

Organisational analysis of festival and event organisation:

Assagenti and the *Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023*



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio aims to provide an overview of the “Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner” organised by Assagenti in Genoa through different theoretical frameworks, focusing on the organisational structure of the event, its purposes, and the internal and external factors that affect it.

After introducing the Assagenti association, the study offers some valuable insights into the organisational structure and the strategies employed by the organisation to deliver the event. Furthermore, this first part of the portfolio delves into the relevance of the various types of stakeholders, the marketing choices of the association and the prominent role of sponsors in the smooth-running of the event.

The second section lays out a situational analysis and the theoretical dimensions of the inner and exterior environment of the event with the help of SWOT and PESTLE analysis. The study eventually describes the project management and sustainability targets of Assagenti.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The paper aims to frame an organisational analysis of Assagenti for the planning and implementation Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner through an examination of event management academic context.

The portfolio is divided in seven sections: the presentation of Assagenti, its organisational structure and strategy, the importance of stakeholders and organisation's marketing choices, the situational and environmental analysis followed by the project management and sustainability effort of Assagenti.

The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner (from now on the “Dinner”) is a networking evening event considered currently as “one of the world's most outstanding events in the maritime logistics and transport industry” (Assagenti, 2023). Every two years, international representatives of the shipping sector meet in Genoa, Italy's shipping capital, to discuss and share opinions and prompts about the industry's state of the art. The most recent edition took place on the 12th of October 2023 with more than 3500 guests. The venue map and few pictures of the evening can be seen in Appendix 1.



The Dinner is part of Genoa Shipping Week, a collection of correlated business events, conferences, roundtables, and sports events focused on contemporary and future shipping and geopolitical evolutions that take place for five consecutive days in October.



Both the Genoa Shipping Week and the Dinner aspire to develop solid professional networks to boost the maritime sector both locally and globally and wish to become a leading factor in the economic growth of the city of Genoa.

1. ASSAGENTI HISTORY AND PURPOSES

The following Figure 1.1 outlines the history, functions, and event-related activities of Assagenti association.

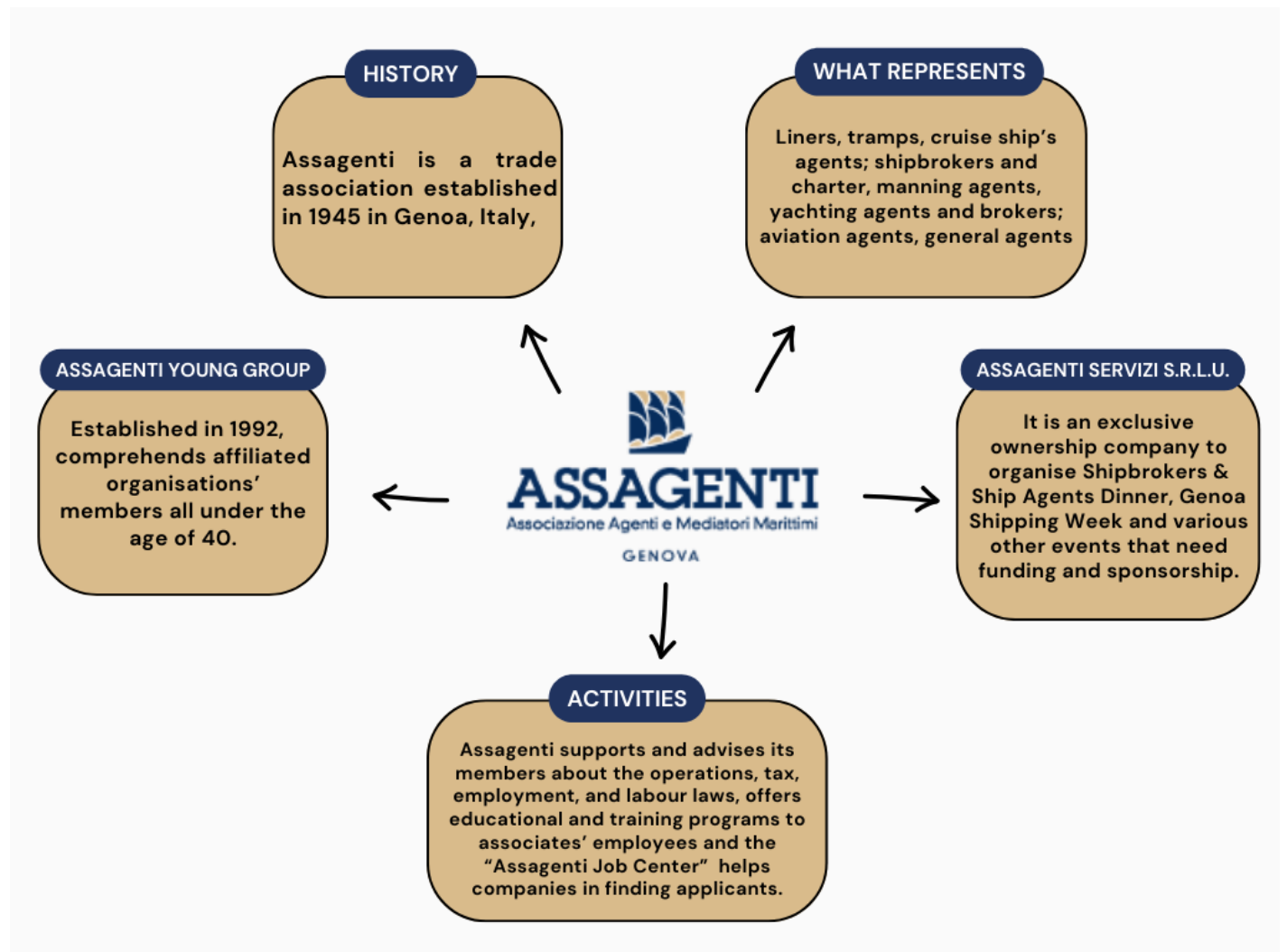


Figure 1.1 Assagenti presentation. (Assagenti, 2023., Assagenti s.r.l.u., 2023)

The empirical data about the event come from an interview with the association Executive Secretary and Administration employee that took place in Assagenti's headquarters on the 24th of November 2023.

2. THE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

2.1 Possible organisation structure categories

Intending to reach decisions, delegate responsibilities, and coordinate work mechanisms, any organisation needs an efficient system. Organisation structure formed the central focus of a study by Mintzberg (1989), in which the author found three key elements that shape any organisation (Table 2.1).

Parts of the Organisation	·The human resources tied together by culture of the organisation
Co-ordinating Mechanisms	The methods in which the organisation's labour is coordinated and divided into tasks
Parameters of Design	Th terms that determine the division of labour and how much the organisation power is decentralised according to the influence of several situational elements.

Table 2.1 Organisational structure key elements (Mintzberg, 1989)

According to Mintzberg (1989), different possible organisation structures can be identified depending on the combination of the key factors described above. The structure can be characterized by a small-scale reality with a flexible frame (Simple structures), a standardised workload bolstered by a “technostructure” (Machine bureaucracy), a highly qualified staff (Professional bureaucracy) or an autonomous middle management (Divisionalised structure). Otherwise, there can be a collective configuration with dynamic project groups composed of specialists (Adhocracy) or highly dispersed communities but with a charismatic leader figure (Missionary organisation).

However, among other critics of Mintzberg's classification, Doty et al. (1993) have challenged some of his conclusions arguing that further research demonstrated that Mintzberg's theory “is a powerful predictor of organisational effectiveness”, as long as it is not considered as an ambitious grand theory ascribable to any organisations (p. 1242).

2.2 The organisational chart of Assagenti

Among the Mintzberg's categories, the Assagenti's organisational structure belongs to the simple structures one. Counting less than ten employees, Assagenti has a flexible structure that allows it to handle the arrangements for the Dinner while complying with the other customary activities and projects of the association. Internal communication is more effective and the distribution of roles and tasks is more evident than in more complex structures. However, it is possible that if few people work for such a massive and composite event, they have various duties and transversal positions that may lead to overlapping and disarray.

The Assagenti's staff hierarchy and distribution of roles and responsibilities are displayed in Figure 2.1.

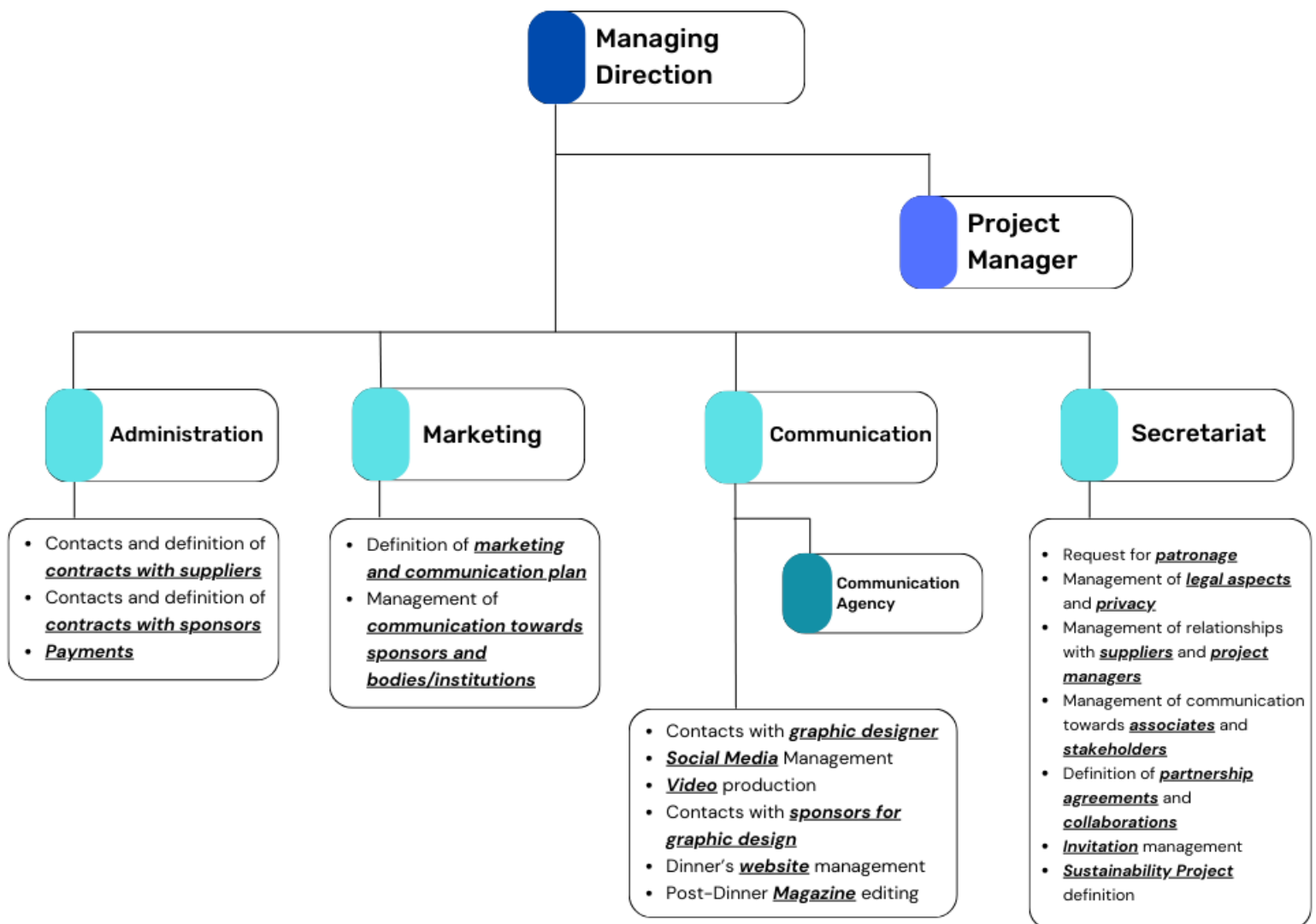


Figure 2.1 The organisation structure of Assagenti. (Administration employee, 2023)

2.3 The event design strategy

Those who take part in events aim to achieve various goals such as: making the acquaintance of new people, interacting with friends and family, and relishing the exciting atmosphere of being part of vast crowds gathered to have fun (Gelder & Robinson, 2009).

To fulfill these goals, the event designer can strategically employ event design and the event features that affect the different forms of social interactions (Nordvall et al., 2014). Nordvall et al., (2014) adopted a framework (Fig. 2.2) to demonstrate how the quality and density of social interactions can be enhanced by conscious and strategic decisions the program of the event, its setting, and which consumables and services will be offered.

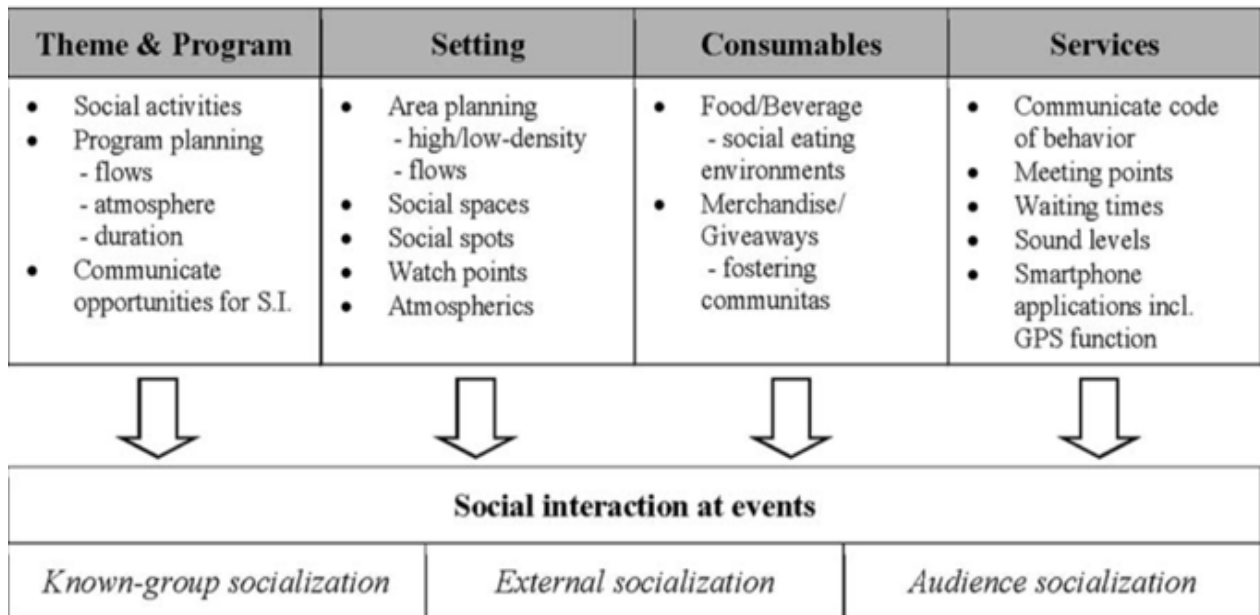


Figure 2.2 Framework for the process of designing events for social interactions. (Nordvall et al., 2014)

These elements are related to the components of the environment, the individual or the group. The firsts are under direct or indirect control of the event organisers, while the others might be only influenced by them. Event designers can affect audience's expectations and stimuli: assembling the event program, organisers can persuade precise categories of audience, depending on demographic attributes and group identity and values. (Nordvall et al., 2014)

By way of illustration, during conventions, roundtables, and dinners, participants can get to know their peers from different realities but also strengthen connections with people they already know.

Therefore, during Genoa Shipping Week 2023 and the Dinner, Assagenti organisers strive to meet the first two purposes both by setting location decors that encourage to sit and chat with other guests and sponsors, or by programming coffee breaks, lunches, one fireworks show and, indeed, the Dinner event itself.

Regarding the Food and Beverage component, Assagenti partnered with Genova Gourmet, the geographical collective brand guaranteed by Regione Liguria and the Chamber of Commerce of Genoa that encompasses various restaurants and catering services that commit to preserve and promote the ingredients and the typical dishes according to the original traditions of the Ligurian area (Chamber of Commerce of Genoa, 2023). This strategy has paid off the higher monetary effort put by Assagenti because the quality of the service and meals offered has been recognised as outstanding, resulting in a great promotion of Genoa and its cultural and culinary heritage (Executive Secretary, 2023).



3. THE RELEVANCE OF STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 The Salience Model and the stakeholders' attributes

According to a definition provided by Polonsky & Scott (2005), in the festival and events context a stakeholder is influenced by the festival or affects its survival and efficiency. Because of their menacing or supportive potential, stakeholders should be involved systematically during the planning phase and the implementation of the festival or event (Getz & Pettersson, 2009).

This paper intends to analyse whether the Salience Model proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997) may observe empirical validation and whether its limitation can be overcome.

Mitchell et al. (1997) identified a tripartite dynamic model based on the identification typology (Fig. 3.1) of three stakeholder attributes whose mix results in a stakeholder's overall salience in terms of resources and potentialities in managerial perception. This study helps to understand the influence of stakeholders' categories on organizational resource allocation, but it also sets the groundwork for future inquiry about the topic.

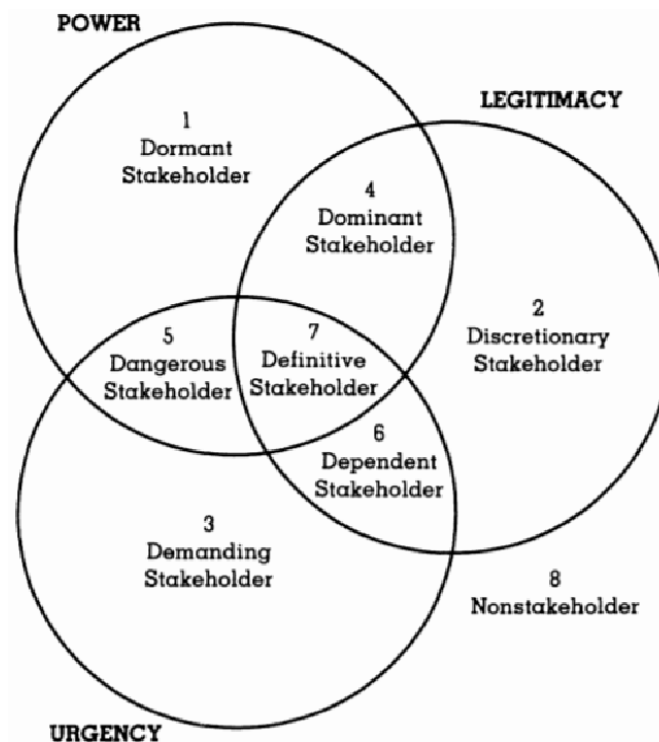


Figure 3.1 The Salience Model (Mitchell et al., 1997)

In his analysis, Mitchell et al. (1997) identifies three elements that compose the Saliency Model (Table 3.1):

Legitimacy	How much the stakeholder works for others' benefit and not only for its self-interest.
Power	The capability of a stakeholder to dictate its will in the relationship, it has three dimensions (coercive, utilitarian, normative) (Gyepi-Garbrah & Preko, 2022).
Urgency	The intensity to which stakeholders demand immediate attention.

Table 3.1 The Saliency Model elements. (Mitchell et al., 1997)

Mitchell et al. (1997) labelled the different stakeholder's categories depending on how many attributes they possess at the same time (Table 3.2):

Latent stakeholders	Who owns only one of the three attributes. (Dormant, Discretionary, and Demanding stakeholders)
Expectant stakeholders	Those who possess two features. (Dominant, Dangerous, and Dependent stakeholders)
Definitive stakeholders	At the centre of the diagram, these are the stakeholders that own all three attributes.
Non-stakeholders or Potential stakeholders	Subjects with any power, legitimacy, or urgency over the organisation.

Table 3.2 The Saliency Model stakeholder's categories. (Mitchell et al., 1997)

Although over recent years the Salience Model and other long-standing stakeholder frameworks have dominated, they still have restricted employment in the festival and event sector as several limitations specific to this study need to be acknowledged (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2019). Derry (2012) has challenged some of Mitchell's conclusions, arguing that his framework is limited to the perspective of the manager and therefore not adequately representative of the "principle of who and what really counts". Critics have also argued that Mitchell's model does not provide yet a multifaceted method necessary to examine complex interdependencies between stakeholders (Radulescu et al., 2016).

Further studies with a strong focus on multiple stakeholder approaches are therefore suggested to make it possible to detect combined efforts and discrepancies and generate a more comprehensive representation of a festival through the integration of different perspectives (Buch et al., 2011).

3.2 The marketing and communication strategy of Assagenti

The strategic plan of an organisation sets the direction that marketing operations must follow to differentiate and be recognised from rivals.

Assagenti marketing specialist collaborates with a communication agency to plan and implement the content creation and distribution for the various media that will be involved. As mentioned by the association's Executive Secretary (2023), the trade magazines are the main channels adopted by his staff to advertise the Dinner and the opportunity to become a sponsor of it.

Furthermore, Assagenti's communication partners made and shared a few videos both before and after the event on the association social media accounts (LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram) (Administration Employee, 2023). Few examples of the social media communication activity can be observed in Appendix 2.

A summary of Assagenti marketing strategy is reported in the following Figure 3.2:



Figure 3.2 The Marketing strategy of Assagenti. (Executive Secretary, 2023)

3.3 Sponsorship as a marketing tool

Among other marketing activities, event sponsorship is considered an effective method to convey the sponsor's brand message and finance the event at the same time.

As Donlan (Sharples et al., 2014, p. 82) states: "The objectives of sponsors and other partners may differ from those of the attendees and the event creator", but their interest for the success of the festival or event must be mutual, otherwise the outcomes produced would be detrimental for both parts (Preston, 2012).

The agreements between the event organizer and the sponsor can include, among others, arrangements on naming rights, media exposure, product purchase, merchandising rights, and hospitality services for sponsor clients.(Sharples et al., 2014)

As discussed above, the Dinner has always attracted international shipping managers and specialists, so becoming a sponsor of Assagenti's event is an opportunity to obtain visibility in a worldwide and professional setting. (Assagenti, 2023)

Assagenti offers Dinner sponsors different bundles of communication tools and services to employ with their guests to make the event an enjoyable and fruitful networking event, in the effort to create potential and long-standing clients. (Administration Employee, 2023). The various categories and their features are briefly summarised in the following Table 3.3.

WHEN	MEMBER	BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD	PLATINUM
BEFORE THE EVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company logo on website (internal pages with hyperlinks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and logo on all online and offline communications 2 invitations to the Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and logo on all online and offline communications N.4 dinner invitations 1 advertorial in the Assagenti newsletter Logo on all Dinner newsletters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and logo on all online and offline communications N.6 Dinner invitations 1 advertorial in Assagenti newsletter Logo on all Dinner newsletters Company material in the press kit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and logo on all online and offline communications N.16 Dinner invitations Logo on all Dinner newsletters Company material in the press kit N.1 exclusive pre-event video interview
DURING THE EVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N.1 rotating advertising image on the Dinner screens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logo on event banners and map 1 advert in rotation on the Dinner screens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logo on event banners and map 1 advert in rotation on the Dinner screens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 advert in rotation on the screens 1 branded 6-seat central lounge area (exclusive) 1 video-interview Logo in the registration area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N.2 branded 6-seat lounges in a central position N.1 video interview Logo on the Dinner badge logo on menu in the catering area
AFTER THE EVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic boxes on Magazine After Dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A half-page advertisement in After Dinner Magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A half-page advertisement in After Dinner Magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full-page advertisement and advertorial in After Dinner Magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full-page advertisement and advertorial in After Dinner Magazine Display of sponsor's logo on the cover of After Dinner Magazine

Table 3.3 Sponsorship bundles for Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023 (Assagenti, 2023)

4. THE SITUATIONAL AND MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT ANALYSIS

4.1 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a major strategic method that investigates where the organisation is positioned compared to its internal environment, concentrating on strengths and weaknesses, and its immediate external settings, a source of threats and opportunities.

This situational examination is usually applied when the organisation is evaluating whether to undertake a new project, enter a new market, or, for instance, set up a new event or festival. Once the overall situation is clearer, managers target to diminish the recognised threats and take advantage of the ascertained opportunities (Johnson, 2017). The SWOT analysis of the Dinner processed by Assagenti's Executive Secretary (2023) interview can be observed in Fig. 4.1.



Figure 4.1 The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023 SWOT Analysis. (Executive Secretary, 2023)

The know-how of Assagenti in organising a high-standard business event that makes Genoa stand out as one of the capital cities for the maritime sector is still unmatched by any potential competitors. Adding complementary activities to the main event and developing a stronger commitment to sustainability issues are the improving opportunities the Assagenti's managers believe for the next edition of the Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner.

However, at the same time, the organisation struggles to find opportunities to grow and expand the scope of the event, especially because of the limited capacity of the location, the only suitable option to host up to three thousand people, with such parking availability and strategic position in and around Genoa. Moreover, according to Assagenti's Executive Secretary (2023), the main threat to the Dinner is the permit to use the Fiera di Genova location itself, due to the compliance with strict and ever-evolving conditions and norms set by the local institutions.

4.2 PESTLE Analysis

The PESTLE analysis is a joint assessment of impact and probability that forecasts the new trends or potential menaces coming from the macro-environment, considering both economic and non-economic factors. The following PESTLE Analysis scheme (Fig. 4.2) summarise the external context of the Dinner.



Figure 4.2 The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023 organisation PESTLE Analysis. (Author's own)

The political context of Assagenti regards local, national, and international geopolitical developments (e.g. armed conflicts) because of the worldwide scale of the shipping sector. Over the last few years, the many economic fluctuations caused uncertainty with growing inflation and higher costs of resources that led to cautious budget choices by the association.

Despite the growing spread of the latest technologies for virtual and hybrid meetings, the last Dinner edition benefited from the attendees' strong desire to gather again after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the unique global context that the shipping sector offers (Administration Employee, 2023).

Assagenti partners with a local law firm to keep abreast of the latest policies and regulations alongside every step of the planning and implementation of the Dinner. Thereby, the organisation is aware of the most recent prescriptions in terms of labour, safety and security, and food and beverage scope. In full compliance with the increasing demand for eco-friendly events from institutions, companies and attendees, with the same law firm, Assagenti edited a Sustainability Protocol to share with all the suppliers of the Dinner to try and implement effective actions to fight climate change. This subject will be further developed in Section 6 of the portfolio.

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

As noted by Getz (2016, p. 491), the main features of events are the limited duration, and the schedule released and settled beforehand. Hence, all the plans and tasks must be completed according to an established and rigid timetable; if the planning is weak, it can eventually lead to the failure of the event.

Wysocki (2009, p. 6) argues that project management is: “a sequence of unique, complex, and connected activities that have one goal or purpose and that must be completed by a specific time, within budget, and according to a specification.” Bowdin (2010, p. 278) adds that the adaptability of project management is indispensable to confront and be resilient against the inevitable variations and unforeseen accidents that affect event planning and development.

Assagenti’s Executive Secretary (2023) reports that the association staff has worked on the Dinner planning and preparation for one year. Thanks to their know-how and consolidated experience after fourteen editions, during this time the team has been resilient to sudden changes and obstacles.

The event lifecycle of the Dinner is represented in Figure 5.1 below.

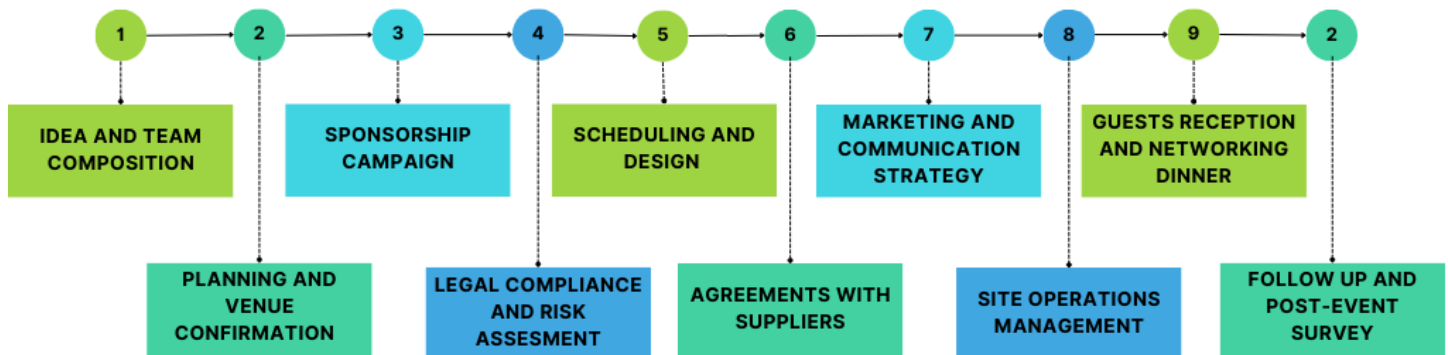


Figure 5.1 The event lifecycle of the Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023. (Administration Employee, 2023)

6. SUSTAINABILITY

The lately widespread concept of sustainability, in its combination of environmental, social and governance aspects, has gained growing relevance in the festival and event context, defined as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 16).

Assagenti is deeply concerned about the future of the planet and the impact on it of human actions: for the association, sustainability is a journey towards the future to arrive there with responsibility (Assagenti, 2023). All the event suppliers were involved and shared a wide-ranging sustainable development portfolio in compliance with ESG criteria (Executive Secretary, 2023). For instance, it is noteworthy that, for the first time from the creation of the Dinner, Assagenti succeeded in advertising and communicating with its guests paperless. Due to practical constraints, this section will briefly focus on the environmental aspect only. The following table (Table 6.1) provides a review of the environmental sustainability effort as reported in Assagenti’s Sustainability Protocol:

Setting, design and logistics related measures	Food and Beverage related measures
Reduce or eliminate the use of paper, favoring the use of digital materials	Promote “Zero Km” raw materials in the “Food & Beverage” department
Scrupulously comply with the legal provisions regarding the disposal of waste, (recycling and/or regeneration)	Favor the use of reusable materials (e.g. ceramic/glassware) and/or biodegradable materials for the execution of the catering service
Prefer plastic-free or recycled plastic materials	Favor the use of reusable and/or biodegradable place settings (cutlery, tablecloths and napkins) for the catering service
Favor the use of electric vehicles	Donate uneaten food and/or raw materials to charities
Favor the rental of the same or the reuse of the plants	Prefer, where possible, “loose” raw materials and not individually packaged (e.g. sugar sachets)
Carpet 100% recyclable in construction industry	Reduce the use of packaging to a minimum

Table 6.1 The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023 Sustainability efforts. (Assagenti, 2023)

7. CONCLUSIONS

The present study was designed to present various event management theoretical frameworks and concepts through the empirical analysis of the Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner and Assagenti's event design approach.

Following a brief introduction to event design theories, Assagenti and its event, the paper displays the possible organisational structures, the stakeholders' roles, and the viable strategies that can be recognised in the festival and event sector. Afterwards, a more empirical analysis of the Dinner is performed through situational and environmental analysis and a swift reference about project management and sustainability in the industry at issue.

Several themes and issues in theoretical frameworks and Dinner case study can still be addressed or further developed. From risk assessment, through post-event evaluations and communication techniques, to virtual and hybrid events, there is so much more to discover and examine in depth.

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APPENDIX 1 – The event in pictures

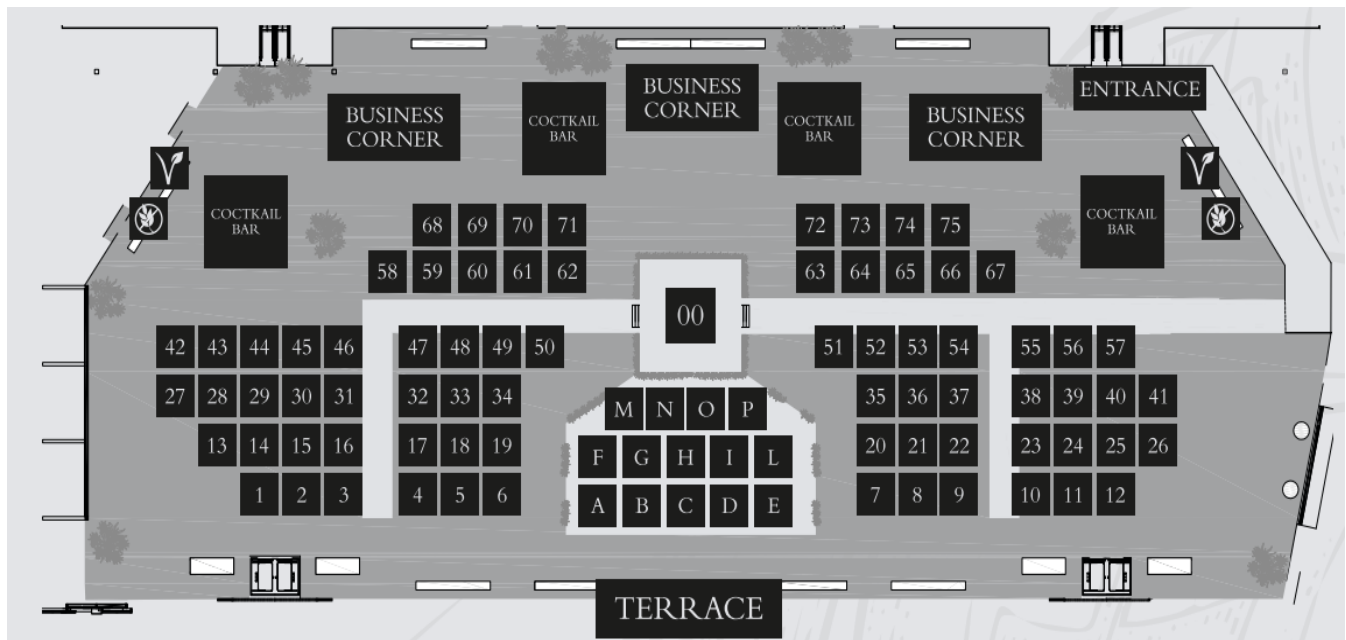


Figure A.1 The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023 Venue Map. (E.S., 2023)



Figure A.2 The Shipbrokers and Ship Agents Dinner 2023. (Assagenti, 2023)



Figure A.3 The Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023. Location setting details (Author's own, 2023)



Figure A.4 The final fireworks show at the Shipbrokers and Shipagents Dinner 2023. (Assagenti, 2023)

APPENDIX 2 – The communication style



Figure A.5 The website homepage of the event. (Assagenti, 2023)



Figure A.6 The digital invitation. (Author's own, 2023)

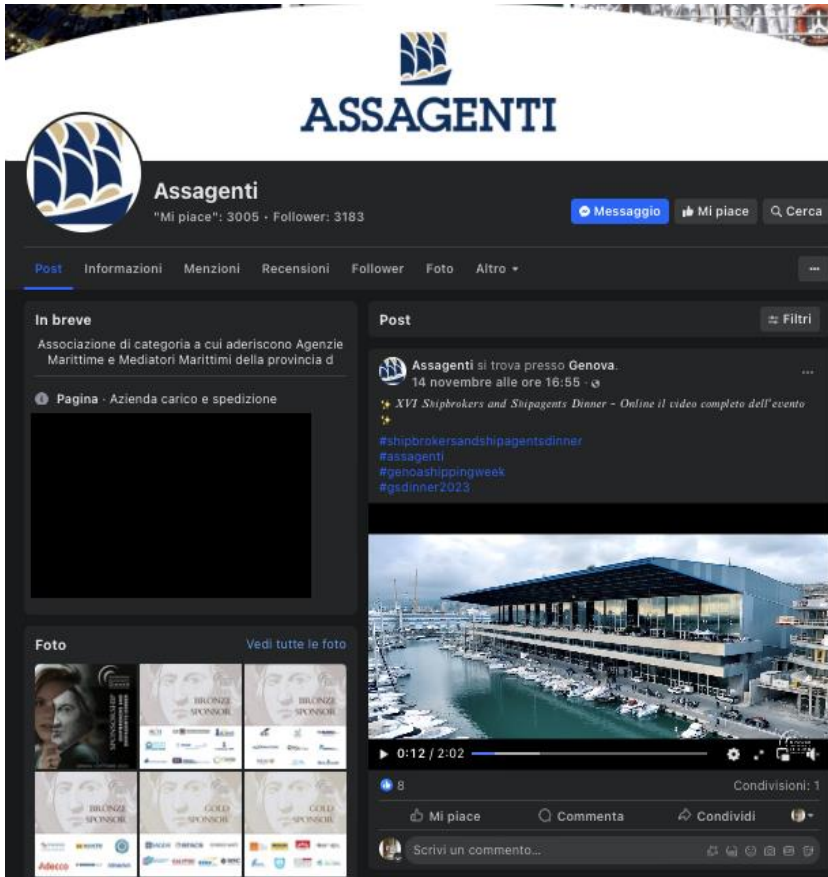


Figure A.7 The Facebook account of Assagenti. (Last visit 01/12/2023)

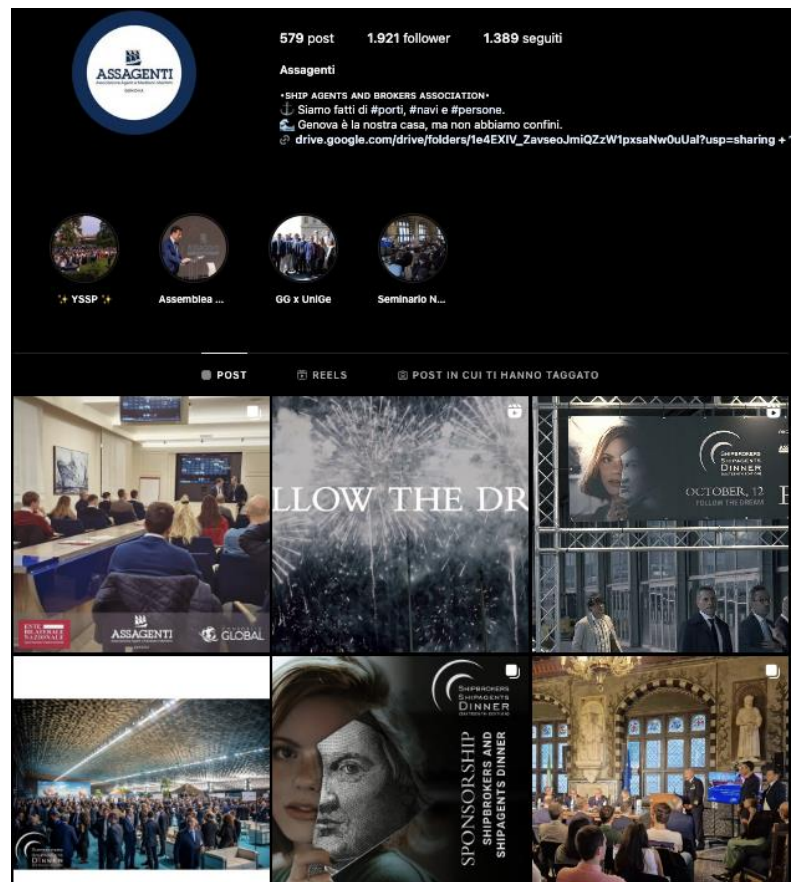


Figure A.8 The Instagram account of Assagenti. (Last visit 01/12/2023)