Chapter 12

Should Festival Be Smarter?
ICT on Mass Events – The Case of the Exit Festival (Novi Sad, Serbia)

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ABSTRACT

The trend of information and communication technologies (ICT) employment to enhance transactions and to deliver better experience to visitors of mass events has been growing increasingly popular over the years. The emergence of “smart tourism” agenda which highlights new, more sustainable ways of business management, experience enhancement and destination management also creates new opportunities for ICT employment in mass event. Thus, this chapter discusses existing ICT holding potential for smart approach employment on mass events. An additional case of Exit festival was used as an exploratory evidence to support the main idea of the chapter. Based on comprehensive literary review and additional information on visitors’ familiarity with ICT gained from the Exit festival, recommendations for mass event managers are presented.
INTRODUCTION

Various mass events are becoming increasingly prolific as communities and destinations attempt to differentiate themselves from others and appeal to visitors. With increased competition for visitors, mass events are constantly striving for innovation by diversifying their programming. A wide range of information and communication technologies (ICT) can be used to enhance the event experience (Halpenny, Salenieks, Song, Van Winkle, & MacKay, 2013). Research in event tourism is fundamentally changing due to an explosive growth of ICTs (Rubinstein, 2015; Lee, Boshnakova, & Goldblatt, 2016). The event industry is also being transformed by digital proliferation and business innovations where ICT plays a crucial role enhancing tourist experiences on the mass events and prove more opportunities for their management. In this chapter, the use of ICTs on mass events is examined to help planners, managers and operators understand the current state of technology employment. Particularly, event organizers, with their constrained budgets and limited human resources capacity, must make choices about embracing these technologies smartly. The emergence of “smart tourism” agenda which highlights new, more sustainable ways of business management, experience enhancement and destination management (Cannon Hunter, Chung, Groetz, & Koo, 2015) also creates new opportunities for ICT employment in mass event. These choices must be made with full knowledge of what each event is about, who their audience is, and what resources are required to support the implementation of ICT (Halpenny, Salenieks, Song, Van Winkle, & MacKay, 2013).

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to review the current state of ICT implementation on the mass events and to advocate for the smart tourism approach employment. The proof-a-concept approach of this paper is based on an extensive literary review. To gain access to users’ familiarity with ICT, the chapter examines the additional representative study of Exit festival, one of the leading music festivals in Europe and in the world. Based on the comprehensive literary review and results of the exploratory case, basic recommendations for smart approach employment for mass event organizers are given.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section one points to basic characteristics of smart approach in ICT design with the focus on travel industry that, among first disciplines, openly employed this concept. Section two examines some of the existing and forthcoming examples of ICT on mass events. Section three presents the exploratory case of Exit festival. The final section identifies main recommendations, contribution and limitations of presented research.

ICT ON MASS EVENTS: TOWARDS SMART TOURISM APPROACH

The review of the relevant literature showed that all ICT applications in this field can be roughly distinguished to two basic types according to its main purpose – visitors-centric applications and managerial ones (Catherwood & Van Kirk, 1992; Lee, Boshnakova, & Goldblatt, 2016). Visitor-centric applications are usually intended to serve various pre- and on-festival experiences enabling visitors’ easier interaction, identification, transaction and enhancing the experience thought co-creation. For example, Tomorrowland’s (Boom, Belgium) tickets come in the form of radio-frequency identification (RFID) wristbands that employ personal ticket information and facilitate a “cashless” environment. At the same time, wristbands allow wearers to connect with one another on social media sites and embedded LED lights can be remotely triggered by the festival, producing light shows from the crowd (Rubinstein, 2015). Managerial applications are usually concerned with visitors’ management in the preparation phase, event