8 Most cited papers (70 or more citations) up to 2016

No.	Year	Document title	Authors	Journal	Citations
1	1998	Welcome to the Experience Economy	Pine 2nd. B. J., Gilmore J. H.	<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	979
2	2009	Brand Experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?	Brakus J. J., Schmitt B. H., Zarantonello L.	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	517
3	2009	Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies	Verhoef P. C., Lemon K. N., Parasuraman A., Roggeveen A., Tsiros M., Schlesinger L. A.	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	398
4	2009	Customer Experience Management in Retailing: Understanding the buying process	Puccinelli N. M., Goodstein R. C., Grewal D., Price R., Raghurir P., Stewart D.	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	211
5	2006	Drivers of Brand Extension Success	Volckner F., Sattler H.	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	192
6	2007	Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications	Oh H., Fiore A. M., Jeoung M.	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	182
7	2009	Customer experience management in retailing: an organizing framework	Grewal D., Levy M., Kumar V.	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	169
8	2002	Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects	Kozinets R. V., Sherry J. F., DeBerry-Spence B., Duhachek A., Nuttavuthisit K., Storm D.	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	153
9	2009	Consumer empowerment through internet-based co-creation	Fuller J., Muhlbacher H., Matzler K., Jawecki G.	<i>Journal of Management Information Systems</i>	146
10	2004	Who benefits from store brand entry?	Pauwels K., Srinivasan S.	<i>Marketing Science</i>	135
11	2010	Co-creating value for luxury brands	Tynan C., McKechnie S., Chhuon C.	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	118
12	2006	Tourism and hospitality marketing: Fantasy, feeling and fun	Williams A.	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	115

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

No.	Year	Document title	Authors	Journal	Citations
13	2009	A model of customer-based brand equity and its application to multiple destinations	Boo S., Busser J., Baloglu S.	<i>Tourism Management</i>	113
14	2011	Customer experience quality: An exploration in business and consumer contexts using repertory grid technique	Lemke F., Clark M., Wilson H.	<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	103
15	2009	Communication and promotion decisions in retailing: A review and directions for future research	Ailawadi K. L., Beauchamp J. P., Donthu N., Gauri D. K., Shankar V.	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	100
16	2009	Effect of experiential value on customer satisfaction with service encounters in luxury-hotel restaurants	Wu C. H. J., Liang R. D.	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	96
17	2010	Dimensions of cruisers' experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend	Hosany S., Witham M.	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	88
18	2009	Luxury brand marketing: The experience is everything!	Atwal G., Williams A.	<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	80
19	2010	Customer experience management: A critical review of an emerging idea	Palmer A.	<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	76
20	2011	Why co-creation experience matters? Creative experience and its impact on the quantity and quality of creative contributions	Fuller J., Hutter K., Faullant R.	<i>R and D Management</i>	70
21	2008	Experience, service operations strategy, and services as destinations: Foundations and exploratory investigation	Voss C., Roth A. V., Chase R. B.	<i>Production and Operations Management</i>	70
22	2005	Building contemporary brands: A sponsorship-based strategy	Cliffe S. J., Motion J.	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	70

Table 9 Most cited authors (with two or more articles): Co-authorship

	Authors 1	Authors 2	Authors 3	Authors 4	Articles	Citations	% of total
1	Pine B. J.	Gilmore J. H.			6	995	11.58
2	Schmitt B.	Brakus J.	Zarantonello L.		10	714	8.31
3	Verhoef P. C.	Lemon K. N.			2	399	4.64
4	Grewal D.	Kumar V.			2	380	4.42
5	Fiore A. M.	Jeong M.	Oh H.	Quadri-Felitti D.	7	265	3.08
6	Füller J.	Matzler K.			4	257	2.99
7	Williams A.	Atwal G.			3	199	2.32
8	Walls A.	Kwun D. J. W.	Okumus F.		4	139	1.62
9	Klaus P.	Maklan S.			4	97	1.13
10	Lorentzen A.				4	69	0.80
11	Ramaswamy V.	Prahalad C. K.			3	57	0.66

Table 9 shows the authors (united by groups of co-authors) who have published at least two articles, in order to identify the main academics who have constantly worked on our topic.

This table shows that the working groups that have acquired a notable notoriety are relatively rare (11), and that, among them, only six groups have been cited more than 250 times.

Table 9 confirms the importance of the works of Pine and Gilmore (995). It also highlights these other groups: Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (714); Verhoef and Lemon (399); Grewal and Kumar (380); Fiore, Jeong, Oh, Quadri-Felitti (265); and finally, Füller and Matzler (257).

The superimposition of the data on working groups on the information about the most-cited papers reveals that only three articles are isolated cases and not included in a more developed research course. These are “Drivers of brand extension success,” “Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects,” and “Who benefits from store brand entry?” These three papers have thus been read in full, so as to verify their pertinence with our theme. It emerged that the first of them uses the concept “parent-brand experience,” and that its extraction was a misinterpretation of our keyword “brand experience.” It has thus been removed from the reference articles. The second one, extracted from the database because of the term “experience economy,” has proved coherent with our research. The last one used the keyword “brands experience” and was also eliminated from the rest of the study.

In order to understand how our 585 articles have inspired the researcher of the reference field, an analysis of the 5,999 citing articles was done: 4,422 of these are linked to the field of business, management, and accounting (73.71%), even though not necessarily exclusively. The second field is social sciences (1,453 articles, 24.22%), followed by economics, econometrics, and finance (999, 12.94%). All the other research areas concentrate far less than 10% of the papers and are thus not of great interest (Table 10).

Table 10 Research areas of the citing papers

No.	Subject area	No.	%
1	Business Management and Accounting	4,422	73.71
2	Social Sciences	1,453	24.22
3	Economics Econometrics and Finance	999	16.65
4	Computer Science	776	12.94
5	Engineering	384	6.40
6	Arts and Humanities	253	4.22
7	Environmental Science	184	3.07
8	Medicine	132	2.20
9	Mathematics	127	2.12
10	Agricultural and Biological Sciences	91	1.52
11	Earth and Planetary Sciences	59	0.98
12	Health Professions	35	0.58
	Other	798	13.30
	Total field assignments	9,713	
	Total articles	5,999	

The data on document types are also revealing. It shows that 76.83% of the papers are scientific articles, followed very far behind at 8%, by book chapters and conference papers (Table 11).

Moreover, the journals themselves have been studied. This has confirmed the indications already stipulated both in terms of field (marketing, management, and tourism) and of quality of the journals (average percentile 84.83), as shown in Table 12. Furthermore, analysis of the journal titles underlines the centrality of the following themes: marketing, management, brand, tourism and travel, hospitality, psychology, service, computer.

Thereafter, in order to identify the principal experiential themes and application fields, we did an inductive thematic analysis of the titles and the keywords of all 585 papers.

Through an inductive coding process, we first identified the experiential issues; thus, we counted the articles related to each topic. In Table 13, the results are reported by the principal experiential themes.

Through a subsequent and further process of inductive coding we first identified the main areas of application; thus, we counted the articles related to each sector. In Table 14, the results are reported in the field of application.

Based on the results obtained with the content analysis, the main experiential research lines are brand experience (31.62% of the 585), experience economy (27.35% of the 585), experiential marketing (21.71% of the 585), customer experience management (8.72% of the 585), and experience marketing (5.81% of the 585).

Table 11 Document types of the citing papers

Document type	No.	%
Article	4,609	76.83
Book Chapter	507	8.45
Conference Paper	489	8.15
Review	214	3.57
Book	122	2.03
Editorial	48	0.80
Note	8	0.13
Letter	2	0.03
Total	5,999	100.00

Table 12 Journals that have published more papers citing the 585 articles

	Journal	Articles	Subject area	Percentile
1	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	162	Marketing	92
2	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	128	Marketing	89
3	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	92	Marketing	95
4	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	87	Marketing	75
5	<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	82	Marketing	64
6	<i>Tourism Management</i>	81	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	99
7	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	78	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	92
8	<i>Journal of Product and Brand Management</i>	73	Strategy and Management	80
9	<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	69	Marketing	77
10	<i>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</i>	69	Marketing	70
11	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	66	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	92
12	<i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	59	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	81
13	<i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	56	Marketing	85
14	<i>Service Industries Journal</i>	56	Strategy and Management	71
15	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	43	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	97
16	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	42	Marketing	63
17	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management</i>	41	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	82
18	<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	41	Marketing	82
18	<i>Journal of Service Management</i>	40	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	98

(continued)

Table 12 (continued)

	Journal	Articles	Subject area	Percentile
19	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	39	Psychology	95
20	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	36	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	95
21	<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	35	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	84
22	<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	35	Marketing	99
23	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	34	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	69
24	<i>Journal of Service Research</i>	33	Organizational Behavior	99
25	<i>Journal of Consumer Behavior</i>	32	Social Psychology	74
26	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	32	Marketing	98
27	<i>Lecture Notes in Computer Science</i>	32	Computer Science	42
28	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism</i>	32	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	55
29	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	31	Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality Management	64
30	<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	30	Marketing	87
Total		1766		84.83

Table 13 Principal experiential themes

Experiential theme	No. articles	% of the 585
Brand Experience	185	31.62
Experience Economy	160	27.35
Experiential Marketing	127	21.71
Customer Experience Management	51	8.72
Experience Marketing	34	5.81
Co-creating Experience	22	3.76
Customer Experience Quality	11	1.88
Experience Design	8	1.37
Service Dominant Logic	7	1.20
Retail Customer Experience	7	1.20
Others	13	2.22

Table 14 shows how the application field predominates tourism, travel, and leisure (28.38% of the 585). Contributions to Web, e-commerce, and social media (13.85 of the 585) and retail (9.74% of the 585) are also significant.

The other fields are rural, food, and wine (7.35%); event (5.81%); bank and service (5.64%) and city and place (4.62%); healthcare, wellness, and beauty (3.93%); luxury and fashion (3.76%). The latter three, however, have strong links with tourism.

A high number of papers do not refer to a specific sector (24.44% of the 585).

Table 14 Main fields of the application of the experiential perspective

Fields of application	No. articles	% of the 585
Tourism, Travel and Leisure	166	28.38
ICT, Online commerce, Social Media	81	13.85
Retail	57	9.74
Rural, Food and Wine	51	7.35
Event and Festival	43	5.81
Bank and Service	34	5.64
City and Place	33	4.62
Healthcare, Wellness and Beauty	27	3.93
Luxury and fashion	23	3.76
Other	22	4.27
Not specified	143	24.44

4 Results Emerged from the Literature Review and Limits of This Analysis

On the basis of the above data, the research questions can now be answered.

RQ1: From the descriptive analysis of the selected papers and the citation analysis, it has emerged that:

1. there is growing interest for the study area defined as CEM/ExP in this work, as the number of publications and of citations linked to the subject confirm;
2. this interest is not limited to a geographical area but extends to all continents;
3. the most important works in this field are “Welcome to the experience economy” from Pine and Gilmore (979 ct.); “Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?” by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (517 ct.); “Customer experience creation: Determinants, dynamics, and management strategies” by Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Schlesinger (398 ct.); “Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process” by Puccinelli, Goodstein, Grewal, Price, Raghuram, and Stewart (211 ct.); “Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications” by Oh, Fiore and Jeong (182 ct.), “Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process” by Grewal, Levy and Kumar (169 ct.); “Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects” by Kozinets, Sherry, DeBerry-Spence, Duhachek, Nuttavuthisit and Storm (153 ct.); “Consumer empowerment through internet-based co-creation” by Fuller, Muhlbacher, Matzler and Jaweck (146 ct.);
4. the most cited authors in this field can be found in these co-author groups: Pine and Gilmore (995 ct.); Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello (714 ct.), Verhoef and Lemon (399 ct.), Grewal and Kumar (380 ct.), Fiore, Jeong, Oh, Quadri-Felitti (265 ct.), and Fuller and Matzler (257 ct.);

5. the journals that have most consistently published contributions in this fields are as follows: *Journal of Business Research* (21 art.); *Journal of Brand Management* (14 art.); *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (13 art.); *Journal of Marketing Management* (13 art.); *Journal of Product and Brand Management* (12 art.); *Journal of Retailing* (11 art.).

RQ2: CEM/ExP indubitably belongs to the “business, management and accounting” field, given that 71% of the papers studied and 73% of the citing articles were published by journals listed in this category by Scopus.

Inside the “business and management” macro-area, the subareas of “marketing,” “tourism,” “leisure and hospitality management,” and “strategy and management” emerge. Among the rest of the journals that have made space for CEM/ExP, we noted, within the “social science” macro-area, the subcategories “urban studies” and “geography, planning and development,” which suggest the use of the experiential concepts in city planning and territorial management. Some contributions were linked to other areas of research, but these have not proven especially interesting within the quantitative frame (number of publications) or the qualitative one (number of citations extracted).

Lastly, the data on citations show that the relationship between the number of citing articles and the number of cited articles is of 10.25. This allows us to consider that, within the “business and management” field, the level of interest for the experiential papers largely exceeds the papers themselves and entails that the publications on our subject have captured the attention of academics who do not directly work on these questions (or that have at least not cited them in their titles, keywords or abstracts).

RQ3: The inductive content analysis on the title and keywords carried out to identify the main research areas and evaluate the level of notoriety of the different experiential approaches reveals that these are brand experience (31.62% of the 585), experience economy (27.35% of the 585), experiential marketing (21.71% of the 585), customer experience management (8.72% of the 585) and experience marketing (5.81% of the 585).

RQ4: The inductive content analysis on the title and keywords has also highlighted than the sectors in which experiential concepts were applied are more frequently: tourism, travel, and leisure (28.38%), Web, e-commerce and social media, (13.85%) and retail (9.74%).

From the methodology point of view, this work presents the following limitations: (a) the research focuses on articles published in journals, excluding the contributions published in books; (b) the database used does not contain the article “Experiential marketing,” by Schmitt, which is considered one of the reference papers on the subject by the literature—this must be taken into consideration when examining the classification of the articles most cited; (c) the research term “brand experience” has led to the extraction of papers that were not always coherent with the research subject, and this problem has not always been identified through the reading of the abstract—the research could thus be improved by a second reading of all the abstracts obtained through this research term and, when in doubt

(e.g., no explicit reference to the basic literature on the subject) by reading the whole paper; (d) analysis of the experiential research lines was carried out through the association of groupings created by the combination of authors having written at least one article together and the experiential concept obtained by the inductive content analysis on the titles and keywords. However, this type of analysis did not enable the association of these research lines with the relating basic literature. A rerun of the research using a co-citation analysis or a coupling analysis would thus be beneficial (Galvagno 2017).

Despite the inevitable limitations of the research, the contribution provides an overall perspective of the growing importance of experiential approaches within the marketing and management literature.

5 Conclusion: The Need for Integration of Different Experiential Approaches

The results of the study and the data presented above enable us to confirm a strongly growing trend for studies that are described as or use the experiential perspective within the “business and management” sector, both in quantitative (number of publications) and qualitative (journals of publication) terms. Analysis of the reference authors shows an important geographical diffusion of the subject. Indeed, academics of all continents work on this subject, with the United States and the United Kingdom at the forefront (RQ1).

As for the interpretative point of view, with the reference of the concept of experience economy, as defined by Ferreira and Teixeira (2013) and Pencarelli and Forlani (2016), and for the larger field of CEM/ExP, it is possible to determine that the period 2006–2009 was the “breakpoint,” the period of affirmation of the experiential concepts within the managerial literature.

Indeed, the phenomenon has at this time made a strong entrance within the scientific business and managerial literature. This is clearly illustrated by the quantitative growth of the contributions published, by the number of times these contributions were cited, and by the quality of the journals that have published them (RQ2).

It is indeed in that period that 13 of the 20 most-cited articles in our 585 paper-strong studied corpus were written. These have furthermore opened research areas (RQ3) and shown systemic application fields for specific sectors (RQ4).

The analysis carried out also provides useful data for a reflection on the historical evolution of this field and on the role of its authors. The data confirm the notoriety of the article “Welcome to the experience economy,” by Pine e Gilmore (1998), which is the most-cited work in our study, at 12% of all citations. This percentage measures the sheer weight of this paper within the field and partly illustrates its role.

However, the citation data also stress that the research field studied, in its current state, does not have absolute reference authors and is not guided by a *pensée*

unique. The analysis of citations of groups of authors shows that only three working groups (besides Pine and Gilmore) account for more than 3% of the total citations. This underlines the important fragmentation of the literature, along various lines of research, as already noted by Kranzbühler et al. (2017: 14) in relation to the customer experience construct and by Homburg et al. (2015) in relation to customer experience management.

Still, within the study of the groups of authors, it is interesting to note that, even though Pine and Gilmore have written several other papers (5), only one of their articles, “Welcome to the experience economy,” has captured the attention of their contemporaries, with 979 citations out of 995. This observation implies that these authors have had the intuition and means to make the subject known to managers and academics. Yet, it also means that they were not able to structure an appropriate corpus that would have imposed them as a reference in the research field.

This is, however, not the case of Schmitt, who launched the concept of experiential marketing in 1999 and that of customer experience management (2003) with the books for managers and operators. In 2009, he also developed the concept of brand experience in his article “Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?” authored with his colleagues Brakus and Zarantonello. This paper had quite an impact on the field. This effort, which goes beyond this specific article, is visible both from the quantitative point of view (10 contributions) and from the qualitative one (second working group, with 714 citations).

Other working groups have emerged from our analysis, such as Verhoef and Lemon (customer experience creation; customer journey), Grewal and Kumar (customer experience management), Fiore, Jeong, Oh, Quadri-Felitti (experience economy concepts and tourism), and finally Füller and Matzler (co-creation experience).

As for the application fields, this paper identifies the following themes: retailing, tourism, entertainment and the arts, hospitality, sport, branding, urban planning, and architecture. Through a quantitative measure, these results confirm the qualitative evaluations of Tynan and McKechnie (2009) and of Same and Larimo (2012: 482).

Integrating the results of this study in an historical perspective and taking into account the literature cited in the introduction, it is possible to confirm that customer experience was:

- identified by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) in the 1980s;
- transformed in customer experience management by the “marketing practitioners and consulting gurus” in “Customer experience engineering” (Carbone and Haeckel 1994), “Experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1998), “Experiential marketing” (Schmitt 1999a, b);
- are discovered within the academic debate, in particular within the sectors of tourism and retail, between 2007 and 2009, in the form of tourism experience and customer experience management;
- legitimized as a central theme of marketing and tourism studies by the contemporary literature.

Finally, considering that the results of the present study describe the important quantitative and qualitative growth in research linked to customer experience, the involvement of authors from the whole world and the conjunction and concurrence of various working prospects, it is possible to conclude that experience management is in its pre-paradigmatic phase (Khun 1970).

Given the typical problems of the pre-paradigmatic research phases (Khun 1970) that, by definition, are “revolutionary,” it is important to underline the need to find approaches that will unite, rather than divide, in order to enable an eventual growth of this economic-managerial approach that focuses on the economic analysis of life experience (whether that of the client or supplier, tourist or inhabitant) in its holistic dimension (emotional and rational at the same time).

The vision that is proposed in the chapter Marketing in an experiential perspective: from “goods and services logic” to “experience logic” is a first attempt to take into account the various contributions that literature has offered to marketing scholars to arrive at a new managerial approach that we define “experience logic marketing.”

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Marketing in an Experiential Perspective: From “Goods and Service Logic” to “Experience Logic”



Tonino Pencarelli and Fabio Forlani

Abstract The work aims to show how experience logic can be used to renew the most known marketing perspectives, by directing them towards new management approaches, which, starting from the customer experience, can find new ways to create, communicate, and deliver value. We use a conceptual approach: We want to propose a new vision of marketing, starting from the traditional goods logic inspired concept of marketing, discussing services marketing contributions, and ending with the experiential and experience marketing theories. We discuss the differences between experiential and experience marketing approaches, in order to go toward a new common vision: the marketing driven by the logic of the customer experience or “experience logic.” Moving from the traditional marketing logic to an “experience marketing logic,” we discuss six managerial processes for marketing managers in order to understand and improve customer experience: developing the experience concept; building the experience setting; communicating the experience; organizing and motivating employees; delivering or staging the experience; monitoring the perceived quality.

1 Marketing of Goods, Services, and Experiences: An Evolutionary Analysis

Studies on the evolution of marketing concepts traditionally emphasize how they have evolved over time, in parallel with changes in a company’s managerial perspectives. The concept of marketing has switched from a production and product orientation (in the 1950s and 1960s) to a sales orientation (in the 1970s) and

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recently, to market and customer orientations, until it assumed a holistic relational approach, involving all the company stakeholders (Gummeson 1999; Kotler et al. 2012; Mattiacci and Pastore 2014; Cavallone 2017).

The coming of post-industrial society and service sector progress has brought about the development of new areas of study. Specifically, the studies have deepened sectoral areas of application dominated by intangible components, particularly in the field of services (service marketing), commercial distribution (trade marketing, retail marketing), tourism (tourism marketing), and culture (cultural marketing). To these areas, contributions have been added in the field of relationship marketing, marketing applied to business-to-business and international contexts and marketing applied to digital environments (Internet marketing). Those studies have tried to highlight, in particular, that the application of marketing to areas where the material dimension of the supply is rapidly thinning, if not disappearing entirely, requires an appropriate adaptation of the strategies, guiding principles, and business processes. This is also true for traditional business, where the concept of the *servitization* of business is emerging (Vandermerwe and Rada 1988; Raddats and Kowalkowski 2014).

In a world where intangible factors and services are pervasive, the service marketing literature (Vargo and Lush 2004, 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2009; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014) points out, in particular, the need to go beyond the classic mental models and managerial marketing approaches guided by the goods logic in order to take into account the differences in the customer approach imposed by the particular characteristics of the service economy, such as simultaneity between production and consumption, intangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability of product, no stocks, no proprietary portability of pension benefits and customer participation in service management processes.

In a world dominated by the logic of material goods, the managerial literature assumes there is clear separation between the sphere of production and that of consumption; value is generated by the manufacturer and then delivered to the client through an exchange that takes place on the market, thanks to the intermediary function of services that mediate between the inelasticity of the traditional Fordist factory and the variety of the demand. This mediation leads to the progressive servitization of production but does not allow the customer to appreciate the value of goods only through delivery, before they are used and consumed.

With the rise of the immaterial economy, services become increasingly important for the creation and delivery of customer value. A service is the act of doing something for another party, either directly or through goods (Vargo and Akaka 2009: 39), and it qualifies as a process (rather than a simple intangible output), a set of activities that represents the basis of each type of economic exchange, determining and also enriching the value resulting from the exchange of goods. The competition between enterprises is a service-based competition, as each type of business is a service business, and all social actors are resource integrators, which are instrumental to the mutual exchange of services identifying a service ecosystem (Lush and Nambisan 2015; Greer et al. 2016).

The emerging and wide-ranging debate surrounding this issue leads to the preliminary service logic perspective (Grönroos 2011) and, more recently, the perspective of service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2009; Lushand Nambisan 2015; Greer et al. 2016), albeit with different emphases (Grönroos and Gummerus 2014), to highlight some distinctive features of service marketing: (1) a product usually has no value in itself (Gummesson 2008); therefore, the customer is always a co-creator of value (Vargo and Lusch 2008); (2) the concept of customer value refers not so much to the exchange value, as the contextualized use value, alluding to categories such as value-in-use and value-in-context, cited by Gummerus and Grönroos (2014), or experiential value (Greer et al. 2016); (3) the company has to interact with the customer's value creation process in order to generate value (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014; Greer et al. 2016; Alves et al. 2016), i.e., it has to plan and manage the platform of interactions in order to support the value creation for and with the customer (Grönroos and Strandvik 2008; Valdani 2009).

Marketing studies, meanwhile, have brought to light that value, for the customer, is determined by the relationship between benefits and sacrifices associated with a particular product, according to a multidimensional, subjective, and long-term perspective (Grönroos 2011). The benefits can be functional (e.g., product performance, customer service, technology content, time, place, and form of supply) and symbolic-relational (e.g., reliability of the brand, status and self-esteem, consideration and social membership, etc.). The sacrifices, instead, arise from (Pencarelli et al. 2013) the gathering of information (i.e., research costs), the evaluation of alternative purchase decisions (e.g., cost of preparing information, procurement costs, purchasing costs), the utilization of the product (e.g., operating costs, maintenance costs, learning costs, obsolescence costs), and finally from the repurchase of traded goods (e.g., conversion costs, psychological costs, disposal operations, and switching costs).

The perception of the benefits and sacrifices (hence, the value) is highly subjective, depending on the customer profile and the social and cultural context in which the individual is immersed.

In addition, because value is co-created during the long-term supplier–customer relationship, the company must fully understand that the value-in-use for the customer is not specified in individual exchanges or episodes, as it is part of a relationship that must be built and maintained over a certain time span. Ultimately, in the services era, value is idiosyncratic, contextual, and full of meaning for the customer, who is the real protagonist of the co-production of the service process (by interacting with the supplier or other partners) and value co-creation (Vargo and Lush 2008; Ordanini and Pasini 2008).

An evolution of these perspectives brings about a vision in which the supply processes are no longer central in managerial practices and theoretical analysis, and there is a diffusion of a broader and customer-centric vision (customer dominant logic). As cited by Heinonen et al. (2010), this vision aims to understand and to deepen how the value emerges for the customer and how the customer builds the value and sense experience before, during, and after the use of the service.

Marketing gradually shifts the focus, from the perspective of supply, service processes, and enterprise, implicit in service marketing approaches, to the customer's perspective and his/her overall experience.

The view, based on customer dominant logic, insists that the co-creation of value implies that the consumer is actually involved and interested in the value proposition of the company, a facilitator, and a resource provider, which enables and helps the customer to obtain the desired value. Value, then, extensively qualifies as experienced-use value, i.e., as the result of both the interaction with the supplying company and of the experience lived and perceived by customers according to their skills and resources, before, during, and after the service delivery in contexts, which may be different from those arising from market relations (value-in-context). The focus on the customer then converges toward the overall focus on the customer's consumption experience, not only as a consumer but also as a member of a community, a family, or a company (Carù and Cova 2003). Therefore, attention is also centered on customers' skills, on their point of view, and its emotional dimensions. This vision incorporates the relational perspective vis-à-vis the supplier for the duration of the relationship.

Ultimately, the value-in-use is qualified by the customer in terms of the overall experience he/she lived, within the specific environment and personal situation. This does not necessarily have to be extraordinary and unique but can also refer to daily consumption forms, outside of market relations (Bruckner 2000; Carù and Cova 2003).

2 From Economics of Services to the Economy of Experiences in Relation to Experiential Marketing and Experience Marketing

Marketing studies are evolving as the world of consumption evolves: Modern consumers are not satisfied by simply having goods and services available, but they are continuously looking for experiences, emotions, and sensory involvement, which can captivate and amaze them (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Florida 2002; Pencarelli and Forlani 2002; La Salle and Britton 2003; Resciniti 2004; Addis 2007; Walls et al. 2011; Sundbo and Sorensen 2013). We are looking to the growing commoditization of goods and services, so that competitive advantages of the firms can be obtained with a customer experience managerial approach (Kranzbühler et al. 2017).

According to Toffler (Rifkin 2000: 193), "We will become the first civilization in history to use a highly advanced technology to manufacture more transient and, together, the most durable products: the human experience" because there is nothing left to buy for consumers other than what they already possess, and they are still wondering: "What can I try that I have not tried yet?" In fact, as a result of the post-industrial society, we are shifting from a service economy to an economy of experiences, which enriches the value of all goods and services, leading to the birth

of a new economic sector: the experiences industry (Nilsen and Dale 2013: 65). These experiences, according to Sundbo and Sorensen (2013: 4), can be defined as the mental impact that is felt and remembered by an individual due to the personal perception of external stimuli. They are experiences that define and distinguish the new behavior of consumer consumption, orienting the traditional paradigm of consumer satisfaction toward the emerging paradigm of consumer sensations and sense-making. There emerges a new perspective of consumer behavior, mainly focused on the analysis of consumption experiences (Gentile et al. 2007; Walls et al. 2011; Achrol and Kotler 2012; Kranzbühler et al. 2017).

Therefore, because a large part of Western society's consumption is to be attributed to the demand for experiences, in which the individual is intimately involved at a physical, emotional, intellectual, or even spiritual level, new horizons arise both in the area of consumer analysis and in the design of the relationship between production and consumption. Companies need to renew their offer, transforming products from simple outputs with a predominantly functional content into solutions with an increasing amount of immateriality and experiential value. Thus, new economic sectors arise, where the experience industries are welcomed and which include all those experiences involving products for which customers are ready to pay directly or indirectly (if offered by public companies) (Sundbo and Sorensen 2013: 5). In the world of experiential consumption, the interest in social, symbolic, emotional, and psychological benefits overcomes the concern about functional benefits. The experiential lifestyle is gaining ground, thus encouraging organizations to put more creativity into their supply processes and facilitating the creation of the so-called "creative class" (Florida 2002: 168).

In this context, service marketing theories have progressively been enriched by the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2013; Sundbo and Sorensen 2013) and experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999, 2003) contributions. What is progressively emerging is the importance of the consumption experience value (Palmer 2010; Stampacchia et al. 2016), which is an experiential value (value-in-experience), which has its roots in the concepts of value-in-use (Vargo and Lusch 2004), value-in-possession (Richins 1994), and in the more recent formulations of value-in-context (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Vargo and Akaka 2009). It takes into account the deep difference between consumption experience and consumer experience (Carù and Cova 2003: 198). Holbrook (1994: 9) states that consumer value "resides *not* in the product purchased, *not* in the brand chosen, *not* in the object possessed, but rather in the *consumption experience(s)* derived therefrom," to mean that experiences are emphasized as vehicles for delivering positive customer value (Rihova et al. 2014).

Scholars point out the need for marketing processes within the economy of experiences to focus on customer experience rather than on goods or services: in fact, the experiential approaches recognize that customers make consumption choices guided by emotions and feelings as well as by rational thinking. Employing a marketing perspective, Schmitt (1999) states that experiences are private, personal events that occur in response to some stimulation and involve the entire being as a result of observing or participating in an event.

Schmitt (2003: 6)¹ also pointed out how, in the post-industrial and services era, many companies and entire industries have acquired the bad habit of dealing with customers in inappropriate and harassing ways. Hence, the author points out the need for businesses to put the customer at the center of the stage in marketing processes and go beyond customer-oriented paradigms, such as the marketing concept itself and the customer satisfaction or customer relationship management approaches, which, according to the author, are more oriented toward the product, its functional benefits, and the commercial transactions, rather than toward the customer. Schmitt (2003: 17) identifies the customer experience management, as the customer-centric process of strategically managing a customer's entire experience with a product or company. The logic of experiential consumption and of the experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999, 2003) suggests that companies should develop an "experiential" platform capable of offering an experiential value promise (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006), which focuses on customer experience (Verhoef et al. 2009; Carù and Cova 2007; Schmitt 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The experiential marketing approach is based on four aspects (Savelli 2013):

- it focuses on the consumer's experience, on in the context, on in the place in which the experience is lived and in which consumers are immersed; Schmitt (1999), in fact, highlights that, in order to stimulate the desired consumer experiences, marketers must provide the right setting and environment (Verhoef et al. 2009; Walls et al. 2011);
- it considers the specific consumption situation as part of a broader socio-cultural context;
- in purchase processes, it recognizes the importance of both rational and emotional factors; therefore, it is important to not consider the consumer a merely rational decision maker but to entertain, stimulate, and creatively provoke him/her;
- it assumes the use of "eclectic methods," i.e., a blend of analytical and quantitative, intuitive, and qualitative tools, to better understand phenomena as a whole;²
- a more extreme interpretation of the concept of experience, Pine and Gilmore (1999) arrives at the new experience economy model, which identifies the experience as something more than a category of attributes to enrich and differentiate traditional products (raw materials, goods and services). According to their model, experience is, above all, a new and different offer category for which a specific and new marketing approach, called experiences marketing

¹Schmitt (1999) observes: "In contrast to traditional marketing, experiential marketing focuses on customer experiences. Experiences occur as a result of encountering, undergoing, or living through situations. They are triggered stimulations to the senses, the heart, and the mind. ... In sum, experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational values that replace functional values."

²In experiential marketing "processes rather than goals, relationships rather than hierarchies, perceptions instead of data, feelings instead of cold reasoning, innovative capabilities instead of ordered regulations and systematic approaches are important" (Schmitt 1999).

(Fortezza and Pencarelli 2011; Same and Larimo 2012), is needed. Experiences marketing is nothing more than an approach applied to highly immaterial and highly experiential products, which we may also call experience products, examples of which are the tourism products (Pencarelli and Forlani 2002; Sørensen and Jensen 2015).

The new experiences marketing approach innovates the supply forms, focusing on building (staging) original, unique, engaging, possibly unforgettable, experiential packages, but it also renovates the other operational marketing policies, such as prices, communication, and distribution. The experiences supply methods take inspiration from the theatrical model (Forlani 2018), where the firm is the company, the staff is the cast, and customers are the guests to be led into various experience domains (entertainment, education, escape, aesthetics) by giving their “best performance” of what is being offered. The experiences economy model explains that companies may be considered to be operating in the experiences business (where the supply of experiences is of higher value than that of goods and services according to an economic value progression path), when experiences are staged for a fee. Therefore, if the experiences are offered as add-ons to goods and services or are free, following a differentiation strategy, the supply form may be included in the experiential logic, but the firms will not be seen as acting in the experiences business. When a company acts in the experiences business, the marketing model should aim to understand the types of experiences sought by customers and, consequently, to set up experiential solutions to meet their needs. Tour packages are good examples of experiential value propositions, which tourists may decide to purchase or to self-produce.

Focusing on experiences, whether they are conceived as products (Pine and Gilmore 1999) or as a consumption experience (Schmitt 2003), means admitting that the company supply value “springs from the customer’s experience.” Therefore, value is not properly created until the offer is consumed and experienced by consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), who should be treated as actors starring in the construction of value (Boswijk et al. 2012). It also means that “experiential marketing is part of the experience marketing: experiential marketing is a tactical rather than strategic approach that marketers should consider central to their integrated marketing communications plans, including techniques, which are part of the core experience marketing” (Same and Larimo 2012).

Lastly, it means recognizing that the value is determined less during the *service encounters* between customer and service provider and more during the *experience encounters* and, above all, during fruition of the experiential offer. This requires flexible and customized interactions between front-line personnel and customers because the value creation process is strongly influenced by personnel’s ability to empathize with customers, thus understanding the reasons and sensing the emotional aspects that led them to the generation of the experience value (Sørensen and Jensen 2015; Verbauskienė and Grišienė 2014). Workers should therefore be selected and trained to understand even the hidden wishes of customers, which are crucial to a positive experiential consumption.

3 Theoretical Implications of the Marketing Driven by the Logic of the Customer Experience (Experience Logic)

If we accept the concept of value-in-use in the sense of customers' experiences, and if we put the experiential dimension at the center of marketing strategies, it becomes clear that the logic of services should be surpassed and integrated by the experience economy perspective. This perspective considers experiences as the true source of value-in-use contextualized for the customer and suggests the adoption of an innovative marketing management approach, which would follow the evolution of consumption right up to the experiences economy. Experience economy "can act at all levels of economic activity: from product to company, to region, country, and world economy" (Bille 2010). Therefore, it may refer to a new marketing model based on the logic of the experience (experience logic) (Pencarelli et al. 2015).

A marketing approach based on experience logic can embrace what is proposed by the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Pencarelli and Forlani 2002) as well as by the experiential marketing model (Schmitt 1999, 2003; Ferrari 2006; Addis 2007), thus integrating them with the literature inspired by the service logic (Grönroos 2011; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014) and the service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008).

After all, service management processes are essential to the generation of value through customized experiences. As stated in Pencarelli (2013), according to the experiential perspective, managerial processes require arranging new activities in order to create value. Such activities should not ignore service processes but use them to set up higher value offers, such as experiences.

As the economic value offered increases, the traditional service management processes should, on the one hand, guarantee the highest possible quality levels, by carefully designing the blueprint (Shostack 1984; Bitner et al. 2008); on the other hand, they should evolve toward "experience management innovative processes," for which the design and construction of experiential solutions to meet the targets of the new business model are required by leveraging basic elements and traditional management services. For example, in the tourism industry (Quan and Wang 2004; Kivela and Crofts 2006), the supply of vacations requires the offer of a wide range of services to complete the experience (transport, accommodation, catering, food, etc.). Similarly, in the industry of concerts, theater, and entertainment, the ability to create value for customers will depend on the quality of artistic performances (the experience in the strict sense, the core product) and on the quality and reliability of the services included in the package (ticketing, security, catering, car parks, etc.). At the end of the day, you may not be able to offer experiences or other experiential products that can generate benefits to the customers if the services within the package are not qualified; this is why the experience logic may be considered a new holistic managerial perspective that can take into account the paradigms that have emerged from the services economy and the contemporary consumer value equation.

Thanks to the integration of service and experience economy perspectives, an innovative conceptual approach to “experience driven logic” marketing may be adopted. The new approach:

- identifies the economic supply categories proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999), e.g., raw materials, goods, services, experiences, transformations, and considers these categories as possible outputs used to define the object of economic exchanges between actors according to the logic of the economic value progression;
- assumes the individual’s experience as a value analysis unit and as the aim of marketing processes [“value is uniquely, experientially, and contextually determined and perceived by customers,” (Grönroos and Gummerus 2014: 207)]. After all, when customers consume a product, they typically have a good, bad, or indifferent experience, regardless of the object of purchase. The key point is how effectively a company is able to manage the experience, offering a balanced mix of functional and emotional benefits to consumers (Berry et al. 2002);
- describes the experience as a complex and multidimensional construct, based on five characteristics (Andersson and Andersson 2013: 84–97): learning, which, as it grows, increases consumption of the product; uniqueness, due to the intangible content of the experience; strong dependence and connection with the environment and with the location in which the experience is enjoyed (as happens in tourism experiences); interdependency between the spheres of activity of the producer and of the consumer and interdependence among consumers, generating network economies; inability to store the supply (as for services);
- brings out different dimensions of customer value in the experiential value perspective, such as *value-in-exchange*, which is linked to the price paid; *value-in-possession*, which is related to the use of the product; *value in use*, which is linked to the consumer’s perception during the consumption of a product, or to the idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual, and *meaning-laden* value. Customer value-in-experience can therefore be defined as the “customer’s perception of value over the entire course of the customer experience” (Turnbull 2009);
- acknowledges that different economic actors take part in the customer’s value creation process, according to an *actor-to-actor* value constellation (Normann and Ramirez 1993), ecosystem service perspective (Wieland et al. 2012; Lush and Nambisan 2015; Greer et al. 2016) and a multiparty perspective (McCull-Kennedy et al. 2015), which goes beyond the boundaries of individual organizations and single entities, to emphasize the role of supply systems, of value systems, and of consumer systems;
- identifies the need to ground the marketing processes on the network theory, i.e., based on a perspective of many-to-many marketing and whose central objective is to create value and to satisfy all stakeholders (Gummesson 1999, 2008);
- divides the process of value creation into three spheres: the supplier’s sphere, the customer’s sphere (alone or in interaction with others), and the joint sphere,

which is the co-creation platform of the suppliers', the customers', and any other partner's experience (Grönroos and Gummerus 2014: 218)³;

- considers customers as workers and as the primary source of value and, hence, responsible for value creation (Cova et al. 2011): according to Cova and Dalli (2009) "Customers perform immaterial work and produce independently of the producer's objectives and strategy. Essentially, immaterial labor is a type of primitive or elementary activity that is not the object of any kind of cultural engineering";
- uses the customers' skills to facilitate their involvement in the value co-creation processes; this implies some basic principles: reciprocal access of the consumers' world with the production world; dialogue between the two worlds through shared codes and languages; transparency regarding companies' use of customer resources; focus and management of risks associated with the processes of value co-creation (Boswijk et al. 2012: 130);
- integrates in a unitary experiential value perspective both experiential marketing (enriched experience goods and services) and experiences marketing.

Moreover, as Verbauskienė and Griesienė (2014: 823) point out, with the experiential perspective some important differences emerge going from traditional marketing and experiential marketing: (a) theory basis: from rational to rational and emotional; (b) focus: from good and services to customer experiences; (c) marketing communications: from one-way communication to interactive, double-way communication; (d) role of a customer: from passive participant to initiator or leading actor.

The marketing concept proposed in this paper follows a *marketing driven by the experience logic*, which can be defined as a managerial approach according to which the strategies focus on planning and co-creating the customer experience. The experience is the main source of value for consumers (Tao 2014). This approach converges with the customer-dominant logic model (Heinonen et al. 2010), where focus is shifted from the provider's perspective to the customer's perspective, in which activities and experiences holistically lived by consumers coexist (customer's world).

Further, Kranzbühler et al. (2017) underlines the theoretical relevance of customer experience research, integrating organizational, and consumer perspectives for current and future researches.

However, the experience logic approach, as we shall see, is meant to be broader. In fact, it focuses on both the provider's and the client's perspectives as well as on the perspective of the network of actors involved in the design, construction, and use of the experience, conceived both as a consumption experience and as a consumer's experience. The experience logic approach also has several areas of overlap with the marketing approach that Schmitt (1999, 2003) defines as customer experience

³Grönroos and Gummerus (2014: 221) point out: "The goal for marketing is to engage the firm with the customers' processes with an aim to support value creation in those processes, in a mutually beneficial way."

management, a managerial model characterized by five stages: analysis of the customer experience; construction of the experiential platform; design of the brand experience; structuring of the customer interface; commitment to continuous innovation. The model is based on the achievement of the five strategic experiential steps, which are connected to many other types of experiences, each having its own structure and intrinsic processes with a growing scale of involvement (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006).⁴

However, while Schmitt's (2003) approach can be more properly placed into an experiential marketing perspective, the vision that we present in this chapter is about an experience-logic-driven marketing approach (experience logic). Our vision brings together into a single perspective both experiential marketing, primarily aimed at adding experiential value to goods and services, and experience marketing. While experiential marketing stages experience to qualify and differentiate products, regardless of whether they are goods, services, or commodities, the experience marketing approach considers the experience a separate offer, i.e., a product experience. In the first case, the core products are goods or services, and experiences are just enriching elements of the value delivery, as typically happens in shopping experiences, where, thanks to the support of new technologies, the shop becomes a multimedia communication context. In the case of product-experiences, instead, the core offer is the experience *sensu stricto*. Therefore, managerial and marketing policies will be different, though converging in processes focusing on experiential consumption. For example, products containing experiential elements may be offered at a price that includes the additional elements or considers them costless, but guests/consumers should be charged a fee for the customization of experience products. As stated by Pine and Gilmore (2013), companies are placed in the business they charge for. Therefore, it is one thing to offer experiences to differentiate a product, while still acting in the goods and services business; it is another thing to offer experience-based value in the strictest sense, using goods and services as instrumental elements for staging the experience. As mentioned above, in the new experience logic perspective proposed, the experiential marketing and the experience marketing approaches are integrated to optimize the overall customer experience at different stages of the relationship with the company and with the other customers. This optimization starts from an understanding of the features

⁴The model is based on the achievement of five strategic experiential modules, connected to many different types of experiences, each of which possesses its own structures and its own intrinsic processes: sensory experience (sense); experiences of feeling (feel); cognitive experiences (think); experiences related to action (act); experiences of relationship (relate). The idea is to offer experiential modules characterized by a scale of increasing involvement: the sense module draws attention through the perceptions provided by the five senses, and is the first and lowest level of experience. The involvement of perception in turn produces feelings and feeling, and you will therefore land on the second level, that of feel; the think module adds an interest and a cognitive involvement to the customer experience; the act module transforms these experiential interests into actions and behaviors, also acting on physical experiences and lifestyles of the client; finally the relate module goes beyond the individual's experience, making it relevant in a wider social context (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006).

Table 1 Differences between marketing driven by experience logic and the other marketing approaches

	Goods logic	Service logic	Service dominant logic	Customer dominant logic	Experience logic
Nature of offering and marketing approach	Goods, as tangible products (traditional marketing, for pushing products to customers)	Service, as an intangible product (service marketing and relationship marketing)	Service, as an intangible product (service marketing and relationship marketing)	Everything, customer oriented marketing	Experience as a product category or as quality of supply; experiential marketing and experience marketing
Value concept	Value in exchange	Relationship between benefits and sacrifices in a long-term perspective	Value in use, idiosyncratic, contextual, experiential, subjective, during the interactions with supplier and other actors, in a value ecosystem and institutional perspective	The value emerges when the service provided by a service company and used by the customer becomes embedded in the customer's context activities, practices and experiences together	Experiential value, which comprises value in exchange, value in possession, value in use during the interactions with supplier and also out of the supplier boundaries, in a value ecosystem perspective
Customer rule	Passive	Active	Active	Active and crucial	Active and deeply involved in all senses (rational, emotional, sensorial and also spiritual); he or she is treated as a guest; he or she plays a critical role in co-creation experiences
Company rule	To plan, produce, communicate (one-way, from the company to customers), and deliver goods to customers	To provide artifacts and contexts that are conducive to experiences and which can be properly utilized by consumers to co-create their personal experiences and value	Co-create value; providers and customers as essentially being resource integrators acting in networks embedded in service systems	To plan, create, communicate (two-way communication between the company and the customers) and deliver value to customers, also providing artifacts, and contexts that are conducive to experiences and which can be properly utilized by consumers to co-create their personal experiences and value	To plan, produce, communicate (two-way communication between the company and the customers) and deliver- value to customers (stimuli for the co-creation); Providing experiential platforms to stage experiences to guests, and providing artifacts, and contexts that are conducive to experiences and which can be properly utilized by consumers to co-create their personal experiences and value

of experience consumption, even before those related to the consumer's experiences. Table 1 summarizes the concepts analyzed.

4 Managerial Implications of the Experience Logic Marketing

The challenges that experience-logic-oriented companies have to face may be summarized in the guidelines introduced by Pine and Gilmore (1999), underscored by Morgan et al. (2009), Zomerdijk and Voss (2010), and integrated by Boswijk et al. (2012: 169):

1. create an identifiable theme for the experiences acting on different levels, taking inspiration from the physical world as well as from philosophical and psychological concepts, religious or political models, historical situations, from art, popular culture, and fashion so as to involve consumers according to their willingness to pay to live the experience or to enjoy the experientialization of goods and services;
2. harmonize the impressions related to the theme of the experience offered;
3. eliminate negative or nonpertinent cues with respect to the theme chosen for the designed experience;
4. pay attention to the atmosphere in order to create a pleasant experience;
5. offer meaningful souvenirs that can enhance the memory of the experience;
6. involve all of the consumers' senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch);
7. pay attention to the authenticity of the experiences proposed;
8. stage the experiences, according to a theatrical drama model and pay attention to the dramatic structure of the events;
9. train frontline employees as though each of them were the most important actors, to ensure the best experience performance;
10. closely couple backstage employees and front-stage experiences;
11. work to seek the welfare of individuals.

Also, a particularly important challenge is to design physical and digital environments providing experiential platforms that continuously enhance the generation of value-in-use and value-in-context for the customer. This should be accomplished in order to facilitate the interactions with the supplier as well as with other customers and to foster the creation of communities and horizontal consumer-to-consumer relations. Examples of such environments are theme parks or technological entertainment platforms (e.g., video games, online games, digital distribution platforms for PC or mobile applications, etc.). Accepting the notion that the satisfaction of a need comes through a set of consumption experiences filtered by all senses, an organization must be able to engage consumers by stimulating their five senses) in every stage of the experience consumption (expectation setting, pre-purchase interaction, purchase interaction, product consumption, and

post-consumption). The logic of this approach is to take into account the multidimensionality of consumer experiences, which are made up of sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relationship components (Gentile et al. 2007), to ensure the consumer's enjoyment through positive and pleasant emotions and, thus, to inspire good memories about the overall experience.

It is further crucial to take into account the overall customer experience construct as Lemon and Verhoef (2016: 77) underlines in the process model for customer journey and experience. The customer journey is defined by three phases: pre-purchase stage (need recognition, consideration, search); purchase stage (choice, ordering, payment); post-purchase stage (consumption, usage, engagement, service, requests). Each phase has touch points to consider: (brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, social external). The ongoing experience is also linked to the previous and next successes.

While considering the three-stage approach to be valid, it has already been recalled that, in the perspective service logic and experience logic, the consumption phase coincides with delivery and often with payment.

In agreement with Forlani (2018), we believe that the three phases can be represented as follows: the phase of the dream (need recognition, consideration, search and socialization of search, choice and ordering or booking), the phase of emotion (payment, consumption-emotion, engagement, service, requests), the phase of memory (sharing of memory and word of mouth, beginning of a new phase of the dream).

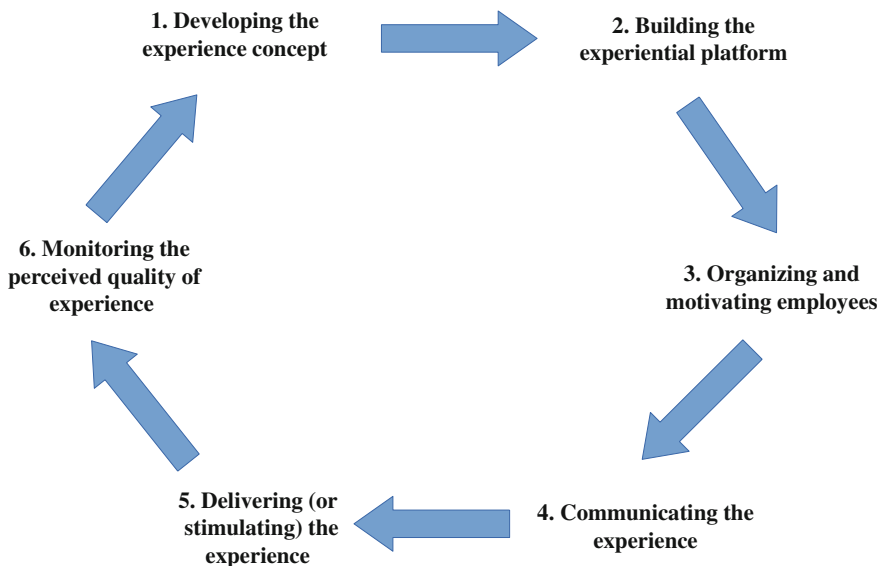


Fig. 1 Framework of an experiential offering from an experience logic perspective

In other words, the experience logic claims that the experiences are first communicated, then they are sold and finally “delivered” or “stimulated” to co-create with the customer.

In this perspective in a previous study, Pencarelli et al. (2017) suggests a framework (Fig. 1) of an experience-logic based service offering applied to the museum sector, in which six managerial processes are identified:

1. developing the experience concept, that is, design the offering portfolio and the value proposition in order to meet the consumers’ need for experiences (Zomerdijk and Voss 2010);
2. building the setting of experience (or experiential platform), which refers to the staging of the core experience and of the peripheral services (facilities or supporting services), which can generate value for customers utilizing internal or external resources and competencies: as we previously noted, in order to offer experiences that are a self-contained product, services are essential;
3. organizing and motivating employees, a crucial process for creating and delivering positive experiences, and acting a role as in a stage performance.
4. communicating the experience, which involves all the communication processes between supplier and customer;
5. delivering or stimulating the experience, which refers to everything the supplier needs to provide in order to make the customer live the experience, such as physical accessibility, in terms of opening hours and localization of experience platform; informational accessibility, i.e., how easy it is to obtain information; economic accessibility, which concerns price policies; the engagement of customers in active rules, connected to the way clients are physically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically involved in an experience;
6. monitoring the perceived quality, which implies that marketing managers should carry out periodic customer satisfaction surveys in order to check if customer experiences are satisfactory.

All six processes are suitable for managing an experience offering considering the overall customer experience journey, including the phases of pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase of an offer.

5 Challenges of Experience-Logic-Based Marketing Management After the Economy of Experiences

The main managerial and theoretical question arises from the uncertainty about the evolution of the economy, as Pine and Gilmore (1999) had foreseen: What kind of economy and business will there be after the experience economy? In fact, we should not underestimate the fragility of the experiential marketing approach for therein lies the risk of trivializing and commoditizing experiences. The risk arises when all companies offer similar and repeated experiences over time, when in

society there emerges an excess of spectacularization that could cause the experience logic to no longer attract and keep customers as they become increasingly addicted to surprise and more difficult to impress.

The answers to this question are difficult to find, as it is difficult to imagine the future of economic systems; we can only hypothesize some key trends. If we consider the fact that new technologies tend to gradually increase the productivity of labor, that climate change will impose green economy approaches to production and to value propositions, that global average life expectancy and leisure time are increasing, we may expect that the consumption processes will evolve, too. The following five strategic and managerial guidelines could help companies adapt the experience logic to the changing environment.

A first managerial orientation can be placed within the paradigm of the experience economy: it is addressed to the systematic innovation of the processes leading to the creation of new experiential value for customers. The customer experience must be set at the center of innovative strategies for business processes and offers. Those strategies must be able to reduce or eliminate customer sacrifices, conceived as the difference between what customers actually want and what they get from the supplier. Managers should be creative and attentive to the changing needs of the market; they should listen to their customers and involve the consumer community as much as possible in order to understand the evolution of the consumption processes and offer experiences, which are in line with new trends, according to an open innovation approach. To this end, the monitoring of conversations taking place on the web, thanks to the rapid and extensive spread of social networks, may be a valuable starting point to offer new and improved consumption experiences. As Berry et al. (2002) point out, new skills in customer-experience management need to be built, starting from the “customer-experience audit,” which has been designed to gain an in-depth understanding of consumers’ behavior in all of the steps related to the consumption experiences by considering both the face-to-face contact with the company and the interaction outside the physical and temporal scope of action of the company (Heinonen et al. 2010). The customer-experience audit could, for example, try to understand the consumption processes in the context of social networks. Thus, the first managerial action suggests focusing on the innovation of types, formats, themes, and areas of the experiences and fielding continuous innovation strategies in order to offer new experiences. To succeed in the experience economy, the management challenge is to work with imagination and creativity and to invest in training, developing, and retaining good staff (Morgan et al. 2009), in order to innovate the experiential platform for new co-creation experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

A second line of managerial action has already been postulated by Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2013, 2016). They suggest a further category of offering which goes beyond experiences in the progression of economic value: transformations. Transformations represent an evolution of the types of offering that put the customer at the center of business activities. With transformations, the supplier customizes the experience and avoids the risk of trivialization. Because changes in

business processes are tailored to people, the customer becomes, in fact, the real “product” or, in other words, the output of the producer’s activities. The customer, therefore, is a person willing to pay to be changed, e.g., students who pay to attend courses in order to improve their knowledge and skills or a person who pays in order to obtain psycho-physical changes in a gym or a health club. In fact, the offer of transformation consists in guiding the individual into a series of activities that will alter the essence of his/her person, qualifying him/her as a person eager to pursue the goal of predetermined change. The company is called to personalize the relationship with the customer by ensuring the proper tutoring tailored to the needs, motivations, and characteristics of the individual. This managerial approach is particularly effective when it is based on shared values and allows customers to create their own change project.

A third managerial approach is connected to the new collaborative and sharing economy and is facilitated by the shift from the traditional logic of possession to the access logic (Rifkin 2000, 2014). With the rising of the new mass collaboration era (peer production), companies can leverage the skills, ideas, and creativity of millions of people and of their clients first and foremost, thus riding the “revolution of participation” (Tapscott and Williams 2006: 13) inspired by the spread of new Internet technologies, which are enabling millions of individuals to contribute to projects and to collective innovations, for free. To seize these huge opportunities, the traditional managerial marketing processes must be able to identify and exploit the growing need for participation and collaboration felt by customers, communities, and social groups that desire to share their intelligence, their ideas, and their knowledge for the creation of social value. Marketing is called to direct all relevant processes in order to foster transparent and honest organization behaviors, which should create and maintain trust with customers asking to be involved in collaborative production by providing open collaborative platforms based on the use of new information and communication technologies. The internalization of the paradigm of collaborative commons in marketing processes will increase competition in traditional business but will also open up new opportunities. In fact, this is happening in different contexts of the sharing economy, where millions of people are pooling cars, bikes, houses, clothing, tools, toys, and/or skills, giving rise to the emerging field of collaborative production and collaborative exchange. This niche market is set to become the dominant paradigm and to lead collaborative consumption (Rifkin 2014). As the business model is changing, so, too, is the role of advertising, which will change (and is changing) profoundly. Advertising will be (and is) largely replaced by the word of mouth and consumer reviews (Negri et al. 2016). Pricing models will change as well: Instead of providing rates linked to single offers, prices may include subscription fees to access collaborative consumption experiences (Pine and Gilmore 2013: 39).

A new managerial challenge is being driven by the Web 2.0, which has led to the dawn of the social media marketing era. Nowadays, consumers, as digital natives, are able to use a large variety of devices (PCs, tablets, smartphones) to remain continuously connected during the day; they also find it much easier to participate and make their contribution to social communities. Organizations need to manage

four critical areas of social media in the experience logic perspective: social community, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce (Tuten and Solomon 2014). Within the social community area, marketing managers can create contact points for citizens and potential consumers in market conversations, business relationships, and content sharing, using the most common social networks sites, e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google Plus (Cioppi et al. 2016). Within social publishing, marketing managers can share content such as videos, photos, music, and documents on the common channels and media sites such as Blog, You Tube, Flickr, Slideshare, in order to converse with consumers and stakeholders and enrich the relationship experience with them, thus engaging them in proactive behaviors.

The social entertainment area includes channels and vehicles that provide the opportunity to play and have fun to single persons or entertainment communities. This is an area where companies can engage people in experiences that help them to enjoy their free time, thus obliging marketing managers to design new entertainment platforms in order to stage original and pleasant recreational experiences. Finally, the social commerce area can improve consumers' experience by engaging the consumer communities to share reviews and ratings (e.g., TripAdvisor), or aggregating business occasions (e.g., Groupon), thus facilitating the buyer's purchase decisions. A company must seize these opportunities to design and offer experience-logic-based value propositions. They must go beyond the simple supply of goods and services in order to engage customers, individually or inside communities, in value co-creation processes through user-generated content and through before, during, and post-consumption activities. In the new era of networked society, the logic-driven marketing experience is called to design, stage, communicate, and deliver experiential value by acting mainly on communities or on the customer as an individual and by also encouraging consumer-to-consumer and people-to-people sharing.

The fifth line of management development involves the establishment of economic processes related to green economy and to sustainability. These emerging paradigms imposed by the deep climatic and environmental changes that the world is currently experiencing will affect forms of production as well as consumption, by designing them to reduce and reuse, to encourage slow living, and more generally, to be more attentive to the quality of life, health, and well-being of people. The diffusion of the green economy philosophy and the growing attention to the limits of development and to the need to change the paradigm of excessive consumption may provide new incentives to companies for creating new and technically innovative platforms of value generation, thus recovering an ancient and authentic philosophy of life. In fact, a good way to respond to the gradual loss of effectiveness of spectacular and standardized experiences, due to the spreading of more and more articulated expectations and the growing power of self-determination of people's consumption, could consist in managing supply to enhance simpler, commoner, and more real experiences. This approach would offer people the opportunity to reflect and meditate on their natural existence, as the slow living philosophy teaches (Fabris 2010).

In managerial terms, this involves targeting the offering toward the construction of experiences, which are not necessarily planned in advance to the smallest detail but are authentic experiences (Wijaya et al. 2013), with some degree of controlled improvisation; this can enhance the personality, knowledge, culture, and the state of mind that the individual possesses when he/she is about to live the experience itself. This approach converges with the new frontier of marketing called sustainable marketing (Achrol and Kotler 2012), which focuses on new segments of consumers being sensitive to ecological and environmental issues. Moreover, the new approach is oriented toward a social value perspective, a wide construct that emerges from the consideration that value has a meaning given by individuals in a social context, because “we live and interact within our wider social networks and within particular sociocultural consumption contexts” (Rihova et al. 2014: 77). Therefore, if value can be built individually and socially, in a customer’s social practices, companies must provide platforms for building that value while generating social consumption experiences.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This study illustrates an original approach to marketing by providing a contribution to the discussion of a new mental model declined in terms of new marketing management logics. In particular, it has pointed out that the spreading of the immaterial and services economy has gradually changed some of the traditional marketing fundamentals, such as the concepts of product, of customer value, and the role of consumers, thus opening up marketing to new prospects and new theoretical and managerial logics. This discipline has moved from a goods logic approach, designed for delivering value (conceived as value-in-exchange) to a passive customer, to service logic and service dominant logic approaches, which, although they are examples of provider-dominant logics, stress the active role of consumers in the value creation processes. The new concept of value is especially qualified as a value-in-use. Subsequently, following the spreading of the experience economy, new marketing approaches have emerged, i.e., approaches that are more centered on the customer’s perspective (customer-dominant logic) and especially on the consumption experience and the consumer experience. The consumer experience literature has been recently reviewed by Kranzbühler et al. (2017), where it is possible to conceive the consumer experience concept as a holistic construct. Kranzbühler et al. (2017) consider both static and dynamic perspectives of consumer’s experiences, where one takes account both of single or multiple touchpoints at one point in time and over time, considering past consumer’s experiences and the entire series of touchpoints with a firm within the entire course of customer journey.

Also, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) point out the strategic relevance for firms to understand customer experience and the customer journey over time. They underline that “customers interact with firms through myriad touch points in

multiple channels and media, and customer experiences are more social in nature. These changes require firms to integrate multiple business functions, and even external partners, in creating and delivering positive customer experiences.”

This led us to make this first attempt to integrate the different experiential perspectives into an integrated approach called “experience logic marketing.” It is an approach suitable for both primary sector experiences, which include companies and institutions that have the production experience as a primary goal (tourism, computer games, films, sports, theater), and secondary sectors, where experiences are add-ons for goods and services (Bille 2010).

On the basis of this approach, researchers and marketing managers need to take note that, in the new context of the experience economy, enterprises can achieve competitive success, by following two complementary strategic guidelines: (a) to provide customers with products—whether goods or services—that have a strong experiential content in order to differentiate them and make unique traditional economic offerings; (b) to provide experiences in the strict sense, considered as specific products and distinct economic proposals; these experiences must be designed, implemented, communicated, sold, and delivered-stimulated specifically to meet the expectations of those consumers eager to live unique moments, willing to keep experiential links with the producers, and to share the value of that experience with other like-minded consumers.

As Pine and Gilmore (2016) recently noted, firms currently are called to embrace experiences in marketing. The competitive success of a company depends more and more on new business models, where the value proposition has a strong experiential content.

To take full advantage of the experience as part of an effective value proposition, however, businesses are called upon to manage the emotional components of the experience with the same rigor used when managing the functionality of goods and services. It could be important, for example, to embrace user experiences via technology, or through operations, or to consider business models of experiences that yield transformations, providing customer-changing experiences, as in the case of fitness centers, health care institutions, coaches and consultants, and so on (Pine and Gilmore 2016).

The pathway to success in this management challenge is to observe customers, listen to them, understand them, and talk to them about their experiences, even those live outside the physical boundaries and time frameworks of the company, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons and ways that drive consumption experiences (Berry et al. 2002). Managers must be aware that firms cannot deliver value by themselves or determine how customers perceive their own experiences because value is idiosyncratic, experiential, and contextual in nature. It is also crucial for managers to understand the different consumer motivations to be engaged in prosumer approaches during consumer experiences (Chandler and Chen 2015; Chandler and Lush 2015).

Therefore, managers must consider that, although businesses can set up interesting experiences, consumer reactions can be quite different due to various external factors (i.e., individual characteristics and situational factors or affect and cognitive

perceptions). This situation should not discourage businesses from creating and staging experiences but rather help them to better understand why some consumers are more impacted than others when they encounter the identical consumption experience (Walls et al. 2011). The organizations should use all the marketing tools in order to improve the customer's experiences: the service-scape framework, the augmented system offering, the customer engagement, the employee and technology–customer interactions, the service experience blueprint, the value constellation, the service ecosystem, and the network approach (Pencarelli 2013; Kranzbühler et al. 2017).

Moreover, it is crucial for marketing managers to avoid the risk stressed by Walls et al. (2011: 20), according to whom “many organizations are moving into the experience business without a comprehensive positioning strategy for consumer experiences or tactical goals of knowing which experience dimensions to emphasize. It is recommended that organizations carefully consider their positioning strategies before engaging in experiences.” Subsequently, managers can apply the experience-logic-based marketing approach, thus formulating value propositions suitable to each different customer's segment and taking into account the framework shown in Fig. 1.

As with all studies, our work has limitations. The most important one is that we only consider a conceptual perspective, although in the following chapters various applications of the experience logic are proposed to different contexts. Moreover, in our contribution we expose preliminary considerations to urge the passage of marketing from the traditional goods or service logic toward the experience logic. The analysis conducted so far is incomplete and requires further study, both theoretical and empirical. From the theoretical point of view, it needs to better clarify the meaning of experience and management implications, in light of the different meanings and different attributes related to the concept of *experience* for consumers. In fact, as Palmer (2010) observes, “The unique nature of customer experience, which is specific to a customer, at a specific time and location, in the context of a specific event, limits its managerial usefulness for planning and control purposes.” Moreover, he concludes (Palmer 2010: 203) that “Academic papers are beginning to recognize the importance of customer experience as an intellectual integrator of service quality, relationships, and brands.”

After all, as highlighted in Forlani et al. in this book, we are aware that the research on customer experience remains fragmented with still relatively little knowledge of the phenomenon. For this it is important to assume new perspectives, as McColl-Kennedy et al. (2015) suggest. Scholars point out that a fresh perspective could consider that customer experience broadening the customer role in customer experience, taking a practice-based approach to customer experience and recognizing the holistic, dynamic nature of customer experience in space and time, thus suggesting an integrated marketing approach (Tsai 2005). It is also important for future research agendas to integrate the customer experience perspectives and the organizational perspectives assuming a multilevel construct of a customer's journey (Kranzbühler et al. 2017).

The empirical analysis needs to be conducted in the areas closely related to the experiences economy as well as in traditional sectors, as they may provide additional useful information to refine the conceptual model and provide supplementary management tools to marketing managers, following, for example, the Zomerdijk and Voss (2010) methodological approach.

In the second part of the present text, we have selected some first attempts at sectoral implementation that go in this direction. Our hope is that these first studies, in which the customer experience is placed at the center of managerial logics, multiply and that new and different methods of analysis are used (e.g., quantitative and longitudinal) in order to obtain more empirical evidence to show us whether the road we have taken is indeed sustainable.

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Part II

Sectoral Applications

The Tourist Offer of the Destination in an Experience Logic Perspective



Fabio Forlani and Tonino Pencarelli

Abstract The aim of the chapter is to propose an application of the experience logic and, in particular, the theatrical model to organize the tourist offer for the destination. Assuming the prospect of selling experiences, it emerges that, among the various factors needed for a destination to fall within the theatrical model, there must be the indispensable presence of a director (governing body in a systemic approach), to which we refer in our proposal for possible tourist destination market-oriented management tools. According to the theatrical model inspired by Pine and Gilmore, in which they underline that each business can be considered a show business, in order to be wholly efficient, the marketing activities must be geared toward the various internal (cast) and external subjects within the organizational system, whether it is a company or a destination. In other words, it is a question of adopting an integrated managerial perspective that is widely diffused organization-wide and culturally holistic. What is to be avoided is the logic of focusing the marketing only on the final client, thereby falling into a near-sighted approach that underestimates the importance of truly satisfying an audience when all of the theater components have worked together well. Indeed, concentrating exclusively on the external consumer means ignoring the fact that, in a tourist system, there are stakeholders (internal clients, distributors, suppliers, financial backers, public institutions, mass media, etc.) whose complete satisfaction is an indispensable condition for satisfying the final client and for long-term competitive success. We propose applying the experience concept and the theater model to tourist destinations with all due conceptual caution, aware of the limitations inherent in both theory and managerial actions, in undertaking to shift into territorial contexts paradigms and tools that were developed with reference to organizational systems.

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1 An Experience Analysis Model for Tourism Management

In this chapter, it is assumed that tourism demand (Andersson 2007; Oh et al. 2007; Volo 2009; Pearce 2011; Walls and Wang 2011; Walls et al. 2011; Martin et al. 2011; Neuhofer et al. 2012, 2014) similarly to the majority of consumption behaviors in Western society, is becoming more and more “experience demand” in the sense attributed to the term coined by Pine and Gilmore (1999); according to them the authors, every experience happens at all levels—emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual—within each single individual, and it derives from “the interaction between the staged event and the previous mental and existential condition of the individual.” This is why two individuals cannot have the same experience. This is why the new competitive challenge for tourism enterprises consists in offering clients something that goes beyond goods and services. In fact, American scholars go on to state that

Experiences are a fourth economic offering, as distinct from services as services are from goods, but one that has until now gone largely unrecognized. Experiences have always been around, but consumers, businesses, and economists lumped them into the service sector along with such uneventful activities as dry cleaning, auto repair, wholesale distribution, and telephone access. When a person buys a service, he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages—as in a theatrical play—to engage him in a personal way. (Pine and Gilmore 1999: 2).

The conceptual perspective of the two authors thus widens the traditional range and typology of products that organizations offer on the market (raw materials, goods, and services), indicating that they can propose types of economic offers that go “beyond the service,” such as experience-products and transformation-products.

Therefore, it is possible to take a step forward in the debate on the relationship between touristic demand and touristic offering and, in particular, on the medium of exchange, i.e., the touristic product. Without touching on the differing perspectives of the producer and the consumer, the touristic product can be considered a composite offer made up of goods, services, information, and contextual elements targeted to the creation of engaging and memorable experiences.

When tourists travel for pleasure, there is always the more or less conscious search for an experience. For the tourism industry, therefore, it is a question of putting this experience requirement at the center of their managerial actions in order to provide the clientele with economic proposals that go beyond the simple mix of goods and services and that are geared more purposefully and consciously toward offering experiences designed to entertain, engage emotionally, and transform tourists. This challenge is felt by all levels and sectors of the tourism industry, whether single organizations, group (network), or territorial system (destination or place).

Associating tourism with the concept of experience is nothing new in studies on tourism phenomena (Walls et al. 2011; Volo 2009; Uriely 2005; Quan and Wang

2004). One must therefore ask oneself what conceptual innovation the experience economy perspective brings, from a managerial point of view, to the study of touristic phenomena. It bears remembering that it is thanks to Thomas Cook, who invented the first package tours, that tourism is nothing more than a “paid-for experience” (Rifkin 2000: 196).

The most significant conceptual advancement made by the Pine and Gilmore study has to do with the offering, where they stress how critical it is for organizations working in a hyper-consumeristic context to formulate economic proposals (outputs) that are richer and able to create greater value for clients compared with what traditional goods and services are able to offer. Following along the path led by those studies that deal with the spectacularization of economic activities and the use of the theater and drama metaphor to describe and guide the management of service organizations (Grove et al. 1992, 1998), the driving concept of the American scholars’ model is that, in order to satisfy the expectations of evermore demanding clients and distinguish oneself from the competition, companies must aim to produce offers with a higher economic value, such as experiences, using the theater model as their managerial reference point (Morgan et al. 2008).

This implies, from a management perspective, that the offering must be able to provide highly innovative answers to tourists’ emerging need for experiences, answers able to create spectacular situations in which the touristic organization or place work just like a theater. In this spectacularization of the touristic offering, the touristic organizations or systems with a governing body become directors of experiences; the personnel and the local community become the cast of the show; and the members of the audience are the guests. Nevertheless, in contrast to what happens in the so-called “society of the spectacle,” where people do not directly take part in the spectacle but only watch passively (Ritzer 2000: 115), in the touristic experience economy, tourists are engaged spectator–actors, active subjects, and guests who participate fully in the theater performance. Moreover, client participation tends to be more and more collective because tourism cannot exist without the presence of other tourist-consumers (temporary community) with whom dynamic interactions take place and that sometimes lead to the birth of post travel relationships. The existence of communities of clients with similar interests inherently implies managerial challenges (Achrol and Kotler 2012) linked to the staging of experiences and the creation of long-term bonds with clients as single individuals but also as groups: the value of the individual’s experience is often dependent on the quality of the network of relationships ensured by the offer.

It is obvious, nonetheless, that, if carried to the extreme or, to put it differently, if the staging is blatantly inauthentic and totally unrealistic, one risks generating experiences that are not at all credible and, thus, ineffective, particularly in instances of contact between guests and local communities. In the presence of models that are excessively formatted, the behavior of the hosting population could be guided by the desire to not mix one’s own authentic and traditional culture with that of the visiting guests. Consequently, the local population would not spontaneously participate in the staged performance but rather would tend to recite pre-determined scripts and stage “pseudo-events.” These artificial situations and simulations do not

foster enriching exchanges but risk banality and transformation into new forms of commoditization, into insipid events that are incapable of generating gratifying existential experiences.

The study of touristic phenomena from the perspective of the experience logic allows us to take a step forward vis-à-vis the traditional assimilation of the trip to the experience; it sheds light on how traveling, compared with services, is associated with situations that generate additional and profoundly different needs, which the tourism industry all but acknowledge and meet. The simple offer of goods and services is insufficient to guarantee tourist satisfaction; “the emotions and experiences lived” constitute the new foundation for value creation; thus, the tourism industry is called to provide tourism consumers with the experiences that they are constantly after.

If one looks to the experience logic as the new key to deciphering the tourism phenomenon, one can conclude by affirming that (Pencarelli and Forlani 2016: 207):

- the tourist, when traveling and sojourning, does not simply demand individual touristic goods and services (unbundled approach) or package deals (bundled approach) but wants touristic experiences that are complex, engaging, and that can be lived in a personal and participatory way;
- the touristic experience derives from the whole set of socioeconomic relationships that develop between a guest and the complex system of actors and interactions that are somehow connected to the territory where the “tourism performance” is staged;
- the touristic experience entails, for the tourist, spatial and experiential transitions that lead to more or less lasting transformations, depending on the quality/intensity of the experience itself. All tourists, regardless of how superficial or distracted they are, will have etched into their minds images, memories, and thoughts of what they experienced while on vacation;
- ultimately, the tourism industry is a natural and ideal “stage” upon which to offer economic experiences that cannot only engage but also transform clients. For those who work in the tourism sector, tourist-guests are also partner-actors and the real product lies within the guest; in other words, it is the sensations and the emotions experienced by the client that represent the final output. Therefore, in designing an experience, the question must be asked: “What set of stimuli will engage the guest in memorable experiences?” and, just as in a theater performance, the dimensions upon which the experience is structured, the so-called “experience realms” (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Oh et al. 2007) must be utilized.

If one considers experiences as a source for the creation of value, then it becomes necessary for tourism operators to be aware of this new type of product being demanded. The tourism industry cannot offer goods and services alone but must offer an experience that is co-created (Campos et al. 2015) with the client-guest. It is clearly evident that today’s most spectacular examples of touristic experiences are tied to the entertainment industry (e.g., theme parks, themed

restaurants, etc.), but one must not stop at the idea that staging experiences just means adding an entertainment component to existing offers.

The authors of the experience economy insist on this aspect, because they believe that the personal involvement of guests is the basis of the new economy. Thus, they strongly underscore the idea that staging experiences does not mean entertaining clients, it means engaging them.

In order to design, produce, and consciously provide this new economic offer, the producers of touristic experiences must therefore know how an experience is structured overall. To this end, Pine and Gilmore have diagrammed the process of engaging a client/guest, using the two most dimensions of the experience, in a model of “experience realms.” The model born from the intuition of Pine and Gilmore has been the object, in recent years, of various empirical tests (Radder and Han 2015; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore 2012; Hosany and Witham 2010; Jurowski 2009; Oh et al. 2007). Empirical studies have confirmed the overall validity of the model, even though they have verified that not all experience realms have equal weight in all experiences (Hosany and Witham 2010; Oh et al. 2007).

In the Pine and Gilmore model, the sum of participation and immersion defines the four realms of an experience: entertainment, educational, aesthetic, and escapist. These fields are combined in differing degrees and proportion, depending on the type of experience and guest involved, thus contributing to the creation of unique, personal, and nonrepeatable events. The degree of final involvement of the client/guest depends on both the person enjoying the experience (high or low propensity to engage in any given event) and on the organization staging the event (degree of involvement it requires).

When guests take part in an aesthetic experience they want “to be” there, in the situation; in an entertainment experience, they want “to stay,” to watch and contemplate; during an escape experience, they want “to do,” to try something, get good at it; finally, in an educational experience, they want “to learn.” The richest, most engaging and memorable experiences contain aspects from all four realms. When a memorable, enthralling, and engaging experience is staged, the guest cannot, in fact, be confined to a single realm. One must adopt the experiential structure like a set of potential stimuli that can serve as a guide in setting the stage, as it were, and clients experience the performance in a more engaging way.

If, in principal, tourism represents a consumption context that more “naturally” lends itself to exploring the four fields of experience for the clientele, it cannot be taken for granted that those who work in the sector are fully aware of this, nor can it be assumed that they are able to appreciate the economic and managerial implications of such a situation. In order to grasp the opportunities that the experience economy can offer to those in the leisure time and tourism business, the physical places of hospitality, transportation, restoration, and the tourism industry in general as well as of the destinations and touristic systems must become “special places,” i.e., original platforms upon which to consciously stage significant experiences that contain elements of entertainment, escape, education, and aesthetic contemplation.

It can therefore be hypothesized that those organizations and touristic systems that are able to provide experiences capable of engaging guests by leveraging on the

four experiential realms and by adapting and “dosing” them according to the target audience will be those that will gain a long-lasting competitive advantage. The offering must, however, adopt a creative approach to staging their experience products, aware that they are not simple outputs to offer consumers but, rather, are inputs for creating value for the client who must be considered a creator not a destroyer of value (Normann 2001; Vargo and Lush 2004, 2008; Lush and Vargo 2014; Lush et al. 2017).

Hence, it is necessary to maximize the degree of tourist involvement in the creation of value, through the dual dimensions of mode (physical, intellectual, and emotional) and function (needs analysis, production, quality control, preservation of ethical value, development, marketing, etc.). In other words, the tourist is not merely a passive spectator but is a protagonist (actor) in the touristic spectacle being staged (by a single enterprise or a touristic system). The direct involvement of the tourist occurs all along the process of touristic consumption, starting from the awareness of a need phase all the way to the activities carried out after the vacation is over (Walls and Wang 2011; Pencarelli et al. 2017). The tourist purchases and consumes (lives) the experience along with the entire set of goods, services, information, elements of historical, cultural, environmental, and anthropological significance as well as other tangible and intangible factors, which he/she, as a user, puts together during the vacation. How this is done will depend on the user’s own motivations, culture, value system, personality, and socio-economic condition.

This notwithstanding, the elements that constitute the travel experience should not be considered on the same plane because they are prioritized, starting from a core of “essentials” to a set of “optionals” that are further removed from the tourist’s primary interests. In conclusion, if one takes the theater as the experience management model, we can define both travelers and hosts as actors in the same performance. This performance is founded on and carried out in the various moments of truth (Normann 2001; Normann and Ramirez 1993) that arise between the numerous subjects in the touristic offering (including the local community) and the clientele, set against the background of a context made up of signs, images, cultures, and groups of tourists participating in the “event” and who are, in turn, the co-producers and influencers of the experiences. The location of the stage performance thus identifies a system of experience offers that produces value, based on the simultaneous and interdependent logics of an ecosystem of value (Lush and Vargo 2014). Within the value ecosystem, the enterprise and the other subjects in the territorial touristic offering are part of a series of co-production relationships that are characterized by high participation and involvement.

The economic actors no longer relate to each other according to the simple, unidirectional, and sequential model inherent in the notion of the value chain. The relationship between the two actors tends to be much more complex than what would be conceptually apparent from the unidirectional “make/buy” model subordinate to the value chain. Instead of “adding” various levels of value one after the other, the partners in the production of the offering work together to co-create value through various “co-production” relationships (Campos et al. 2015).

The challenge for touristic management resides, therefore, in “directing” a performance in such a way as to enhance the theatrical contribution not only of those who, like a professional cast, intentionally play a part in order to reach the audience (e.g., workers and other people who contribute to touristic production) but also of those who contribute to the performance in the role of spectators who are directly involved (e.g., tourists and their interactions), keeping in mind their dissimilar propensity or capacity for direct participation.

2 Tourist Offer of the Destination from an Experiential Perspective

In order to organize the tourist offer from an experience logic perspective, the first step (see Pencarelli and Forlani in this book) must be to identify the experience product to be offered (through the market analysis of experiences and through the definition of the market segment and of market positioning); this product must be associated with a touristically significant territory, one that has the necessary features to be a candidate for the staging of offering on the significant and distinctive touristic experiences market. The subsequent step is to arrive at a set of features that a destination or a touristic system should have (or should procure) in order to stage experiences that are able to engage consumers in all four experience fields described in the previous paragraph.

According to the experience logic, each touristic experience is unique and nonrepeatable because it is generated by the interaction between a guest and the package of services, good, and commodities created by the system with the support of the contextual platform and the contribution of the guests themselves; hence, the characterizing features of the experience production system are rooted in the territorial touristic system. The latter, as a mix of offerings and the object of acts of governance, must possess a series of requisites that make it attractive to target tourist groups. As highlighted by Pencarelli and Forlani (2016: 220–222), the destination must have attractions, accessibility, accommodation and amenity, atmosphere, attitude.

The *attractions* constitute the focus of the touristic experience offered, in that they are the core component around which the experience is built, and they represent the primary motivation for guests to travel to a specific territory (Quan and Wang 2004; Leiper 1990).

The *accessibility* of the territorial touristic system indicates the ease with which guests can access and enjoy the experiences staged there. We believe that this feature can be broken down into the following three aspects of accessibility: physical, economic, and information (awareness).

The *accommodation and amenity* requisite indicate how coherent the territorial context is with the experience activities planned, or, in other words, how suitable the touristic activities are for serving as the background for the planned staging of

the experience. Thus defined, hospitality implies the presence of all those goods and services that either support or facilitate (Quan and Wang 2004) the physical realization of the touristic experience in a given destination (accommodation, restoration, etc.).

The *atmosphere* expresses the ability of the territory that is home to the touristic system to “immerse” guests in the experience to be staged. As such, it is likely to be determined by the general landscape or environment (natural or man-made) of the territory. We need to remember the importance of details because small aspects in stark contrast to the general context can, by themselves, compromise the credibility of a setting.

The *attitude* represents the cultural and social liveliness of the territory that is either expected or required by the experience. Essentially, liveliness is tied to the human factor for it is determined by the numbers, crowding, and movement of people along with the liveliness and warmth of the social relationships that develop among them. Thus defined, liveliness is determined by the people who work in touristic facilities, but much more so by the local population and by tourists staying in the area itself (Goffi and Cuculelli 2018).

Once it has been determined what features a territory must possess in order to be a suitable stage for a specific touristic experience, individual factors and/or resources that determine those characteristics must be identified.

The importance of the factors that are directly attributable to various territorial features has already been highlighted by the pertinent economics—and business-related literature (Della Corte 2013; Martini 2015; Buhalis 2000). In confirmation thereof, in an experiential perspective, we underscore the importance of “transversal” factors/resources, to wit, local culture, confidence, information, and image. We consider these to be transversal because they act on the perception of all five characteristics that define the ability of a territory to act as the staging area for touristic experiences (Pencarelli and Forlani 2002, 2016).

Based on the resources needed to stage the target experience, the director of the tourist offer [the governing body of the offer system (Golinelli 2010)] can specify both the resources/constraints that are present and governable inside the structure of the system and those outside of it. This means that the entrepreneurial idea of a meta-manager must gradually evolve from a general and abstract vision toward a concrete one, as the connections and relationships that are necessary to acquire the capabilities and systemic competences for staging experiences emerge from the whole structure of the system.

In a touristic territory, depending on the type of experience that is being staged, there should be a coherent and organized combination of key factors that qualify the operating system as a viable system. Such structural components should therefore not only represent constraints for strategic action (static factor in the resource based view) but should also be the objective of any project geared toward qualifying a territorial area as touristic, from the standpoint of economic governance according to viable system logics. Consequently, such elements should be linked by virtue of their complementarity in pursuit of common strategic goals. Should the structural components enter into conflict (e.g., high accessibility could be detrimental to

environmental quality, or overly numerous and active tourists could provoke resentment in the local population, or an overly positive image could create excessive expectations on the demand side, and so on), a better combination and blending of these elements becomes necessary. Depending on the experience that one aims to offer guests, various elements will be harmoniously combined, emphasizing the information, the image, and the culture factors (model for the conscious management of the experience produced) and avoiding conflicts, and trying to make sure they all support one another. This is why the governing body is called to formulate and implement a territorial tourism marketing plan that is capable of enhancing, selecting, and mobilizing the components of the district operating structure in a viable system approach.

3 A Theater Model for Touristic Destination

To have the governance of an experience touristic be consciously market oriented requires a process of marketing planning (Kotler et al. 2012; Mattiacci and Pastore 2014; Ferrero 2013; Lambin et al. 2012) aimed at the final client. Marketing policies must also consider the supply constraints of a tourist destination (Pike and Page 2014; Gretzel et al. 2006). In other words, appropriate policies must be set up to link the internal and external actors to the destination in order to obtain an optimal use of the resources of the territory in which the system is anchored.

Using the theater model (Baccarani and Bonfanti 2016; Morgan et al. 2009; Morgan et al. 2008; Williams and Anderson 2005; Stuart and Tax 2004; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Grove et al. 1992) we could affirm that the system's governing body should take on the role of playwright and director of the territory that serves as a stage and, as such, should guide the company of actors or the cast (business operators, local population, and other subjects in the territory, including tourists) in staging the experiences that actively involve the public (guests) in a memorable way.

In order to adequately carry out its tasks, the governing body must possess diverse managerial skills so that it can integrate the consolidated marketing management tools into the more complex and broad problem of managing systemic relationships (in both subsystems and super-systems). The experience logic marketing, adopted by Pencarelli and Forlani (in this text), seems to respond well to these exigencies. The marketing driven from experience logic is in fact designed to facilitate the co-creation of value by customers (Galvagno and Dalli 2014) in an ecosystem perspective (Wieland et al. 2012) that recognizes the contributions and consequently involves all the actors of the destination (residents, public institutions, etc.).

According to this marketing concept, value is co-created by all parties involved. Consequently, the adopted managerial approach transcends the lines of demarcation between functions and specialized disciplines; it adopts a holistic viewpoint that, at the destination level, implies a marketing approach in which there are no buyers and sellers but, rather, partners who exchange resources to jointly undertake interrelated activities geared toward the staging of experiences.

Basically, the experience logic marketing philosophy goes beyond the classic paradigm of the 4Ps of marketing management, incorporating it and orienting it toward a broader perspective that sees the end user as just one of many targets of marketing actions. According to this model, if marketing activities are to be completely effective, they must be aimed at the various subjects, both internal to (subsystems) and external to (super-systems) the system, whether it is an enterprise or a destination. In other words, an integrated, organizationally widespread, and culturally holistic managerial philosophy must be adopted; it must be suitable for system-wide application and therefore leaning away from myopic marketing logics that are only focused on the final client and ignore the interdependent contribution brought by all territorial system actors to the value co-creation of the tourist experience.

With reference to theater-inspired management of touristic systems, the task assigned to the director (governing body of the system destination) is to provide an answer to the questions *With Who? Why? What? How? and Where?* in the holistic management of the complex system of staging touristic experiences. Depending on what type of experience is being offered to guests, the director must harmoniously combine and enhance the available or procurable territorial resources in such a way as to not damage the ecosystem and must not engage in an excessive spectacularization of the offering in order to avoid negative consequences for both the demand and the territory. It is for this reason that the governing body is called upon to formulate and implement a tourism marketing plan capable of enhancing, selecting, and mobilizing the components of the territorial system in order to guarantee the survival and sustainability of the system in the long term.

To summarize what we have seen up to now, we can refer to the model shown in Fig. 1. This model assumes that the governing body of a touristic system (destination) should coordinate,¹ as a director, the staging of the show, and its actions should be based on a management philosophy addressed to the market.

Therefore, the governing body will have to carry out accurate planning of the touristic experiences they want to realize both for the intentionally chosen demand segments and for those segments arising according to the high capacity of attraction of the offer. It is, then, necessary to avoid the common practice in the field of services where the actors often forget that the client is the beneficiary and final judge of the offer and that the quality of performances cannot be guaranteed only by the “good will” of service suppliers, but, on the contrary, it should be properly organized and officialized. Similarly, for any kind of performance we want to set up, it is necessary to have a drama and a script: according to the kind of performance (dynamic or stable) and the kind of script (stable or dynamic), different styles of

¹Just like on stage where the actors play, the quality of the show depends on their capacity of get the public emotionally involved, in the same way on the stage of the territory there are both tour operators and local population, which are operative protagonists of the touristic offer and responsible for the final performance. The governing body, just like the theater director, is in charge of realizing the best performance, but once it has begun, he can only give directions from the backstage.

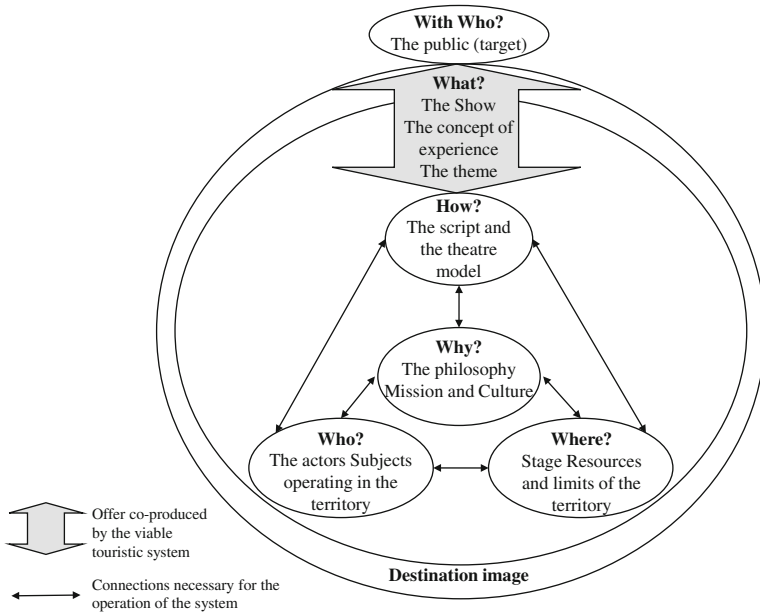


Fig. 1 Theater model for destination touristic offer

theater will be set up and modulated according to the audience, the actors, and the relative environmental context (Forlani 2018). However, in this context it is important that theatrical performances do not arise from extemporaneous actions but from conscious and deliberate choices.

The management of a touristic system also has to check the outcomes of the activities realized and to verify the achievement of the goals, the satisfaction of guests and stakeholders (tour operators, local population, public institutions, distributors, sponsors, etc.), and the economic trend of the system, taking into account also the relationships between all its elements or between the elements of the super-systems.

Below we examine in detail the model presented in Fig. 1:

1. *With Who?* (the audience, i.e., the market segments for whom to set up the experience). The market segments chosen as target are made of the groups of tourists for whom the touristic experience has been designed (Gretzel et al. 2006). Without dealing with the analysis of market and segmentation, we just remember that, for the purposes of segmentation strategies, as for services, the variable participation of the guest is crucial (Cova and Dalli 2009), considering that the quality of the performance and of the experience setup depends on the will and the capacity of the guest to interact with the offer. In order to make an efficient analysis of the market, the governing body of the touristic system has to create an informative system of reliable marketing, which could control the current demand and calculate the potential one.

2. *Why?* (the philosophy, i.e., goals, culture, and trust of the territory as elements of unity and awareness of the touristic system). The viable system philosophy is determined by those goals (mission) indicating and defining the reason why the system exists. These goals can be generated inside the system according to its own culture, or they can also be suggested by the governing body. Culture is the key element of the touristic offers of the district because it guides, permeates, and gives substance to the way of thinking, being, and acting of those who operate in the territory. For this reason, culture can be considered as a bonding-resource and also as an opportunity-resource (managerial instrument) of the touristic system and must be managed with awareness by the governing body because it is the engine of the whole system. When culture corresponds to the goals of the system, it creates awareness, trust, and sharing, which help to create a collaborative environment among those who own the resources of the system. In order to extend the unitariness of systemic bonds, the governing body should clarify the mission of the system by elaborating and summarizing the goals and by identifying the guidelines for the touristic development of the territory.

A possible mission for touristic systems could be based on the following goals:

- tourism has to generate value for the economical actors involved;
- tourism has to increase the quality of life of local populations;
- tourism has to guarantee an eco-friendly and sustainable economic development;
- tourism has to guarantee high-quality touristic experiences to the guests.

The culture of a touristic system is made of rules and values born from history, traditions, habits of the territory, and the people living in it. Most Italian territories are rich in history and traditions, and each one of them owns a unique traditional culture with its own peculiarities, which allow satisfying the touristic need of “controlled existential variety.” However, it is necessary to underline that, as a resource, the peculiarities can be seen as a rich mineral deposit to be enhanced by introducing an extraction system in order to make it reusable. Analysis about the demand and the observation of some touristic systems leads to affirm that the key is the culture of diffused quality (Goffi and Cuculelli 2018; Cuculelli and Goffi 2016). The total quality of the holiday experience is affected by the quality of every single experience lived during the performances involving all the aspects of the touristic experience. It is commonly known that it is not possible to speak about quality in the absolute sense, but we should speak of a quality depending on the clients’ perceptions. We distribute high-quality service when the consumer experiences the same level of quality he or she has expected.

The governing body has, therefore, to act on the existing culture by trying to operate in all three levels of the touristic system:

- culture of the territory. Protection and promotion of the peculiarities of the territory considered as strategic and characteristic resources;
- culture of the quality. Increasing the quality of products, services, and elements involved in the staging of touristic experiences;

- culture of cooperation. Research and incitement of a supportive harmony among the actors of the territory by operating on trust. The meta-manager has to provide the connection between the subsystems of the touristic district by promoting the switch from an individualistic logic to a cooperative logic.
3. *What?* (the show, i.e., the concept of touristic experience, created by sensations, feelings, and memories). Defining the concept of experience means to explicate the expectations we want to satisfy and, therefore, to explicate, through an accurate orchestration of the experience, the emotions and feelings we want the guests to taste. It also means to identify the instrument able to merge the (implicit or explicit) intentions of internal and external subjects of the viable system in a moment-place of discussion, in order to generate awareness and strategic sharing among the actors.

We have already underlined how, during the phase of experience designing (plot), it is necessary to involve, in a balanced way, the entire experiential structure of the individual (aesthetics, entertainment, evasion, and education) and, therefore, to consistently define and map the characteristics of the territory useful to realize an efficient staging. With relation to defining the vision of the experience we want to set up, a crucial element is the theme of the experience.

As for the term, according to the dictionary of Italian language Zingarelli, a “theme” is a “topic, subject of a piece of writing, a reasoning, a discussion,” a “topic or a basic idea.” Therefore, a theme is a simple idea, which can give birth to a series of further developments. The concept of theme is evolutionary and dynamic; it conceives an essentially open reality from which imagination, creativity, and initiative originate. However, there are bonds and rules to respect, in fact, it requires coherence with the initial idea and a line of general orienteering should be followed.

The theme is the central element of the vision of the experience and the central idea on which to build the experience itself. A well-conceived theme is like a structure around which tourists can organize their impressions to product experiences made of rich and long-lasting memories. In addition, for tour operators, the theme is a general policy on which to build a personal and peculiar offer, which has also to be coherent and integrated in the global experience proposed by the territory. Therefore, to theme an experience means to create a set of information able to locate the territory in the perspective of both the tourists and the operators.

During the identification of the theme, the governing body should ask and find answers to these questions (Pine and Gilmore 1999):

1. What can we do to improve the aesthetics of the experience lived by guests?
2. What can we do to make the experience more entertaining and pleasant in order to make guests stay?
3. What can we make guests feel in order to involve them?
4. What can we make guests learn during the experience?

Actions able to satisfy these goals can be based on the involvement of the guests’ five senses, by playing with noises, smells, colors, landscape, cultural

background, and tastes during the experience. In this case, we can speak of “sensorializing” things. However, it is also possible to “experientialize” things by transforming resources into stages for unique and personal experiences. Alternatively, finally, it is possible to connect experiences with souvenirs helping both to concretize the theme of the experience and to spread proofs of the experience lived (Pine and Gilmore 1999).

To conclude, we underline the following advantages of thematization. First, the thematic approach is a procedure available for the governing body to realize and manage the positioning of the touristic offer through psychologic and communicative differentiation. Thematic positioning, above all when applied through an accurate management of the image, is an effective answer to the needs of globalization: strong and differentiated images. In addition, themes operate inside the system. In fact, they allow creating, locating, and/or strengthening the elements of the territorial identity; by doing so, they generate common interests, referring points, contacts and connections able to integrate different sectors. Finally, whether accepted by the local system, they create an “endogenous development” and a didactic of learning able to nourish the theme.

Some examples of thematization of the territory can be found in the routes of win and tastes or the routes of oil; in the past, we also assisted to thematizations involving history, art, health, etc.

4. *How?* (the script, i.e., aware management of information and relationships between actors and guests). In tourism, the tourist takes part in the producing process of his/her vacation in a strong and motivated way; therefore, he/she often acts as director–producer. If we consider the role of the tourist in the planning phase, the management and the production of the journey, we can observe a continuum of configurations of the offer (Rispoli and Tamma 1996), which has as extremes the “one-to-one” configuration (DYS tourist) and the “package” configuration (hetero-organized tourist), while the “network” configuration is in the middle. Along this continuum, we can find systems of a relationship between demand and offer in which the active role and the participation of the user decreases (less flexibility of the product), but the degree of control and management of the system increases (more chances to design and manage all relationships).

According to Pine and Gilmore’s theater model, we can underline how managing the interaction and the participation of the plurality of the actors involved in a performance can be synthesized in the script. The script is “all that can be spread from time to time and from place to place; it’s the fundamental code of events, pre-existing any scenic action ... in business the script is represented by the procedures and the approaches (usually codified) used by a company to represent strategy (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The definition of a script corresponds to the establishment of the procedures to manage the information (existing inside and outside the system), the relationships (existing inside and outside the system), and the image of the system itself. For the touristic system, to write a script means to

establish a marketing policy in the integrated and common holistic perspective of the marketing. Therefore, it means to identify the policies of marketing mix and to lead and rule the relationships with tourists and stakeholders present inside and outside the touristic destination. In other words, it is about guiding the actors of the system in carrying out preparatory activities for the performance, able to involve all the experience fields of the tourist, by exchanging the resources each partner controls. The systemic-integrated communication is the kind of policy, which acquires a significant centrality during the definition of the touristic script. From what has already been said about the functions of the governing body (to find a correspondence between the external and internal elements of the system), it is clear that information and image are the critical issues about managing resources and factors.

The quality of the experience expected by the tourist depends on the image he/she has of the experience itself.

The image of the experience is connected with the theme in a double way. Thematic positioning (positioning of the territory through psychological and communicative differentiation of the offer) gives shape to the image, but, at the same time, the image determines the above-mentioned positioning. In fact, the image spread then returns to the territory with tourists and their expectations.

Therefore, the governing body of the touristic system can use information and image as cross stimuli to act on the expectations of both the demand and the stakeholders through word-of-mouth communication (memories of past experiences), market communication (promotion of territory), and interactive communication among the actors present in the territory during the experience.

It is important for the director to be able to influence, maintain, and develop the theme and the image of the territory in order to operate simultaneously on the expectations of the demand and on the system's ability of interacting, understanding, and satisfying such demand.

We think that the Internet and the Web 2.0 are the best instruments for providing support in the management of information and of systemic-interactive communication (Cioppi et al. 2016).

The Internet allows connecting the elements inside the system (intranet) with the external elements (extranet) in real time through a highly interactive communication (one to one, one to many, many to many).

Without explaining in particular how to use the Internet, we just underline the importance for each member of the touristic system to own a website and social network account. The official website of the touristic system should act as "the system virtual stage," a "place" able to connect intentions and information about the subjects inside the system in order to generate a homogeneous, shared, and real image of the territory.

The script should also establish other marketing mix policies, which could consistently promote the experience-product; for example, it is necessary to define the prices linked to the experience, by identifying the most appropriate procedures for the actors to be cheap and competitive. Another important issue is the sale of the product;

in this phase, it is necessary to define its relationships with the super-systems of organized distribution and organized consumers (consumers' movement).

5. *Who?* (the actors, i.e., the subjects present and acting in the territory and involved in the production of the experience). Tourism is made by people for people; therefore, the role of all the actors (even if not specialized in tourism) in the territory is fundamental. Tourism requires an extreme application of the principles of total quality and of total relationship marketing, which have to aim toward the clients' satisfaction: quality "affects us all," it does not concern only the quality office; similarly, marketing activities "affect us all" and not only "the people of the marketing office" (Pencarelli 2001: 63).
6. *Where?* (the stage, i.e., the territory as a totality of resources and abilities of the system). In this regard, we refer to what has been previously said about the operative structure of the touristic system.

4 Conclusion

To summarize, if, in the experiential perspective, tourism business is a show business, in this chapter we have proposed a "theater" managing model of touristic systems, where the governing body has to provide answers to the following questions: With Who? Why? What? How? Who? Where? in order to manage, in a holistic way, the complex system of staging touristic experiences. According to the kind of experience desired, the director must combine and promote, in a harmonic way, the available or reachable resources of the territory in accordance to the ecosystem. Nevertheless, it is important not to exceed with the spectacularization of the offer because it could lead to negative consequences on the demand and the territory. For this reason, the governing body has to design and apply a relationship marketing touristic plan that is able to promote, choose, and mobilize the actors operating in the destination and make them act in accordance with the philosophy of the viable system, which aims to the survival and the balance of the system.

Finally, from our work there emerges, alongside the indisputable merits of providing innovative and holistic elements for reflection and action for the governance of tourist destination in the new consumption scenario, that the experience logic approach also presents some negative aspects. These aspects should not be overlooked in the governance of touristic systems when, for instance, following in the wake of a strong theme, the choice is made to stage experiences aimed at enhancing existing facets of the territory or region (in terms of both front region and back region) and build artificial touristic spaces that tourists must pay for in an area where a real experience could be enjoyed for free. We allude, in particular, to the danger that, in an effort to make an offering so spectacular in terms of providing

tourists with experiences, emotions, memories, dreams come true, or other forms of entertainment, it risks becoming excessively trite and overly commercialized,² thus creating desensitized clients who may be resentful of the various forms of experience-tourism and are less apt to be amazed, awed, and surprised.

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²At its most extreme, the experience economy approach leads to significant segments of public goods (museums, natural resources, traditions, etc.) taking part in cultural productions in which culture is brought to the market to offer entertainment and experiences to tourists (Rifkin 2000: 201).

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Sustainable Management of Events in an Experiential Perspective



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Abstract Events are complex value propositions that are realized by specialists to meet different leisure and entertainment needs. They are highly intangible and experiential-type products (Pencarelli and Forlani 2016) to which the application of logical experience is particularly suitable (Bartolazzi et al. 2008; Pegg and Patterson 2010; Manthiou et al. 2014; Getz and Page 2016). This chapter aims to describe the role played by events in the experience economy for territories involved in sustainable tourism strategies. The authors also propose a model for event impact analysis and evaluation. Starting from the idea that tourist destinations represent a stage on which tourism products can be displayed, so as to satisfy the demands of travelers seeking engaging experiences (Pencarelli and Forlani 2016), the importance of the role played by destination management in managing the events is further underlined. Tourists searching such experiences want to be in the spotlight and co-participate with territorial players in the creation of value. As such, event management requires the use of tools such as planning, organization, and control in order to design, plan, and put on a balanced program of events while monitoring the impact on value creation for both tourists and regional stakeholders within the perspective of sustainability. This chapter proposes to redefine the experiential perspective of a set of indicators that are useful in holistically evaluating the

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performance of events in a traditional tri-faceted dimension, i.e., economic, social, and environmental.

1 Tourism Events as a Systemic Offer of Experiences

The connection between events and tourism reveals itself to be complex and difficult to define, leaving a number of open issues that are harbingers of overlapping and problematic definers, beginning with the very concept of a *tourism event*. Can an event be defined as touristic simply because it justifies tourist flows and represents a motivation for someone to take a trip? Or should we consider touristic those events that attract the predominating participation of tourists rather than residents? Moreover, event management is a field of study that intersects tourism and destination but which remains separate (Allen et al. 2000; Ferrari 2002; Yoeman et al. 2003; Getz 2008; Crowther 2010; Berridge 2010; Getz and Page 2016). According to the logic we have adopted, in order to consider events in a touristic context oriented toward sustainability, every event is the result of a systemic offer of goods, services, information, tourist attractions, environment, and culture. Such an offer is put out by local and nonlocal production systems, both of which supply the customer with economic offers that go beyond a simple mix of goods and services to aim more specifically and consciously for a product with high experiential content (Rispoli 2001).

In this sense, then, events constitute an archetypal experience, in keeping with Pine and Gilmore's progression of economic value (1999, 2016), which aims to intercept the use of the consumer's free time. Having free time, in fact, fosters consumer needs that have been considered unnecessary luxuries in the past but which are now seen as a community's social right; this creates needs that are connected to the consumption of tourist experiences of various kinds, both genuine and artificial. The consumer pays to spend time enjoying memorable events; companies and territories use a physical facility, as though it were a stage upon which to showcase experiences that intrigue or attract consumers at various levels, including sensorial, emotional, and cognitive, and that can have an impact on the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual values of the experiences they (the customers) perceive. The consumption of experiences makes it paramount for the production system to develop and make good on its experiential value promise (*Experiential Value Promise*, Schmitt 2003); in other words, it must act upon multiple areas of human perception and follow experiential policies able to increase the symbolic value of the offer. What is traditionally supplied (good and services) must therefore be enriched by experiential content that will satisfy the hedonistic needs of the post-modern consumer. To "experientialize" an offer is equivalent to significantly increasing the degree of involvement of the subjects in the act of consumption to the point of allowing individuals to intentionally take advantage of the event and, thus, to echo the words of Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2013, 2016), to pay for the

experience itself (paying events) instead of limiting themselves to appreciating the experientialization of good and services (free events).

Experience products must truly be unique, able to fully engage the consumer and the hosting communities emotionally, physically and cognitively; it is for this reason that these products must be innovative and capable of proposing new and original solutions thanks to their format, content, time period, location, and participants involved. No event should be (or can afford to be) a replica of another, even in subsequent editions of the same event. This requires the creative intelligence of all the subjects involved, including the viewers or participants, so as to avoid banal standardization of any kind. Each event has specific features that qualify it based on the venue where it is held and that highlight certain aspects of dialectic contamination and critical bonding between experience and territory.

The connection between event and experience is explored by Maggiore and Resciniti (2009), who proposes a model for managing events that is “experience oriented.” According to the author, in order to design an event in which the experiential dimension is enhanced, it becomes necessary to use the following three elements, which make up what is called the event mix, as levers:

- the program, i.e., the core of the offer (theme, guests, shows, etc.);
- the location, i.e., the venue where the event is being held;
- the services, i.e., all of the interactions between the organization and the participants that are aimed at producing value for the latter in terms of suitability of the event.

The events may stem from initiatives proposed by either permanent or temporary organizations and/or from the collaboration between them and/or a network of professionals (artists, experts, etc.) who are coordinated through hierarchical models, i.e., through network approaches that activate “cooperation chains” (Sedita 2009; Aiello et al. 2012). From this viewpoint, it is important to understand the connections that exist among the event organization methods, the governance model for tourist destinations, and the key actors’ approach to destination management. Events are the result of activities borne of the creative intelligences (shared, but also not shared and unknown) of various subjects who are either already present at the destination or who come from other territorial areas. Florida (2002) considers people, when seen as human and artistic capital, to be the very basis for creative capital. Creative capital is made up of talent (people’s creative capacity), technology (businesses’ innovative capacity), and tolerance (the capacity to accept and welcome diverse cultures and ethnicities). This, in turn, qualifies the locations’ capacity to attract visitors and is a determining factor in realizing the potential for development of those locations.

The task of synthesizing the system of players involved in the value creation process relative to an event is a difficult but necessary one. The central role is taken on by the organizer or the agent responsible (whether directly or indirectly) for all of the activities related to putting on the event. The organizer/agent may act in different ways based on:

- the number of subjects involved: as a single entity or as a team;
- the legal nature: public, private or mixed entity;
- the timeline: continuous or occasional;
- objective of the event versus the organizer's mission: the event being the organizer's mission (event as objective) or a collateral activity (event as a means to an end);
- geographical location versus the venue for the event: local or external.

Whatever form the organizer assumes, the event not only represents the output of a series of managerial activities, but it is also the result of the contribution made by an indefinite number of local-area subjects who, albeit not directly responsible for the event, sometimes become determining factors of its success. Therefore, there exists a network of subjects who are external to the organization, i.e., a network of relationships that represents a *constellation of value* associated with the event. In our opinion, this created value represents the object to be evaluated and taken into consideration in both the pre-event and post-event phases.

Moreover, events offer the opportunity to actively engage consumers/tourists guided by the emotional and dream-like aspects of the decision-making process and willing to be the co-producers of the experience product (van Limburg 2008; Pegg and Patterson 2010; Boo and Lu 2015). Thus, their presence allows for the success or failure of the event itself, just as the way in which they participate in the event determines the performance (Mason and Paggiaro 2012; Pegg and Patterson 2010).

Consumers can express new categories of needs and can provide information that is useful for programming or re-programming the event. Their participation can also determine the situational climate and can contribute to the experience itself and to the perception of authenticity by other participants (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Further, anyone who takes part in an event is likely to foster future communication about it through word-of-mouth and new technologies (social networks, chat rooms, virtual communities, etc.). Finally, the participants can contribute to the innovative aspect of the event by making available their own personal creativity or facilitating access to the creativity of the social networks to which they belong (Pencarelli and Splendiani 2010; Prentice and Andersen 2003; Richards and Wilson 2006).

On the basis of the above-mentioned aspects, we go beyond the “traditional” concept of event—analyzed as a synonym of ceremony or ritual—and re-qualify it as an occasion where time is spent in an entertaining way. In this sense, Shone and Parry (2004) maintain that an event can be understood and, indeed, defined as “that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions, which have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of a people.”

Thus, events constitute important vehicles for increasing the touristic and cultural attractiveness of destinations and, hence, for creating economic and social value for the territory, although they must be managed and calibrated on the basis of the crowd capacity of the venues (Fuentes et al. 2015; Pencarelli et al. 2013). To maintain a long-lasting competitive edge, it is opportune that events follow the

principles of sustainability, just as any other activity should that takes place in areas that attract tourism (Pencarelli et al. 2013; Raj and Vignali 2010). Such principles are based on a core value that is expressed in the triple-sided (economic, social, and environmental) dimension. For this reason, it becomes desirable to develop event management models and tools that dovetail with a sustainable approach to destination management (Pencarelli and Splendiani 2010).

Eventually, events become tools that tourist destinations can use to develop their own competitive differentiation strategies (Crowther 2010). The differentiating effect is of particular importance, especially when events are able to provide experiential value that is specifically linked to that area (Bartolazzi et al. 2008). An event, for example, that is focused on a local food and wine typology qualifies itself as a proposal of unique experiences for customers (authentic experiences) that is simultaneously capable of enhancing the resources of stakeholders in the territory (e.g., by enhancing the experiential value of the typical local products).

From this perspective, events should be managed using experience logic in order to maximize the effectiveness of the proposal in experiential terms (Pencarelli and Forlani in this book). In particular, as observed above, it is important to:

1. create an identifiable theme for the experiences acting on different levels, taking inspiration from the physical world and from philosophical and psychological concepts, religious or political models, historical situations, art, popular culture and fashion so as to involve consumers according to their willingness to pay to live the experience or to enjoy the experientialization of goods and services;
2. harmonize the impressions related to the theme of the experience offered in the event;
3. eliminate negative or nonpertinent cues with respect to the theme chosen for the designed experience;
4. pay attention to the atmosphere connected to the event in order to create a pleasant experience;
5. offer meaningful local souvenirs that can enhance a participant's memory of the event;
6. involve all of the consumers' senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch);
7. ensure the authenticity of the proposed experiences;
8. stage the experiences according to a theatrical drama model and pay attention to the dramatic structure of the events;
9. train front-line employees as though each of them were the most important actors to ensure the best event experience;
10. closely couple backstage employees and front stage event experiences;
11. work to seek the welfare of individuals and of all stakeholder involved in the event.

Governance implies the necessary involvement of the territorial subjects in consideration of the nature of the "complex and systemic products" of the events and outputs of the territorial production system, which includes participation of players who are diverse by nature, objectives, or governance models. This implies

that the governing territorial agent carries out activities to coordinate and guide the players involved in building the event product and obliging them to follow the time constraints, guidelines, and protocols imposed in compliance with the principles of sustainability. Such principles must therefore represent the managerial framework of reference for both the organizers and the territorial policymakers.

2 The Need for Shared Event Management: Role of Planning

The use of strategic planning for tourism events has been the object of numerous professional publications, but it remains a relatively unexplored research topic (Getz 2008: 416–417). Among the various scientific papers that have contributed to the literature (Getz 1991, 1997; Gnoth and Anwar 2000; Stokes 2008), the work done by Stokes (2008) is worthy of note. This author examined different strategic planning models for both single events and tourist destinations. The author observed the growing importance of stakeholder theory in the analysis and interpretation of the development strategies for tourism events and has underlined the need to pay proper attention to the relationships between influential individuals and groups regarding initiatives to be undertaken. This attention includes particular consideration for the interactions and relationships with the local community, businesses in general, local agencies, culture, and nature interest groups (Getz 1997) as well as with visitors and tourists.

Indeed, subjects who are in any way interested in an event, whether actively or passively, can play a significant role by either orienting the strategy of the event or by having an impact on its outcome and success. By way of example, local businesses can take on a communication function that can strongly influence the whole tourist experience.

From this perspective, it becomes advantageous to conceive of event planning as a participatory and dynamic process aimed at catalyzing various forces within the destination system toward the achievement of a common sustainable objective. This requires adequate listening to and sharing with the stakeholders, taking into consideration both of the categories in which they may be classified (Grunig and Hunt 1984), i.e., those who bring productive factors or resources that make the events feasible (local agencies, organizers, businesses, sponsors, etc.) and/or those who acquire the services that make up the system of events offered (visitors, tourists, residents). In some cases, such as EXPO 2015 in Milan (Romanenko and Ferrazzo 2014), the local community's weak level of attention can generate opposition from citizens or other stakeholders, resulting in delays and difficulties in programming and implementing activities. In fact, in mega events, it must be kept in mind that managerial processes concern a variety of projects within one event, which in itself represents a complex project. Event managers still must continue to pay close attention to the gratification of the participants, making the experience of the event

unique and memorable for them. In this regard, it is important to involve the participants in a positive way and make them the active protagonists of the event, from the planning stage to the stages following the event. Subjects' involvement must be concretely achieved through tried and true methods successfully used in numerous territorial planning experiences, such as focus groups, public forums, public-private round tables, surveys to measure expectations or degree of satisfaction, and so on. Along these lines, it bears noting that if, on the one hand, it is worthwhile to include as many potentially interested subjects as possible—particularly for the diffusion of information—on the other hand, a selection process is essential in order to discern those strategic choices and lines of action that best keep with sustainable objectives. In pursuing the ultimate goal of shared strategic governance, it is plainly evident that the expectations, opinions, and suggestions of the different stakeholders should be gathered and the most relevant ones identified. As highlighted by Napolitano and Riviezzo (2008: 135) in their work on strategic marketing in reference to urban developments, it can prove useful to assign an order of priority to the stakeholders based on their vested interest and on their power to influence choices, decisions, and results.

The basic idea is to satisfy the expectations of those stakeholders who are considered to be the most important, while, at the same time, create sustainable value for the whole destination. Such an objective induces planners to emphasize, in the context of the strategic planning process, the phases related to measuring and analyzing the impact of a single event or of a system of events.

Evaluating the results can, in fact, make it possible to:

- foster improvement and innovation processes for the experience product event because they are indispensable for both its success and its survival;
- obtain suggestions for the better allocation of resources toward those events whose performance is better;
- define more rational objectives and actions (e.g., communication activities);
- improve the use of resources;
- create and maintain favorable event conditions within the territorial system;
- set up collaboration and cooperation projects with the stakeholders.

Therefore, in keeping with sustainability principles, pre-assessing the possible impact of an event is essential when developing systems of events to be offered that not only can more adequately respond to the stakeholders' needs and expectations but can also generate value for the hosting territory. A tourist destination should therefore schedule its portfolio of events (Getz and Page 2016) through a selection of the same (events to be organized, to be supported with contribution, to be sponsored, not sponsored, to be avoided), which should coordinate with the territorial stakeholders, evaluate the experiential qualities of the event (guaranteeing its competitiveness), and evaluate the sustainability characteristics (fundamental to qualifying its hold in the medium-to-long-term).

3 Assessing the Impact of Events in the Context of Sustainable Tourism Development: Prospect of Value Creation

The concept of sustainable tourism is commonly understood as an approach to tourism development that is capable of satisfying the current needs of tourists and of the hosting regions while at the same time safeguarding and improving future prospects. It therefore aims for the “management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential processes, biological diversity and life systems” (World Tourism Organization). Taking a closer look, sustainable tourism is a topic that appears to have significant management implications, in addition to ethical–cultural ones, because it determines the need for managing and enhancing the natural and environmental resources in a given destination. Such resources are the key factors in that destination’s competitiveness (Crouch and Ritchie 1999; Franch 2010; Pencarelli and Forlani 2016). Territorial policymakers who seek to implement governance approaches that aim to maintain or recover sustainability are thus called to orientate territorial strategies towards multidimensional objectives, i.e., ones capable of highlighting the connections and the cause–effect relationships between the tourism phenomenon and the economy and the environment and society (cf., Mihalic 2000). Events are, by all means, to be included among the elements that constitute territorial strategy (cf., Cercola and Bonetti 2009) and, as such, are objects to be considered in the sustainable tourism development programming for destinations.

Impact analysis for an event in the hosting territory is a topic of major relevance, particularly because of the critical issues related to subjectivity factors tied to the value created and perceived by the territorial subjects. Event assessment appears to be of particular interest to scholars who focus on event management. Getz (2008), in analyzing the subject of future prospects for tourist destinations, proposes the “event portfolio” approach, according to which the territory would think about and plan events using the same logic adopted by companies when developing new products. The author subdivides events into categories according to their attraction potential and tourist flows, ranging from mega-events to local events. (Williams and Bowdin 2007), instead, focus on the evaluation of single events and imagine a three-step process: *pre-event assessment* in a preliminary phase; *monitoring* during the event; and *post-event* analysis in the final phase. These authors also stress the fact that the economic–financial profitability of events is actually crucial to their survival, and so, for this reason, the area pertaining to the events must be closely governed by control mechanisms. Their research showed, however, that this does not always occur.

In fact, in the literature, the topic of event impact measurement in economic terms remains preeminent when compared with the social and environmental

arenas, where there are still very few consolidated evaluation models, although progress is being made in this sense (Quinn 2006; Franch 2010; Deery et al. 2012; Toraldo et al. 2012). The major focus remains centered on the economic effects of the event and is attributable to the fact that this is where the greater interest lies, i.e., considering how important events are in influencing the economy of the hosting territory and also considering the weight, in turn, that economic resources carry in affecting social and environmental conditions.

As Bracalente et al. (2011: 1252) and Della Lucia (2013: 92) have remarked, the overall impact of an event upon the economic system can be seen in the multiplying effect that is generated by the demand for goods and services coming from both organizers and visitors. Specifically, the impact can be said to be the estimated sum of the various effects connected to the production and sale of goods and services. This can be broken down into direct and indirect impacts.

- *Direct*: representing expenses borne by the organizers (e.g., rental fees for buildings, stages or equipment, setup, publicity costs) and by the visitors (e.g., cost of tickets, overnight accommodations, food, shopping);
- *Indirect*: tied to providing the necessary input to supply the goods and services requested (e.g., hospitality and welcoming, food catering, transportation, trade).

Another point of note is the induced multiplicative effect of increased consumption in the local community, which follows in the wake of the distribution of economic value and a rise in the standard of living. From a holistic perspective, the impact of an event on the hosting territory can be seen, first of all, in three contexts (Cherubini et al. 2009):

- *Economic*: the effects—direct, indirect, and induced—which are felt in the local economy, both in quantitative terms and in terms of wealth distribution;
- *Social*: the effects relating to the changes that are brought about in the residents' quality of life;
- *Environmental*: all of the effects that the event can produce vis-à-vis the natural balance in the surrounding environment.

The three dimensions represent the same ambits in which territorial sustainability is identified and, thus, assessed (Pencarelli and Splendiani 2010). At the same time, they also represent three perspectives concerning value creation for stakeholders.

The prospect of sustainable value creation for the territories and for tourist destinations implies the need to not only focus on the economic and social effects but also to develop analytical models based on a holistic view that encompasses all three dimensions. Such models must be applicable in the three assessment phases described above, i.e., before, during and after the event (Gregori et al. 2013).

The integration of experiential logic with that of sustainability highlights the capacity of events to create lasting territorial value, which depends on the capacity of the events themselves to grasp and respond to the experiential consumption needs of the target tourist segments and to satisfy demand by generating benefits

that can be seen as superior to those offered by the competition. For this reason, too, they should be considered elements that are not necessarily exclusive to what is being supplied in the system of territorial tourism, but which, based on market needs, can be integrated into other components and tourist products so as to make up experiential packages that are suitably competitive.

In addition, as pointed out in the experiential literature (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2013; Johansson and Kociatkiewicz 2011; Bartolazzi et al. 2008), events produce experiential communication that have a major impact on the visibility and image of the territory, thereby contributing to brand place market positioning (Hanna and Rowley 2013).

When using experiential managerial logic, it is appropriate to enrich the three classical domains of the sustainability paradigm with some indicators that take into account experiential performance to evaluate and monitor event performance. When analyzing event performance, it is important to consider how all the realms of experiences impact participants (Oh et al. 2007; Mason and Paggiaro 2012; Akyildiz et al. 2013; Boo and Lu 2015; Geus et al. 2015).

The underlying argument is that sustainable events in a given territory in the medium- to long-term must provide an experiential value aligned with the market trends (the experiences required) and the positioning of the destination (thus increasing the experiential value of the same).

In practical terms, while the assessment of the experiential competitiveness of the event is the responsibility of the organizing entity that takes on the entrepreneurial risk, the relevant aspect to be assessed for the destination management organization is the experiential coherence of the event itself with the territory's image. Event control metrics should therefore be able to assess the experiential dimension of the event and its impact on the strategic positioning of the territory and on the brand place. In fact, if there is coherence between the experience generated by the event and the territorial values, then the experiential value of the destination multiplies; but if there is not coherence, it causes an unwanted market repositioning or nonpositioning effect. As Pencarelli and Forlani (2016: 220) state, "According to the experience logic each touristic experience is unique and non-repeatable because it is generated by the interaction between a guest and the package of services, good, and commodities created by the system with the support of the contextual platform and the contribution of the guests themselves, the characterizing features of the experience production system are rooted in the territorial touristic system. The latter, as a mix of offerings and the object of acts of governance, must possess a series of requisites that make it attractive to target tourist groups. It must be attractive, accessible, hospitable, appropriate (as a setting), and lively."

In the Forlani and Pencarelli chapter of this volume, it was also shown that this model assumes that the governing body of a viable touristic system should

coordinate,¹ as a director, the staging of the show and its actions should be based on a management philosophy addressed to the market. When considering the event as a product experience, it can be emphasized that the task of territorial management is to verify the coherence between the experience event and the territorial context, both in terms of enhancing the elements of attraction and in terms of protection and enhancing the appropriate setting and social (lively) resources while also in coherence with accessibility and accommodation services.

The present paper underlines the need for an assessment that takes into account the experiential coherence between the event and the host territory, both in terms of impact on the elements of the operating structure and the place brand. This assessment should be carried out by analyzing the perception of the relevant stakeholders (i.e., tourists, tour operators, citizens, etc.).

4 Assessment Model to Measure an Event's Capacity to Create Value from the Perspective of Sustainability

One model for event impact assessment, formulated from the perspective of sustainable tourism development, is an integration of what has been recognized in the literature (Martini 2010) and adopted by the World Tourism Organization (Guidebook on Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations 2004). In particular, the model analyzes four dimensions:

1. *The economic and competitive dimension*: This is defined as the capacity of the event to generate market value in the host territory. This dimension, considered by some to be the most important because it is the only one able to determine the survival of the event itself over time, can be evaluated according to four sets of indicators that are complementary, albeit distinct: economic–financial indicators, strategic–competitive indicators, *experiential performance indicators*, and *experiential coherence indicators*. The first set of indicators includes parameters such as the number of participants, the volume of business generated, the number of nights booked for the event, etc. Because they present the advantage of accurate measurability, these indicators can be best used for post-event assessment, as they are indicative of what has emerged from the event (although they can also serve to forecast results and therefore can be used in both the pre-event and the during-event assessment phases). The strategic–competitive indicators, instead, can better represent the prospective capacity of the event to

¹Just like on a stage where the actors play and the quality of the show depends on their capacity to get the public emotionally involved, in the same way on the stage of the territory there are both tour operators and the local population, which are operative protagonists of the touristic offer and responsible for the final performance. The governing body, just like the theater director, is in charge of realizing the best performance. But once it has begun, he can only give directions from backstage.

generate economic value, as they are primarily tied to the competitive capacity of the event in relation to other competing events and, consequently, to its potential for increasing the attractiveness of the hosting territory. These indicators include participant satisfaction and loyalty, event-related brand recognition, etc. The experiential performance indicators allow for evaluation of the experiential nature of the event and its potential competitiveness as a product experience. The experiential coherence indicators allow for assessment of the coherence between the experiential dimension of the event, of the territory and its brands:

- a. *Economic–financial indicators*: number of tickets sold (experience products sold) and number of participants, revenues from ticket sales or from goods and services sold (directly or indirectly connected to the event), resources invested in putting on the event, ROI for the event, number of people employed, number of people arriving or present because of the event, increase in real estate value of the hosting areas and sites.
 - b. *Strategic–competitive indicators*: participant satisfaction/enjoyment, degree of accessibility (physical and economic), loyalty rate of participants, event-related brand recognition, uniqueness of the event on national/international level, innovative capacity of the event (compared with previous editions), how well it fits in with the host territory’s strategy, capacity to engage in synergetic and co-marketing activities with the host territory (consistency with the territory attractivities and the values that are communicated), capacity to create jobs and foster entrepreneurship (consistency with the accommodation facilities in the territory and their value proposition).
 - c. *Experiential performance indicators*: presence of a light theme, dramaturgy of the event (program of activities/shows) consistent with the theme, consistency of the setups and scenery with the theme, proposal of souvenirs (gadgets/merchandising/souvenirs) in line with the theme, ability to engage the visitor’s five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, feel), degree of originality of the proposed experience (original, format, imitation, etc.).
 - d. *Experiential coherence indicators*: consistency between place brand experience and event brand experience (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2013), how the event had an impact on the place brand image and the experiential positioning of the territory, capacity to engage in synergetic communication and co-marketing activities with the host territory (consistency with the values communicated by the territory).
2. *The social dimension*: This is defined as the capacity of the event to generate well-being in the host territory. This capacity can be measured by taking into consideration some tangible and intangible aspects related to the concept of quality of life, such as a strengthened spirit of cohesion and integration of the residents, the latter’s satisfaction level vis-à-vis the experience and the image of the territory that is projected through the event hosted, the opportunities for learning and innovation, the improvements brought to area infrastructure, job

opportunities, security and personal safety (which could be compromised or threatened because of the events held, especially those that attract big crowds). Another point worthy of consideration is the effect of “cultural contamination” between residents and tourists, elements that generate knowledge and innovation *spillover* within the territory (cf., Migliaccio and Rivetti 2012). One study on the social impact of events (Deery et al. 2012) highlights that some important variables can influence residents’ perceptions concerning the effects of an event. These variables include the economic interests tied to the event, the distance between a resident’s home and the place of intense tourist activity, the level of contact with the visitors or the tourists and the use of common services and spaces, the ratio of visitors/tourists to residents (an excessive number of people coming from outside the territory could lead to conditions of intolerance), the emotional attachment to the location (this can depend on the length of residency, if it is a resident’s birthplace) and the political, social, and environmental values held. Therefore, all of these values must be considered when assessing the social impact of an event. This also implies that there cannot be a generalized evaluation made without taking into account the possible differences of perception within the local resident population, which is not homogeneous. Within the social scope, those aspects tied to employment and the birth of new business activities also ought to be considered, along with economic–financial elements that should be seen in the context of social innovation and the creation of innovative and entrepreneurial networks (Holt and Lapenta 2013). The indicators related to the social dimension can be grouped together according to the following variables:

- a. *The hosting community’s acquisition of benefits deriving from the event*: level of involvement of local businesses and of local workers, amount of investments made in the territory (e.g., sports facilities), fiscal revenues generated, enhancement of territorial brand, event-territory-local business co-marketing initiatives undertaken, maintenance and growth of real estate values, new entrepreneurial activities generated locally, matching of event objectives and territorial policymakers’ objectives (e.g., de-seasonalization of tourist flows), innovation and know-how brought into the territory.
 - b. *Participation, enjoyment, and satisfaction of residents*: number of residents participating in the event and their degree of satisfaction, satisfaction of local business people, degree of integration between local culture and that of non-residents.
 - c. *Health, safety, modified habits of residents*: level of safety in organization process, number of work-related incidents/accidents recorded, number of crime incidents, number of emergency calls, costs to local public authorities to guarantee safety and traffic conditions.
3. *The environmental dimension*: This is defined as the capacity of the event to allow the ecological balance of the host territory to remain unaltered.

Monitoring the environmental effects is quite important for a destination, both from the standpoint of preservation of touristic resources and that of following consumer trends. In fact, “the concept of environmental sustainability will always represent a critical factor in the choice of a destination because the quality of the environment is part of the touristic experience” (Gregori and Bolzicco 2009; Laing and Frost 2010; Ruozi 2005). In addition to the effects on the natural environment, other factors must also be considered, such as those tied to the deterioration of artistic, historic and cultural heritage and, more generally, to the landscape, particularly in cases when the capacity of a location is not complied with and visitors/participants do not behave respectfully. The assessment of such an impact would seem especially useful, then, to strike the right balance between safeguarding the environment in a wide sense, as an ecosystem, and the enjoyment of the benefits of which it is composed. The indicators relative to the environmental dimension can be grouped together according to the following variables:

- a. *Pollution generated*: emissions levels harmful to the atmosphere (CO₂, fine particulate matter, etc.), levels of acoustic emissions (noise pollution).
- b. *Consumption of energy and of natural resources*: electrical energy consumption, per capita quantity of energy per participant, percent of energy from renewable sources, water consumption, percent of water savings, dimensions of area destined for the event and impact on flora and fauna.
- c. *Waste management*: total quantity of waste and refuse produced, per capita quantity of refuse per participant and percent of separated (recyclable) refuse in total.
- d. *Conservation and redevelopment of historic-artistic heritage*: in the selection of events to be supported, those who offer experiences that are consistent with culture (art, monuments, etc.) and local resources (typical products, crafts, etc.) should be preferred. This way, the event will not only promote itself but also the territorial context. The events that do not detract from the location should also be chosen, and it is even better if alternative venues are to be upgraded (maintenance, adaptation and improvement).
- e. *Active policies on sustainability and certifications*: communication policies connected to sustainability issues, possession of environmental certifications for the events.

A process of event management must, ultimately, have an overall guideline to which it refers (Table 1) that is a synthesis of the four perspectives outlined above and which is connected to a set of measurable and relevant indicators. Moreover, at the destination level, it would be useful in any case to adopt the event portfolio approach, according to which diverse events can coexist, displaying different types of performances and targeted to different objectives, but which all aim to achieve satisfactory results in every dimension and, hence, are sustainable in the long term.

Table 1 Synoptic table of the dimensions and variables of the model

Dimension	Variables/groups of indicators
Economic and competitive	a. Economic–financial b. Strategic–competitive c. <i>Experiential performance</i> d. <i>Experiential coherence</i>
Social	e. Hosting community’s acquisition of benefits deriving from the event f. Participation, enjoyment, and satisfaction of the residents g. Health, safety, and modified habits of the residents
Environmental	h. Pollution generated i. Consumption of energy and of natural resources j. Waste management k. Conservation and redevelopment of historic-artistic heritage l. Active policies on sustainability and certifications

5 Concluding Remarks and Managerial Implications for Policymakers

In the context of growing territorial competition and limited resources, we believe that adopting a managerial approach to the overall handling of tourism events, in line with principles of management and marketing, can offer a valid solution for destination managers who intend to develop tourism supply systems that are oriented toward value creation for the territory. In fact, because of the increasing importance of these events as sources of territorial attractiveness and competitiveness, event management represents an inescapable critical factor for the government agencies of territories that depend on tourism. An event’s capacity to generate tourist flows, and therefore to be the main reason for the trip, represents that factor that best helps us to conceptually distinguish generic events (regardless of theme) from tourism events.

Merely forecasting and even organizing a calendar of events remains nevertheless insufficient in touristic contexts that are governed strategically, i.e., in those where there is a strategic horizon and objectives that are recognized, shared, and followed. Fully included among territorial strategic activities undertaken, events must be the objects of a shared management approach and, as such, subject to processes of planning, assessment, and control that involve territorial stakeholders in decision-making and evaluation.

In those cases where governing authorities intend to imprint events with sustainability in the experiential perspective, their very assessment takes on holistic and multidimensional connotations because it is not only the economic–financial dimension but also the competitive and experiential (market dimension) and the environmental and social dimensions that will be taken into consideration. The value created for the territory, expressed through the three dimensions illustrated above, represents the object of measurement and the fundamental point of reference

in each phase of the management process, whether it be for a single event or for a portfolio of events.

However, a number of difficulties come to light in the attempt to realize such a theoretical forecast in real contexts. What are the determinants of perceived value vis-à-vis the single beneficiaries? What degree of intensity can be attributed to those values and how does one measure created value? How is it possible to measure the experiential performance of the events from the guests' point of view, as the value concept is value-in-use contextualized? The schema proposed here, while not presuming to be exhaustive, represents a holistic assessment model based on a set of indicators oriented toward sustainability and the experiential perspective conceived as the balance of the three perspectives. This is the only way to guarantee the continuity of an event and the growth of lasting value for the territory.

The assessment model can be adopted as a managerial yardstick for destination manager organizations to orient and guide the realization of sustainable and experiential events, which, besides fostering consensus and social cohesion, are also able to create territorial economic value in a way that does not upset the environmental balance of the area. Therefore, events must be capable of ensuring the satisfaction of both the tourists and the hosts who participate in the events, as well as the territorial stakeholders who are involved in supplying the experience product (the organizers, the agencies, and institutions that provide public areas and facilities, financiers, sponsors, etc.). The set of indicators proposed can be expanded, refined or more narrowly focused, according to the following:

- the specifics of the events as classified by nature and theme (sports, religion, culture, music, food and wine, etc.), size (small, large, etc.), frequency (one-time, annual, monthly, etc.) or target (local, national, international);
- the venues (mountain, rural, urban, coastal destinations, archaeological areas, etc.);
- the resources activated by direct beneficiaries of the events (free or paid events) or by indirect beneficiaries (totally or partially sponsored events or financed by private or public funds from outside the organization).

This model can also provide a basis for starting a quality certification process in compliance with the standards outlined in ISO 20121, specifically concerning event qualification for sustainability. Furthermore, in some cases, having information regarding event performance can be useful to either reposition or modify certain features of the event. This would allow, for example, an event to go from being free to paid, from a one-time event to periodically repeated during the year, from being a high-season event to a shoulder- or low-season one and so forth.

This paper aims to provide a conceptual contribution that serves to highlight the connections that exist between tourism events and the sustainable development of tourist destinations through the perspective of managerial analysis that uses the logic of experience. As such, there is clearly a significant limitation in the lack of empirical validation of the model proposed. A further limitation resides with the difficulties in measuring some of the indicators, for reasons tied to the need for

instruments and tools that are not easily mobilized (e.g., amount of refuse collection and recycling, measurement of CO₂ emissions, etc.) or because of the possible co-presence or overlapping of other events at the same destination, making it difficult to isolate the figures.

Nevertheless, as with any control system, what must be kept in mind is that what cannot be measured cannot be assessed. Therefore, the model aims to serve as a support tool and a catalyst for managerial innovation in the field of tourist destination management, within which events represent the emblem of highly experiential products capable of increasing the competitiveness of the destinations themselves. This study could be especially useful to territorial policymakers who are being called to give event management a high priority in the planning process for territorial tourism. This inevitably means weighing the impact of events, as seen in the three dimensions—social, environmental, economic—by adopting a holistic approach to assessment that can monitor value creation for territorial stakeholders alongside of sustainable development for destinations. These goals are anything but conflicting; on the contrary, they are closely connected and interdependent.

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How Marketing Works in the Experience Economy: The Case of the Experience Gift Box Providers



Fulvio Fortezza, Andrea Dusi and Tonino Pencarelli

Abstract This chapter deals with a particular segment of the experience economy sector, i.e., experience gift box providers. The analysis is based on Wish Days, a former Italian company that, in 2016, was acquired by the international market leader Smartbox. This is an interesting field because such companies act as value net integrators that set up and offer a wide range of life experiences, which are then “packaged” and “put on a shelf” just like any other product. The marketing approach performed by these companies is mainly based on networking and emotional engagement.

1 Introduction

Over time, the experiential thread has become increasingly acknowledged as one of the most interesting developments of the marketing concept (Schmitt 1999; Carù and Cova 2007), together with the more established subject of relationship marketing (Resciniti 2008). It is not one of the many “marketing panaceas” (Badot and Cova 2008) whose proliferation in recent years continues to jeopardize the robustness of the discipline by spreading confusion and a plethora of “new marketing” approaches (Fortezza 2009).

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In the existing literature, there are still few contributions on the marketing of those companies whose core business relates precisely to *experiences* (producers or retailers of experiences), conceived as outputs in their own right.

The main goals of this chapter are as follows:

- (a) to deepen understanding of the specific features of the “experiential outputs”;
- (b) *to study the peculiarities of “experience marketing” offering a conceptual model* for application to various types of “experience operators”;
- (c) with particular regard to the new experience operators, some interpretative hypotheses will be formulated in terms of *the critical issues which they have to face*.

This study is based on the Wish Days case study, which involved a series of direct interviews with the former management team of the company as well as an analysis of the corporate documentation and participant observation method.

We studied this business case only up to 2016, when the company was acquired by its main competitor in Italy and worldwide market leader, Smart Box.

We selected the Wish Days case study as a revelatory one (Yin 1994), due to the fact that this company had been able to reach a prominent market position in the Italian market in a very short time.

2 Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

2.1 *The Evolution of the Sociocultural Scenario and the Experience Perspective*

As the typical needs of a society in the process of development have largely been satisfied for broad sections of the population, people today, disoriented by the changes of the postmodern world (Beck 2007), are in search of meaning, sense (Fabris 2003) and new forms of fulfillment (Addis 2005), happiness and “core values” (Morace 2005; Fortezza 2014b), which they often find in market offerings (Boswijk et al. 2005; Fabris 2008; Fortezza 2014a).

In this context, experiences provide value to the individual when they:

- provide sensory gratification, including of an extreme nature;
- create opportunities for social interaction (Cova 2003; Bartolazzi et al. 2008; Fortezza 2009);
- help reinforce the individual’s identity, or allow them to “borrow one temporarily,” such as during a theatrical production;
- create opportunities for self-fulfillment.

All considered, this evolves the concept of leisure time and increases its value (Valdani and Guenzi 1998; Resciniti 2004). Now it no longer means “free time away from work,” but it becomes an important “asset” in the creation of value for individuals (Busacca et al. 1999).

In this context, leisure time is used less and less as a “prolonged, distinct and predetermined space” and more and more as a “collection of moments” spread throughout the year. This gives rise to the tendency to construct everyday life as a schedule of numerous different activities (Pratesi 2002).

2.2 *The Specific Features of Experiences as Outputs*

If a number of authors (Wakefield and Blodgett 1994; Valdani and Guenzi 1998; Lovelock and Wirtz 2007) argue this is a particular segment of the service sector associated with leisure and entertainment, Pine and Gilmore (1999) consider experiences as an economic category in their own right.

This is not a question of mere terminological subtleties (please see Pencarelli and Forlani chapter in this book) but a key issue, as it goes to the heart of the company’s mission and its strategic choices. An interesting example of a shift from the *service* to the *experience* is that of those restaurants that construct the customer experience so as to delight them in every respect, with considerable attention to the many different aspects that can create value (including, of course, the actual food), leaving the customer then to decide how much to pay for the experience they have had. Another case is that of go-kart tracks, which are often primarily concerned with selling minutes to hire the use of their facilities and equipment, as opposed to offering “driving experiences.”

Pine and Gilmore (1999) also underline that experiences, which are repeated over a given period of time, can give rise to genuine “transformations” (of various kinds) in the individual, who in this case pays for the (positive) changes achieved as a result of the contribution of the company.

Figure 1 illustrates a classification scheme for intangible outputs, where the transition from services to experiences to transformations entails not only an alteration in the nature of the business of the company but also a significant change in the impact on customers. In fact, on the one hand, this increases the “personal content” of the consumption experience (through a deepening level of involvement of the individual in the act of consumption); on the other, it increases the cognitive and/or emotional impact on the individual. These two dimensions are reflected in the risk of standardisation of the respective businesses (decreasing, from services to transformations) and their potential value (growing, from services to transformations).

In relation to the personal experience content, the starting assumption must be that experiences are, by definition, subjective; hence, the “experiential programme” itself can stimulate reactions and effects on an existential level, which are extremely different in different subjects, all the more so when considering individual transformations.

In regard to the impact on the individual, it is interesting to note the reference of Addis (2005), who indicates how experiences can generate alterations in the fundamental processes of people who participate in them, in terms of emotions,

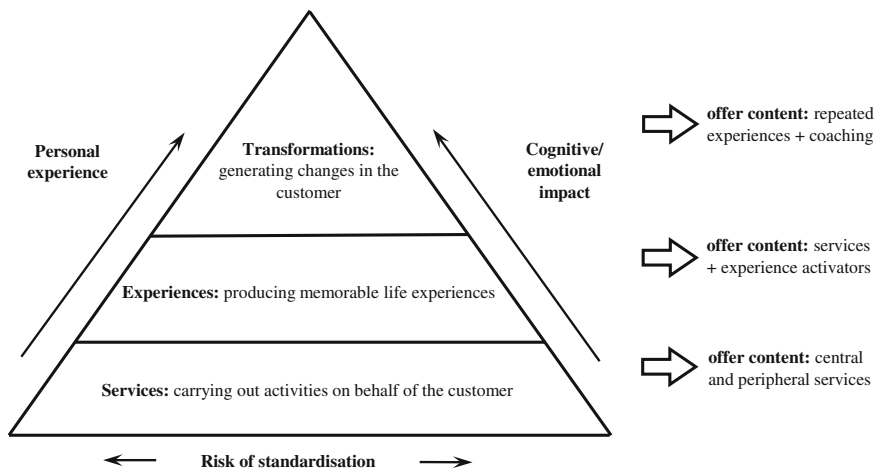


Fig. 1 The experiential progression

attitudes, behaviour, physiological aspects, and expressions. According to this, the experience products must facilitate positive alterations in the equilibria of individuals' daily routines, thus showing changes of a more fundamental nature in the personal status quo of those who consume them.

As alluded to earlier, these outputs also reflect a growing level of complexity in the offering, given that experiences are constructed by combining a series of supporting services with specific “experience activators,” while the transformations are generated as a combination of a collection of experiences, through a process of coaching.

2.3 A Possible Model for Experience Marketing

With the aim of developing a conceptual and operational framework for experience marketing—to which we are now turning our attention—we take as a reference the model proposed by Pencarelli and Forlani (2002, 2016), which was calibrated on the basis of tourist experiences and territorial governance (please see also chapter Forlani and Pencarelli in this book). We propose to adapt and extend it to the various possible experience sectors (Fig. 2).

Actually, the layout of this diagram is borrowed from the assumptions of Pine and Gilmore (1999), who frame the relations between supply and demand in a theatrical perspective, in which the producers are seen as “directors of the experience,” whose effectiveness is measurable by the extent to which the experience is perceived by the customer as memorable, which is reflected, in turn, in the (maximum) price that the company can charge.

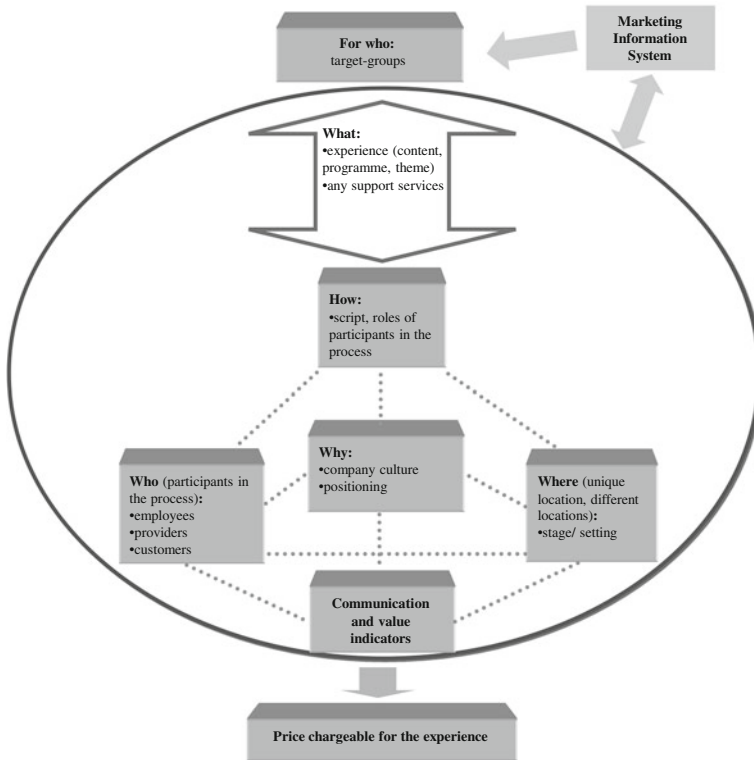


Fig. 2 A possible model for experience marketing. *Source* Inspired by Forlani and Pencarelli in this book

The central feature of the model is the marketing information system, which is a determining factor in terms of the choice and potential refocusing of the customer-segments. Overall, it must drive the whole process of constructing and enhancing the value of the experience.

With regard to the choice of the target groups, it must be emphasized that there are some subjective characteristics that create a greater predisposition to the consumption of experiences. In essence, some people are more inclined than others to having experiences and therefore to paying for this type of offering. For the purposes of segmenting the experience markets, the use of forms of behavioral segmentation is also appropriate in our view, such as in terms of benefits sought or styles of participation in the experience. In this case, we may have, for example, customers seeking:

- experiences that involve primarily the mind as opposed to experiences involving primarily the body;
- experiences centred on the self, as opposed to experiences based on sociality;
- experiences entailing active or passive roles on the part of the consumers.

We have referred to consumers of experiences, as opposed to purchasers, as these two roles are not always one and the same, given that, as we shall see, experiences can also be purchased as gifts.

Deeper consideration of “what to offer to the identified segments” leads us on to the merit of the product system devised by the director of the experience. This includes

- (a) *the contents of the experience to be provided.* From this standpoint, in the experiential field nothing must be taken for granted, by making the most of everything which can bring pleasure to the customer, whose “experiential world” (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006) must be studied carefully. This prompts the choice of some “experience activators,” which Schmitt (1999) refers to as “strategic experiential modules”:
 - *sense* activates experiences of a sensory nature;
 - *feel* activates affective experiences;
 - *think* activates learning experiences;
 - *act* activates experiences of a physical nature;
 - *relate* activates experiences of a social nature;
- (b) *the programme for the experience*, where standardising and imposing an excessively rigid definition of the experience to be consumed must be avoided;
- (c) *the chosen subject for implementation*;
- (d) *the underlying and supporting services.*

A significant problem for experience offerings is the risk of losing their impact as time passes. It is a critical factor, for example, in the case of theme parks, which need to “invent something new” year after year. In general, potential approaches to addressing this threat include:

- frequently refreshing the range of experiences;
- full and varied catalogues of experiences;
- the uniqueness of the offerings, with a quest for “the unusual”;
- surprise effects;
- a greater degree of customer participation in the process of delivering the experience;
- the addition of useful service elements, such as the combination of overnight accommodation services with theme park visits, to prolong the experience and make it more comfortable, or the development of packages, by working with other experience or service operators;
- an evolution toward the business of transformations.

The aspects of “who” (*who participates in the process?*), “how” (*What script does the experience follow? Which roles do the various participants take? What kind of interactions are envisaged between them?*) and “where” (*What is the setting for the experience?*) are closely interrelated. Indeed, experiences can be produced in

a single location with primarily internal staff (as with theme parks) or in multiple locations, through the assistance of a network of experience providers.

In both cases, it is fundamentally important to manage the interaction with customers. This critical factor, which is well known in the field of services marketing, affects how people are trained and managed and how the “moments of truth” are handled (Grönroos 2009). This dimension increases in complexity if the production of the experience is outsourced.

In both cases, the script for the participants in the process is closely associated with the program of the experience. In this sense, an interesting aspect is represented not only by the interactions between the staff and the consumers of the experience but also by the interactions between the consumers themselves, as in holiday villages, for example.

In regard to the setting (or stage) for the experience, this is another part of the “what” and depends, in particular, on the chosen subject. It includes the atmosphere and the scenery or backdrop of the place where the experience is provided.

An important factor in ensuring the cohesion of the overall process of creating value in the experience (the “why” in our model) is represented by the company culture (which affects the methods of interacting within the company or its value network as well as with customers) and the positioning of the producer of experiences.

Finally, the role of “communication and value indicators” is to reduce the risk perceived by customers given the intangibility of the product. From this standpoint, it is necessary to offer foretastes of the available experiences and recall positive experiences, which have already been enjoyed, thus inducing people to share them with others (word of mouth). Of particular use to this goal are the web, enabling communication via the company website and conversations taking place on social networking sites, along with the packaging.

2.4 The New Experience Operators

The experience sector is extremely varied and in a state of evolution. This is also due to the recent interest in this business expressed by some of the leaders of the digital economy. As a case in point, in 2016 Airbnb started selling its own tourist experiences along with overnight stays.

A particular type of player, which has become increasingly widespread in recent years, is represented by those companies that package or sell experiences as gifts for people to give to others or for themselves (B2C). These gifts can also be part of promotional and retention programs devised by companies in a range of sectors for their customers (B2B).

Clarke (2008) defines an “experience gift” as a gift consisting of an activity (or package of activities) in which the recipient is invited to participate. Experience gifts acquire particular value in contemporary society, where individuals have little time (with their frenetic lifestyles) and exhibit the strong need to acquire meanings

for themselves and for their loved ones. Experience gifts play on the imagination of those who give and those who receive them. This increases the “flexibility” of the gift and helps to make these products unique, thus enhancing the level of satisfaction of the parties involved (the giver and the recipient).

We could refer to businesses of this type as “catalogue-based experience operators.” They usually comprise a broad set of experiences for multiple customer segments, leveraging on cross-selling and word of mouth. As for distribution, they mainly rely on large-scale retail trade, so these experience gifts usually appear as actual boxes, which are put on a shelf just like any other product to be sold in a department store or the like. In this field, the absolute worldwide market leader is Smartbox (over 500 million euros’ worth of turnover), followed by Wonderbox (around 160 million euros’ worth of turnover). They are both engaged in a progressive expansion on the market at the international level, also buying pre-existing companies and related brands.

The online coupon business model started to thrive as of 2010 and has continued to grow. Groupon, Groupalia, and hundreds of other web platforms offering discounted (for the most part) coupons for hotel stays, beauty farm retreats, dinners, adrenalinic experiences, and so forth have had a relevant impact on the overall market.

3 The Wish Days Case Study

3.1 Company Profile and Historical Notes

Wish Days was created in Verona (Italy) by Andrea Dusi and Cristina Pozzi, in 2006. The first brand they launched was Elation (2006), an e-commerce experience portal offering access to a catalogue of over 4000 activities connected with well-being, sport, hobbies and passions, food and drink, romance and also including various company incentive and team building activities. In 2007, the founders of Wish Days created a new dedicated website named “Melaspasso,” which was aimed at targeting the business-to-business context in a more specialized and, thus, effective way. As a result, in just one year from its foundation, the company hit its first million in revenues.

In the meantime, the international market leader Smartbox entered the Italian market, soon to be followed by other (national and international) players such as Wonderbox, We Box (by the Alpitour Group), Boscolo Gift (by the Boscolo Group), and RegalOne, just to mention the most important ones.

In 2009, in order to extend its market share Wish Days launched “Emozione3,” i.e., a brand-new range of experience gift boxes, which was meant to seriously challenge the main competitor, Smartbox. Year by year, Emozione3’s market share grew to 30% in 2016 (around 35 million euros’ worth of turnover) thanks to 35 different references and 5000 points of sale (consumer electronics shops, bookstores, food retailers, and travel agencies).

The same year, Wish Days was sold to Smartbox, which incorporated its assets and only kept the Emozione3 brand on the market.

3.2 *Vision and Competitive Strategy*

The most interesting features of the Wish Days case from the strategic perspective relate to:

- (a) *the business concept*, which was focussed on the “world of experiences” to offer customers;
- (b) *the business model*, which had been devised to ensure support for critical success factors such as managerial speed, the variety of solutions offered and continuous learning;
- (c) *the business architecture*, which embodied the principles of the proactive business (Valdani 2000), featuring a strong networked configuration.

Wish Days had many points in common with traditional tour operators, from which it differentiated itself primarily through its business concept.

Generally speaking, the changes now taking place in the contemporary socio-cultural fabric facilitate the packaging of moments of life for sale on the market as outputs.¹ In this sense, overall, the whole range of life experiences on the market is still expanding considerably. Tourist experiences² (i.e., the core business of tour operators) represent just one part of these.

Wish Days had sparked off an interesting process of innovation in a strategic direction, through a formula that involved:

- the aggregation of multiple offerings already present on the market (e.g., experiences of staying in period furnished residences) that, in combination, created “a world of experiences and emotional responses” meant to simplify the customer’s life (in relation to time savings) and enrich their range of choices. From this perspective, many standard catalogue experiences (e.g., the “murder mystery dinner”) would have been difficult for most customers to find out about, above all because many of the related experience providers did not have the necessary skills or resources to present themselves to a broad market;
- devising unique experiences that were previously not available on the market, including translating life experiences into paying experiences (e.g., “meet the pope” or the “day as a farm worker”);

¹Hence the powerful ethical criticism of Rifkin (2000) on the commodification of human experiences.

²Taking the definition of “Tourism” provided by the World Tourism Organization, we can consider “tourist experiences” as a part of the life experiences for payment sector, which entail the transfer to the places where the experience is consumed, plus overnight accommodation there.

- the completion of the range with products for the business segment (team building and training) whose concept was already familiar to the market, whilst ensuring a wider range with more uniqueness.

3.3 Adopted Marketing Approach

Because Wish Days was a company that outsourced the production of experiences, it assigned particular importance to the management of the relationship aspects that characterized the overall value process. It was, therefore, a marketing arrangement with a powerful strategic, holistic, and relationship dimension (Gummeson 1999), one that was closely connected to the architecture of the business, with the objective of creating value for the customer through the network.

Considerable importance was attached to market information based on a dedicated internal area. Analysis of the competition was a top priority, involving systematic monitoring with a weekly report of each competitor's new offerings. In terms of demand, direct customer satisfaction surveys were carried out, along with bimonthly focus groups involving suppliers. Other information was gathered via the customer care staff.

The market segmentation was operated on the basis of the benefits to be provided to consumers (B2C or B2B).

In terms of the company culture, the key principle was speed, continuous renewal, uniqueness, a philosophy of customer service and learning, all of which were reflected in the positioning of the company's brands.

In terms of the "what," "who," and "how," the choice of providers was intrinsically related to the management of the product range and its extension to include new references, with the aim of maintaining a high "emotional content" for the offering, thus opening up new scenarios for customers.

In essence, starting from the product lines, which they had decided to offer, in relation to various types of leisure activity, Wish Days moved on to the search for the products and references of greatest interest and their associated suppliers. After a careful exercise to select appropriate suppliers for experiences offered in the catalogue, the company then sought to establish a relationship with them. For example, the suppliers were regularly stimulated and supported in devising innovations to the experience offerings.

The production of the experiences was therefore outsourced, yet interest was maintained in both the product and the production. From this perspective, Wish Days acted as an "enhancer of a value network" (Valdani 2000) in which other players (such as travel agencies) were also involved.

In regard to the "where," the preparation of the setting was the responsibility of the suppliers, even though this was one of the aspects that determined the initial choice of supplier, where an evaluation was carried out of the level of consistency with the contents and the theme of the experience in the catalogue.

On the same subject, it is interesting to emphasize how, unlike tourist experiences, with which the destination is a fundamental driver of customer choice; in such a case, the main focus is placed on the type of experience to be consumed. Besides, it is also true that many of the experiences in the Wish Days offering were connected or connectable with holiday experiences.

In regard to “communication and value indicators,” importance was given to public relations initiatives and, in particular, the Internet. This involved the company’s own portals and the use of Web 2.0 tools, especially Facebook and blogging.

Careful attention was also given to the packaging of the experiences and to distribution-related decisions, such as space allocation, visual merchandising, and communication at the point of sale, to encourage impulse purchasing within the large-scale retail trade.

4 Final Remarks

In the “new era of the intangible,” many people are prepared to pay for activities that, in the past, would have been unthinkable to go out and buy (consider the “day as a farm worker”) or which would have been unlikely to occur to people as something to want to experience (e.g., the “adventure into space”). Yet it can be entertaining and fulfilling to have access to a world of many-and-varied potential thrills and experiences in which one can choose the best solution, depending on the occasion. These aspects are the drivers for the new experience operators, who are skilled at “packaging moments of life.”

We have seen how the experiences represent an evolution from services in terms of the complexity of the output and the potential value. The objective is to amaze customers, to thrill their senses, to make them feel a certain way, to provide them with skills or abilities and break out in a positive way from their normal personal status quo.

In this sense, the experience company must consciously operate as a “director of the experience,” synergistically combining:

- (a) *analytical efforts*, to identify the most profitable customer segments, to investigate the “customers’ experiential world,” to analyze the competitive market place, including potential suppliers and partners;
- (b) *experience design efforts*, to decide whom to target the offering at, which type of value offering to produce, the content, themes, and programs for the experiences to be staged, the participants to involve, the spaces, and the features of the setting;
- (c) *efforts to stage the experience*, which largely relate to the “how” to operate the process of providing the experience;
- (d) *efforts to enhance the value of the experience*, involving work on tasters and the like as well as on mementos/souvenirs and on conversations with customers.

All these components combined help to make the experiences meaningful and memorable, which have an impact on the customers' preparedness to pay to consume them.

It is precisely these considerations that have led us to see how a common problem for companies in the "experience sector" is ensuring that the experiences do not lose their appeal over time. This critical issue requires specific counter-measures. From this point of view, for the "catalogue-based experience operators" there are additional critical factors to be managed:

- outsourcing the production of experiences requires specific forms of controlling the "moments of truth" and the quality of the experiences provided, which is especially related to the management of the supplier network and customer relationship management before and after the experiences;
- to take up the previous point again, it must be concluded that many of the catalogue-based life experiences can form part of broader overall holiday experiences. Although, on the one hand, this may suggest intriguing differentiation initiatives for the new experience operators, it might also attract traditional tour operators;
- "packaging" the experiences, presenting them in an off-the-shelf fashion in large-scale retail outlets, is an opportunity that, while interesting, could result in a weakening of the concept;
- finally, there could also be a problem of opportunistic behavior by the customer, who, once he or she has consumed a given experience with a given provider, could opt to purchase the product directly in future. This risk can be addressed, on the one hand, by effectively bringing out the entertaining side of the "world of experiences" to offer to the customer and, on the other hand, by supporting the service and relationship components that have been previously discussed.

Overall, this chapter provides a potential interpretative model of the methods of managing the leisure-time experiences business within a marketing management framework.

The experiences business is more complex than the traditional businesses of the post-industrial era, requiring managers to complement their traditional service marketing and management skills with creativity and innovation (talents that are typical of performers and artists) together with planning abilities, attention to detail, and coordination skills.

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Experience Economy and the Management of Shopping Centers: The Role of Entertainment



Elisabetta Savelli

Abstract This chapter applies the experience logic perspective to the retail industry by analyzing the role and the management of entertainment strategies in the shopping center format. The purpose is twofold: (i) proposing a conceptual classification of entertainment based on the existing literature; (ii) examining the influences of entertainment strategies on shopping centers' market performances to provide suggestions in regards to the effectiveness of such strategies. After a short description of the shopping center industry, the study analyzes the changing role of the format occurring over the last decades and proposes a classification of entertainment that includes *recreational services (food and leisure) and special events*. Changes occurring in these areas of entertainment, alongside those concerning the market performance indicators of shopping centers (i.e., number of receipts, average amount of receipts, number of visitors who buy, visitors frequency), are explored by discussing the results of a qualitative study focused on 16 Italian shopping centers over a three-year period. Practical implications for shopping center managers are provided via empirical findings, while limitations of the study are underlined for suggesting future research directions.

1 Introduction

Shopping centers became essential retail avenues over the past few decades, rapidly growing in all countries worldwide (Frasquet et al. 2001; El Sayed et al. 2003; Millan and Howard 2007; Gilboa 2009).

They first appeared in the 1920s in the United States and included key features of modern shopping malls, e.g., unified architecture, a selection of shops and service activities, private parking, and a unitary management (Crawford 1986). Later, in the 1960s, shopping centers appeared in Western Europe, rapidly adopting the

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U.S. model. The development of the format did not skip Italy. Between the end of the 1970s and 2015, the country experienced a shopping center building boom. To date, there are more than 940 shopping centers located throughout the country (Il Sole24Ore, 19/11/2016). After a few years of suspension, due to the economic and real estate crisis, 16 new shopping centers were opened between 2014 and 2016. An increasing development of the format is also expected in the rest of Europe, with the completion of approximately 9.1 million square meters of sales area estimated in 2016–2017 (Cushman and Wakefield 2016).

Three main attributes characterize Italian shopping centers (Zappi 1994): (i) average size, generally ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 m², which is lower than those in European and, above all, American shopping centers; (ii) the presence of a large nonspecialized area (hypermarket) playing as a magnet; and (iii) the prevailing suburban location: Italian shopping centers are rarely located in city centers. Over time, greater attention to quality emerged, and new business ideas began driving the current management of shopping centers, such as for Scalo Milano, which opened in October 2016, which has a large area devoted to design, and for Il Centro di Arese, which focuses on new brands such as Primark's to better meet the market's demand and customer needs¹ (Il Sole24Ore, 19/11/2016). Notably, what has primarily changed the role of shopping centers in recent times has been the increasing use of entertainment strategies, according to an experience logic perspective, aimed at enticing consumers, satisfying the increasing demand for leisure shopping and clearly differentiating the format's image (Sit et al. 2003). Thus, shopping centers moved from place of purchases into customers' destinations, regardless of the marketing mix they offer. Entertainment has become an integral part of the format, used for extending trading areas, lengthening shopper stays, and increasing tenants' revenues (Shim and Eastlick 1998). In other words, entertainment (such as movie theatres, food courts, fashion shows, restaurants, etc.) has become a strategic tool developed to enhance the shopping center's ambience, thus improving the overall customer experience (Gentile et al. 2007).

Despite the importance of entertainment for the competitiveness of modern shopping centers (El Hedhli et al. 2013), it remains difficult to find a shared definition of entertainment fitting the retail format. This is partially due to the fact that consumers are not homogeneous; thus, they perceive a similar entertainment activity differently in terms of meanings and importance. Moreover, in contemporary shopping centers, entertainment tends to be operationalized through multiple items (Sit et al. 2003). A classification of entertainment could be, therefore, useful to better managing the overall marketing and competitive strategy of shopping centers. Furthermore, few studies (De Nisco and Napolitano 2006), to the author's knowledge, have previously investigated the effectiveness of entertainment

¹This contributes to attracting the attention of international investors who return to Italy, considering to invest both in best-performing structures located in the most important cities, such as Rome and Milan, and in "best secondary" centers, with high turnovers, such as the "Collestrada" shopping center in Perugia, which was recently purchased by Eurocommercial (Il Sole24Ore, 19/11/2016).

strategies by considering their impact on shopping centers' performances. This could be an area of interest for retailers and managers to improve their overall success and competitiveness.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it aims at proposing a conceptual classification of entertainment strategies based on the existing literature focused on the experiential marketing approach. Second, it examines how different entertainment strategies can affect the market performances of shopping centers.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 deals with a description of the shopping center industry, focusing on its changing role over time and a review of the literature on entertainment. A categorization of entertainment activities is proposed, and the research questions are defined. Section 3 focuses on the research method. Next, the main findings of the study are presented. The final section discusses the results and offers practical implications.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 *The Changing Role of Shopping Centers: From Convenience to Entertainment Experience*

To date, it remains difficult to find a unique definition of the shopping center. According to the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), *a shopping center is a group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned, developed, owned and managed as a single property, typically with on-site parking provided* (ICSC 2016).² An additional definition is provided for the European market by considering the center's size: *a European shopping center [is defined] as a retail property that is planned, built, and managed as a single entity, comprising units and "communal" areas, with a minimum gross leasable area (GLA) of 5.000 m²* (Lambert 2006: 35). A further description takes into account the location (O'Mara 1999). Three different types of shopping centers emerge, namely, convenience centers, which are located in residential neighborhoods, community centers, having a large catchment area and a wide range of shops and services, and regional or super-regional centers, having a transregional importance and satisfying short-term as well as medium- and long-term customers' expectations.

The above definitions highlight important attributes of the format. Nevertheless, given changing customer expectations and technological progress, shopping centers have become increasingly hybrid, thus strict classifications as per size or location might not be enough to describe the format and a more comprehensive description combining size, location, sector, and tenant mix should be better to reflect the different types of shopping centers.

²<https://www.icsc.org/> [last access: 18/03/2017].

Leaving aside the definition issue, what is more relevant to the aim of this study is to comprehend how shopping centers developed over the time and changed their role in the retail context. This evolution can be simplified by considering three periods: the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s and 2000s, corresponding to as many “generations” of shopping centers.

The “first generation” considers the hypermarket as the driving power of shopping centers, usually flanked by a small gallery consisting of service activities (laundry, hairdressing, etc.). The typical structure comprises one or more department stores and a large parking area. The attention is focused on proximity and food services. The concept of economics prevails (Anastasia 2000), as the format is designed to meet growing consumer demand for services, time-saving, and wide variety. The design is inspired by convenience and efficiency, aiming at optimizing the enjoyment and distribution of all spaces (Savelli 2012).

Toward the mid-1980s, the increasing competition emerging in the retail context forced shopping center management to shift from cost strategies to differentiation strategies. Different types of shopping centers arose, characterized by specific roles, dimensions, and functions. The average size increased as well as the number of outlets and services in the shopping gallery. The offering expanded to non-food specialized stores (clothing, sports, home appliances) and extra-core services (bars, restaurants, leisure areas, etc.). The original concept of the shopping center as an *extraordinary efficient machine for selling* (Ritzer 2005) continued to prevail, but its functions improved through the establishment of new commercial and service activities.

The third generation is characterized by the development of ever more leisure-oriented structures integrating the commercial tenant mix with new services and activities related to entertainment (Sit et al. 2003; De Nisco and Napolitano 2006). The role of shopping centers changed, making them attractive destinations not only for buyers but also for visitors searching for enjoyment, fun, recreation, and amusement (Sassoli 2006; Jamal et al. 2006; Kim and Kim 2008; Alavi et al. 2016).

2.2 Leverages of Entertainment in the Shopping Center Context

The use of entertainment in shopping centers has become so widespread that many scholars consider it as an essential attribute of this format (Belk and Bryce 1993; Robertson 1995; Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Hernandez and Jones 2005; Padilla and Eastlick 2009).

It is typically difficult to find a unique and objective definition of the term “entertainment,” especially in reference to the retail context. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as *the action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment*. With regard to shopping centers, entertainment can be improved by

providing communal initiatives (e.g., birthday party of the shopping centers, shows with comedian guests, etc.), activities and services offered by single operators, whose core business is strictly entertainment-related (e.g., cinema, restaurants, bars, etc.) as well as through specific initiatives proposed by single operators (e.g., events or thematic activities organized by individual retailers in the gallery).

Within the above categories, this study focuses on two main groups of entertainment activities, namely, recreational services and events.

Recreational services. Cardinali (2009) suggests a fundamental distinction between “traditional services” and “extra services.” The first area consists of activities falling within the core competence of the shopping center (logistic, information, support, etc.), while extra services are excluded from the core business being divided into functional (aimed at meeting the customer’s functional needs, i.e., financial, insurance, tourism, legal, etc.) and hedonistic activities (aimed at satisfying the increasing demand for pleasure and entertainment: bars, cafes, leisure areas, etc.). Extra services, in particular, can be further divided into two groups: food and leisure. Food services include bars, restaurants, gourmet, ice-cream parlors, food vending machines, and other services allowing visitors to take a break and to enjoy their shopping experience. Leisure services, on the other hand, concern all those activities and facilities specifically dedicated to fun and free time enjoyment. They can be addressed to children (e.g., playgrounds), as well as adults (e.g., gyms, bingo halls, cinemas, beauty centers, Internet points, bowling, etc.). Leisure services are often an integral part of the shopping gallery and encourage consumer attendance at the shopping center, regardless of their purchases.

Recreational services enrich the overall offering of the shopping center, improving its socializing function and its role as a meeting point (Dennis et al. 2001; Bloch et al. 1994; Khare 2011), thus playing a critical role for the format differentiation. However, by considering the natural life cycle of services (Cardinali 2009), it is to be wondered if their differentiation ability can last for a long time or if changes are not yet made. Over time, it has been recognized that such services have allowed shopping centers to become attractive destinations for spending leisure time, but it is also true and easily observable that many food and leisure services characterize the basic offering of a growing number of shopping centers (Bloch et al. 1994; Ismail El-Adly 2007): almost everywhere, especially in larger structures, consumers can find cinemas, bars, restaurants, seating areas, children’s areas, and other similar activities. One can almost affirm that recreational services are now a basic tenant mix that consumers are expecting to find everywhere, especially within major structures. Therefore, shopping centers should search for new differentiation strategies, to avoid the risk of disenchantment that threatens their competitiveness.

This suggests the first research question of this study:

- RQ1: Can recreational services remain effective to attract and entertain visitors within the shopping centers? What is changed, or recommended, in the management of these activities?

Special Events. In managerial literature, events relate to the planning, production, and management of activities, including festivals, recreational, sporting, and artistic events, both in the business context (meetings, conferences, fairs, exhibitions, etc.) and in private (weddings, parties, social events, etc.). The main attributes of events can be synthesized as follows: presence of goals, presence of a group of people taking part in the event, affinity with alive shows, limited duration in time, and uniqueness (Getz and Page 2016).

By focusing on the experiential nature of events, this study proposes a distinction between “hyperreal events” and “mediterranean events” that originates from the theoretical perspectives most commonly used in the international literature on experience: the North American approach and the European approach (Savelli and Bartolazzi 2013).

Hyperreal events reproduce the main traits of the hyper-universe (Carù and Cova 2006). They are aimed toward transactional and/or sales purposes and are based on simulation and artifice rather than authenticity. They aim to produce an imaginary reality in which individuals are driven to lose their landmarks and forget about their real life. The hyperreal event is standardized, planned in every detail, and it can take place anywhere, going beyond the reality (Augè 1992). Mediterranean events, on the contrary, are based on the assumption that experience is not necessarily extraordinary, but it can be ordinary, concerning the daily lives of individuals (Abrahams 1986; Bruckner 2000). The focus is on individuals’ values, the sense of belonging, the authenticity, the respect of others, and the relationships (Cova 2005; Silva et al. 2005; Carù and Cova 2006). These events suppose a strong link with the territory, the development of authentic relationships with consumers, the involvement of consumers, and the pursuit of different purposes, involving issues of social interest (Bartolazzi et al. 2008).

Over time, several authors (Gottdiener 1995; Ritzer 2005) have shown that strategies based on pure entertainment have gradually lost their effectiveness. This particularly occurs when entertainment activities are created without considering the positioning strategy of the shopping center or without knowing which experience dimensions to emphasize (Walls et al. 2011).

Postmodern consumers need to develop new forms of sociality based on interaction, connectivity, and creativity (Cova 1997; Dholakia 1999; Le Breton 2000; Cassano 2001; Cova and Pace 2006; Johnson and Ambrose 2006; Thompson 2006). Consequently, even with regard to events, one sees the need for the development of new forms of entertainment able to fit the emerging consumer trends that push for greater interaction and direct involvement. Mediterranean events seem to capture such trends more closely than do hyperreal events.

This suggests the second research question of the present study:

- RQ2: Do hyperreal events lose an effect over mediterranean events? What is changed, or recommended, in the management of these activities?

3 Research Method

The research was based on a qualitative study carried out through direct interviews (Corbetta 1999) addressed to a small group of Italian shopping center managers (general manager or marketing director).

The purpose of the study was fourfold:

1. to analyze the current use of recreational services and events as part of the differentiation strategies of shopping centers;
2. to understand what kinds of entertainment-based activities (food and leisure services, hyperreal, and mediterranean events) are most commonly used;
3. to explore changes occurring in the entertainment strategies proposed by shopping centers over a period of three years (from 2013 to 2015);
4. to evaluate the effectiveness of different entertainment activities taken under consideration.

In relation to Point 4, the effectiveness of entertainment strategies was assessed by analyzing the variation of market performances of shopping centers. While aware that market performances may depend on many internal and external factors, the examination of such performances—related to changes in the recreational services and events management—could suggest useful implications for managers. Moreover, the analysis of market performances could be particularly interesting as it gives information about the market positioning of shopping centers, thus suggesting what strategies should be developed to improve their competitiveness and attractiveness. Following Bellintani (2010), three indicators were used to measure the shopping centers' market performances³:

- average amount of the receipt (AAR) = turnover/total number of receipts;
- number of visitors who buy (NVB) = total number of receipts/total number of visitors in the time unit;
- visitor frequency (VF) = total number of visitors/population insisting on the catchment area of the shopping center; it measures the flux variation in the time period $t_0 - t_1$.

³Bellintani (2010) also considers the re-letting time (RT) among the market performance indicators, i.e., the time needed to re-market a sales unit within the shopping center. However, this indicator represents an indirect measure of the center's attractiveness, which varies according to the size of the structure and the types of merchandise considered. Therefore, it has been overlooked in the present study. Also the visitors' frequency (VF) was preferred to the number of unique visitors (NVU) proposed by Bellintani (2010). Both indicators measure a shopping center's flux variation. However, the VF indicator is independent from a shopping center's size, contrary to the NUV indicator (whose measure derives from the ratio: total number of visitors/number of commercial units within a shopping center).

In this study, the number of receipts (NR) was added to the above indicators to provide a more comprehensive picture of shopping center market performances.

Because the topic of entertainment is still not well known and defined (especially in relation to shopping centers), and given the variability of situations concerning the management of both recreational services (whose mix may be variously composed and changed over time) and events (that are extremely heterogeneous in their nature), the research was conducted through structured interviews. These ensure a good standardization of the information collected without limiting the *opening to the unknown*, which belongs to the typical context of qualitative research (Corbetta 1999).

The questionnaire was based on both open and closed questions grouped into two sections: one section was aimed at describing the recreational services and one concerned with events. A preliminary part was further included concerning the sociodemographic attributes of shopping centers and their market performances.

In terms of services, the questionnaire investigated what food and leisure activities are mostly proposed by shopping centers, changes introduced over the years (in terms of new open services), the percentage of GLA used for services and its variation since the opening year, and differentiation attributes characterizing the service offering compared with those of their competitors. Services were analyzed following the classification provided by De Nisco and Napolitano (2006).

The questionnaire section focused on events first looked at general features such as the number of annual events, their duration, the type of accessibility (free/paid), and the average level of standardization/originality. Next, detailed information about the characteristics of events organized during the 2013–2015 period was investigated. To facilitate the data collection, the description of each event was guided within a conceptual framework that replicates the five dimensions used to distinguish hyperreal from mediterranean events, i.e., relationship between the event concept and the territory (low vs. high); standardization of the event (low vs. high); purpose (commercial vs. social); intensity and nature of interactions developed with customers during the event (planned vs. spontaneous); customers' participation in the event (passive vs. active). Therefore, during the data processing, each event has been coded as hyperreal or mediterranean based on the predominance of attributes indicated (at least three attributes out of five variables of the same type).

A total of 16 shopping centers were investigated. Because of the small sample size, a technique of purposive sampling was considered as most appropriate (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In particular, we selected structures distributed across the Italian country and the size. This was not done to compare big and small, or northern and southern shopping centers, but simply to improve the variety of shopping centers under investigation (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Spiggle 1994).

4 Empirical Results and Discussion

4.1 Sample Profile

Shopping centers are distributed across the country, while recording a greater concentration in the southern regions. They are mainly located in peripheral areas, and about half of them have been opened for over 15 years. According to the ICSC classification, six centers are of small size, six of middle size, and four centers are definable as large. Table 1 summarizes the sample profile.

Small centers are equally distributed between northern and southern regions. They are opened before 2003, except for one center that was opened in 2007, with a number of commercial activities (including hypermarket) ranging from 15 to 90. It is interesting to note that northern shopping centers show a larger number of commercial activities than those located in southern zones (small shopping centers located in northern Italy have exactly 60, 77, and 90 commercial units, while small centers located in southern Italy count 15, 35, and 44 commercial units).

Half of the medium-sized shopping centers were opened after 2005. All of them are located in south-central Italy (exactly one structure is located in the center and four in the southern regions) and have a number of activities ranging from 35 to 113.

Last, large-sized shopping centers date back to the 1990s. Only two centers were opened after 2010. One of them is located in northern Italy. Except for one structure, these shopping centers include more than 100 commercial units.

The catchment area is variable: from a minimum of 30,978 people to a maximum of 2 million and 257,000. No differences emerge in relation to the location of the structures and their size with regard to the catchment area. Few small structures insist on large catchment areas (over 1 million people), while medium- and large-sized areas have a much smaller reference population (under 50,000 people).

Table 1 Sample profile

Geographic distribution	North	5
	Center	1
	South/Isles	10
Location	Central/peripheral	5
	Peripheral	3
	Peripheral/extra-urban	6
	Extra-urban	2
Year of opening	1990–1999	8
	2000–2009	6
	2009–2013	2
Size	Small (GLA < 19,999 m ²)	6
	Middle (20.000 m ² < GLA < 39.999 m ²)	6
	Large (40.000 m ² < GLA < 79.999 m ²)	4

4.2 Market Performances of Shopping Centers

Table 2 depicts the shopping centers' market performances over the period 2013–2015.

Visitor flow (VF) variously changed. About half of the shopping centers registered an increasing value of VF, with percentages sometimes close to 0, sometimes to +2% and, in one case, close to +7%. In one case, the VF increased by 14.83%: this refers to a large structure located in southern Italy, which extended its GLA in 2014 (this probably contributed to attracting more traffic).

In the remaining eight centers, there was a general decrease of the VF, ranging from minimum values close to 1 or 0, to more consistent values of -7.14%, up to a maximum of -22.69%. The worst performance refers to a small shopping center (opened in 1990) consisting of 15 commercial units. Probably the scarce variety of services and commercial offerings contributed over time to weakening the attractiveness of this structure.

The economic crisis of 2008 is considered as the main factor influencing the VF variation (mean value: 5.25 on a 7-point Likert scale). Notably, this factor is defined as being responsible for both the increase and decrease of VF values. On the one hand, the economic crisis encouraged consumers to re-evaluate the convenience and recreational offering of shopping centers; on the other hand, it encouraged customer austerity, thus reducing his or her expenses and overall shopping opportunities.

Table 2 Market performances indicators over the period 2013–2015^a

	Visitors flow (VF) (%)	Number of receipts (NR) (%)	Average amount of receipts (AAR) (%)	Number of visitors who buy (NVB) (%)
SC1	1.99	0.28	-6.40	-1.68
SC2	-0.32	-8.70	0.31	-8.40
SC3	2.46	3.29	-5.31	0.81
SC4	6.56	-2.44	-0.35	-8.45
SC5	2.12	-5.55	-4.46	-7.51
SC6	-7.14	-8.33	-6.25	-1.28
SC7	14.83	37.50	-8.57	19.75
SC8	-0.30	0.58	-3.57	0.88
SC9	-3.43	-2.30	-9.31	0.45
SC10	-8.79	-16.40	-1.89	-8.35
SC11	-1.92	-7.70	-12.93	-5.90
SC12	-22.69	-11.63	-2.28	-2.03
SC13	0.39	-25.66	-12.82	-25.95
SC14	0.00	1.14	-12.96	1.14
SC15	0.57	-1.90	-7.5	-2.45
SC16	-9.52	-16.13	-3.05	-7.30

^aPercentage variations

Besides the economic crisis, shopping centers have recognized the negative impact on VF caused by the opening of new shopping centers or similar formats (outlet, hypermarket) inside the catchment area (mean value: 2.94) and the closure of industrial plants (factories, companies) nearly located (mean value: 1.19), which contributed to worsening the economic conditions of resident families. Surprisingly, the construction of new roads has been reported as a negative event for the VF performance (mean value: 1.56), as it makes it easier to move the population and to reach other commercial structures. No one recognized the influence on VF variation caused by the construction of new residential areas, the opening of new factories or industrial plants and the closure of road infrastructures.

The negative trend of VF goes along with the negative variation of both the number and the average amount of receipts (NR and AAR). Except for one shopping center (i.e., SC8), where the negative change in VF corresponds to a slight positive change in the number of receipts (NR) (+0.58%); the decreasing number of visitors usually translates into a decreasing value of NR and of AAR, which falls by minimum value of -0.35% up to more than -12% . The declining value of AAR also occurred in those structures registering an increasing value in NR and/or VF performances. This is certainly in line with the fact that the economic crisis is recognized as the main factor affecting the market performances of shopping centers: individuals have a lower budget and spending power, and, even if they do not reduce the frequency of visits to shopping centers, they are forced to spend less money, thus pursuing promotional offers and low prices.

A generalized decreasing also concerned the number of visitors who make purchases (NVB). One shopping center (i.e., SC13) registered a negative trend of -26% in the NVB indicator. This is the youngest shopping center among those analyzed (born in 2007) having smaller dimensions ($GLA < 10,000 \text{ m}^2$). It also recorded the highest decrease of NR and AAR indicators, despite the slight increase in the number of visitors (VF). Because this is a very small and recent structure, it probably faced greater economic and organizational difficulties compared with other structures stably operating in the market for many years. However, what is comforting for this center is the positive variation occurring in the VF indicator, which reveals a good ability of the center to attract customers.

The positive trend of VF goes along with negative values of NR and NVB indicators also in other structures, thus suggesting that shopping centers continue to be perceived as a place of leisure, where people go even without having to make purchases.

The above considerations may find additional explanations by analyzing the evolution of the entertainment activities offered by shopping centers over the time-period considered.

Table 3 Food services provided by shopping centers

	01/01/2013	31/12/2015	Absolute variation
Food court	55	52	-3
Bar	34	35	1
Ice cream parlor	9	8	-1
Restaurant	27	21	-6
Pizzeria	15	16	1
Fast food	8	10	2
Deli	4	5	1
Take away	0	1	1
Pub	0	0	0
Wine bar	0	0	0

4.3 Recreational Services

Food services. The most popular food services include food courts, bars, restaurants, pizzerias, fast food, and ice-cream parlors. No pubs and wine bars were found in the shopping centers analyzed. Renewal processes occurred during 2013–2015. Notably, three food courts, six restaurants, and an ice-cream parlor were closed, while one bar, one pizzeria, two fast foods, one deli, and one take-away were opened (Table 3).

This suggests a trend toward the opening of new activities providing fast and convenient food services, instead of traditional restaurants requiring a longer break and greater expenses.

Shopping centers that invested in new food services registered an increasing VF. It is notably the case of a large northern shopping center that opened four new food courts, two bars, one fast food, and one take-away over the 2013–2015 period and recorded a significant increase of VF (+6.58%) as well as the case of a large southern center that expanded its food services by opening one bar, one restaurant, and one deli, thus registering an increased VF of +14.83% (in this case, also the AAR increased by 37.5%). Meanwhile, there is a small shopping center in northern Italy, which reported a significant reduction in VF (-7.14%) and, in parallel, the closure of a food court and an ice cream parlor. Similarly, a shopping center located in a central region faced a significant decreasing value of VF (-8.79%) while closing a food court and one restaurant. This suggests that expanding the food services could contribute to increasing the shopping center's appeal, thus attracting visitors. However, the VF growth may also be due to other factors, and the extension of food services could be a natural response of management that seeks to meet the demand trends.⁴ The relationship, however, is not always linear. Additionally, the VF variation is not always proportional to the variation in the food

⁴It can also be said when both the supply of food services and the VF indicator are decreasing.

services offering. There is a case of a shopping center where the increasing value of VF corresponds to a clear restriction of food services, through the closure of four food courts, four restaurants, and two bars. Therefore, the dynamics concerning the leisure services and the events have to be considered to find more precise relationships between market performances and entertainment activities provided by the shopping center.

Leisure services. The most popular leisure service is the children’s play area. Other popular services include game rooms and beauty centers. In one case, there is an Internet point and a public park. Four cases reported, among the leisure services, the presence of a square place, that is, an open space devoted to walking and meeting activities. No other services have been mentioned by shopping centers, such as bingo rooms, bowling, disco, fitness centers, and so on.

The overall renewal of leisure services has been limited. In two cases the game room was closed, while in the other two structures the beauty centers were closed. Three shopping centers declared the opening of a new children’s play area over the period considered.

In other words, existing leisure services tend to be maintained, and no expanding attitudes were found in this area, except for playgrounds, which make the shopping center more attractive to families with children (Table 4).

There is a good relationship between the decrease in leisure services and the negative market performance of shopping centers, even if it is difficult to establish the causal relationship between these aspects. On one hand, it may be the negative market performance that forces the closure of some leisure services, pending the

Table 4 Leisure services provided by shopping centers

	01/01/2013	31/12/2015	Absolute variation
Square place	4	4	0
Bingo room	0	0	0
Cineplex/multiplex	0	0	0
Convention center	0	0	0
Bowling	0	0	0
Disco	0	0	0
Night club	0	0	0
Game room	5	4	-1
Swimming pool	0	0	0
Fitness center	0	0	0
Sport center	0	0	0
Beauty center	5	4	-1
Internet point	1	1	0
Children’s play area	9	11	2
Public park	1	1	0

shopping center's survival. On the other hand, it may be the closure of leisure services that makes the structure less attractive to visitors. Moreover, contrary to what we observed for food services, there is no correspondence between the opening of new leisure services and the positive market performance, i.e., structures that invested in leisure areas did not match better performances compared with those that did not. There is the case of a small shopping center, which, despite having increased the leisure services by opening a play area for children, recorded a drop of about 3.5% of the AAR and a sharp drop in VF (more than 9%).

What emerges as interesting is that the two structures that show the best market performances have left unchanged their leisure services.

To sum up, while the reduction of leisure services is usually associated with a market performances' decline, the opposite relationship does not occur among the shopping centers investigated. This could suggest that leisure services are considered as "basic" attributes of shopping centers that consumers naturally expect, the lack of which is perceived as a structural deficit, while the presence of which does not contribute to a significant improvement of the shopping center attractiveness.

By comparing the food and leisure services' variation with the market performance indicators over the 2013–2015 period (Tables 5 and 6), it emerges that shopping centers revealing the worst market performances (i.e., SC12, SC16, SC10, and SC6, in order) have reduced the overall services' offering (especially food)—except for SC16, which left unchanged the food services area and increased the leisure services by opening a children's play area. On the contrary, those structure who recorded increasing performances, at least in terms of VF (i.e., SC4, SC7), have invested in increasing food services.⁵ The overall positive performance of SC3 corresponds to a partial replacement of leisure services instead of food services, while in the case of SC5, 10 food services were closed while the market performances still increased, especially in terms of VF (this is probably due to the opening of four new stores in the same period).

This further confirms the nonlinearity relationship between recreational services and market performances of shopping centers, which is consistent with previous studies (Bloch et al. 1994; Ismail El-Adly 2007) that consider recreational services as an integral part of the basic tenant mix, hardly able to differentiate one shopping center from another, and to increase its attractiveness unless the offer of such services is changed over time to better fit emerging consumer trends.

The managers interviewed seem to be aware of this. In fact, they declared to have finalized the introduction of new services to provide more responsive activities, which is in line with the emerging shopping habits and consumer needs (Table 7).

⁵These two structures have, however, achieved a general restructuring of the shopping center, resulting in an increasing number of shopping activities (respectively, +47 and +38).

Table 5 Food services and market performances (only food services that are offered in shopping centers analyzed are listed in the table)

	VF (%) ^a	NR ^a	AAR ^a	NVB (%) ^a	Food court ^b	Bar ^b	Ice cream parlor ^b	Restaurant ^b	Pizzeria ^b	Fast food ^b	Deli ^b	Take away ^b
SC1	2	0.28	-6.40%	-1.68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC2	-0.30	-8.70	0.31	-8.40	0	0	0	-1	0	1	0	0
SC3	2.50	3.29	-5.31	0.81	-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC4	6.60	-2.44	-0.35%	-8.45	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
SC5	2.12	-5.55	-4.46	-7.51	-4	-2	0	-4	0	0	0	0
SC6	-7.14	-8.33	-6.25	-1.28	-1	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0
SC7	14.83	37.50	-8.57	19.75	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
SC8	-0.30	0.58	-3.57	0.88	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC9	-3.02	-2.30	-9.31	0.45	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC10	-8.79	-16.40	-1.89	-8.35	-1	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0
SC11	-1.92	-7.70	-12.93	-5.90	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC12	-22.70	-11.63	-2.28	-2.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC13	0.39	-25.66	-12.82	-25.95	0	0	0	-1	1	0	0	0
SC14	0	1.14	-12.96	1.14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC15	0.57	-1.90	-7.5	-2.45%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC16	-9.52	-16.13	-3.05	-7.30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

^aPercentage variation over the 2013–2015 period

^bAbsolute variation over the 2013–2015 period

Table 6 Leisure services and market performances (only leisure services that are offered in shopping centers analyzed are listed in the table)

	VF ^a	NR ^a	AAR ^a	NVB (%) ^a	Square place ^b	Game room ^b	Beauty center ^b	Internet point ^b	Children's play area ^b	Public park ^b
SC1	2%	0.28	-6.40%	-1.68	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC2	-0.30%	-8.70	0.31	-8.40	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC3	2.50%	3.29	-5.31	0.81	0	0	0	0	1	0
SC4	6.60%	-2.44	-0.35%	-8.45	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC5	2.12%	-5.55	-4.46	-7.51	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC6	-7.14%	-8.33	-6.25	-1.28	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC7	14.83%	37.50	-8.57	19.75	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC8	-0.30%	0.58	-3.57	0.88	0	-1	0	0	1	0
SC9	-3.02%	-2.30	-9.31	0.45	0	0	-1	0	0	0
SC10	-8.79%	-16.40	1.89	-8.35	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC11	-1.92%	-7.70	-12.93	-5.90	0	-1	-1	0	0	0
SC12	-22.7%	-11.63	-2.28	-2.03	0	0	0	0	-1	0
SC13	0.39%	-25.66	-12.82	-25.95	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC14	0	1.14	-12.96	1.14	0	1	0	0	0	0
SC15	0.57%	-1.90	-7.5	-2.45	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC16	-9.52%	-16.13	-3.05	-7.30	0	0	0	0	1	0

^aPercentage variation over the 2013–2015 period^bAbsolute variation over the 2013–2015 period

Table 7 Variables affecting the improvement of recreational services (factors evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale)

Variable	Food service (mean value)	Leisure service (mean value)
Developing new differentiation strategy	2.87	3.375
Facing new customers' needs	3.875	3.625
Strengthening the customers' loyalty	3.25	3.75
Strengthening the customer orientation of the shopping center	3	3.186
Strengthening the overall shopping center's image	4	4.063

4.4 *Special Events*

Special events strictly qualify the marketing approach according to an experience logic perspective. They play an important role in the management of shopping centers analyzed to improve their overall image and to increase customers' loyalty and satisfaction. Promoting events also represents a strategic tool to improve a shopping center's turnover rate (Table 8).

Managers perceive thematic events as being more effective than standardized and repetitive ones, and they give particular importance to those events that are in line with the characteristics of the target audience, in order to improve the positioning of the structure and to differentiate it from competitors. All these considerations are strengthened in the case of mediterranean events, while hyperreal ones tend to be perceived as less effective, both economically and commercially (Table 9).

By considering the events managed over the 2013–2015 period, although not all respondents have completed this part of the questionnaire, interesting dynamics are observed.

Nine structures (out of 13 respondents) increased event offerings. Two have left them unchanged (one of which is the shopping center registering the worst market performances), while one has reduced the number of events managed over the time.

The total number of events promoted grew from 155 in 2013, to 184 in 2014, up to 196 in 2015.

Most events last one day or less. However, over time, events of a short duration seem to decrease in favor of those lasting between two and five days and longer (seven days or more). Rarely, special events promoted by shopping centers are accompanied by promotional activities concerning the product category on which the event focuses, albeit indirectly (e.g., books, pasta, organic products, etc.). This

Table 8 Effects of events managed over the 2013–2015 period (factors evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale)

Year	Improving turnover					Improving VF					Improving SC's image					Improving SC's loyalty					Improving customer satisfaction					Improving SC's customer orientation				
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
SC1	4.4	4.4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
SC2	3.4	1	1	3.4	1	1	3.4	1	1	3.2	1	1	3.2	1	1	3	1	1	3.4	1	1	3.4	1	1	3.4	1	1	3.4	1	1
SC3	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1.4	1.4	1	1	1	1	1	1
SC4	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	7	7	7	7	7	7	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
SC5	4.4	4.8	4.8	4.2	4.2	4	5	5.6	5	6.2	6.2	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	4.6	4.8	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	5	5.4	5.6	5	5.4	5.6	5	5.4	5.6
SC6	7	7	7	6	6	6	7	7	7	1.8	6	6	6	6	6	6.4	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SC7	4.6	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.4	5.6	5.2	5.4	5.6	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5	5.2	5.6	5	5.2	5.6	5	5.2	5.6
SC8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SC9	4.8	5.8	6.2	4.6	5.8	6.2	4.4	5.8	6.2	4.4	5.8	6	6.2	4.4	5.8	4.6	6.2	6	3.6	5.8	5.6	3.6	5.8	5.6	3.6	5.8	5.6	3.6	5.8	5.6
SC10	6	5.8	6.6	5.8	5.2	6.4	7	7	7	7	7	5.6	5.6	7	6.8	7	6.8	6.6	5	5.2	5.8	5	5.2	5.8	5	5.2	5.8	5	5.2	5.8
SC11	4	4.2	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	3.8	5	2	3.8	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
SC12	1	1	1.8	1	2.4	1.8	1	2.4	1.8	1	3.2	1.8	1	3.2	1.8	1	3.2	2	1	2.2	1.6	1	2.2	1.6	1	2.2	1.6	1	2.2	1.6
SC13	3	2.6	3.8	4	2.8	4.4	4	2.8	4.4	4	4.4	4.4	4	4.4	4.4	4	2.6	4.6	3	4	3.8	3	4	3.8	3	4	3.8	3	4	3.8
SC14	6	6	6	7	7	7	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5.4	6	5	5.8	5.6	5	5.8	5.6	5	5.8	5.6	5	5.8	5.6
SC15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SC16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mean value	4.17	4.15	4.43	4.37	4.29	4.49	4.35	4.65	4.57	4.45	4.52	4.68	4.25	4.26	4.31	4.08	4.31	4.08	4.31	4.35	4.08	4.31	4.35	4.08	4.31	4.35	4.08	4.31	4.35	
Mean value med. events			4			4.05			5			5.21			3.77														4.97	
Mean value hyper. events			5.45			5.55			5.5			5.68			5.09														4.95	

Table 9 How shopping center managers perceive special events (factors evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale)

	Improving turnover	Improving SC's image	Improving customer loyalty	Improving customer satisfaction	Improving SC's customer orientation
Events (in general)	5	6.438	6	5.688	4.813
Mediterranean events	5	6.063	5.75	5.813	4.814
Hyperreal events	4.188	4.125	4.063	4.375	4.313

reveals a lack of attention (and/or ability) toward the exploitation of potential synergies resulting from the management of an overall entertainment strategy carried out on multiple fronts.

Managers interviewed were also asked to describe the main five events yearly promoted over the 2013–2015 period. Exhaustive answers were provided by 13 managers out of 16 interviewed.

In 2013, events with a concept closely linked to the historical, artistic, cultural, and local characteristics prevail. Moreover, events enhancing spontaneous interactions among participants are preferred. The absolute values of these attributes remain stable or rise in 2014 and 2015. Despite that the main goal tends to be commercial-oriented, as is the case of hyperreal events, managers seem to prefer mediterranean events. Over 60% of the observed events show these attributes, thus recording a growing trend over the period investigated.

No linear relationships emerge between the types of events and the shopping center market performances (Table 10). The (two) shopping centers declaring best performances invested exclusively in mediterranean events. However, there are also situations in which the proposal for such events corresponds to negative performances. Interestingly, in two cases out of three, where there was growth in mediterranean events, there was also a positive trend in VF and NR values. Thus, mediterranean events seem to be attractive toward visitors, stimulating them to attend a shopping center regardless of their purchases. This result is in line with a general trend of Italian shopping center customers who are increasingly looking for authentic, engaging, and customized experiences rather than simply standardized entertainment.

Table 10 Market performances of shopping centers and absolute variation of events

	VF ^a	NR ^a	AAR ^a	NVB ^a	Absolute variation no. of events	Absolute variation mediterranean events
SC1	2%	0.28	-6.40%	-1.68%	7	3
SC2	-0.30%	-8.70	0.31	-8.40%	2	2
SC3	2.50%	3.29	-5.31	0.81%	2	0
SC4	6.60%	-2.44	-0.35%	-8.45%	5	-1
SC5	2.12%	-5.55	-4.46	-7.51%	1	-1
SC6	-7.14%	-8.33	-6.25	-1.28%	0	0
SC7	14.83%	37.50	-8.57	19.75%	2	0
SC8	-0.30%	0.58	-3.57	0.88%	-	-
SC9	-3.02%	-2.30	-9.31	0.45%	11	-2
SC10	-8.79%	-16.40	-1.89	-8.35%	8	0
SC11	-1.92%	-7.70	-12.93	-5.90%	-3	0
SC12	-22.70%	-11.63	-2.28	-2.03%	4	0
SC13	0.39%	-25.66	-12.82	-25.95%	2	0
SC14	0	1.14	-12.96	1.14%	0	1
SC15	0.57%	-1.90	-7.5	-2.45%	-	-
SC16	-9.52%	-16.13	-3.05	-7.30%	-	-

^aPercentage variation over the 2013–2015 period

5 Conclusions

Consistent with previous research (Verhoef et al. 2009; Grewal et al. 2009; Puccinelli et al. 2009), this study highlights the relevance of the experience perspective for the retail context; in particular, it provides support to the experience logic approach proposed here (see Pencarelli and Forlani in this book).

The retail context is naturally prevailed by intangible components. Notably, the shopping center industry has rapidly evolved over the years, thus transforming the commercial format into places of leisure and socialization where people go regardless of their purchases. As previously stated (see Sect. 2), the commercial offering of shopping centers was initially improved through a gradual servitization of business (Raddats and Kowalkowski 2014). However, the rapid commoditization of services required management to further enrich commercial offerings by introducing new services and entertainment activities fitting consumer demand for experience value (Palmer 2010).

The results suggest a significant use of entertainment strategies among shopping centers. Food and leisure services are widely spread and seem to be considered as critical components of the basic tenant mix. Innovations introduced during the 2013–2015 period have entailed food areas more than leisure ones, pursuing the common aim of improving a shopping center's ability to attract consumers eager to

spend enjoyable time when shopping. Similarly, events are largely used. Their number varies from a minimum of six events up to 50 and more events yearly promoted. Mediterranean events are commonly considered as more effective and attractive than hyperreal ones.

This suggests the growth of a more customer-centric vision among shopping center managers, which, in turn, focuses on the creation of an overall consumption experience as proposed by the experience logic perspective (Pencarelli et al. 2015). In line with this approach, in fact, the commercial offering of shopping centers has gradually improved by enriching the entertainment contents and enhancing the strategic integration among recreational services and special events so that visitors can be increasingly considered not only as consumers but as members of a broader community of the shopping center, taking part in the overall customer's value creation process.

Despite the relationships between entertainment strategies and market performances being not always linear, simply to identify, and univocally related, our results suggest that this approach leads to best market performances for shopping centers because it allows to better meet the increasing demand for interaction and experience on the part of the customer.

Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, mainly related to the small number of shopping centers analyzed (which reduces the results' generalization), to the short time period taken for the longitudinal observation (which makes it difficult to deduce how long-term changes will occur in marketing and entertainment strategies), managerial implications can be cautiously proposed.

In particular, two suggestions can be underlined, as they are worthy of interest for shopping center management.

First, entertainment strategies should enhance the development of new food and leisure services even more aligned with the market demand. Restaurants with international and/or vegan cuisine, wine bars, personal-care centers, and playgrounds for children represent a few examples of services that could be planned to improve the customer orientation of the shopping center. This should require the development of niche strategies and the implementation of a specific market segmentation that is undoubtedly risky, as it reduces the market opportunities but allows management to better focus on a specific target, thus improving its ability to give effective responses to consumers. Let's think, for example, to a shopping center focused on families. It could provide a commercial offering consistent with the needs of the "family" target: from rattles sold at a special price of a few cents to nursery areas designed as mum and baby environments, furnished with nursing chairs and napkin dispensers. This could contribute to developing shopping experiences strongly based on social and relational contents, privileging activities and services that fit the specific needs of the center's visitors.

A second implication concerns event management. Managers interviewed are greatly aware of the importance of events to entice consumers and satisfy their need for enjoyment. As suggested by the experience logic approach, events are considered as useful tools to improve the experience content of the overall shopping center value offering. Thus, fun and enjoyable events are widely used, including

festivals, anniversary celebrations, contests, sociocultural initiatives, fashion shows, and other activities. Given the heterogeneous nature of special events, the research findings suggest improving the proposal of mediterranean events, aimed at reinforcing a shopping center's linkage with the territory as well as exciting the consumers' attention on social issues (e.g., environmental saving, food waste reduction, etc.) and their active participation. As for recreational services, this could require a specific market segmentation and a clear choice in terms of market positioning, thus transforming events into effective marketing tools planned to strengthen the overall image of the shopping center.

Given the limitations of the present study, future research should be useful to investigate on a large scale the entertainment strategies among shopping centers, also considering different situations in terms of center size, location, tenant-mix composition, and/or entertainment orientation. Moreover, a comparison between the time period already investigated and subsequent time periods should be useful to improve the significance of the longitudinal study and, consequently, the results' generalization.

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The Importance of Being Earnest. Enhancing the Authentic Experience of Cultural Heritage Through the Experience-Based Approach



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Abstract This chapter contributes to the scientific research on cultural marketing, by analyzing the application of the experience-based approach to the management of cultural heritage and museums. After discussing some of the main marketing innovations of the last 20 years, the multidimensionality of the museum experience is examined in depth, with a focus on the increasing role of co-production and co-creation of value. Particularly, the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is discussed as a way to widen the value of museum experiences, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, a model is provided based on value co-creation through (1) the enhancement of cultural heritage as unique and nonfungible resources inherited from the past (*authenticity*), (2) the active involvement of visitors (*interaction*), (3) and the effective communication of the value of cultural heritage to different audiences in accordance with their skills and resources (*storytelling*). Through a critical investigation of a specific case study in the field of archaeology, Poggio Imperiale Park in Poggibonsi (province of Siena, Italy), the main challenges emerging in the “glocal” context are addressed, such as the need to satisfy the dual quest for experience and authenticity expressed by cultural consumers.

1 Introduction

Since the early 1980s, the rise of “new museology” has led to a challenging debate in Europe and the United States about the role of museums in contemporary society. Pursuing the need for innovation, museums and heritage sites have redefined their relationships with their audiences and communities, thus favoring, at least at a

The Importance of Being Earnest. A Trivial Comedy for Serious People (1895) by Oscar Wilde.

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theoretical level, the emergence of a visitor-oriented and visitor-centered approach (Villeneuve 2013; Di Pietro et al. 2014; Samis and Michaelson 2017).

After changing from being institutions *about something* into institutions *for somebody* (Weil 1999), museums have recently started to design and provide their services *with somebody* (Simon 2010: iii), not only extending access to cultural heritage to different and new clusters of users but also promoting their active participation (Black 2005), “engagement and extensive dialogue” with service providers (Taheri et al. 2016: 1387):

Museums are not simply “objects” oriented environments; they are also “people” oriented social contexts (Taheri and Jafari 2012) in which people come together around the content of the site they visit and share opportunities of gaining “mutual benefits” from each other’s presence (Simon 2010). [...] As Simon (2010) indicates, museums have this capacity to stimulate connections between people. (Jafari et al. 2013: 1738)

As argued by Jafari et al., “Museums are, therefore, not just about *what to see* and *what to relate to*, they are also about *who to see* and *who to relate to*” (2013: 1746) and visitors are “not just idle audiences who stand and watch the game take place” (Taheri and Jafari 2012: 205) but cultural participants interested in co-creating their experiences and actively engaged within the museum context: “create, share, and connect with each other around context” (Simon 2010: ii–iii) is becoming the pay-off of the museum of the twenty-first century.

However, after more than 30 years since the first contributions on this subject, the gap between intention and reality still seems to be too broad: on the one hand, the scope of some innovations is limited (McCall and Gray 2014); on the other hand, it is not rare to find museum management practices that are resistant to change (Villeneuve 2013).

Taking these critical issues into consideration, the present chapter examines the wide and interdisciplinary literature on the museum and heritage experience, highlighting its complexity and evolution through time. The aim is to understand whether the visitor experience is also becoming the new marketing in the heritage sector (Homburg et al. 2017), within the perspective of the “marketing-driven experience logic” as a new holistic conceptual approach based on the integration of service and experience economy (Pencarelli 2017; Pencarelli et al. 2017). More specifically, when investigating ways and tools to widen the value of cultural experiences (Packer 2008; Chan 2009), the research focuses on the increasing role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) at museums and heritage sites, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, looking at strategies to satisfy the dual quest for experience and authenticity expressed by consumers, a case study is provided. The activities carried out in an Italian open-air museum, Poggio Imperiale Park in Poggibonsi (province of Siena, Italy), are analyzed in depth as an example of participatory culture (Valenti and Salzotti 2017).

2 Experience-Based Approach in Marketing Studies: From Theory to Practice

Inspired by studies on the consumer experience (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), over the last 20 years, experiential marketing has gained an increasing role in the field of managerial research and practice. According to Schmitt (1999), each experience is characterized by the interaction of cognitive (*think*), sensory (*sense*), emotional (*feel*), social (*related*), and behavioural (*act*) factors, also called strategic experiential modules (SEM). The purpose of experiential marketing is the creation of experiences that stimulate one or more of these components in order to satisfy the need for experience and differentiate products that are similar in terms of function (Zarantonello 2005: 112). Moreover, according to the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1998, 1999), the relationship between an organization and its market is emerging as the production of experiences that are decisive for consumer satisfaction: nowadays, experiences are memorable events orchestrated by companies for their customers and have to be considered a new offer category.

In this context, when marketing innovation is sought, the application of the principles of experiential marketing and experience economy could be a useful tool for promoting integrated consumer-oriented product and communication policies in different sectors (Boswijk et al. 2012; Sundbo and Sørensen 2013).

As a matter of fact, in spite of the complexity and diversity of aspects that characterize each experience, many studies on this topic have mainly focused on the hedonic value of consumption (Carù and Cova 2007), shifting the attention to the emotional and sensory components of consumer behavior, thus producing an imbalance that is opposite to that produced by traditional approaches based on functional and utilitarian rationality (Resciniti 2004: 22). This trend is developing in the cultural sector, too, insofar that many studies have concentrated on the hedonic and emotional components of cultural experiences (Ferrari 2006; Ferrari and Veltri 2008). However, according to an approach integrating both the intellectual and the affective dimensions, an experience can produce the greatest benefits through the free and conscious selection and combination of different opportunities offered by the market (Resciniti 2004: 101).

Based on the theatrical model, the experience economy has also failed by interpreting experiences as mere performances to stage for customers, whereas effective development and application of the experience-based approach have to involve and engage customers in the value proposition as co-creators of value. In line with this perspective, value qualifies as experienced use value, “i.e., as the result of both the interaction with the supplying company and the experience lived and perceived by customers according to their skills and resources, before, during, and after the service delivery” (see Pencarelli and Forlani in this book). Moving from this approach, the experience logic has brought together into a single perspective both experiential marketing and experience marketing (Pencarelli 2017).

Finally, when analyzing the consumption experience, in addition to the increasing importance of the experience value, another trend deserving of growing

attention is the search for authenticity (Pine and Gilmore 2007). In the field of social sciences, this trend is now a widely shared assumption: Scholars talk about a return to the roots (Lanternari 2006), an authenticity obsession (Lipovetsky 2008), and the quest for genuineness, reality and truth in consumption (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Beverland and Farrelly 2010) as a consequence of the increasing movement and standardization of goods, capital, services, people, technology, and information within the global context. Particularly, the process of globalization that is affecting contemporary society has provoked not only a faster interchange of products and ideas and a wider dissemination of knowledge but also a gradual separation of labour, capital, technology, and other productive factors from specific spatio-temporal coordinates, with significant effects on the relationship between culture, identity and community (Arnould and Price 2000). De-territorialization has modified the processes of mass consumption, generating a cultural reaction and new trends that consider genuineness and authenticity as the most valued factors, especially in tourism and cultural consumption (Goulding 2000a; Gilli 2009; Prentice 1996, 2001).

Given this changing context, museums and cultural heritage could provide a good field for testing the emerging trends in marketing studies thanks to

- (1) the complexity of their *experience* and the possibility to intertwine profitably and integrate holistically different experiential factors;
- (2) the role of *authenticity* in the experience of cultural heritage as a group of unique and nonfungible resources inherited from the past, i.e., “*real* objects, genuine and trusted” (Parry 2007: 61) or “real things” (Latham 2015: 2), that are not replaceable with similar goods.

3 Complexity of the Museum and Heritage Experience: A Literature Review

By developing the “rational entertainment” model featured by Charles Willson Peale in the eighteenth century (Kotler 1999), museums have progressively become “hybrid places,” capable of balancing learning and fun, modeling entertainment as a means of knowledge and learning in the perspective of edutainment or infotainment (Macdonald and Alford 1995). More specifically, since the beginning of the 1990s, an increasing focus has been placed, within museum studies, on the numerous and varied components and objectives of the museum experience (Table 1) (Falk and Dierking 1992; Kotler 1999, 2001; Pekarik et al. 1999; Goulding 2000b; Kotler and Kotler 2000; Stephen 2001).

First, in 1992, Falk and Dierking published their *The Museum Experience*, a book that soon became popular in museum studies and education. In it, the authors illustrated the visitor’s experience as “a continually shifting interaction among

Table 1 Analysis of the museum experience from a review of the literature between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries

Model	Experience components
The interactive experience model (Falk and Dierking 1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal context • Social context • Physical context
Clusters of experiences (Pekarik et al. 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object experiences • Cognitive experiences • Introspective experiences • Social experiences
Recreational experiences (Kotler 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement • Playfulness • Contemplation • Learning
Variety of experiences (Kotler and Kotler 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual and sensory • Recreational • Sociable • Learning • Celebration • Enchantment
Experience of leisure (Stephen 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Contemplation • Social experience • Place

personal, social, and physical contexts” (Falk and Dierking 1992: 6). According to their interactive experience model:

- (1) the *personal context* is what visitors bring to the visit, that is, their psychological makeup, including prior knowledge, background, experience, intrinsic motivation, attitudes, interests, and expectations;
- (2) the *social context* is the within-group sociocultural mediation: It is provided by those with whom the visitor attends or those the visitor encounters during the visit (i.e., museum staff and other visitors);
- (3) the *physical context* is the setting in which the experience takes place, including the objects and artefacts, as well as facilities and surroundings, the architecture, “feel” and ambiance of the building.

One of the main merits of this model is that it has identified the strategies that museum managers can and should employ to design the museum experience.

A few years later, Pekarik et al. (1999) further developed this framework by identifying four different clusters of experiences consistent with the museum mission: *object experiences*, related to the possibility of seeing “real things”; *cognitive experiences*, such as acquiring information and widening personal knowledge; *introspective experiences*, i.e., imagination, memories, and reflections upon what is seen in the museum context; *social experiences*, or interaction with other people within the museum context.

In the same year, Kotler (1999) labeled all the different types of experiences that a museum can offer as “recreational experiences,” distinguishing four categories: *excitement, playfulness, contemplation, and learning*. It might be useful to stress that, when analyzing the learning dimension, Kotler focused on discovery and experimentation, as well as observation and analysis, leaving out the understanding of the value of cultural artefacts. Later, Kotler and Kotler (2000) detailed and enriched the variety of museum experiences, by adding a focus on contemplation and rituality. They differentiated six types of experience in all, namely, *virtual and sensory, recreational, sociable, learning, celebration, and enchantment*.

Finally, Stephen (2001) approached edutainment by orienting the leisure experience to the promotion of quality of life and individual growth. He distinguished four components of the museum experience, namely, *education, contemplation, social experience, and place*.

The multidimensionality of the museum experience is also confirmed by visitor studies, which recently identified five types of experience expectations of museum visitors, namely, *easiness and fun, cultural entertainment, personal identification, historical reminiscences, and escapism* (Sheng and Chen 2012) and also underlined how social and individual experiences may occur simultaneously during the visit or at different times and places (López Sintas et al. 2014).

Sharing the same approach, when analyzing heritage experiences, McIntosh (1999: 43) talked about “feelings of fun and enjoyment, escape and routine, sharing valued time with family or friends or learning”, concluding that they are the “result of encountering, undergoing, or living through situations; and they are triggered simulations to the senses, the heart, and the mind.”

All these frameworks agree in identifying different factors in the museum and heritage experience in the same way that experiential marketing does when analyzing the consumption experience in the same years. As stated by Chan (2009), museum and heritage experience dimensions consist of cognitive, affective, physical, and social aspects and are similar to other experiences that provide “sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values that replace functional values” (Schmitt 1999: 25).

Moving from this perspective, the more recent scientific contributions on the topic have focused on visitors and their interaction within the museum context, setting up the museum as an “open work”. According to a constructivist approach, museums are required to provide visitors with different perspectives and points of view and to favour open-ended learning results (Sandell 2007: 78). Baradaran Rahimi (2014), for instance, suggested a new model for the creation of sociocultural interactions between people and places within the museum space, based on three factors: *motivation* (emotional and intellectual motivators), *context* (tangible and intangible properties), and *actuation* (impulse, atmosphere, and signal).

Finally, the concept of “co-production” has become more familiar within the museum sector (Davies 2010), in which visitors are promoted from being “members of an audience (*cultural consumers*)” to “performers (*cultural producers*)” (Stylianou-Lambert 2010: 135).

4 Enhancing Museum Experience Through and Beyond ICTs

Fully aware of the complexity and multidimensionality of museum experiences and the active role of visitors, museum studies have discussed strategies and tools that are able to innovate museum communication and thus to favor the involvement of different and new clusters of users, who are increasingly demanding and experienced.

The literature on this matter has focused on offering the visitor a wide range of choices—“reservoir of possibilities” (Weil 1997)—thanks to the opportunities provided by new technologies (Table 2) (Galluzzi 1997; Witcomb 2003; Addis 2005; Parry 2007; Falk and Dierking 2008; Marty 2008; Tallon and Walker 2008; Solima 2009, 2010; Bakhshi and Throsby 2012; Bonacini 2014).

As previously argued (Cerquetti 2012), by combining compactness and interaction, flexibility and mobility, multimedia and hypertexts, ICTs allow us to

- (1) collect and contain a large amount and different types of information (e.g., texts, sounds, images, videos, etc.) in a small device;
- (2) customize the museum experience, by independently selecting both the content and level of detail, thus favouring learning and enhancing previous knowledge;
- (3) exploit economies of replication to the extent that the same content could be used for other purposes (e.g., catalogues, guides, etc.).

Table 2 Advantages and disadvantages of ICTs within museums

ICT PROs	ICT CONs
Compactness	Investment costs
Flexibility	Maintenance costs
Interaction	Replacement of the museum
Hypertextuality	Intrusiveness
Multimedia	Interruption of the visit path
Customization	Isolation and distraction of the visitor
Mobility	Difficult use in groups
Transparency	Uncomfortable location
Communicative property	Difficult usability
Economies of replication	Pure entertainment
Visitors involvement and engagement	Trivialization
Maximization of value	Spectacularization and Disneyfication
Long-lasting relationships with visitors	
Edutainment	
Thematization	
Immersion	
Spatialization and scenarization	

As confirmed by empirical research on science centers (Quistgaard and Kahr-Højland 2010), new mobile technological devices combine (1) flexibility in managing information through visitors' involvement; (2) mobility, allowing people to access information close to museum objects; (3) transparency, without distracting attention from the exhibits; (4) communicative property, enabling people to interact with other people during the visit. As a consequence, according to the above-mentioned open-ended perspective, these devices are an effective means to get customized digital narratives, especially for young people, by offering them new ways "to connect with their environments and share their experiences" (Hughes and Moscardo 2017: 47).

Nevertheless, the risks associated with the use of ICTs within the museum should not be neglected. First, even though ICTs enable a reduction in staff costs, ordinary maintenance costs also have to be taken into account in addition to investment costs, in order to avoid storing out-of-date and out-of-order devices. Second, ICTs should not replace museum visits nor become a mere substitute for the guided tour but be used to improve on-site communication and increase the value of the museum experience, by achieving results that are not possible to attain through traditional tools.

On this point and paying close attention to the relationship between technologies and the museum space, Pujol-Tost (2011) discussed the results of a summative evaluation carried out in a number of museums in the United Kingdom. While acknowledging the effectiveness of technology in terms of user involvement, the survey highlighted the failure of some ICT-based museum projects in terms of visitor satisfaction. The critical issue was not the intrinsic quality of technology but the lack of a proper link between museum objects and technological devices, which were often placed in an inconvenient position along the museum itinerary. In addition, ICT tools can be intrusive, as they interrupt the visit, isolate visitors, and distract them from observing museum artefacts. In other cases, touch screens are small and designed for one-to-one use only. Thus, they do not allow the participation of several visitors. In such cases, traditional communication tools would be more effective as well as more affordable than technological devices, whose usability can be difficult for some categories of visitors.

Considering these possible critical aspects, museum studies has pointed out the need to adopt a case-based and concept-driven approach to ICTs rather than promoting a technology-driven one-best-way (Antinucci 2007), hence the use of technological devices only if they are more effective in communicating the wide range of values of museum artefacts and collections (Kéfi and Pallud 2011) and in visitor engagement. Many contributions have progressively underlined the need to favor visitor participation (Simon 2010; Mygind et al. 2015), pointing out the role of ICTs before, during, and after the visit as a way to (1) customize museum experiences; (2) maximize value for visitors; (3) develop long-lasting relationships with them. As confirmed by a recent survey, this approach is supported by museum managers, who put edutainment, the ability to promote social interaction and the creation of immersive experiences as successful strategies to innovate museum management (Mencarelli et al. 2010). Moreover, ICTs are widely considered an

essential tool—not only because they are able to stimulate engagement and understanding, thanks to interaction and immersion (Courvoisier and Jaquet 2010), but also because they can be an activation factor in the absence of motivation and context (Baradaran Rahimi 2014).

From this point of view, ICTs are particularly effective if they are able to create narrative environments that help in communicating the historical value of museum collections and artefacts (MacLeod et al. 2012). In fact, thematization, spatialization, and scenarization could be useful tools (Mencarelli and Pulh 2012), but only if storytelling and any virtual reconstruction enhance the real and original artefacts preserved in museums rather than replacing them. Briefly, given that “authenticity matters” (Hampp and Schwan 2014), the risks of spectacularization, trivialization, and Disneyfication that technologies may entail have to be carefully avoided (Balloffet et al. 2014).

As widely shared, the narrative is more important than technological devices: A narrative can contextualize and re-contextualize, discover or invent connections among heterogeneous elements, exclude or include; manage and organize, dramatize and immerse; activate individual and collective memory processes and retain visitors (Calabrese and Ragone 2016). According to Nielsen:

A narrative is essentially a structure that can be based on emotional, learning, educational, interactive, individual or social, imaginative, fictive or non-fictive, digital or non-digital, subjective or objective engagements. It gains attention by evoking feelings, memories and curiosity. [...] Storytelling can be viewed as the concept that combines *the articulation of understandings* that defines museum communication and the *engaging narrative* that forms the story. [...] The power of storytelling lies in the fact that it provides methods for emphasizing meaning, understanding and feelings. [...] A museum that uses storytelling internally has the opportunity to consider the authenticity of stories and enhance external communication with target audiences (Fog et al. 2010: 52–55). [...] Storytelling can be one of the most important tools for creating meaning – and can ensure emotional engagement among visitors and staff. (Nielsen 2017: 6–7)

In the pursuit of this kind of innovation, ICTs could be helpful, but other tools could provide a useful contribution as well, if they are able to engage audiences effectively in the experience of cultural heritage, convey clearly its value to different clusters of visitors and ensure a wide understanding and appreciation of its meaning. In a nutshell, authenticity, interaction, and storytelling, and not ICTs, are the key factors for the innovation of museums and the creation of value for visitors (Fig. 1).

As a consequence, proper development of an effective experience-based approach within museums should evaluate the relationship among cultural heritage, visitors, and staff, taking into account the following issues:

- (1) the defining trait of museums is the conservation of cultural heritage as a group of unique and nonfungible items inherited from the past (stock) that are not replaceable with similar goods (*authenticity*) (Parry 2007; Hede and Thyne 2012; Thyne and Hede 2016);
- (2) the understanding of cultural heritage value relies on visitor participation: visitors should be able to choose content according to their skills and resources,



Fig. 1 Value co-creation within museums: from stock to experience

and interact with other people and the environment (*interaction*) (vom Lehn 2006; Baradaran Rahimi 2014; vom Lehn and Heath 2016);

- (3) effective communication of the value of cultural heritage requires a narrative capacity able to connect artefacts with their history and original context (*storytelling*) (Fontana 2009; Montella 2009).

5 Experience of Archaeology: A Case Study

5.1 Research Rationale and Methodology

When approaching service and communication management in archaeological museums, sites, and parks, some preliminary remarks have to be made. First, in many cases, archaeological artefacts or buildings are not only intrinsically fragmentary and laconic but are also deprived of their original context. As a consequence, a clear understanding of their shape and function is a privilege that visitors do not have, except for a few experts. The issue is even worse if we analyze the accessibility of communication tools: Even though their content should be available to different and wide clusters of visitors, they usually contain plenty of technical terms and are too difficult for most people. In addition, the aesthetic content of many archaeological artefacts means they do not appeal to people in the way museum and art gallery exhibits usually do. However, even though archaeology relates to far off, even remote, times, it remains close to our everyday lives, as confirmed by the ongoing existence of forms and uses in many of the objects that fill our houses or workshops (Cerquetti 2014). This is an important advantage, an intrinsic value, which has to be communicated through effective storytelling (Dal Maso and Ripanti 2015)—and not necessarily through ICTs.

Sharing these assumptions, a case study was analyzed as an example of an innovative communication approach, which satisfies the need for both experience and authenticity, by carefully using technologies and putting people at the centre of

its strategies. We decided to examine the activities of an Italian open-air museum, Poggio Imperiale Park in Poggibonsi¹ (province of Siena, Italy), “an archaeological and monumental area of 12 ha, delimited by the walls of a never completed sixteenth century fortress, built by Lorenzo de’ Medici and planned by the architect Giuliano da Sangallo” (Valenti and Salzotti 2017: 243). The hill preserves tangible evidence covering more than a millennium, from late antiquity to the Medicean period, passing through the destroyed city of Poggio Bonizio, which is the true historic centre of Poggibonsi, even though it was buried and only brought to light by archaeological excavations.

Specifically, the field research focused on the Poggibonsi Archaeodrome,² a project started in 2014 that aims at “an in progress full scale reconstruction of the 17 structures found during the excavation of a Carolingian Age village” (Valenti and Salzotti 2017: 244)³ from 1993 to 2008. The structures are completely reconstructed from the excavation plans, while interior furnishings in the huts reproduce objects and finds from excavations or documented in other archaeological contexts for the Carolingian era in Tuscany. The Archaeodrome is managed by Archeòtipo s.r.l.,⁴ a former spin-off of the University of Siena founded in 2010.

It is a model of best practice in the archaeological field, as confirmed by the three national awards the park has received in less than three years of activity: the SAMI (*Società degli Archeologi Medievisti Italiani*) prize 2015, the Medieval Italy Award 2016, and the Arcus Competition for the Best Art Bonus Project 2017.

The research was conducted according to qualitative research principles and through the triangulation of different sources of evidence, such as secondary and primary data (i.e., website, videos, statistics, real observation,⁵ and interview) (Yin 2003). In October 2017, the president of Archeòtipo s.r.l. was interviewed. The semistructured interview analyzed three aspects in depth: (1) the origin of the approach applied in Poggibonsi; (2) examination of the open-air museum experience; (3) the social and economic results. As far as the museum experience is concerned, three issues were investigated in detail for the purpose of this paper: (1) the involvement of visitors; (2) the relationship with history and authenticity; (3) the role of ICTs.

¹<http://www.parco-poggibonsi.it/>.

²<http://www.archeodromopoggibonsi.it/>.

³As stated by the promoters of the project: “to date, available funds allowed us to build a longhouse (residence of the landlord), a peasant hut with farmyard and hen house, the blacksmith’s forge, a bread oven, two barns, and the vegetable garden; and also some temporary sheds for craft activities, destined in the near future to be replaced by other huts and a large wooden granary on elevated platform” (Valenti and Salzotti 2017: 244).

⁴<http://www.archeotipo.it/>.

⁵See also: “Food and Buongoverno,” which is a tribute to Ambrogio Lorenzetti based on the reconstruction of a living and interactive portrait of artisan shops that are represented in the famous Buongoverno frescoes. The activity was coordinated by Prof. Marco Valenti, Department of Historical Sciences and Cultural Heritage of the University of Siena, during Siena Food Innovation, Millennials Festival 2017 (<http://www.siylab.eu/en/millennials-festival-2017-2/>).

5.2 Creating the Need for Archaeology: Toward an Innovative Approach

The approach adopted at the Archaeodrome represents the stage of full maturation and the pragmatism in an innovative process of designing, creating, and disseminating archaeological content that started in the 1970s with Riccardo Francovich. Developing ideas from Public Archaeology, Francovich argued the need to focus research efforts on projects, which, from their early stages, involved a close relationship with the territory and its civil, institutional, and administrative representatives. According to his vision, scientific research could not ignore the future enhancement, communication, and public enjoyment of cultural content. These ideas have been continued and developed by Marco Valenti and his research team, by progressively exploring new and innovative communication strategies and tools. Since the 1990s, the potentialities of information technologies and digital infrastructures have been explored. These technologies, which were largely far from the educational and cultural background of scholars in the field of humanities, allowed the group to become completely autonomous in the management cycle of archaeological information from data recording to the construction and dissemination of content—in terms of both methods and skills.

Multimedia, videos, interactive graphics solutions, geographic information systems, and various digital graphic tools have been identified as effective tools for opening up new digital opportunities, in order to make data and results from the field research available to the general public. However, in time, ICTs have become a discipline experienced not as an innovative medium, but as an end in itself, with increasing attention on projects focused on the technical perfection of IT solutions (in many cases, just theoretical) rather than on their functionality. Consequently, in the context of increasing wild and extreme digitization, Archeòtipo has decided to return to the roots of communication, enhancing human and personal relationships, verbal and gestural communication. Given the marginalization of this way of communicating in current society, this approach has been recognized as original and innovative. Nevertheless, Archeòtipo s.r.l. has continued to adopt digital solutions and social networks that dominate modern communication as tools for sharing information, knowledge, and experience with a wide audience.

Against the dominant detached digital approach, the creation of immersive and experiential atmospheres appeared to be the best and most innovative solution, more capable of involving new audiences in search of a personal, human, real, and sensory-based approach. Nowadays, this method appears to be almost forgotten, thus original for young generations and able to excite more curiosity. The choice has both ethical and scientific reasons. First, it is founded on the desire to open the doors of archaeological knowledge to the general public by pursuing the following strategies:

- (1) a plain and simplified language, tailored to the audience's level of knowledge, which does not sacrifice content and avoids the sensationalism largely common in some communicative channels;
- (2) an immersive and experiential approach that is within everybody's reach and stimulates the attention, curiosity and desire to explore some topics further.

As stated by Marco Valenti, the main purpose is the creation of "the need for archaeology" in the general public and citizens, while a good access key is provided by real life and the materiality of history.

From a scientific point of view, two factors are mutually complementary and able to self-perpetrate seamlessly: on the one hand, the deep interweaving between the construction and interpretation of archaeological content; on the other hand, verification through historical experimentation and reconstruction. Similarly, the efforts made toward an alternative communication, based on the concepts of materiality, gesture and reproduction of objects, contexts and structures, are stimulating and part of the research: Building what is theorized opens up new questions to be investigated. Thanks to this process, the interpretation results are questioned in depth and subjected to a material test that does not allow critical issues to be avoided, nor does it tolerate superficiality or partiality in the processes aimed at data definition. In a nutshell, as argued by the president during the interview, experimentation and reconstruction fully enter the dynamics of research, thus becoming an essential part for the correct and complete construction of information and the continuous regeneration of knowledge content and objectives.

5.3 Touch the Past: Designing and Building an Authentic Immersive Experience

The Carolingian village and its huts are a faithful reconstruction of what was excavated in the field next to the Archaeodrome. When building the huts, the starting point was provided by excavation plans. Therefore, each pole is exactly driven into the ground where the pole's hole was found.⁶ The reconstruction is carried out by according to an extremely philological approach and using the same materials and instruments used in the Carolingian Age,⁷ except in rare cases for security and accessibility reasons. The same principle leads to an accurate reconstruction of all aspects of everyday life in the Carolingian village, e.g., food ingredients and cooking techniques, clothing (not costumes, but historical clothes

⁶The pole holes are the negative evidence that makes it possible to understand the shape and size of the structures.

⁷To understand how the Carolingian Age huts are reconstructed, see <https://www.facebook.com/pg/archeopb/photos/?tab=albums>; [https://www.facebook.com/pg/archeopb/videos/?ref=page_](https://www.facebook.com/pg/archeopb/videos/?ref=page_internal)
<http://www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli/viva-la-storia-costruire/33268/default.aspx>.

that are woven, dyed, and sewn using ancient techniques) and productive activities (production techniques, instruments, objects).

Following the same approach, during the visit of the Archaeodrome, cultural operators interpret a character from the Carolingian village, wearing rigorously and philologically accurate historical clothes, in cases of both guided tours and experience-based immersive educational activities on specific topics (e.g., food, military life, funerals, writing and iconography, constructive techniques, craftsmanship, and peasantry, etc.). Visitors can verbally and gesturally interact with historical characters, helping them in their jobs or other daily activities. This approach aims at providing a demonstration of daily life rather than history at large; the latter serves merely as a framework for the village and its characters (e.g., Charlemagne, wars, stories about other peoples and cultures, e.g., Longobards, Byzantines, Arabs, etc.).

As pointed out by the president of Archeòtipo s.r.l., meeting and talking with historical characters (e.g., the *dominus* of the Carolingian Age village or servants and other humble inhabitants) help enormously to break down psychological and reverential barriers between guides and their visitors, the “scholar” and the “ignorant”: The audience is much more enthusiastic and encouraged to ask questions or launch into requests for explanations, even though elementary, feeling part of the game and without fear of making a bad impression. The involvement of visitors, especially children, is based on mutual curiosity between people belonging to two different epochs and cultural backgrounds and aims at highlighting the diversity of habits, customs, lifestyles, social structures, religious beliefs, objects, and tools. Visitors can move freely around the village and its huts and organize their visit by interacting with spaces and characters, following no fixed route, only their will and needs. The museum space is not intimidating, nor just a space to be visited, but rather a real-life space and a “time bubble,” where people can play, experiment, learn, discover, and study.

Visitors are also involved before and after the visit thanks to the website,⁸ the Facebook page,⁹ which is constantly updated, and other virtual spaces such as the webpage of the inhabitants of the Archaeodrome,¹⁰ which promotes fundraising to support the activities of the open-air museum.¹¹ These digital tools allow visitors to find out about the village, its characters, and lifestyles through information, storytelling, and contextualization. The continued updates through social networks are a way to develop long-lasting relationships with visitors, thus promoting their loyalty, facilitating their affection for the museum, and constantly involving them in the activities carried out in the Archaeodrome and in the management of the area. Moreover, the Archaeodrome promotes other activities that do not include the

⁸www.archeodromopoggibonsi.it.

⁹www.facebook.com/archeopb.

¹⁰<http://www.amici-archeodromo.it/>.

¹¹People who financially support the Archaeodrome become residents of the village and receive a certificate with the name and profession of their character.

traditional visit, such as historical tastings and dinners with narratives and theatre performances or historical book presentations.

In addition to the positive posts and evaluations of visitors on social networks, some positive results can be seen in terms of the development of tourism in Poggibonsi: from 42,453 arrivals and 114,041 room nights in 2014, to 46,909 arrivals and 132,591 room nights in 2015, up to 61,681 arrivals and 156,531 room nights in 2016, with a 45.37% increase in arrivals and 37.10% increase in room nights from 2014 to 2016 (Siena Province, Tourism Monitoring Unit). Furthermore, thanks to this project, the city of Poggibonsi has gained the attention of mass media: prime time, well-known TV shows and news on national public and private channels.

As argued by Valenti and Salzotti (2017: 256–257):

Poggibonsi has always been squeezed among giants of tourism (it lies half way between Siena and Florence, very close to San Gimignano and Monteriggioni, near Volterra and the Chianti), but it never developed its own distinctive offer. The town has always been regarded mostly as a simple transit place between the different locations to be visited. The trend of the last two years (with a steady growth that exceeded 50% from one year to another) evidences the capability to intercept such flows, inviting tourists to stop at the hill of Poggio Imperiale, or even making it the exclusive destination for organized trips from all over Italy. It is an acknowledgment to the choice of offering a very special visit experience, where experientiality represents the real strong point and historical contents are paired by a truly accessible communication approach, without forgetting the vital need to engage and entertain the visitors.

6 Conclusion

As argued in this chapter, in the design of successful museum and heritage experiences, authenticity, interaction and storytelling are a cultural mandate, as key factors for improving the quality of heritage experience at all stages of service offerings: from research to communication before, during, and after the visit.

In this perspective, the Poggibonsi Archaeodrome is a social and cultural space experimenting with an innovative communication approach that promotes interaction with people and contamination with other disciplines, languages, and information tools. Moreover, it pursues a philological approach to history and archaeology, thus engaging visitors critically and providing them with a context within which to understand the value of cultural heritage.

In a nutshell, the project satisfies the need for experience and authenticity expressed by consumers, especially in tourism and cultural consumption (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2007). By staging an accurate experience of the past, the activities carried out in the Poggibonsi Archaeodrome holistically involve all the strategic experience modules (SEMs) identified by Schmitt (1999):

- (1) *sense*: albeit in the absence of real artefacts, which are fragmentary or preserved elsewhere, visitors can “touch” the past, i.e., reconstructions made from the same materials used in the Carolingian Age (e.g., soil, water, straw, wood, hemp, etc.), and smell or taste medieval food during, for example, historical tastings and dinners;
- (2) *feel*: visitors participate in different situations from everyday life in a Carolingian Age village (e.g., ceremonies such as funerals or marriages);
- (3) *think*: visitors are critically engaged, by thinking, questioning, and learning about history; this process also involves scholars;
- (4) *act*: visitors act and interact with historical characters during their visit asking questions and sharing their knowledge;
- (5) *relate*: visitors relate to historical characters and other visitors during and after the visit (i.e., through social networks).

Finally, this project satisfies the key principles of the experience logic framework (see Pencarelli and Forlani in this book) as follows:

- *nature of the offering and marketing approach*: the product is an experience based on a complex and multidimensional construct with five characteristics: (1) learning; (2) uniqueness; (3) strong connection with the location; (4) interdependency between producers and consumers; (5) inability to store the supply (Sundbo and Sørensen 2013). Moreover, as mentioned above, the marketing approach combines the perspectives of both experiential marketing and experience marketing;
- *value concept*: the experience brings out different dimensions of customer value in the experiential value perspective, i.e. value-in-exchange, value-in-possession and value-in-use;
- *customer role*: customers are deeply involved during the visit at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, social and behavioural). Through their interaction with suppliers during the visit, they can customize and co-create their experience (Conway and Leighton 2012); through social networks, they can also interact with the open-air museum staff before and after their visit;
- *company role*: the Archaeodrome plans, creates, communicates and delivers value to customers, thus providing experiential contexts and platforms for interaction with visitors.

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Experience Logic: The New Challenge for Trade Fairs



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Abstract The present chapter applies the experience logic to the trade show (TS) sector by analyzing the role of the different stakeholders' categories (exhibitors, organizers, visitors) in the transformation of trade shows into interactive and experiential platforms. Based on the complexity and the multiple facets characterizing the phenomenon of TSSs, the starting objective of this work is to outline, through a review process, the main trends emerging from the recent (2010–2017) business and management international literature devoted to trade shows (TSSs) and trade fairs (TFs). In the second part of the chapter, attention is focused on one of the trends identified in the literature review (i.e., the growing importance of the entertainment and experiential component in the TS management), and the main tasks, performed by the different categories of TS actors, are explored by discussing the review's outcomes. The results of this work make different contributions to TS literature (identification of recent trade show papers, systematization of their main research focuses, and construction of a possible framework of synthesis) and to business management (identification of the main roles and tasks each category of TS participants is called to play in order to stage the trade fair experience).

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1 Introduction

Trade shows (TSs) were defined in 1986 as “events that bring together, in a single location, a group of suppliers who set up physical exhibits of their products and services from a given industry or discipline” (Black 1986). Today TSs still represent a leading business and development instrument for the global and European economy (Tafesse 2014). With 465 exhibition centers, the European continent still holds more than 50% of global exhibition space (AEFI 2016), especially in Germany, Italy, and France, which dominate the entire industry in terms of venues, exhibitors, and visitors (UFI 2016; Li 2015; Chu and Chiu 2013; Smith et al. 2004).

In the European context, (whose industrial system mainly consists of small- and medium-sized businesses), trade shows are still one of the most effective communication tools to promote products and services, contact new customers, and, above all, to gain access into new markets.

In the literature context, the TSs topic became a systematic research argument during the 1980s–1990s (Søilen 2013). In those years, the trade show theme was mainly focused on the importance of this instrument in a purely promotional/sales perspective (Aloui 2016; Li 2015; Rodriguez et al. 2015; Çobanoğlu and Turaeva 2014; Søilen 2013; Tafesse and Korneliussen 2012; Kirchgeorg et al. 2010; Bathelt and Schuldt 2008; Power and Jansson 2008; Herbig et al. 1998). In particular, trade shows were only perceived as demand–supply meeting places where the main exhibitor objective was to close a final sale before the end of the event itself (Çobanoğlu and Turaeva 2014). The focus was therefore mainly directed on the trade shows’ selling objectives at the expense of the non-selling-objectives (Menon and Manoj 2013).

In contrast, in recent years, alongside growing interest of the literature sector toward the TSs topic (Menon and Manoj 2013; Prado-Román et al. 2012), a trend reversal has occurred. The trade show tool, in fact, far from being considered as a mere selling and promotion instrument, has begun to be perceived as a vital part of a firm’s marketing mix (Rinallo et al. 2016; Sasaka 2012) and as a strategic marketing leverage achieving selling and non-selling objectives (Çobanoğlu and Turaeva 2014; Søilen 2013). By encompassing the potentialities of mass communication (typical of advertising), of profiling strategies (typical of direct mail and direct sales), and of network strategies, (typical of new media), over the years TSs have acquired new functions and new roles. This is also in the light of the major socio-economic changes of the new millennium (Li 2015; Chu and Chiu 2013; Sasaka 2012). Against this background, the last few years’ literature has identified new functions that trade shows could exercise as relational platforms, in which the many participants (exhibitors, visitors, organizers, exhibitor centers, cities) respond not only to commercial stimuli (Andreae et al. 2013) but also, and above all, to interactive exchanges (Li 2015). Therefore, the attention of literature has moved from selling objectives to non-selling ones.

In this way, TSs evolve from mere promotional/sales settings to relational/informational exchange platforms able to contribute to a (1) firm’s brand identity

construction (Chu and Chiu 2013); (2) establishment of informative relations between trade fair stakeholders (Li 2015); (3) presentation/transfer of technologies/innovations of the products/services presented in the TS booths (Aloui 2016); (4) information transfer, cooperation, and future trade relations (Cop and Kara 2014); (5) learning/knowledge creation; (6) access to new technologies, market trends, and potential partners (Rodriguez et al. 2015); (7) customer relationship-building, competitive intelligence, and market information gathering (De Freitas Santos and Da Silva 2013; Tafesse and Korneliussen 2012); (8) relational networking (Søilen 2013; Evers and Knight 2008); (9) benchmarking strategies (Çobanoğlu and Turaeva 2014); (10) staging of learning and emotional moments with the active participation of TS visitors (Rinaldo et al. 2010).

Overall, it clearly emerges from the literature how, for years, trade shows have been a topic of great interest (Gottlieb et al. 2014; Tafesse 2014; Prado-Román et al. 2012; Tafesse and Korneliussen 2011) recently characterized by a profound change, which has led to an evolution of the definition, roles, and functions of TSS (Rodriguez et al. 2015).

2 Objectives and Methodology

Starting from the complexity and the new facets characterizing TSS (and in particular their interactive and experiential dimension), the main objective of this work is to figure out if the experience logic falls within the main trends emerging from the recent (2010–2017) business and management international literature devoted to trade shows (TSS) and trade fairs (TFs).

Relating to this, the research question of the present chapter is as follows:

- RQ: Does the experience logic fall within the main trends emerging from the recent (2010–2017) literature devoted to the TS sector? If yes, what is the role of different TS stakeholders in the construction of the experience value?

In order to answer this research question, the present work adopts a process of systematic literature review (Galvagno 2017) concerning business and management articles published between 2010 and 2017 and dedicated to the topics of trade shows (TSS) and trade fairs (TFs). In particular, the research process has been divided into the following phases: (1) collection; (2) systematization/selection; (3) in-depth analysis of the identified review database. As a systematic review search begins with the identification of specific keywords and terms, which are built from the scoping study (Tranfield et al. 2003), in the first phase the most appropriate search strings have been identified (“trade show*”; “trade fair*”) and then employed in a subsequent systematic research.

Scopus and Web of Science are the electronic databases selected for the review, which have enabled the filtering of the results by (1) subject area (business, management, and accounting), (2) document type (article), and (3) time frame

(2010–2017). These databases were searched for articles containing “trade show” and “trade fair” in their titles, keywords, or abstracts. These specific search strings have been chosen for the review process, as Kirchgeorg et al. (2010) affirmed that the term “trade show” is regarded as a synonym for “trade fair.” Through the subsequent reading of the abstracts of the identified articles, papers that do not deal with the analyzed theme were deleted. In case of ambiguity (abstracts that did not allow the clear identification of the level of attention to the topic), the full text was read. At the end of this systematic process, a final database of 84 articles has been identified.

3 Findings

As shown in Table 1, from a temporal point of view, the number of articles dedicated to TSs and TFs declined between 2010 and 2013 (passing from 16 in 2010 to six in 2013) but increased during the biennium 2014–2015. This period of growth has been then followed by another period of decline during the subsequent biennium (2016–2017). In terms of journal distribution, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (15), *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism* (6), and *Industrial Marketing Management* (5) are the journals that devoted more space to the trade show/fairs theme.

From a methodological perspective, 35 papers adopt quantitative methods, 35 qualitative approaches, while the remaining (14) adopt mixed methods (Table 2).

In order to answer the first part of the research question (*Does the experience logic fall within the main trends emerging from the recent (2010–2017) literature devoted to the TS sector?*), the main trends, analyzed by the 2010–2017 articles devoted to TSs and TFs topics, have been extracted. Table 3 summarizes the review’s results.

Table 1 Temporal distribution of articles ($n = 84$)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Number of articles	16	9	9	6	11	14	10	9	84

Table 2 Adopted Methodologies

Methodology	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Quantitative	6	3	5	3	5	5	5	3	35
Qualitative	6	3	4	2	6	5	4	5	35
Mixed	4	3		1		4	1	1	14
Total	16	9	9	6	11	14	10	9	84

Table 3 Research trends

Research Trends	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Relationship marketing	7	6	6	2	7	10	3	4	45
Internationalization process	2	3	2	2	3	2	6		20
Experience logic marketing	4	1	3	1	2	4	1	2	18
New media presence	3			3	3	1	1	3	14

Overall, the thematic analysis of the selected articles identified four major tendencies tied to contemporary literature. In particular, alongside the leading role assumed by the trade show tool as an informative stage (Jeong 2016; Rinallo et al. 2016; Alberca-Oliver et al. 2015; Measson and Campbell-Hunt 2015; Oromendia et al. 2015; Sarmiento et al. 2015a, b; Bettis-Outland et al. 2010; Kirchgeorg et al. 2010) for the creation of relational networks (*TSs and relationship marketing*) in a perspective of opportunities for international growth/expansion (*TSs and internationalization process*), above all for small- and medium-sized firms (Kalafsky and Gress 2014; Jer 2014; Li and Shrestha 2013; Kontinen and Ojala 2011), there has been an increasing interest in the recent literature toward the emotional impact a trade show event can generate in a TS stakeholder (*TSs and experience logic marketing*).

The literature attention therefore moves from the purely economic and commercial aspects of the TS tool to the emotional/experiential component as a key factor for the overall effectiveness of trade show performance and as one of the main TS reasons for visitors’ participation (Gottlieb et al. 2014; Björner and Berg 2012; Rinallo et al. 2010).

The experiential impact needs to be sought not only during the planning/realization phase of a trade show event but also through an increasingly *omni-channel* strategic approach. Thus enabling the management of the TS online (websites, social media, virtual trade shows) and offline channels in a more systematic way and thereby giving visitors the uniformity of the TS online (*TSs and new media presence*) and offline experience (Gottlieb and Bianchi 2017; Singh et al. 2017; Wu and Wang 2016; Chongwatpol 2015; Dawson et al. 2014; Sarmiento et al. 2014; Tafesse 2014; De Vaujany et al. 2013; Melles 2013; Tafesse and Korneliussen 2013; Geigenmuller 2010; Kirchgeorg et al. 2010; Ling-Yee 2010). Table 4 provides a possible framework of the principal tendencies emerging from recent business and management literature devoted to the topics of TSs and TFs.

4.1 B2B Visitors' Perspective

Rinallo et al. (2010) are the first authors who dealt with this area of study during the review period (2010–2017). Focusing on the analysis of trade shows as interactive platforms, these authors apply the experiential logic to the professional visitors' expeditions at trade fairs in order to observe visitor movements across different stands and other event areas, analyze visitor interaction with the different experience providers on the stands and with other visitors, and to elicit visitor meanings in context and their evaluations of different experiences. At the same time, trade shows become, for industrial buyers, information sources, as the search for information is one of the main motivations for attending events. In particular, Rinallo et al. (2010) proposed the metaphor of trade show visits as embodied experiences because the informative situations faced by B2B visitors, during the TS events, are profoundly different from those experienced through other communication tools, as they are characterized by sensorial overwhelming, information overload, and physical fatigue.

Overall, the most salient elements of valuable trade show experiences are cognitive and relational in nature, as trade fair expeditions become, for visitors, learning moments (Sarmiento et al. 2014, 2015a, c), during which visitors can keep themselves up to date, escape the daily routines, and have time to reflect on broader issues.

In addition to the cognitive elements, the relational opportunities represent another fundamental driver of valuable trade show experiences (Sarmiento et al. 2014). In particular, visitors can actively attend trade shows in order to meet people, establish or maintain social bonds, and gain a sense of community with key actors in their business and relational networks (Momsen 2010). In this way, visitors themselves become important sources of knowledge, through the activation of informal conversations that contribute to the diffusion of knowledge about products and suppliers.

Together with the cognitive and relational components, the TS setting also offers a leisure factor thanks to the planning of cocktail hours, invitations to dinner, and social events. The main purposes of these activities are to relieve the professional visitor's tiredness and to reinforce social ties between TS participants.

In their work, Tafesse and Korneliussen (2012) analyzed how the TS booths' atmosphere (pleasant atmosphere, appealing product presentation, wide-open spaces) can influence visitors' mood states and consequently their purchase incidence (Kim and Mazumdar 2016; Gilliam 2015; Gopalakrishna et al. 2010).

By concentrating on the same stakeholder's category, Björner and Berg (2012) focus their attention on the collective experiences shared by professional attendees during the event. In particular, by participating in TS events together with others, attendees and visiting firms can share experiences, test products, and follow live

product demonstrations (Kim and Mazumdar 2016) as an active audience and as co-creators of TS experiences. Starting from these findings, the authors indicate the existence, in the event setting, of a “*practice of communication*,” that is, the simultaneous practice of business communication and experience based on collective community building. In particular, the very character of the events can activate visitors and turn them into active business actors and co-creators of the experiences and the interactive bonds created during trade show expeditions. In this way, TSs become interactive platforms, in which temporary communities (in this case of professional visitors) are created through shared experiences and for particular (commercial) purposes (Björner and Berg 2012).

In order to systematize these findings, the authors offer a theoretical framework based on experiences in the TS context. Starting from the assumption that exhibitions (with their own dramaturgy, choreography, and architecture) are essentially experiential, interactive, and relational, the proposed framework is composed of three affirmations: the creation of “collective experiences” is an important element in events; experiences in such settings are “co-created”; and these co-created experiences are created based on audience participation. By participating in events together, attendees share experiences, and, at the same time, they are involved in co-creating them as active participants.

In this way, according to Carù and Cova (2006), because contemporary consumers aim to be immersed into experiential settings in order to have a memorable experience, in the TS platforms, visitors yearn for immersing themselves into the exhibition environment through the fielding of all five stimuli: sense (product test); feel (emotional shows); think (technical and cognitive presentations); act (guest star shows with the visitors’ involvement); and relate (social dinners, cocktails hours).

4.2 B2C Visitors’ Perspective

In general, B2C trade shows may be somewhat different from B2B ones. They are characterized by a more liberal and friendly atmosphere, more exhibitors, lower entry fees, and a larger volume of attendees. These elements suggest that perceptions of effectiveness of a B2C trade show may possibly be different. In particular, more and more B2C visitors evaluate the perceived effectiveness of a trade show by judging its entertainment aspect (organization of special events, presentation of products, range of exhibits, gather product/service information). In this way, for consumer TS visitors, such special events and presentations are not perceived purely as a mean of product demonstrations, but they become an integral component of the overall entertainment experience of a trade show event (Gottlieb et al. 2011). Overall, trade shows can offer “highly stimulating environments with a great variety of offerings on display, which may facilitate the entertainment of B2C TS visitors” (Gottlieb et al. 2011: 22–23).

Also from the B2C perspective, TS visitors can participate in a trade show's experiential environment. They may even be viewed, in fact, as partial employees (Gottlieb et al. 2014), who actively participate in special events and product demonstrations, establish interactive relationships with other TS actors, browse a range of products, and collect a variety of brochures, as if it were a form of recreational shopping (Rodriguez et al. 2015).

4.3 Exhibitors' Perspective

With reference to the experiential logic from the exhibitors' perspective, in his work, Søylen (2010) underlines the evolution of trade shows from sales to festival platforms, by focusing on the role assumed by the exhibiting companies in this transformation process. This is a consequence of the characteristics of the new consumer who has become increasingly bored and always looking for entertaining and creative activities (Ahola 2012). Consequently, trade shows should continue the evolution of their core focus (began in the early 2000s), which moves from products–services–sales toward dialogues–relations–entertainment and finally experiences.

In particular, Rinallo et al. (2010) state that the experiences provided by exhibitors at trade shows are mainly based on offering visitors the opportunity to see, examine, and touch, in a professional and socialized context (Rodriguez et al. 2015; Sarmiento et al. 2014; Jin et al. 2013), samples, products, and prototypes as reminders able to relive the experience when the TS is over.

Exhibitors also host different types of in-stand events, which include product demonstrations, social and entertainment events, technical seminars, and conferences (Kim and Mazumdar 2016; Gilliam 2015; Gopalakrishna et al. 2010; Søylen 2010). More specifically, Bloch et al. (2017) explore in their work the impact of exhibitors' decisions, concerning a booth's design, on attracting attendees, as buyer preferences and business relationships are formed and nurtured in these spaces. Overall, the design of a booth plays a fundamental role in garnering visitors and providing a positive business atmosphere.

In particular, concerning product demonstrations, Kim and Mazumdar (2016) analyze trade shows as contexts where exhibitors can demonstrate three different stages of innovation during the same event: (1) early-stage products and prototypes, which are presented for the first time (debuts); (2) products moving toward a launch stage (concepts); and (3) finished new products, which are commercially available (market-ready products).

Exhibitors become, in this way, the main source of learning (Sarmiento et al. 2014, 2015a), through whom visitors can obtain in-depth information and knowledge that would be otherwise impossible to acquire. More specifically, the visitors'

experiences are mainly influenced by two categories of experiential providers: TS exhibitors and organizers. The first create experiences by replicating the entire set of what Schmitt (1999) defined as “experience providers” (people, products, visual communications, spatial environments, sounds) on their stands (Rinallo et al. 2010). The authors’ findings highlight how, among the different elements constituting experiences, the product presence and the relational factor represent the most important ones for visitors. For this reason, exhibitors should allocate resources for improving the quality of these two experiential elements and for guaranteeing knowledgeable and competent booth personnel for the visitors.

4.4 Organizers’ Perspective

TS organizers represent the second category of experiential providers identified by Rinallo et al. in their work (2010). In particular, the authors focus their attention on the experiential strategies adopted by trade show organizers, by highlighting how the accurate monitoring of visitor experiences allows organizers to design and realize more attractive events. More specifically the main role, assumed by TS organizers from an experiential perspective, concerns the arrangement of the exhibition space, by creating information and rest areas and setting up learning activities and social events. Overall, in a TS environment characterized by a proliferation of trade show events and by exhibitors and visitors with limited resources to participate, trade show organizers are asked to understand this dual situation, by offering experiential events where attendees can immerse themselves. In particular, trade show organizers assume, in the experience marketing logic, the absolute role of director, by selecting participants (exhibitors, market leaders, and innovating companies), designing the booth map and visitors’ routes in the exhibition stage, setting the tone of visitors’ experiences and by creating the setting in which the experiences, provided by everyone, are embedded.

Starting from an ethnographic and longitudinal field study addressed to visitors, participants, and organizers, Björner and Berg (2012) underline how the arrangement of interactive activities, during trade show events, can encourage experiences and interactions with the possibility of developing attachments between guests and organizers.

Table 6 summarizes the review’s results (concerning the role of the experience logic applied to the trade show sector), by showing for each research focus (line) and for each investigated stakeholder category (column), the authors who have dealt with them.

Table 6 Research focus: stakeholder category matrix

Main research focus	Analyzed stakeholder					
	Visitors B2B	Visitors B2C	Exhibitors	Organizers	Other stakeholders	
TSs as physical and cognitive experience (TSs as embodied experience)	Rinaldo et al. (2010)					
TSs as information sources	Rinaldo et al. (2010)		Rinaldo et al. (2010)			
TSs as learning moments	Sarmiento et al. (2014, 2015a, c), Rinaldo et al. (2010)		Sarmiento et al. (2014, 2015a), Rinaldo et al. (2010)		Player-Koro et al. (2017)	
Relational opportunities as fundamental driver of valuable TS experiences	Sarmiento et al. (2014), Momsen (2010), Rinaldo et al. (2010)	Rodriguez et al. (2015)	Rodriguez et al. (2015), Sarmiento et al. (2014), Jin et al. (2013)	Björner and Berg (2012)		
TS atmosphere and stakeholders' behavior	Kim and Mazumdar (2016), Gilliam (2015), Tafesse and Korneliusen (2012), Gopalakrishna et al. (2010)		Bloch et al. (2017), Kim and Mazumdar (2016), Gilliam (2015), Gopalakrishna et al. (2010)			
TSs and the practice of communication	Björner and Berg (2012)					
TSs and entertainment components		Gottlieb et al. (2011, 2014)				
TSs as facilitators of everyday consumer creativity		Ahola (2012)				
TSs as festival platforms			Ahola (2012), Söilen (2010)			
TSs and typologies of provided experiences			Kim and Mazumdar (2016), Rinaldo et al. (2010), Söilen (2010)	Rinaldo et al. (2010)		

5 Conclusions

The results of this work provide different contributions to TS literature and to business management. From the literature perspective, the review process enabled the identification and systematization of business and management articles, devoted to the trade shows (TSs) and trade fairs (TFs) studies, published between 2010 and 2017. In particular, through a thematic analysis, it has been possible to identify the main research focuses and trends emerging, from the recent TS literature, and to build a possible framework of synthesis (see Table 4).

In a second phase, the work focuses on the dynamics of the TS sector from the experiential logic perspective, by highlighting and deepening the role played by each stakeholders' category in the transformation of trade shows into interactive and experiential platforms.

Overall, from the review emerges how the key elements of valuable trade show experiences are cognitive and relational in nature. On one side, TSs become learning spaces (where visitors can participate in technical and informative presentations and test products) that engage buyers' creative thinking toward the solving of work-related problems (Rinallo et al. 2010), while from the other, they may transform themselves into interactive and relational platforms. In particular, participants cannot only be interactively immersed into the exhibition environment, through the organization of shows into the show (which may include the visitors' involvement), they can also establish and maintain relations with other TS stakeholders, in order to build professional and relational networks.

In addition to the cognitive and relational elements, the TS stages also offer a leisure component through the organization of cocktail hours and invitations to dinners and emotional/recreational events, with the main purpose of relieving the participants' tiredness and reinforcing their social ties born and built during the event. In other words, what renders trade show experiences so meaningful is the opportunity to test products, obtain in-depth information, speak to the people, and look each other in the eyes.

Faced with this scenario, the present work identifies, from a business management perspective, the main roles each category of TS participants is called to play in order to stage the trade fair experience. In particular, the outcomes of the trade show activities are particularly influenced by the experiences' quality and quantity proposed and organized by the principal TS providers: exhibitors and organizers.

TS organizers are the directors who actively plan visitors' experiences at the macro level, through the selection and casting of the actors (exhibitors, market leaders, and companies) and the design of the stage (planning of the booth map and visitors' routes in the exhibition setting) in which the experiences, offered by each TS stakeholders' category, are embedded. In order to reach these objectives, organizers should focus more attention on the creation of an emotional atmosphere through the offering of onstage shows, live music, informative moments, and celebrity presence. In addition, they are also called to reduce visitors' physical and mental fatigue through the inclusion of rest areas, the offering of multiple

informative sources (websites, exhibitors' maps), and through careful selection and distribution of exhibitors. Overall, the principal role attributed to TS organizers, from the experiential logic perspective, is the creation of the perfect context in which visitors and exhibitors can make the best of their trade show participation (Gottlieb et al. 2014; Rinallo et al. 2010).

At the same time, exhibitors become fundamental actors in the TS stage, whose principal task is to transform their booths into experiential settings by contributing, in this way, to the conversion of the trade show into a successful entertainment platform. TS booths' atmosphere, in fact, can highly influence the overall TS experience, the visitors' mood states, and, consequently, their purchase incidence (Gottlieb et al. 2014; Tafesse and Korneliussen 2012). In particular, exhibitors must consider, first of all, that trade show events are no longer mere opportunities for direct sales; on the contrary, they become places in which visitors are not only looking for information and for testing products; they want also to have fun and live an embedded experience (Rinallo et al. 2010).

In other words, trade show visitors today look for a stimulating environment, in which exhibitors help them to experience the offered products in a creative manner (ex. through expert staff, exciting visual props, presentation of prototypes or products that visitors can take away as a reminder of their TS experience, novel product demonstration) and to activate conversations and professional/relational networks (through the stimulation of casual meeting and social interactions in specific areas of their booths, organization of competitions, technical seminars, cocktail hours).

In order to make the TS experience really performing, visitors, in turn, are called to transform themselves into an active audience and into co-producers of the joint emotions lived during the event. In particular, from the experiential logic perspective, visitors should actively attend trade shows and immerse themselves into the TS environment, in order to establish interactive relationships with other TS actors, build and maintain business and relational networks, assimilate and spread knowledge about products and suppliers, share experiences, test products, follow and participate in live product demonstrations, browse a range of products, collect a variety of brochures, and participate in special events.

Overall, from the review emerges how all the actors, who take part in the trade show event, co-create it: organizers (the director of the TS stage); exhibitors (the main actors of the TS experience); and visitors (active audience, co-actors and co-producers of the overall experience), by confirming in this way the fact that the trade show business is fully part of the experience economy. Table 7 summarizes the main roles and tasks the different categories of TS stakeholders are called to play, from the experiential perspective.

Table 7 TS stakeholders' roles and tasks (from the experience logic)

Stakeholders	General role	TS experience components		
		Cognitive components	Relational components	Leisure components
		Main tasks		
Visitors	Transformation into an active audience and into co-producers of the joint emotions lived during the event	Assimilate and spread knowledge about products and suppliers, test products, follow and participate in live product demonstration, browse a range of products, collect a variety of brochures	Establish interactive relationships with other TS actors; build and maintain business and relational networks	Participate in leisure events
Exhibitors	Transformation of TS booths into experiential settings	Offer expert staff, present prototypes and products, organize novel product demonstration, propose technical seminars	Stimulate casual meetings, social interactions in specific areas of the booths, organize competitions	Offer exiting visual props, cocktail hours
Organizers	Creation of the experiential context (casting of the actors, design of the stage, maximization of the ambient effects)	Offer informative and learning moments, multiple informative sources (websites, exhibitors' maps)	Include rest areas, careful selection and distribution of exhibitors	Offer onstage shows, live music, celebrity presence

In conclusion, in the TS business, experience logic vision highlights that the value concept needs to be considered in a value ecosystem perspective, where many actors provide a contribution to value co-creation in an experiential perspective, according to the cognitive, relational, and leisure dimensions.

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The Experiential Approach in the Cosmetics Industry: The Eva Garden Case Study



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Abstract The work proposes a new management approach to analyzing the management processes of cosmetics companies in the experience logic and tests such a model on Eva Garden Srl, an Italian company specializing in the production and commercialization of makeup, in order to find new ways to create value for its customers, first of all, and for the company itself. We adapt the five-step experiential approach to the cosmetics industry. Starting from the analysis of the customer experience and moving on to the incentivization of employees in the experience marketing logic, we describe five managerial processes that could help marketing managers in the cosmetics industry to understand and improve customer experience: designing the experience; staging the experience; communicating the experience; monitoring the perceived quality of the experiential offer; training and motivating employees in the experiential perspective. We aim to propose a new interpretation of the value creation processes in the cosmetics industry, which is intrinsically experiential (as in cultural or food-related experiences), and describe the peculiarities of the experience logic approach in this industry.

1 Introduction

The wellness industry, which includes the cosmetics industry, has been the object of numerous studies in the marketing and management literature, but no studies, to the best of our knowledge, have focused on the experience logic marketing approach to meet the desiderata of modern consumers and create value for both customers and companies.

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This industry is growing and the drivers that shape it are mainly the desire to have a beautiful body, be happy, live longer, have time for themselves, and achieve one's goals (Yeoman et al. 2014). Even during the time of economic crisis, sales of lipsticks grew exponentially to satisfy sensorial and emotional dimensions by providing the excitement and hedonic pleasure of consumption and to compensate for everyday stress and frustration deriving from the difficult economic conditions (Elliot 2008; Ling 2012).

Focusing on the cosmetics industry, cosmetics consumers today are well informed and empowered; they look for quality ingredients as well as “green,” moisturizing, and high-performing products. These customers simultaneously use multiple distribution channels, want to have an active role on social networks to give and receive advice, and to share their brand experience with others. They not look only for a good quality/price relationship and a courteous sales transaction; they are mainly seeking a place where they can receive care and emotional involvement (Beauty Report 2016).

Value attributed to cosmetics depends heavily on the emotional involvement created with the characteristics of the cosmetics products, the shops, and the advertising and on interactions with other users that mostly happen on social media and other online platforms (Lobschat et al. 2013).

Therefore, cosmetics consumption can be interpreted from the perspective of the experience logic approach, which assumes that consumers are increasingly looking for goods and/or services that are “experientialized” (Schmitt 1999, 2003; Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006) or unique and memorable experiences and/or personal transformations (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2014, 2016; Boswijk et al. 2012), and managerial approaches in the experience logic would help to satisfy the cosmetics consumer's desires.

Such a perspective is coherent with what has been developed up to now in the management literature on wellness and more specifically on cosmetics, but there is a lack of theoretical approaches and empirical studies in the experience perspective. In particular, the aim of this study is to utilize a new marketing approach in the experience logic (Pencarelli and Forlani in this book), one which was developed for the museum sector (Pencarelli et al. 2017), and adapt it to the cosmetics industry by means of a case study conducted by the author in an Italian makeup company. In this perspective, the research questions are as follows:

- RQ1: How can management processes of cosmetics companies be interpreted by adapting the experience logic approach to the cosmetics industry?
- RQ2: What does the model suggest when applied to a cosmetics company case study in terms of theoretical and managerial implications?

In order to answer the research questions, we adapt a five-step experience logic managerial approach to the cosmetics industry and apply it to Eva Garden Srl, a typical, small Italian cosmetics company that deals both with dealers and final consumers.

2 Literature Review: Cosmetics Industry and Experiences

There are many managerial studies (Becheri 1997; Koustelios 2003; Gregori 2002, 2005; Montagnini 2006; Trudeau and Shobeiri 2016; Xu-Priour and Cliquet 2013; Gregori and Cardinali 2008, 2013, 2015; McKechnie et al. 2007; Pencarelli and Dini 2017; Conferente and Brunetti 2017) on the different sectors of the wellness industry.

First, we agree with the wide definition of the wellness industry suggested by Gregori (2005), which refers to all the companies specialized in the offer of different typologies of products and services aimed at satisfying and improving the psycho-physical condition of individuals and avoiding invasive interventions. The concept of wellness is understood as an evolution with respect to health. In this perspective, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a complete state of psycho-physical and social wellness and not only the absence of disease (Gregori 2002).

Although demand and competition have undergone profound changes, the wellness industry does not show a corresponding improvement in managerial skills, and new managerial models are needed (Gregori 2002, 2005). Some authors stress, for example, that the spa industry, which is part of the wellness industry, has made huge investments but needs to improve its communication, organizational, and managerial processes and develop new managerial approaches (Gregori and Cardinali 2015). Furthermore, spas need to invest in technology (Yeoman et al. 2014) and integrate new services such as beauty and fitness and also external services connected to the territory such as culture and food (Pencarelli and Dini 2017).

Focusing on the cosmetic industry, the object of this work, as there is not a widely accepted single definition of this industry in the literature, building on the cosmetics products classification suggested in Beauty Report 2016, we propose that “the cosmetics industry refers to all the companies dealing with beauty and healthcare offering at least one of the following products: facial, body, body hygiene, and mouth hygiene products, facial, eyes, lips and hands makeup products, perfume, hair and scalp, gift wrap or makeup cases.” These products are generally sold in the following distribution channels: pharmacy, perfumery, large distribution, herbalist shop, home sales, mail sales, sales to beauty institutes, hair salon, and/or online (Beauty Report 2016).

The European cosmetics industry is a science-driven and highly innovative sector valued at €77 billion in retail sales prices in 2016, the largest in the world. The largest national markets are Germany (€13 billion), United Kingdom (€11.5 billion), France (€11.4 billion), and Italy (€9.9 billion).¹ In Italy, the industry is fragmented and composed of small companies and few big players. Cosmetics companies invest also during times of crisis to face the increasing domestic competition and demand evolution (Beauty Report 2016); however, cosmetics consumers expect an increasingly qualified service-oriented approach

¹Source: www.cosmeticeurope.eu access 01/12/2017.

(Beauty Report 2016), and new managerial approaches that meet cosmetics consumers' desiderata are needed.

The marketing and service management approach (Lovelock and Wirtz 2007; Grönross 2009) seems to be suitable for cosmetics companies, which, although they manufacture products, also offer services and need a strong customer and service orientation (Gregori and Cardinali 2013, 2015). Furthermore, these companies need to develop relationships with all the partners of the value chain—suppliers, actors within the distribution channel and end consumers—in a systemic perspective of value co-generation process (Vargo and Lush 2008; Ferrero 2013; Grönross and Gummeros 2014; Pencarelli and Conti 2017). In fact, value-in-use may be co-created by service providers alone, by customers alone, and/or jointly (Grönross and Gummeros 2014). Providers also could facilitate the process of creation and enjoyment of the value by managing the platform of interactions and integrating the applied resources with the competences and resources of the beneficiary before value is realized (Grönross and Gummeros 2014; Vargo et al. 2008; Lush and Vargo 2014).

However, we agree with the idea that the logic of service must be surpassed with management approaches within the logic of experience (Pencarelli 2017; Pencarelli and Forlani in this book) even for the cosmetics industry, and we argue that cosmetics companies need to focus on consumer experiences rather than simply on goods and services (Schmitt 1999; Pine and Gilmore 1999). The experiential approaches recognize that consumers make consumption choices guided by emotions and feelings as well as by rational thinking (Pencarelli 2017). This is true especially in the cosmetics industry where consumers do not buy only products and/or services but want to enjoy pleasant shopping experiences and other kinds of experiences. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by proposing to create and manage experiences according to the five-step experience logic approach described in the next paragraph.

In particular, we believe that, in the cosmetics field, two approaches to the experience can be developed: the “experientialization” of products (Schmitt 1999; 2003; Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006) and the experience and transformation intended as new businesses are added to goods and services on the value progression scale suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

Few marketing and managerial studies have analyzed the cosmetics industry through concepts connected to experiences. For example, Trudeau and Shobeiri (2016) affirm that conversation, advocacy, and affiliation are the three significant dimensions of social currency that have a positive impact on all the dimensions of brand experience (i.e., sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral), which play a major role in shaping consumers' decisions. Therefore, the authors suggest that cosmetics companies should facilitate consumer-to-consumer interactions in such a way as to create a superior brand experience.

Xu-Priour and Cliquet (2013) analyzed French and Chinese cosmetics markets and demonstrated that consumer enjoyment of the shopping experience and consumer attitudes toward store channels are derived from seven aspects of recreational shopping, i.e., social aspects of retail environment, service quality, browsing,

bargain hunting, social interaction, enduring involvement, and brand experience. Therefore, cosmetics companies should better design and manage these elements to create more value for customers from their shopping experience.

Conferente and Brunetti (2017) analyzed the role of intermediaries in the cosmetic industry, in particular in the hair care sector, and found that the professionals do not only deliver the products and the producer's brand identity but help the manufacturer to extract more meaning from the brand. The Authors affirm that this strategic alliance between the manufacturer and the intermediary may provide several benefits for the company and suggest to understand the activities that the commercial partner can do in order to co-create value helping the supplier to deliver higher value to the final customer.

In this work, we assume that cosmetics companies need to be interpreted in a new marketing perspective based on the experience logic in order to find new ways to co-create value for and with customers, companies, and all the stakeholders. In this regard, we agree with the idea that experiences are private, personal events that occur in response to some stimulation and involve the entire being as a result of observing or participating in an event (Schmitt 2003: 17). Therefore, companies should strategically manage the entire customer experience process (customer experience management) and to the scope develop an "experiential" platform capable of offering an experiential value promise focused on customer experience (Schmitt 1999; Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; Pencarelli 2017). The experientialized goods approach is urgently needed in the cosmetics industry, where products need to be integrated with attributes to enrich and differentiate traditional products, especially through design and packaging of products and engaging shops.

Furthermore, we agree with the definition of experience given by Pine and Gilmore (1999) as a new economic offer that the consumer lives as a personal and unique event and in which she/he is engaged on the emotional, physical, intellectual, and/or even spiritual level. In addition, the experience with cosmetics products is characterized by two aspects: (1) cosmetics products are classified as experience goods (Klein 1998) (for example, cultural products and food), as they naturally stimulate the senses and evoke feelings connected to beauty and wellness; (2) it is important to safeguard beauty and wellness of the body; a positive cosmetics experience needs to avoid damaging the body or the health of individuals; therefore, the cosmetics experience is a negative one if it damages the body or health.

Cosmetics companies may co-create with cosmetics consumers different types of experiences by utilizing the four dimensions of Pine and Gilmore (1999): entertainment, education, aesthetics, and evasion, so as to create experiences and transformations at the physical, emotional, and intellectual levels. The greater the level of engagement (e.g., emotional involvement, participation, observation, etc.) of the person and the capacity of the company to create the best contextual conditions (first, the offer of high-quality and interesting services), the more memorable the experience is, the higher the interest to re-live that experience is. In particular, a cosmetics company could co-create positive and memorable experiences with the customer along the lines of the five-step process proposed in the following section of this paper.

We also agree with the definition of transformation offered by Pine and Gilmore (1999), which, adapted to the cosmetics sector, is the result of a series of guided experiences (as defined above) crafted to match an important cosmetics customer's aspiration and that it changes the customer mainly on the physical, emotional, and psychological level. As with experiences, transformations need to protect the body and may be of different types.

For example, a customer, after taking part in a series of experiences with makeup can improve the art of applying makeup, thus feeling improved physically and psychologically, or, after a series of massages, a woman can feel better and healthier, or, with special skin care treatment, a person can solve a skin problem and feel aesthetically and socially improved.

The cosmetics offering system, which will be described in the following paragraph, consists of an offer that includes goods, services, experiences, and transformations. It is based on the "augmented service offering" model (Grönroos 2009) properly adapted to the cosmetics industry. The original model is made up of a basic core package of essential services, facilitation services (necessary to provide the essential experiences), and supporting services, which are able to differentiate the offering; in addition, there are three elements on which to act inherent in the process of service delivery: service accessibility, customer–supplier interaction, consumer participation (Grönroos 2009).

3 Five-Step Model to Manage the Cosmetics System Offering in the Experience Perspective

A five-step model to manage a cosmetics company in the experience perspective was built on the basis of the Pencarelli and Forlani in this book, and the suggested framework by Pencarelli et al. (2017) on the cosmetics sector literature described in the previous paragraph and further literature on experience logic (Schmitt 1999, 2003; Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006). In order to create positive and memorable experiences from which transformations can result (as defined above), these companies need to follow the five managerial steps outlined below.

Step 1: Designing the Experience. The experience design implies studying the demand of experiences and transformations through a deep understanding of the consumer processes in the offline and online contexts (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006; Heinonen et al. 2010) and identifying the customer target segments, designing the customer value proposition, defining the delivery mode, and communicating the experiential offer (Zomerdijsk and Voss 2010).

The model considers the offering system of cosmetics companies to be a package consisting of the "core" or essential product (the cosmetics products) and (eventual) facilitating products, the "core" experience (the shopping experience) and other experiences/transformations that are created for final consumers and bundled with the essential product, the facilitating and supporting services in specific cosmetics environments.

The “core” or essential product of a cosmetics company is the offer of cosmetics products. In particular, the consumer can buy core products directly in shops (large distribution, for example) or online shops with no advice/assistance or consultancy and/or no interest in experiencing store environments or the advice/assistance of experts in cosmetics store environments (for example, of beauticians in makeup corners of beauty centers). In the first case, it is a “purchase of goods”; in the second case, it is a “shopping experience” connected to “experientialized goods” or products enriched with services in specific environments.

The facilitating products may be included in the offering system and help to show, try, and sell cosmetics products (for example, specific displayers, furniture, etc.) and live experiences. The facilitating services of a cosmetics company consist of the sale service, which allows access to the essential product (the “purchase of goods”) and of the advice/assistance or consultancy service of experts, which allows the basic assisted shopping experience connected to “experientialized goods.” Finally, the supporting services such as bar, Internet, and other services in store environments contribute to enriching the shopping experience and other experiences, thus differentiating the company from competitors. Store environments refer to the physical aspects (furnishings) and intangible aspects (colors, lights, perfume, internal design, comfort, etc.) of store or shopping environments (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006).

In order to co-create positive and memorable shopping experiences and other experiences/transformations with customers, the company must offer high-quality products, high-quality and interesting services, and engaging store environments, both alone (if it has its own shops) or in collaboration with distribution channel intermediaries (e.g., a dealer, beauty center, spa, thermal baths center, etc.) and apply the following rules (Pine and Gilmore 1999):

- theme the experience, i.e., dramatize it by creating a story to help customers participate, in harmony with the character of the company;
- leave an indelible impression on customers;
- eliminate anything that may distract customers from the theme;
- encourage customers to buy products as tangible evidence of their experience;
- define a price as a function of the value of the experience;
- remember that the more sensory an experience is, the more memorable it is; and
- convey the idea that the customers are buying an experience when they pay for a ticket.

A cosmetics company needs to offer the opportunity to live different experiences as personal and unique events in which the customer is engaged on the physical, sensorial, emotional, psychological, and/or intellectual level. As Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggest, cosmetics companies should help the customer to live the desired experiential dimensions beyond the aesthetic dimension (simply being there, e.g., in a beauty center, a spa, etc.), the fun dimension (having a coffee and relax on a sofa in a cosmetics shop), the learning dimension (learning new concepts linked to beauty and wellness), and/or the escape dimension (“doing something,” playing an

active role such as trying skin care products). Today, the use of technology in the co-creation of experience is fundamental (Pine and Gilmore 2014: 26); therefore, cosmetics companies should integrate effectively the real with the virtual.

As cosmetics experiences are co-created by the customer and the company (and its partners of the distribution channels), the greater the level of engagement of the customer and the capacity of the company (and partners) to create the best contextual conditions (high-quality products, high and interesting services, engaging environments, theme the experience, etc.) is, the more positive and memorable the cosmetics experience is. For example, a cosmetics consultant provides a high-quality service if he/she is passionate and well trained and provides interesting assistance if he/she adopts new methods such as edutainment or gives advice for an easy and quick makeup routine, which is useful for busy women who want to look nice every day.

Cosmetics companies could offer not only isolated experiences but also customer-changing experiences or transformations, which may improve customers at the physical (sensorial), emotional, psychological, and/or intellectual level. To this end, as Pine and Gilmore (2016) suggest, they should identify the aspirations their customers desire to achieve, define an offer consisting of a series of experiences to satisfy those aspirations (for example treatments such as massages to improve one's aesthetic aspect and health, or a makeup course to enhance the face and become transformed at physical and psychological levels), guide the customers through the transformation processes (with personal assistance during the experiences), and charge for the demonstrated outcomes the customers achieve.

Step 2: Staging the Experience. The experience has to be “staged” for the “guests” (Pine and Gilmore 1999) by, on the one hand, mobilizing external resources and expertise (e.g., cosmetics designer, suppliers of packaging, internal designers for creating engaging store environments, dealers, beauticians, etc.) and on the other managing the relationship with the customers and partners in a strategic way, as experiences are co-created with the cosmetics company, its partners and the customers (Gronroos and Gummeros 2014; Xu-Priour and Cliquet 2013).

To create positive and memorable experiences, all the company staff and the suppliers of raw materials and partners of the distribution channels and other partners (e.g., makeup artists, internal designers) should work hard to co-create the experiences for final consumers and be engaged in all tasks, as even the most mundane of tasks can engage in a memorable way (Pine and Gilmore 2014).

Furthermore, to create value with the relationship with the customers, the cosmetics company and its partners of the distribution channels should facilitate (Grönroos 2009):

- (1) the accessibility of the offer (Pencarelli 2013); companies should allow the customers to access—at information, physical, temporal, spatial, procedural, and economic levels—easily and effectively to goods, services, experiences;
- (2) the interaction between the customer and the company and partners and among customers;

(3) the active role of the customer.

Step 3: Communicating the Experience. This step involves the use of various communication approaches and tools, both offline and online, directed toward the various market segments in order to effectively communicate the experience.

Companies in the cosmetics sector should communicate emotions and also give information connected to their offer before, during, and after the stage of experience, in order to anticipate, reinforce, and prolong the memory of the dream of beauty and wellness connected to the offer (Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006). Furthermore, they need to manage four critical areas of social media in the experience logic perspective: social community, social publishing (share contents on social networks sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google Plus or Blog, You Tube, Flickr, Slideshare), social entertainment, and social commerce (Tuten and Solomon 2014). The final goal is to reinforce the relationship experience with customers and stakeholders, engaging them in proactive behaviors. Online brand-related forums widely affect consumers' impressions of brands (Marzocchi et al. 2013).

The company strategy should contribute to developing and reinforcing the brand image of the company. The communication of the company offer can be reinforced if retailers contribute to communicating the product brands in their portfolio.

Step 4: Monitoring the Perceived Quality of the Experience. This means carrying out periodic customer satisfaction surveys with regard to the offer in order to verify that customer experiences are satisfactory and to identify the gap between user expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml et al. 1990). In particular, the manufacturer should, in collaboration with the distribution channel partners, measure the satisfaction level for services (sale, assistance, the shop atmosphere, etc.) and for the expected as well as the lived experiences. The identification of eventual dissatisfaction factors may help to improve the experiential offer and design new and more effective experiences.

Step 5: Training and Motivating Employees According to the Experience Perspective. The personnel, especially front office personnel who deal with all the interactions with customers, should be trained to delight their "guests" and be motivated to offer memorable experiences, by knowing how to build memorable experiences, which may yield transformations (Pine and Gilmore 1999), as explained in Step 1. To this aim, it is important to use levers such as empowerment, training, and incentives to help personnel to create more and more positive and memorable experiences (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 2014).

4 Case Study Methodology Applied to Eva Garden Srl

Eva Garden Srl was chosen as a case study, as it represents a typical small Italian company in the cosmetics industry, which offers wide and interesting experiential products to final consumers and to partners in the distribution channel. The

company is based in Pesaro, has 15 employees, and has specialized in the production and commercialization of makeup for face, eyes, lips and hands since 1979. It manufactures more than 2,000 items targeted to consumers (mostly women aged 30–60) who want high-quality products and beauty advice. It sells through dealers to more than 1,500 beauty centers (90%), hairdressers, and pharmacies (10%) in Italy (50% of sales) and abroad (mainly in Europe). Eva Garden has been selling makeup to consumers through a makeup lounge in the new company headquarters since 2007 (where consumers can buy and obtain makeup consultancy from beauty consultants), through a shop in Pesaro since 2012 and online (the company and beauticians manage the online consultancy) since 2015.

The exploratory-descriptive work uses the qualitative methodology and the case study method (Yin 2009). In this study, different survey techniques were used in the March–October 2017 case study period to ensure validity of the results, in particular:

- Semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews with the owner and two managers of the company (the questions regarded the description of the five-step model).
- A focus group with eight dealers (the questions regarded the description and a 1–5 scale evaluation of the cooperation with Eva Garden and beauticians/hairdressers/pharmacies and of the Eva Garden experiences/transformations) and one with eight beauticians (the questions regarding the description and a 1–5 scale evaluation of the collaboration with Eva Garden and dealers, Eva Garden experiences/transformations) and two focus groups with eight consumers (women, age 30–50) (the questions regarded the evaluation of accessibility, interaction with the front line staff and with other consumers, the active participation of the consumers and the description and a 1–5 scale evaluation of experiences/transformations).
- Analysis of information available on the company (e.g., the website, brochures, catalogues).
- Participant observation by the author during the case-study period to the following events: Cosmoprof 2017 in Bologna, makeup lounge and shop of Eva Garden in Pesaro, and two beauty centers of Eva Garden.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. To ensure credibility (or internal validity), data triangulation and the “informants” approval of the research report were made.

5 Findings: The Case of Eva Garden Srl

In regard to Point 1: Eva Garden does not conduct consumer market analysis but deeply understands customers’ desiderata, purchasing and using processes of makeup products through the continuous feedback received from its partners, e.g., the supplier of semi-finished goods, containers, and packaging, the dealers,

the beauticians, hairdressers, pharmacies, and from web bloggers (Klio, Gossip, Nabla Cosmetics, etc.), online platforms (e.g., Beautytrends.com), and final consumers through comments on Facebook page Eva Garden Makeup.

When Eva Garden designs makeup products, it takes into consideration the needs of final customers who look for product quality in terms of durability, comfort (pleasantness), high-quality raw materials (whether natural or chemical), and that respect the constraints imposed by law.

The company co-designs the products together with Intercos Spa, an Italian supplier of semi-finished products, which interprets the latest trends seen through the eyes of four great fashion guides, art, design, and future and places on the market new semi-finished products and products with new colors, materials, technologies, and formulations. Eva Garden, together with the supplier, selects from the wide Intercos offer the semi-finished products that will go into its twice-yearly launch of two mini collections (on average five products) for spring–summer and autumn–winter. They take into consideration the needs of European women in search of a good mix between long-lasting freshness and pleasantness of the product.

Furthermore, Eva Garden co-designs its containers and packaging with specialized manufacturers and also co-designs with furniture manufacturers' specific furnishings line (display cases, drawers, mirrors, and makeup chairs) for beauty centers and other centers to help selling Eva Garden makeup.

The minimalist style according to the company's philosophy of enhancing the sensorial experience. For example, preference is given to shapes that are pleasing to the eye and to the touch (e.g., containers with soft-touch effects, colored packaging that recalls makeup palettes, etc.).

Finally, with this philosophy, the company co-designs with the partners of the distribution channel the experiential offer for final consumers by defining dedicated makeup corners with goods, services, and engaging environments. The company, therefore, educates dealers, beauticians, hairdressers, and pharmacies with the ultimate aim of helping to sell, thus creating value for the final consumer.

The offer system of Eva Garden is shown in Table 1.

The experiences and transformations are built on the core goods (make-up), facilitating b2b goods (make-up furniture), facilitating services for b2c markets (sale service and beauty consultancy) and supporting services (make-up service, training service, café and Internet).

The experiential offers to final consumers are co-created thanks to the intermediation system in dedicated makeup environments made up of physical and immaterial elements. All the experiences and transformations are built around the theme of sensorial involvement, which is based on the high-quality of beauty goods, high-quality and interesting services, and on engaging store environments. The complete offer is based on the idea that makeup should be comfortable, durable, to be used every day in terms of total look and not only an aesthetic but also curative, integrating beauty and well-being. In addition, consumers must be able to try the products, to feel pleasant sensations while shopping, be able to learn notions related to makeup, and, finally, to relate to others in stores and online.

Table 1 Offer of Eva Garden Srl

Type of offer	Description
“Core” goods (makeup)	Eva Garden makeup products are goods aimed to satisfy desires of aesthetical improvement of consumers
Facilitating goods for b2b markets (makeup furniture)	Eva Garden makeup furniture such as displays, drawers, mirrors and makeup chairs to deliver to beauty centres, hairdressers, and pharmacies
“Core” experiences (shopping experience)	Eva Garden products are purchased in the shopping area of the final consumers at the beauty centers, hairdressers and pharmacies and at Eva Garden makeup lounge and shop, which includes the beauty consultancy of experts and living the dedicated make up environments
Experiences connected to the makeup made by beauty experts	Paid makeup experience for special occasions such as a wedding in which a personalized makeup suitable to enhance your face is required. The experience is offered at beauty centers and at Eva Garden by makeup artists and beauty consultants
Experiences connected to “open door days”	Daily events co-created by Eva Garden and beauty centres where makeup artists/beauty consultants di Eva Garden by beauty centers, hairdressers, and pharmacies do makeup ad hoc for consumers who buy at least one product used for makeup
Experiences connected to the self-makeup lessons	Individual or repeated self-makeup lessons made by Eva Garden and beauticians for final consumers
Experiences connected to the study-holiday	Weekly vacation in which beauticians/hairdressers/ pharmacists and distributors attend the lessons on product, makeup, marketing, sales and merchandising techniques and share the holiday
Transformations connected to makeup/sale professional courses	Training courses for beauticians/hairdressers/ pharmacists on the product and sales techniques; at the end of the courses they acquire knowledge and skills on the product and on how to sell it
Transformations connected to management courses	Marketing training and sales techniques courses for retailers; knowledge and skills on products and sales methods are increased

The “core” shopping experience is carried out in a way assisted by the owner of the center who tries to intrigue the customer, invite her to try the products, or have them applied and give personalized information. The technique usually adopted is edutainment to convey notions in a professional but easy and light way. The owner generally anticipates the shopping experience when the customer requests a treatment (e.g., during a massage) or can talk about the makeup products that best suit the client and/or present new products. The consumer enjoys an experience that is, above all, sensory, in which sight and touch are stimulated. Moreover, the consumer lives an emotional and intellectual experience because the communication and the products evoke emotions, and the learned notions produce gratification on the intellectual level.

The company's makeup lounge allows to live the most engaging and memorable shopping experience is the better-equipped area than those of the centers described above. It is a nice and colorful space, where many collections of products are laid out in displayers and drawers, a space with three mirrors and three makeup chairs where beauty consultants perform product tests. In addition, customers can sit in comfortable armchairs and read magazines or watch videos on fashion and makeup trends and have a coffee. They can browse online or talk to other customers. For online shopping, assistance is also guaranteed by experts (not yet in chat, by mail or social networks). However, in addition to the products and the environments, to achieve a positive and memorable shopping experience, the ability of the owner of the center to involve customers and the interest on the part of the consumer remain fundamental.

With regard to customer engagement processes aimed at satisfying the need to improve facial appearance and psycho-physical well-being, Eva Garden and beauty centers through staff and beauticians offer the experience of self-makeup lessons to final consumers for a minimum of two hours, which can also take place for groups of up to six people. The experience is highly personalized to match the needs of the final consumer, who may, for example, wish to focus on the preparation of the skin as a base for makeup or on daily fast makeup routines or a makeup suitable for special occasions.

Customers attribute a value of 4.5 to the experiential offer and affirm to live mainly physical (sensorial) and emotional experiences and also the aesthetic, learning, entertainment, and evasion dimensions of the experiences.

The experience connected to the study holidays in tourist destinations in Italy and abroad is targeted to the partners of the distribution channels. It lasts one week and consists of half-day of lessons on products, makeup techniques, marketing, sales, and visual merchandising held by external experts aimed at retailers, beauticians and owners of hair salons and pharmacies and dealers, and half-day free time. In addition to knowledge on products and how to apply makeup and sell, participants also socialize in the free time with colleagues and experts.

Transformations are targeted to the partners of the distribution channels and occur at the end of paid training courses. Regarding the makeup and sales professional courses for beauticians, hairdressers, and pharmacies, Eva Garden adopts the approach of edutainment, and courses are structured in five days: (1) "Know the Eva Garden universe" (one day): the aim is to make known the qualities and characteristics of Eva Garden products and their use for sale purposes and the ways to know and approach consumers and techniques of communication, sales, and loyalty; (2) "experience" (two days): is aimed at learning the theory and practice for basic and advanced makeup, respectively, through interactive technical makeup sessions to enhance a face with makeup in five minutes and complete makeup in 25 min; (3) "expertise" (two days): focused on theory and practice to enhance a face with nude makeup and fashion makeup with the use of products for sale.

The attention to the customer experience by Eva Garden is also extended to retailers who attend training courses aimed at improving the skills necessary to improve the overall experience of final consumers.

Management training courses for dealers typically last three days and are held by external business consultants and accountants. The participants acquire notions useful for selling the products and for interacting with customers. Eva Garden sales and marketing directors teach how to finalize sales to the consumer, emphasizing makeup as a total look, and, to this end, to get customers to try products by applying a lipstick or blush or mascara as a free item, e.g., a bonus offered at the end of an aesthetic treatment.

Partners of the distribution channels are highly satisfied with Eva Garden's offers. In particular, dealers (4.6 in a 1–5 scale evaluation) and beauticians (4.7) are highly satisfied with the cooperation and the offering system of the manufacturer. Beauticians are satisfied with the cooperation with dealers (4) and also dealers have a quite satisfactory opinion (3.8) of the cooperation with beauticians. Only some dealers complain about the difficulty to improve the sale skills of beauticians.

Regarding Step 2 (staging the experience), the company collaborates with partners in the distribution channels and with freelancers such as makeup artists, beauty consultants, interior designers, and schools of aesthetics in order to stage experiences for final consumers. It is therefore a matter of co-staging experiences with partners and final consumers who are satisfied with the elements of the offer described below (Table 2).

Table 2 Accessibility, interaction, and the active role of consumers in EG makeup corners/shops

Elements of offer	Description
Informational accessibility	Information can be easily obtained online at www.evagarden.com (B to C) and evagardenpro.com (B to B) and by phone to Eva Garden and beauticians/hairdressers/pharmacies. Some consumers would appreciate more information on products by beauticians
Physical accessibility	It is easy to access the large shops and makeup lounge of Eva Garden beauticians/hairdressers/pharmacies; makeup corner in beauty centres/hairdressers/pharmacies are generally small and make up corner should be much more valorized
Temporal accessibility	Good opening times: daily from 8.30 a.m. to 8 p.m., except Monday; 24 h 24 temporal access for on online shop
Spatial accessibility	The beauty centers/hairdressers and pharmacies and Eva Garden shops and makeup lounge can be easily accessed by private means of transportation
Procedural accessibility	Services are easily accessible; credit card payment and delayed payment can be made
Economic accessibility	Competitive prices of products and experiences considering the very high quality of products and services
Company/beauticians/hairdressers/pharmacists interactions with consumers	Good interactions between customers and the company and distribution channel and company directly that answer quickly to questions directly or by phone, email and on Facebook and YouTube
Interactions among customers	Consumers talk frequently among themselves in shops but mainly online
Active role of consumer	Consumers play an active role in shopping by asking information about products and trying products

With regard to Step 3 (communicating the experience and the transformation), the company under examination invests increasingly in communication, has dedicated personnel for marketing and communication activities, and uses the following means:

- B to C website www.evagarden.com (online shop) and B to B website www.evagardenpro.com and the social media Facebook and YouTube;
- direct communication to dealers, beauty centers/hairdressers/pharmacies, beauty consultants, and makeup artists;
- events like trade shows, such as Cosmoprof;
- sponsorship by Rai, Rossini Opera Festival, Vis Pesaro women's football.

The communication made by the partners in the sales points is integrated with the company's communication.

The purpose of the site and social networks is to attract the attention that focuses on emotional aspects; then, more detailed information of the products is provided, above all on the B to C site, from company staff and distributors and through product labels. Eva Garden is renewing its communication under the banner of minimalism, freshness, and rediscovery of colors, especially in packaging that is no longer black and white but colored. In the videos, the company does not use testimonials of famous people but of little known models, and the aim is to intrigue.

On Facebook, posts are published twice a week, and there are always many comments, but there is still a lack of coordination in the management of requests for information and orders, which are placed at the same time on online shops, email, and Facebook. There is a lack of strong and coordinated communication in the distribution channel made difficult by the length of the canal and the lack of propensity to sell in certain beauty centers.

Eva Garden has rarely conducted customer satisfaction surveys with dealers and beauticians/hairdressers/pharmacies and final consumers in regard to goods and services (Step 4: monitoring the perceived quality of the experience) but receive daily feedback of its complete offer (offline and online), and the quality of experiences and transformations has been never assessed. However, the company receives daily feedback from customers directly (email, website, Facebook page, etc.) and through distributors.

Finally (Step 5: training and motivating employees and partners according to the experience logic), employees and partners (dealers, beauticians, etc.) attend regularly courses in technical areas (products, makeup techniques, etc.) and learn also how to improve the customer experience. Eva Garden trains the distribution channels partners in a systematic way, as it is aware that they are the true actors who stage the experiences.

6 Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the five-step experience logic approach (Pencarelli and Forlani in this book and Pencarelli et al. 2017) can be adapted to the cosmetics industry to create value for customers, cosmetics companies, and partners of the value chain. In fact, Eva Garden Srl, an Italian company specialized in the production and commercialization of makeup, widely adopts such an approach.

The study is in line with the management literature on the cosmetics and wellness industry (Gregori and Cardinali 2008, 2015). It confirms the importance to pass from a service logic to an experience logic and establishes of a higher level of validity for the newly developed concept of experience logic management approach.

The proposed model underlines that the experiential offering system of cosmetics companies (the manufactures) may consist of experiences in the form of “experientialized goods” (Schmitt 1999, 2003; Ferraresi and Schmitt 2006) and other experiences and transformations (Pine and Gilmore 1999), which are built on goods and services and dedicated environments. Therefore, cosmetics companies may enrich the offer of goods, thematize the experiential offer, and strongly involve customers, thus differentiating themselves from competitors and increasing customer loyalty.

Furthermore, the suggested model highlights that the experience logic approach needs to be used in a network perspective, as cosmetics companies (the manufacturers) cooperate with partners of the distribution channel to co-create value for consumers. The exception is if the manufacturer owns its shops or other distribution channels. To this end, the cosmetics company has to co-create value in collaboration with partners of the channel with the final goal of creating value for the final consumers.

Eva Garden offers a wide range of experiences to consumers based on high-quality goods and services and engaging environments. It co-creates value for final consumers together with its partners of the distribution channels; to this end, it helps and educates its partners by offering facilitating goods and a dedicated experiential offer.

The company adopts the experience logic according to the proposed model, especially in co-designing (Step 1), followed by co-creating the experiential offer (Step 2) and training internal and external professional figures (Step 5). According to the experience logic approach, improvement is needed in communication (Step 3), and the quality of the experiential offer should begin to be monitored (Step 4).

In particular, the company could improve the communication processes before and after experiences with social networks, enhance the rational dimension linked to the provision of more in-depth information, and coordinate the communication according to an integrated logic between channel partners. Also, the company could carry out periodic surveys to assess the quality of the experiential offer involving all distribution in order to improve Eva Garden’s offerings.

This exploratory-descriptive study adds knowledge to the experience logic approach literature, as it proposes a specific managerial model in the experience perspective for the cosmetic industry and tests it on a cosmetics company. Future research should test the model on other cosmetics companies in various countries and through longitudinal studies.

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Marketing of Traditional-Local Products in the Experience Logic Perspective



Tonino Pencarelli, Fabio Forlani and Mauro Dini

Abstract The hypothesis underlying the chapter is that the business of *traditional-local products* requires a specific and suitable approach, which needs to combine the conceptual tools of service marketing with the experiential perspective. In line with an experience logic perspective, the authors suggest that the producers of traditional-local *products (raw materials and goods)* abandon the conservative strategy that rests upon the defense of traditional means of production, and embrace instead an experience logic marketing approach. As widely illustrated in the literature, this way manufacturers could offer an integrated portfolio, inclusive of both traditional agro-industrial items and new experiential products, such as themed events, carrying higher added value. The chapter adopts a qualitative approach and case study analysis as the research methods. Despite the limitations of the research related to the use of a single case study, the paper proposes some theoretical and managerial insights adopting the experience logic as a conceptual model to observe and interpret the food and wine business, thus innovating its value proposition. Through an experience logic approach, companies that produce traditional-local products, especially small and medium-sized, can intercept the new postmodern consumption processes that require experiential content, authenticity, and low standardization of the offer.

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1 Concept of a Typical Product from the Perspective of the Experience Economy

In the Italian market, all agricultural and artisanal food products that are labeled DOC (controlled designation of origin), IGP (protected geographic), DOP (protected designation of origin), or TSG (traditional specialty guaranteed) (Arfini et al. 2010) are defined as a “typical product” (Platania and Privitera 2006; Pencarelli and Forlani 2006; Tregear 2003; Endrighi 2001). Typical products can be conceptualized as “issuing from small-scale agricultural systems, with special characteristics due to the combination of local raw materials with traditional, inherited, production techniques” (Tregear 2003: 91). The concept of “typical product” includes both products whose characteristics derive from the place (local product) and those that come from particular traditions (traditional product). For this reason and in keeping with the international literature (Guerrero et al. 2010; Kim et al. 2009) on this topic, the concept of typical product will be classified as “traditional-local product” in this study.

The aim of this work is to understand the nature, function, and potential of traditional-local products analyzed from the experience logic perspective, assuming that the product is the production result (output) of a system of any type (Rispoli and Tamma 1992, 1996). Whatever the nature of this product, it is the exchange element of the company with third-party systems and represents the fundamental reference of the mission, business, and production organization of a single-company system (Coda 1988) or a system of companies (Pencarelli and Forlani 2016).

As highlighted by Forlani et al. in this book, studies that use the perspective of the experience economy to analyze the dynamics of the market are in significant growth. This trend is relevant in various sectors, including tourism (Andersson 2007; Oh et al. 2007; Hosany and Witham 2009; Morgan et al. 2009) also in the versions of wine tourism (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore 2012, 2013, 2016; Wei 2013; Carlsen and Boksberger 2015), food and gastronomy tourism (Mason and Paggiaro 2012; Gordin and Trabskaya 2013; Holm et al. 2013; Sidali et al. 2013; Eriksen 2015; Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen 2016; Iaia et al. 2016), and rural tourism (Fiore et al. 2007; Loureiro 2014; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore 2012; Manniche and Larsen 2013).

As highlighted by Pencarelli and Forlani (2006, 2016), embracing the perspective of Pine and Gilmore’s experience economy (1999: 166) and adopting an “abstract” concept of the product, we can overcome the classic sectoral divisions (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and classify the economic output (from firms) in five forms, each subsumed by the next level of output, i.e., raw materials, goods, services, experiences, transformations. The different types of products are solutions that meet different needs of food and wine customers (Sundbo 2013; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore 2012; Platania and Privitera 2006) according to the logic of the progression of economic value (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The evolution of demand and consumption is showing a growing demand for experiential content (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Schmitt 1999, 2003) and existential content

(Boswijk et al. 2007). These requests may be satisfied in the consumption of goods and/or services “experientialized” or be “packaged” as experiences or transformations (Pencarelli and Forlani in this book).

The perspective of the experience logic underlines that:

- the value concept for customers is first of all a concept of value in use in the sense of people’s experience, so that customer experiences need to be considered as the true source of value;
- experientializing a product implies enriching the equation of customer value by adding emotional, symbolic, and relational benefits in order to differentiate the offer;
- designing, staging, and selling an experience means giving the customer an emotional content, and its value equation will depend on the balance between the benefits related to the consumer’s involvement in a personal experience and the sacrifices necessary to access it. The companies that produce and offer experiences are then required to use their facility or setting as a “stage” upon which to involve consumers—spectators on a sensorial, emotional, and cognitive level, in order to create emotional, intellectual, and spiritual value.

Based on this interpretation model, agro-food industries should not feel constrained by the technology and the nature of the raw materials used (Sundbo 2013; Manniche and Larsen 2013; Sidali et al. 2013; Arthur and Hrac 2015; Eriksen and Sundbo 2016). They should be free to choose, given the constraints of the market as well as the resources and skills possessed, the type of product to design, produce, sell, and, therefore, the business in which to compete. In this perspective, companies in the agro-food industry can expand their portfolio offering by proposing experiences and transformations in association with the already treated raw materials, goods, and services (Pencarelli et al. 2013, 2015). Thus conceived, the “traditional-local Italian” designation acquires a cross-sector value (Pencarelli and Forlani 2006; Pencarelli et al. 2015) affecting agriculture, commerce, artisanal crafts, events, and, last but not least, tourism (Pencarelli et al. 2015; Bartolazzi et al. 2008).

In this study, in the perspective of the experience logic, the traditional-local product is understood according to the following definition: “The economic offer of one or more firms located in a geographically, culturally, and historically definable territory, which is perceived by the demand as a unitary product consisting of a package of items that are tangible (agro-food products, craft products, manufactured goods), intangible (service, information, culture, history, knowledge, traditions, etc.), and experiential (events, fairs, exhibitions, etc.) characterized by unified brand image.” The proposed definition therefore takes into account the fact that the local product offering system must be able to grasp both the perspectives of local producers, who adopt typical and representative production processes of a territory, and that of consumer demand, which identifies a determined area as a place of local and typical productions.

The aim of the chapter is to show how the experience logic approach could be actually useful for the management of typical products, especially the case of truffle, in order to increase the value creation for the customers and for the firms, also considering that the experience logic helps keep up with the evolution of consumption.

2 Experience Logic Marketing for Traditional-Local Products

As we have shown in Pencarelli and Forlani in this book, the logic of marketing based on experience (experience logic) incorporates the proposals of the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999) and of experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999), integrating it with the conceptual advances introduced by the recent literature on service logic (Grönroos 2011; Grönroos and Gummerus 2014) and service dominant logic (Vargo and Lush 2004, 2008). Experience logic marketing is that the approach to marketing that puts the planning and co-creation of the customer experience, which is the main source of value for the consumer (Ferrero 2013), at the core of strategic business action. This model seems to us more appropriate to describe quality food consumption (Pencarelli et al. 2013; Manniche and Larsen 2013). Indeed, modern consumers, especially “foodies,” are increasingly searching for products that satisfy different needs (Lee and Chang 2012; Rezende and Silva 2014; Capitello et al. 2015), are novel and highly authentic (Sidali et al. 2013; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore 2012; Charters et al. 2009); this means they expect the supply to be differentiated and follow policies that impose high-quality standards.

From this point of view, the traditional-local products, compared with mass food products, enjoy some of the following strengths (Pencarelli et al. 2015; Pencarelli and Forlani 2006):

- they can better satisfy the requests for originality and variety coming from the world of luxury food consumption (Sarin and Barrows 2005) because they possess the characteristics of uniqueness and differentiation; they are perceived by consumers as being more natural and respectful of the ecosystem because they are associated with artisan activities and considered more sustainable than “industrial” products;
- these products allow consumers to move away from the globalized consumer models of contemporary society, giving them the opportunity to establish themselves, to distinguish themselves and, in a certain way, to emancipate themselves from massified and anonymous behaviors (Sidali et al. 2013; Manniche and Larsen 2013);
- on foreign markets, they benefit from the added value of “Italianness” and the “Made in Italy” label (Iaia et al. 2016).

Moreover, typical products support the valorization of the territory in a touristic sense (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016; Loureiro 2014; Sidali et al. 2013). In fact, food in recent years has assumed a central role in the expectations and motivations of travelers, so as to imagine a process of “capitalization” food and local culinary specialties (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016; Manniche and Larsen 2013; Kivela and Crofts 2006; Espeitx 2004), to be considered real tourist attractions capable of moving a target of travelers that international literature defines as “foodies” (Fox 2007). In this way, gastronomy, as well as being a pleasant sensorial activity, is transformed into an attraction factor and a tourist marketing tool for destinations managed according to experience logic (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016; Folgado-Fernández et al. 2016). The food product, in other words, becomes a point of union between the authenticity of a territory and the tourists, more and more eager for genuine proposals, participatory and closely linked to the specifics of the territory they visit (Loureiro 2014; Sidali et al. 2013; Nocifora et al. 2011). Furthermore, modern consumers, especially in the food field, are increasingly looking for products that meet the needs of variety, novelty, and high levels of genuineness, thus imposing differentiation policies in compliance with high-quality standards in terms of quality (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016; Sidali et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, there are also some problematic aspects that restrict these products’ growth potential and market success. These are:

- traditional-local products that are often highly perishable and difficult to preserve without altering their organoleptic characteristics, which makes it difficult and expensive to transport and sell them on markets that are geographically far removed from the production areas (Pencarelli et al. 2015);
- satisfying and gratifying if consumed directly in the places where they are produced, rather than in contexts far away from the territories of origin (Kivela and Crofts 2006; Fox 2007);
- production volumes that are usually modest and capable of satisfying only limited demand (Pencarelli and Forlani 2006);
- the actors in the supply network are predominantly small and medium-sized enterprises, with their relative limitations (Loureiro 2014; Sidali et al. 2013).

From the goods logic perspective, the last two points represent determining constraints in the formulation strategies for the enhancement of local productions because the production limitations and narrowness of entrepreneurial formulas (Pencarelli et al. 2015; Coda 1988) limit and restrain strategic actions, both in terms of innovation and enhancement of brand identity.

From the experience logic perspective, instead, the same aspects can be read differently, and marketing strategies should be rethought:

- (1) the concept of the traditional-local product should evolve and expand with experiential components. From the centrality of the “what” associated with material goods, we shift to the “what and how” of services, and then to the “what, how, where, when, who, and with whom” of the experiences and

transformations, where it is the customers themselves who become the output of the offer;

- (2) the pricing policies should not be based on the cost of the competition but on the value perceived by the customer (customer value). In other words, the question is how much customers are prepared to pay—not only for the material components but also and especially for the experiential value of the experience;
- (3) the communication policies should switch from the description of the characteristics of the products to forms of complex narrative (storytelling or staging of stories) that highlight the symbolic, emotional, and experiential benefits of the products. In the narrative of the product, it becomes fundamental for there to be interactive communication between front-office and customer in the place where the experience is consumed;
- (4) the marketing policies should be reviewed by integrating the logic of the distribution with that of attraction. The experiential distribution of the product aims to enrich the goods or services with emotional elements, making them unique and rare, even through the use of the “Made in Italy” concept. In the second case, the firm, using traditional-local products as a tool to attract tourists, invites the consumer to experience unique moments in places and times determined by supply (restaurants and/or place of production) according to a predetermined portfolio (Fortezza et al. in this book) and by exploiting possible partnerships with tourist intermediaries (tour operators, travel agencies, etc.). The manufacturing places, with their atmosphere, culture, and history factors, in both cases have a strategic importance in creating the experiential value of the food and wine product and should be seen as the stages upon which the experiences are acted out;
- (5) the brand image and reputation of the product and the territory should be the key elements of the experiential narrative. The qualifying image of a territory (Antonelli and Viganò 2012) experientializes the fruition of a little-known handcrafted food or product, thus favoring its entry into the channels of distribution and consumption (emblematic of the role of the “Made in Italy”). The product brand—territory brand relationship—can also be interpreted in a reverse perspective, whereby the combination of the name of a little-known territory with the one of products made in the area that has a high reputation can enhance the territory itself, especially in the tourism sector. This underlines a need for reciprocity between territorial image and brand and that of traditional-local products, which emphasizes the need to integrate the branding policy of individual actors with the territorial one (Iaia et al. 2016).

The idea to enrich the offer with experiential elements appears particularly appropriate for the enhancement of niche or exclusive food and wine products (traditional-local products such as truffles, for example) because it exalts the strengths (variety, authenticity, seasonality, specificity, exclusiveness, etc.) and transforms their problematic aspects (perishability and difficulties of conservation, limited production, small manufacturers) into opportunities.

If observed from an experiential perspective, traditional-local agricultural resources thus become key components of tasting services and experiences (truffle-based menus, guided tastings) and highly differentiated visitor experiences (truffle hunting). In addition to increasing their market value, they escape the massification trap of the offer (Pine and Gilmore 1999), thus becoming a key driver of regional development (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016; Loureiro 2014; Sidali et al. 2013; Manniche and Larsen 2013).

3 Case Study: The Truffles of Acqualagna

The truffle sector plays an important role in the luxury wine and food market (Wolf et al. 2016; Sarin and Barrows 2005; Berry 1994), one which is particularly interesting with respect to the aims of the present study because the consumption of truffles is highly symbolic, experiential, and social. The product is marketed in a variety of forms: as a raw material (from the seeker to the dealer), as a good (industrial products flavored with truffles), as a service (retail distribution, gastronomy, catering, etc.), as an experience (guided tastings, truffle hunting, themed holidays, etc.).

The methodology adopted is the case study (Yin 2003), held to be consistent with the objectives of the present research study, which does not aim to measure the observed phenomenon or to carry out normative prescriptions but rather sets out to identify the unique characteristics of this particular product. In the field of management studies, the use of case studies lends itself to the construction of theories by providing random forms of explanation that offer a coherent conceptualization of a phenomenon (Eisenhardt and Grebner 2007; Gibbert et al. 2008; Yin 2003; Tsang 2003) and which favor the understanding of why or why some relationships supported by qualitative data manifest themselves. Of particular interest in this regard is the type of theorization proposed by Tsang (2003: 199), constructed as a 2D matrix that case study allows for generalizations: the emphasis (weak or strong) on contextualization and emphasis (weak or strong) on theoretical development. There are four possible situations:

1. construction and verification of theory: the case or the cases inductively permit the extraction of theoretical relationships capable of preparing the bases for new theoretical formulations or to verify the existing ones;
2. identification of empirical regularities: the case represents a method that intends to identify empirical regularities from the results emerging from the case method, generating results that may lead—but also not lead—to the creation of new theories;
3. creation of interpretive meaning: the case or the cases allow a deep understanding of human experiences immersed in rich contexts, drawn from the real world;

4. contextualized explanation: based on a structured theory that allows a random explanation of the observed phenomena.

The wealth of case analysis is therefore evident and is increasingly taken into consideration as a method of study to understand complex phenomena related to business management.

We chose to analyze the truffle of Acqualagna because the national recognition for quality of the Acqualagna Truffle and for the economic relevance of the truffle sector in financial terms within the municipal area of Acqualagna.

In the territory of Acqualagna, the Marini & Azzolini company has been considered a significant case, relevant for our research, because it has a portfolio of complex offers that include goods, services, and experiences all related to the theme of truffles. Furthermore, the Marini & Azzolini company has a significant role among the local players.

The case study data were collected in successive phases through different qualitative modalities. At the first meeting, a discussion was held with the entrepreneur at the University of Urbino on the occasion of a seminar given by him on the sector and on the activities of his company. This was followed by analysis of the data published by the company on its official website (text and images): a semi-structured interview (Corbetta 2001) with the entrepreneur, which took place at company headquarters; a visit with direct observations at the National Truffle Fair of Acqualagna; a qualitative semistructured interview with the entrepreneur (Corbetta 2001), which took place at company headquarters.

3.1 *The Truffle Market*

In Italy, all nine of the known species of truffles are collected. Among these, the most valuable is the Tuber magnatum Pico (white truffle of Alba or Acqualagna or Prized White), which has always maintained its leadership—not only on the table but also in terms of market prices. Italy and France are the world leaders in the production, processing, and commercialization of the tuber. The domestic market is composed of different companies, and among them, those who have managed to find innovative methods for the conservation of the truffle have acquired a competitive advantage over their competitors. The salient features of the truffle market are:

- rarity of the fresh product: the formation of truffles is the result of a balance among soil, climate, and symbiotic plants (there are few areas in the world that are favorable to the growth of the truffle);
- seasonality: the various types of truffles grow only in short periods of the year;
- high perishability: truffles lose their edibility in a few days (maximum 10 days);
- strong oscillation of prices: they depend primarily on the variability of the supply. Also, because truffles are generally rare and expensive, in years of scarcity the Prized White has fetched a price as high as €5,000 per kilogram;

- strategic role of conservation: it is significant within the industry because it determines the possibility of exceeding the limits of “perishable”;
- strong asymmetry of the market: in terms of information between professionals and clients;
- availability of derivative products: truffle-flavored sauces, creams, oils, cheese, grappa, etc. are poorly differentiated. Consequently, customers tend to buy one product over another based on the lowest price or through relationships of knowledge and trust with sellers.

The truffle sector is traditionally divided into three categories: fresh product; preserved product; and derivatives. Finally, the classic truffle chain (Marone 2011) is as follows: seekers; territorial agents or brokers; conserver and transformer; distribution; gastronomy or catering; consumer.

3.2 *Acqualagna: “The Truffle Capital”*

“Acqualagna is a town of 4,400 inhabitants located within the province of Pesaro and Urbino in the Marche region. It has been labeled at a national level as the truffle capital, owing to its important year-round events dedicated to the truffle and for its long-standing traditions of research, production, and sale of the most famous tuber of all times” (www.acqualagna.com; date 11.12.2017). It should be noted that the city of Acqualagna introduces itself as the “The Truffle Capital” in official publicity materials (print and digital). The National White Truffle Fair is organized annually and is held in the town’s historic center. In the 2014, marked the 52th edition, Acqualagna and the surrounding territory of Montefeltro competed directly with the famous truffle town of Alba (and the Langhe Territory), located in Piedmont because they commercialize all nine types of fresh product existing in Italy, unlike other regions that do not have all the varieties to offer. The countries that buy the most from the producers in Acqualagna are Germany, in first place as the largest European consumer, followed by France, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, England, and the USA.

3.3 *The Marini & Azzolini Company*

Marini & Azzolini is an enterprise that commercializes truffles and derivatives, whose mission is well illustrated in the company website: (www.trufflespecialties.com; date 11.12.2017): “The Marini & Azzolini company has worked for over 50 years in the truffles and food sector, renewing their yearly commitment to offer top quality products to the customer. The truffle, “king” of international gastronomy, grows abundantly in the territory of Acqualagna and Montefeltro, where the

company uses the best hunters of the area to procure it and carefully process and distribute it.”

Based on the experience logic, the activities of Marini & Azzolini may be reclassified as follows:

- purchase of fresh truffles (raw material);
- production and commercialization of goods: fresh truffles washed and selected; preserved truffles, truffle specialties, other specialties, accessories for truffles;
- production and commercialization of services: typical local gastronomy (point of sale in Acqualagna);
- production of experiences related to the sale of goods and services: specialty food-tastings with truffles in partner hotels;
- production and sale of experiences and transformations: organizing and offering travel packages in collaboration with two travel agents (one in Pesaro and one in Germany), with the aim of letting tourists “experience” the hunting and gathering of truffles directly in the woods around Acqualagna; organizing cooking lessons where participants have fun learning to cook with truffles. All experiential initiatives foresee the opportunity for customers to visit the company and Acqualagna, including local product tastings.

The activities of Marini Truffles do not all have the same impact on company turnover. In fact, the largest share of the business comes from the supply of goods (from Marini to the distribution chain, gastronomy, and restaurateurs accounts for 89%), followed by service activities (direct sales account for 10%), and last, sales of the truffle “experience” (truffle hunting and cooking lessons account for 1%). Most of the revenues generated from the sale of goods, in particular, break down into fresh truffles (27%), preserved truffles (25%), truffle specialties (derivatives) and gourmet products created through partnerships (47.9%), and truffle accessories (0.1%).

The geographic markets served are Italy (10% of sales) and the international market (90% of sales, with France, Russia, and Germany in the forefront; there is also growing interest from emerging markets, with Brazil in the lead).

The main market segments that are the recipients of the company’s products (supplied through distributors or agents, one for each country served) are represented by the Ho.Re.Ca. sector and, in particular, luxury restaurants, high-quality gastronomy, and large-scale retail trade. The latter segment has fostered significant growth in sales as well as the introduction of new products in the portfolio (e.g., a truffle-flavored honey was created in collaboration with a beekeeper, a truffle-flavored grappa was created with a grappa producer, tagliatelle with truffles, truffle risotto, or instant polenta with truffles came from a joint venture with pasta producers).

The main instrument for the promotion of Marini Truffles (through which new customers are added) is to participate in truffle fairs and food and wine events in Italy and abroad. The company is focused on personal interactive communication tools with distributors considered key players in the company. The company does

not, however, pay particular attention to communication with consumers—nor does it take any care in attributing significance to the experiential value of the truffle of Acqualagna. Communication tends to be functional and geared primarily to the management of the supply chain relationships. In the food sector, the image of Italian and “Made in Italy” products is important, and the company takes advantage of it to pull its exports. At the national level, Marini and Azzolini relies on the Acqualagna brand and does very little, if anything, to enhance its brand, which is not very well-known in the sector.

From the interview with the entrepreneur, it was noted that the price of the product, both fresh and preserved, can be defined as “dynamic” because it undergoes constant variations dictated by several factors. These can include the quantities of truffles found in a short period of time (three or four days), their characteristics (shape, size, type, etc.) and the receiver (gastronomy, restaurant, importers, large-scale retail distribution, and consumers). Based on these variables, the company adds a mark-up, which can vary from 25 to 50%. The prices of derivative products (made with third-quality truffles and scraps) do not follow this trend because they tend to follow the logic typical of the agro-food industry.

The company also does not proactively manage the relationships with other actors in the town; its activities are limited to participation in the initiatives proposed by the city (e.g., Truffle Fair of Acqualagna), which are seen as a “necessary” act and not as a fundamental activity for the creation of value. According to Marini, “the fair is helpful for the enhancement of the Acqualagna brand, but its impact on our company in terms of turnover is trifling.”

Ultimately, the company is focused on its value chain in which the competition is mainly based on trust, reliability, and service to the distributor or intermediary: “the building of relationships with potential customers and therefore the possibility of selling our products is tied directly to the fiduciary relationship to the seller. These relationships are constructed and managed individually in their specificity.”

For Marini & Azzolini, then, value lies in the ability to position the fresh product, on the basis of its characteristics, in the various categories of customers (supermarkets, high gastronomy, restaurants), or keeping it and transforming it to produce truffle derivatives, which turn out to be one of the most profitable activities. The company sees the truffle as a raw material to be processed and transformed into a good. This action is carried out by adopting a management approach aimed at maximizing the value of the offer based on the organoleptic characteristics of the truffle itself and of the potential customer, from a perspective that seems to be of a goods logic type.

4 Discussion and Final Considerations: What Space Is There for the Experience Logic Marketing in the Truffle Business?

The case study shows that the company appears to remain focused on the truffle as a raw material to be transformed into a good, thus adopting a management approach geared towards maximizing the value of the offer pursuant to the organoleptic characteristics of the truffle itself and the customer to whom it addresses. This managerial perspective seems to be of the goods logic type.

If the company assumes the experience logic perspective and is able to effectively integrate product distribution and the attraction of customers into the business model, as well as consider the customer's experience as the marketing driver, how might its marketing approach be modified? In our opinion, from the experience logic perspective, the marketing strategies should be rethought:

- first, if the customer's experience is the marketing driver according to the experience logic, then the challenge is to provide a sense of value, to the raw material, goods, and services, thus emphasizing their emotional, positional, distinctive, and experiential aspects. Direct sales to end consumers is the responsibility of the company to intervene on these variables;
- the concept of the traditional-local product should evolve and expand with experiential components. From the centrality of the "what," it is important to shift to the "what, how, where, when, who, and with whom" of the experiences and transformations where it is the customers themselves who become the output of the offer;
- the pricing policies should not be based on the cost of the competition but on the value perceived by the customers;
- the communication policies should switch from the description of the characteristics of the products to forms of complex narrative (storytelling or staging of stories) that highlight the symbolic, emotional, and experiential benefits of the products; the brand image of the product and the territory should be the key elements of the experiential narrative;
- the marketing policies should be reviewed by integrating the logic of the distribution of products with that of attraction of tourists.

In regard to the organization of incoming travel and cooking classes, it should be conceived not so much as a business needed to strengthen the reputation of traditional-local products intended as goods but as the business of attracting customers by proposing themed experiences that have to do with food and wine and truffles, i.e., innovating and expanding the concept of traditional-local product, as proposed in Pencarelli and Forlani in this book. These initiatives would be co-designed and co-produced by a broad network of actors, belonging to both the food and wine sector and others (tourism, culture, teaching kitchen, trade, in the formula of the food and wine concept store, etc.). This type of business broadens the value-creation horizon that involves not only the supply chain actors and the

end consumers but also other suppliers of territorial resources, all of which falls within a perspective of mutual, territorial value co-creation.

To emphasize the experiential dimension of the consumption of economic offers in a portfolio of products based on truffles, what is needed is more work on and higher priority given to the brand of good itself, qualifying it as a “product of gastronomic luxury.” It is also necessary to work on the value of the brand of the company and of the territory of origin, as has happened in other sectors (for example, Chianti in the wine sector). For this purpose, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders in the value system, in a project of integrated marketing aimed at enhancing the positional and symbolic aspects of the world of Italian truffles, in general, and of Acqualagna, in particular.

In short, the company studied follows a goods logic approach. At the moment, it is not interested in the value co-created by and with the customer in places where the truffle experience originates (in restaurants and in the local area) and operates only residually in the business of culinary tourism. In this way, in our opinion, the company does not grasp the opportunity offered by the experience logic, and it leaves it up to the other players in the sector to co-create value for customers by acting on the experiential, emotional, relational, and symbolic benefits to the end customer.

Furthermore, the adoption of the experience logic approach, as highlighted by the literature, improves the ability to enhance local typical products as a crucial element for the endogenous development of territorial systems, in consideration of the important economic and social effects it can produce. In fact, through the strengthening of the typical characteristics, the purely productive function of agricultural activities is completed by new and different functions, including environmental and land protection. In recent years, in fact, initiatives have been multiplied to combine agricultural production with services (tourism, recreational, educational, social, etc.), also with the aim of intercepting and satisfying new segments of consumers interested in using agricultural products in the territories of production to “immerse themselves” in the culture of the places and live the experiences of consumption as an opportunity for cultural and social enrichment (Pencarelli et al. 2013). The contemporary establishment of a non-mass production and consumption model has strengthened and brought out the interest in traditional and typical agro-food products; thus, enhancement of the quality of typical products is placed at the center of attention not only by economic operators but also by public administrators, who identify them as a central element of a comprehensive strategy of local development that also includes cultural protection of productive traditions.

The typical products are in fact the result of small-scale agricultural activities, which have particular characteristics due to the combination of local raw materials and traditional production techniques handed down over time. Businesses, especially those of smaller size and/or located in sometimes disadvantaged and marginal territories, see in the typical products a possibility to find a new area of competitiveness toward increasingly competitive markets from the point of view of price, which recover the added value that modern industry and distribution have in limited

time. On the other hand, local public administrations see this prospect also with interest to strengthen the identity and cohesion of the local community, stimulating synergies, and links with other economic activities.

Despite the limitations of the research related to the use of a single case study, the paper proposes a new conceptual model (experience logic) to observe and interpret the food and wine business as well as the businesses involved in the new post-modern consumption processes, in which there is demand for a strong experiential content, authenticity, and low standardization of the offer. Further and more extensive studies should be conducted to refine the model and to verify the managerial implications in practice.

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