

**Change Management as a tool to drive the adoption of new commercial strategy in Small
Community
(Alpine) Destinations**

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ABSTRACT

Today's society is evolving at a fast pace. New communications tools are appearing every day and new technology is appearing constantly. To keep up with the newest trends, meet customers' needs and stay competitive on the market, organizations have to adapt, change the way they operate. This is a complex matter which has to be addressed at societal, organizational and personal levels. Imperatives identified lead to a conclusion that socially-constructed change is the most suitable strategy to implement change within a tourism community-type destination. Challenges are identified as being difficulties related to the human factor, communication and learning. The use of a change readiness index is discussed, as a tool to identify in which destinations radical change can be implemented more successfully.

Key words: Change Management, Change Readiness Index, Tourism Destination

Introduction

In general, the international tourism industry is showing signs of decline. The situation may be worse in some mountain destinations, such as those situated in Alpine regions. Those mountain destinations are multifaceted (Padurean, 2010a, b; Leasser & Beritelli, 2013). However, their supply chain is often fragmented into several groups of interest and frequently none of them is able to control the destination. So, despite numerous linkages and interdependencies, destinations are one of the most difficult entities to manage (Carmin, Darnall & Mil-Homens, 2003; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

Moreover, the decision-making process is often limited to a destination's prominent actors who form an elite group (Beritelli, 2011b). It can lead to negative consequences for present and future destination development, i.e., its minimal openness as regards multi-stakeholder cooperation,

reduces the willingness to change, innovate and adapt to new trends in e-dynamic, global tourism markets (Pechlaner, H.; Tschurtschenthaler, 2003).

A way to keep the industry dynamic is change management, which requires agility, creativity, adaptability and resilience, i.e. new mind-sets, models and ways of seeing and being, within the touristic destinations (Pollock, 2015). Change management is necessary when the destination wishes to meet the expectations of guest, improve the marketing actions, employee qualifications and finances (Pechalner &

Tschurtschenthaler, 2003). A lack of change will probably result in uneconomic and unsustainable scenarios.

A touristic destination is a dynamic, evolving, complex eco-system that includes various interdependent natural and social subsystems. Under the eco-system, numerous stakeholders, subsections and tourism providers (transport, accommodation, entertainment, etc.) work together to create a value chain to decline tourist experience (Baggio, 2008). Each subsystem has its own identity, and has to be adequate and capable of evolving, learning, and working toward adjusting to their surroundings. As such, ecological thinking, rather than economic thinking, should be developed by them to engage senses, feelings, and intuition, think in terms of relationships, connectedness and context, and communicate with those who are stuck. Although such a living eco-system cannot be controlled, it can be influenced by change management.

General introduction on change

Types of change

Change occurs when motivation, ability and triggers come together at the same time (Fogg, 2011). Kourilsky (2014) describes two types of change: homeostasis and transformative. The homeostasis or level 1 change happens inside a system, enabling the system to maintain at the same state by correcting internal and external elements. When a level 1 change ceases to suffice, a system has to move to transformative or level 2 change. This type of change affects and modifies the system itself, for example, by reconstructing reality, and truly disrupt existing processes within organization. There are three major steps for a successful change adoption (Kourilsky, 2014, pp. XVII - XVIII):

1. Solutions have to be explored with the person/system concerned by the change.
2. The quality of the change objective has to be assessed; does it respect the ecology of the system?
3. Understand the usefulness of resistances, they can become change drivers.'

Change can generate many emotions that can be either positive or negative e.g. anxiety, fear and

excitement. Thus, an efficient change strategy has to allocate a good share of resources to the people within the organization. Leaders have to work on a range of aspects to help the organization survive: (i) moral purpose, (ii) understanding change, (iii) relationship building, (iv) knowledge creation & (v) sharing and coherence making”. Furthermore, leaders have to take into consideration the different perception of reality between different people. Because ones vision of reality is influenced by (1) cognitions/mental operations which influence perceptions/behaviors, (2) a filter between reality and perception of the environment (geographical, cultural, social, intellectual and imaginary), (3) souvenirs. (Kourilsky, 2014, pp. 35-47). Thus, management skills are needed to introduce the change and convince people to accept the change, by telling the whole story about purpose, cooperation and value.

Barriers to change Barrier 1: The Human Factor

The success of organizational change highly relies on the actions of the organizations staff. The actions taken by human are influenced by external and internal factors. The external factor relates to the environment they are in. the internal factors include needs, desires, habits, instinct and past experiences. Because human mostly react via intuitive mode and reproduce things as what they are used to do. Wendel

(2014) summarizes several critical points to help understand how human acts:

- “Most of the time, we’re not consciously deciding what to do next.
- We often act based on habits. They can be created, but are hard to defeat.
- We often make intuitive, immediate decisions based on our past experiences.
- When consciously thinking, we often avoid hard work. We “wing it” with rough guesses based on similar, but simpler, problems.
- We look to other people, especially peers and experts, for what we should do.
- The obvious stuff really matters: making things easy, familiar, rewarding, beautiful, urgent, and feasible.” (Wendel, 2014)

Therefore, to bring about a new project and motivate people to change what they are used to do, the organization has to go beyond rational decision-making process. The actions humans take are linked to the environment they are in, their needs and desires, their experience and other factors. The decision process is, however, unique to each person and there is no magic formula to force a person to change something about her life. Nevertheless, it is possible to set up “the right conditions for action”. (Wendel, 2014):

- Detect a cue (external or internal)
- React **to it**
- Evaluate it (weighing costs and benefits)
- Check for ability (e.g. skills, belief in success)
- Decide on the right timing

Here is a “leaky funnel” which represents each step of the acronym CREATE (cue, reaction, evaluation, ability, timing and execute) and every possibility to leak out at each step.



“For someone to take an action, five things need to happen immediately beforehand: The person responds to a cue that starts her thinking about the action. Her intuitive mind automatically reacts at an intuitive level to the idea. Her conscious mind evaluates the idea, especially in terms of costs and benefits. She checks if she has the ability to act—if she knows what to do, has what she needs, and believes she can succeed. She determines if the timing is right for action—especially whether or not the action is urgent.”(Wendel, 2014)

Source : <https://uxmag.com/articles/how-to-help-your-users-take-action>

Wendel (2014) describes some strategies to change behaviors: Cheating uses informed consent of the users and then implements an automatized change (e.g. substituting healthy ingredients in the food people eat). Making habits consists of responding to a trigger (e.g. walk once a day). Supporting the conscious action is used when the two first strategies are not applicable because the

action is complex, in which, the users are being supported to take steps leading to success. (Wendel, 2014)

Barrier 2: Communication

(Kourilsky, 2014) gives a clear understanding of the problematic around communication that we live in a world with more information but less communication. Yet, communication is crucial for an efficient change management strategy. Information only concerns the message delivered, while communication considers esteem, confidence, valorization and respect which altogether bring a sense of relationships between individuals. Kourilsky (2014) argues that information without communication is not influential. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the recipients' values and criteria in order to develop the relationships. Also, a good communication does not stipulate but rather induce a change.

Barrier 3: Learning

Kourilsky (2014) argues that every change implies learning and different learning level are described in regard to change level. Level 1 is conditioned and systematic. Level 2 represents the transfer of these learnings to other context (for level 1 change). Level 3 concerns transformation of mentalities and behaviors (for level 2 change). Therefore, a higher level of learning is required in order to reach level 2 change (evolutive change). Research on social learning suggest that higher level learning leads to higher level change.

As a touristic destination is a disorganized environment that many stakeholders have the power to make or break an initiative, social interaction has to be seriously considered to achieve socially constructed learning. Cullen (1999) argues that cognitive learning (how a person processes and reasons information). occurs at the social-level before it does at the individual level. It revolves around many factors, including problem-solving skills, memory retention, thinking skills and the perception of learned material. Also the zone concept is explored; as it shows that if people work together they generate better results and that social-collaboration can be tutored (guided participation). This kind of strategy can help to have a common reflective dialogue and move beyond routine.

In this case, a learning community is helpful to enhance the socially constructed learning. A learning community generally has four characteristics: (1) Members of the community share perspectives, (2) Collaboration is crucial in terms of team learning, (3) Personal learning is also valued and (4) dialogue and inquiry are fostered. These characteristics enable to reinforce the

personal and group identity, empower the community, and allow people to co-construct the future of the organization together. (Cullen, 1999).

This section talks about the barriers that may encounter during the change of a destination, from the perspectives of human factor, communication and learning. Socially-constructed change is functional in overcoming the barriers.

Socially-constructed change

According to a research led by Kotter (2014) nearly 70% of large-scale change programs did not meet their goals. Hamel and Zanini (2014) argue that the problem is not the process used but rather the way organizations are designed. Isern & Pung (2007) underline the fact that change implementation often fail to meet the high expectations set at the beginning of the process, they point out some factors responsible for unsuccessful transformations: launching a multitude of initiatives lacking the necessary resources, failing to provide support for long-term improvement and focusing strictly on one objective and overlooking related issues. The problems show that change is a dynamic yet chaotic process. Therefore, a great discipline is required at every time of the process. Therefore, besides the aspirations, energy, and ideas (Isern & Pung, 2007), respecting the ecology of the system and applying the socially-constructed change are necessary to avoid the failures.

Socially constructed change would entail the key stakeholders from the tourism community destination to work together to develop the region from within. This would require a strong will to work together. Cooperative behavior among actors and stakeholder groups in tourism destinations has a lot to do with interpersonal relationships. Beritelli (20011) suggests that when selecting and approaching the appropriate mix of representatives, considering the people first, and the institutions they represent second. Tourism destination communities distinguish themselves less by formal rules and norms of cooperation and more by autonomous key actors, a phenomenon where past individual experiences affect future behavior more than the individual's affiliation to his institution.

As communication intensity reinforced through multiple rounds of cooperation as well as effectiveness of getting in contact foster collaboration, it would be important to pay attention to previously installed bonds of trust and understanding among actors, recognizable through intense communication; Launching a collective action between companies whose actors already exchange information but do not exhibit kinship would likely fail. The rule of social exchange theory,

according to which anticipated reciprocity leads the actors to offer information in order to gain reputation and influence and a reward, works inversely. The more information exchange takes place, the less the involved actors will exhibit cooperative behavior, as they already feel that they have complied with the social norms, or they think that exchanging information with perceived competitors is the rule to follow if one wants to be accepted in the community.

It seems quite apparent that a top-down approach would not suit the particular conditions in a community tourism destination and that the changes need to come from the community itself (bottom-up) and not for example from an expert/consultant (top down), invited to the destination for that specific purpose. In fact, change is most likely perceived as a discontinuous event managed from the top when it should be initiated from everyone in the organization and be shared on a change platform allowing for a faster adaptation with the external environment. So the main problems of “usual” change management process are that: change start at the top, change is rolled out and change is engineered. The article suggests that change should be looked at differently:

From	To	What (Hamel & Zanini, 2014)
Top-down	Activist-out	The responsibility and chance for initiating changes should be made possible at every level of the organization.
Sold	Invited	In order to foster commitment the entire organization should be involved in the "how" process.
Managed	Organic	Change will develop "naturally" if everyone in the organization has the place, the platform, to point out problems, interest and brainstorm.

To embrace such a change vision, the use of an adapted and efficient change platform becomes crucial. As many support tools are available, the challenge lies in encouraging employees to make use of these without being concerned about tackling problems beyond their qualification. Discussion should be honest, to efficiently identify challenge; brainstorming is a long-term process and time should be given for ideas to flourish. An aim would be to generate a set of experiments to develop at different part of the system to prove or disprove their quality, give resources and encourage individuals to initiate the change they want to see. In a corporate organization, the challenges of shifting to a socially constructed form of change lie in enabling role shift and inspiring employees to initiate change and proactively participate in the process. (Hamel & Zanini, 2014)

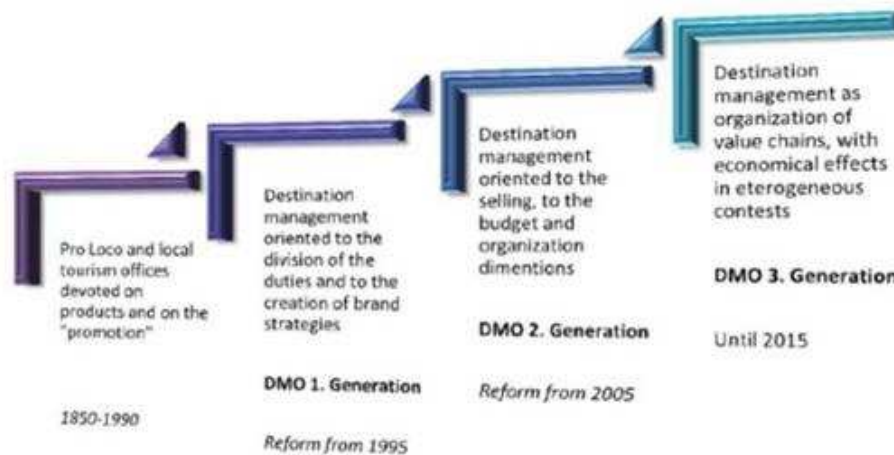
Readiness to change

There is broad agreement that good management of tourist places, efficient value chains, with appropriate use of e-technologies, have become key for tourism. This particularly applies when the aim is to drive longterm performance and differentiation (Buhalis&Law, 2008; Dwyer, et al., 2004; Flagestad, 2006; Font, Tapper, Schwartz&Kornilaki, 2008; Formica&Kothari, 2008; Gratzner, 2003; Gratzner&Winiwarter 2003; Laesser et al., 2007; Laesser et al., 2013). Moreover, due to globalization pressure, substitution among tourism destinations is becoming pervasive. Thus, every host area should be better positioned and differentiate their products through a dynamic and innovative value chain in order to gain a competitive advantage (Fine 1996, 1998, 2000; Porter&Millar 1985; Vengesai, 2003).

A radical change should focus on the degree that the destination flourishes rather than how much profit each entity is making. However, if stakeholders are not ready for change, many resources are potentially wasted. Thus this study deemed that it would be better for a destination to demonstrate a greater readiness to change and to raise the potential for successful change. The successful case could then be shared with other destinations, convincing them not only of the need for change, but also of the potential benefits they might reap in doing so. Also, a successful case might also convince authorities to demand change, prior to providing further financial support for small, struggling destinations. In addition, authorities can determine whom to support, based on a demonstrated ability to change commercial approaches from traditional to more modern, incorporating new consumer behavior and new technology.

Swiss Alpine destinations

The evolution of DMO roles in Switzerland was particularly underlined by research carried out by the San Gallen University. During last 50 years destination management has been evolving from a product-based focus, to a more cooperative system, i.e. 3rd generation DMO. The figure below summarizes the change in destination management in Swiss destinations from the 1960's .



Source: Bieger, T., Lasser, C., & Beritelli, P. (2010), Destinations Strukturen der 3. Generation - Der Anschluss zum Markt. Working Paper. Universität St. Gallen.

The implementation of the DMO of 3rd generation in tourism destination required evolutionary change and application of five key principles (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011; Beritelli, & Reinhold, 2009):

1. Process-oriented marketing -(marketing funnel) for every strategic DMO's tasks
2. Process-oriented managers
3. Variable geometrie des Raumes, detaching from the strength territorial principles
4. Collective financing of tasks
5. Transparency in financing

Furthermore, as already underlined below, the importance of networking is crucial for market-driven development of those structures. Beritelli and Bieger (2013) emphasized that flexible process-oriented networking structures allow to better optimize marketing and promotion tasks and create market-oriented products. Wray, Dredge, Cox, et al., (2010) enumerated the most important features of successful present and future destination management. Effective DMOs should have:

- transparent and responsible decision-making engaging local groups of interests and their readiness to change;
- a clear designation of responsibilities and appropriate operational structures,
- a long-term vision of destination development.

According to Gretzel, et al. (2006) and Mistilis, Buhalis & Gretzel (2014) a market-driven destinations approach should be built on mutual trust, joint risk taking and shared visions of development. The importance of creating shared value (CSV) in successful governance perspective was particularly underlined by Porter & Kramer (2011). Their (r)evolutionary concept of shared value focuses on the statement that contemporary "business needs a successful

community, not only to create demand for its products, but also to provide critical public assets in a supportive environment' which leads to the next stage of evolution in the limits of capitalism (Porter&Kramer, 2011). The CSV concept merges societal needs with core business values in order to: decrease societal harms, reduce costs through innovative product and technology solutions, strengthen local suppliers and enhance long-term competitiveness in sustainable ways. This concept is promising also for present and future tourism development. Several companies and destinations have already implemented CSV into their strategies of development (e.g.: Visit England (NTO), Access Holidays (DMC), ABTA Travel Association etc.)

Methodology

To reduce wasted resources and energy used to implement socially constructed change without success, the study aimed to develop and test a tool to identify destinations demonstrating a greater readiness to change. This would be useful to minimize wasted resources by raising the potential for successful change, as well as to be able to share positive results to convince others of the benefits to follow a similar process. Also, a best practice case can convince authorities such as banks and other lenders, to demand change, prior to providing further financial support for small, struggling destinations.

To measure readiness to change in a destination, different existing questionnaires were evaluated for their suitability for this task. Following, an adapted questionnaire was developed with 2 main sections that required respondents to answer questions based on their perception of the change readiness of the tourism destination they work in followed by that of their company. The questionnaire was loaded into Sphinx software and then piloted using a tablet, at a e-tourism workshop, held in the German speaking Valais region, with around 25 attendees. During a workshop coffee break, delegates were invited to participate in a short change management card game (what type of change stakeholder might you be). Following interaction with the short game, 10 workshop participants agreed to participate in the online survey (delivered in German). Respondents were all professionals working at management level in tourism destinations, interested in new developments in related technology.

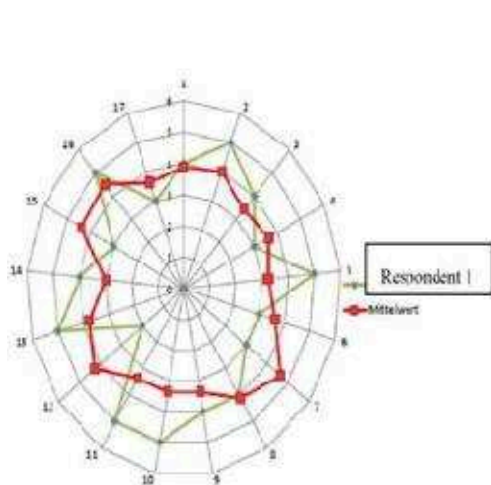
The following data were collected and analysed:

Thinking about the destination you work in, select the box reflecting your level of agreement with each statement below on a scale where 1= I strongly disagree and 6= I strongly agree

Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
3	3	Ich weiss es nicht	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	4	3	4	6	5	4	2	3	5	5	5
4	5	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	5
3	5	2	2	6	4	2	2	4	4	4	3
2	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3
In the destination where you work, do you have good knowledge about aspects such as trends, economic policies, etc.	Managers in your destination have the ability to communicate to other the most important factors that bring about change within the next 5 years	Company managers at the destination maintain dialogue with all stakeholders (for example, customers, suppliers, administration, policy, business partners) both inside and outside the destination.	Customer satisfaction is evaluated at regular intervals.	Employees are expected to be well motivated and committed to changing processes.	The management in our company is actively looking for feedback from the management site.	There is a communication between the managers and the employees about the mutual expectations.	Business is not calculated and calculated and calculated.	There is a possibility of working together in the destination.	Business managers work in a way that allows them to discuss their own goals.	The players in the destination work flexibly and cooperatively.	

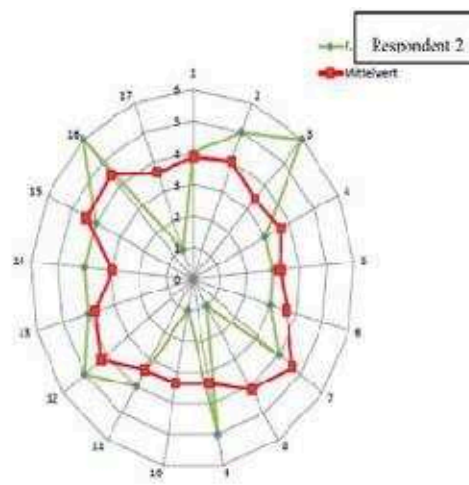
Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht	Ich weiss es nicht
5	4	4	4	4	1
1	2	2	2	4	2
5	3	2	2	5	3
1	5	3	4	2	3
5	6	2	2	5	5
5	4	5	6	1	1
2	5	4	3	2	4
5	3	3	6	3	4
2	3	2	2	5	2
The employees in our company work flexibly and cooperatively.	There is a mutual communication between the actors across the destination.	Within the destination there is a high degree of trust among the companies.	Communication in our company is open and sincere.	The future destination of the destination can only be determined by company executives and not by an employee or resident in the destination.	Vision, strategies and goals for change are discussed only at company level and not at the destination level.

The responses of each respondent were then compared to the average from the group so as to give feedback to each respondent regarding change readiness versus the other respondents. Results are shown below. These must be interpreted considering that respondents were all attending a workshop on e-tourism and thus were already interested in the changes going on in their environment. To gauge these results in the real context of touristic destinations, a much larger sample would be required.



	info@mosap.ch	Global Mittelwert
Mittelwert des ganzen Fragebodens	3.55	3.78
Mittelwert des Unternehmens	3.33	4.04
Mittelwert der Destination	4.27	3.63

Your results are above the average; it seems that your destination is "ready for change"; communication and cooperation are the main strengths of your destination. The company results are slightly below the average.



	1. Schwinger	Global Mittelwert
Mittelwert des ganzen Fragebodens	3.71	3.78
Mittelwert des Unternehmens	3.33	4.04
Mittelwert der Destination	3.61	3.63

Your results are slightly lower than the average. You gathered more points with questions regarding the destination than the company. Cooperation and communication within the destination are aspects which seem to be particularly strong.

Conclusion

In multinational corporations with a wide range of resources, change management is already a difficult process. It is more difficult for a touristic destination. The community-based small tourism destinations have key stakeholders that range from local residents to politicians, who may know nothing about tourism but can control the potential of the destinations to meet the needs of contemporary tourists. Thus, a top-down approach is not considered useful, and previous negative experience has also demonstrated that expecting a fast change, for example, by getting an external consultant to develop a strategic change proposal, does not generate effective results. Socially constructed change, involving a team of interested participants to start with, may realize change, although the process may be rather long. However, there may be no other viable alternatives, except to dissolve the struggling destination by removing the far-reaching benefits of tourism for the regional stakeholders.

The change may have high risks to fail. It is important to evaluate and improve the level of readiness of change within a destination. Before starting a socially constructed change project, it is necessary to address the possible barriers within the destination and also organize some community learning programs. A Change Readiness Index is a useful tool that is quick to use, whose results can be easily analyzed and compared among different respondents. However, evaluating change readiness is just the first step of the change management process. Once a destination has been chosen (based on their level of change readiness), there is a need to deploy a

modified version of the questionnaire on stakeholders within the destination to identify their category and influence (evaluate your personal level of change readiness). Following, the destination will need to be accompanied through the socially constructed change process, fostering regular team dialogue sessions (with coach), as well as utilizing other CM tools, such as the risk wheel, change acceptance curve, process theatre, stakeholder wheel /matrix etc. A simulation might be used as a tool to learn/convince about new commercial strategy (raise change readiness of individual stakeholder influencers). It is hoped that a project of this type be launched in the Valais region of Switzerland, in the coming months.

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