



EVENT TOURISM, VECTOR FOR A COMPETITIVE DESTINATION – CASE STUDY: TIMIȘOARA, ROMANIA

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Abstract:

Established tourist destinations worldwide annually attract a significant share of the total number of visitors. Very popular are the world's cities that have become true tourism destinations, especially for short stays. In Europe, the project “European Capital of Culture” was launched for the promotion of culture and cities as tourism destinations. The possibility of holding this title has led the authorities of many cities to mobilize and engage with civil society in order to highlight their heritage. One way of attracting a greater number of tourists to such destinations is by organizing events and directing their activities towards event tourism.

Timisoara is an urban tourism destination in Romania, known as the “capital of Banat”. Currently, the city, through its representatives in the local administration and other NGOs, is trying to get this European title for 2021 with the hope that the number of tourists will increase considerably, as will the revenues from this sector, and Timisoara will become an appreciated tourism destination.

Key words:

tourism destination,
event,
event tourism,
competitiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, people have tried to spend their free time in the most pleasant way possible, preferably outside their residence. The duration of leisure time, income, tourist offer, prices and tariffs, degree of urbanization, level of preparedness of the population, transportation performance were important factors influencing their decision. The reasons are multiple and subjective, from the desire to rest to the need for knowledge. Therefore, the locations chosen for leisure are diverse and varied.

A tourism destination can be defined as an area, region, country, city which has a rich anthropogenic and / or natural heritage. In other words, it is “that geographically delimited area perceived by tourists as a distinct/self-contained entity that has a unitary policy and legal framework” (Buhalis, 1999). According to some experts, any tourism destination has the following elements (Rotariu, 2009):

- ♦ Fundamental (geographical location, climate, river network, fauna, flora, *i.e.* natural conditions on site, as well as archaeological and historical sites);
- ♦ Natural Peripheral (surroundings, local population, general ambience);

- ♦ Created Peripheral (accommodation infrastructure, food, transportation, entertainment facilities, and commercial services).

Basically, natural and anthropogenic resources, overall localization, education and hospitality of the population, basic and general infrastructure, events that attract visitors give the tourism destination specific features. The legislative and regulatory framework in the field of tourism, security and reliability offered influence the selection of tourism destinations.

All tourism destinations are in constant competition to attract most visitors and to achieve the highest revenues.

The competitiveness of a tourism destination is also given by the perception and image that tourists have, and can be measured by the number of accommodation facilities, number of tourists accommodated, and number of overnight stays, average stay, and revenues.

An increasingly growing number of tourists consider cities to be interesting travel destinations due to their history and culture.

Major cities in Europe are competitive tourism destinations, popular with people all around the world, the number of visitors and annual revenues standing evidence (Table 1).

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Table 1. Top European cities preferred by visitors in 2014

No.	City - a tourism destination	No. of visitors (millions)	Revenues from tourism (billion US \$)
1.	London	18,69	19,3
2.	Paris	15,57	17,0
3.	Istanbul	11,6	9,4
4.	Barcelona	7,37	11,2
5.	Amsterdam	7,23	4,4
6.	Milan	6,82	5,3
7.	Rome	6,79	5,6
8.	Vienna	6,05	5,6
9.	Prague	4,93	3,8
10.	Munich	4,90	5,6
	Total	89,95	87,2

Source: Global Top 20 Top Destination Cities by International Overnight Visitors (2014), Hedrick & Choong (2015)

Given that, in 2014, according to the statistics of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (World Tourism Barometer, 2015), the number of tourists arriving in Europe was 588 million, the first ten cities on the continent attracted 15.29% of this total. Revenues from tourism in these cities in the same year accounted for 17.13% of the total tourism revenues across Europe (508.9 billion US \$).

It can be said that the interest in European cities is evident, and for their promotion and other such destinations, a successful project "European Capital of Culture" was launched in 1985. This title is conferred annually by the European Parliament to two cities from different countries, one in Western Europe and one in Eastern Europe.

One of Romania's cities, Sibiu, received this title in 2007, and for 2021 another Romanian city will be chosen. Timișoara is one of the candidate cities.

In order to increase the attractiveness of tourism destinations, in general, organizing and holding of events on different topics is quite appreciated.

2. EVENT TOURISM

The events organized in major cities try to get tourists out of the mundane, to attract their attention, to create strong emotions and memories. They are organized with a particular purpose, they are marketing tools.

Organizing an event requires (Sârb, 2013):

- ◆ Establishing targets;
- ◆ Establishing the target audience;
- ◆ Choosing the type of event;
- ◆ Choosing the concept of the event;
- ◆ Choosing the date and the location of the event;
- ◆ Establishing the program;
- ◆ Budgeting and resource planning;

- ◆ Establishing the performance indicators;
- ◆ Choosing the promotion channels.

The benefits that an event can bring to the tourism destination are:

- ◆ An approach to the public (tourists);
- ◆ Attracting new categories of tourists;
- ◆ Promoting the destination with a brand;
- ◆ Controlling sent messages;
- ◆ Increasing revenues.

The adequate event categories for a tourism destination would as (Florea & Belous, 2004):

- ◆ Entertainment and recreation (music, dance);
- ◆ Cultural (concerts, theatrical performances, magic shows, exhibitions, religious events);
- ◆ Scientific / educational (congresses, conferences, workshops);
- ◆ Sports (international competitions).

Event tourism has become constantly present in the urban tourism destinations, bringing them a competitive advantage. By event tourism, we mean the form of tourism whose main purpose is participation of tourists in one or several events organized at a specific date within a particular destination. This form of tourism generates the following effects:

- ◆ Establishing an image and reputation for the tourism destination;
- ◆ Increasing the number of tourists;
- ◆ Knowledge of and interaction with other cultures;
- ◆ Efficient use of tourism resources;
- ◆ Elimination of seasonality;
- ◆ Raising the standard of living of the resident population;
- ◆ The emergence of business opportunities for local people;
- ◆ Specific and general infrastructure development;
- ◆ Developing new markets.

Orientation towards event tourism in recent years has brought major benefits and good reputation to the tourism destination and created unforgettable memories and impressions for visitors.

3. TIMIȘOARA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

Romania is a European country located in the south-east Central Europe, having an area of 238,391 km². There are 320 cities in Romania, one of which rank 0 (Romania's capital) and 13 rank 1 (municipalities of national importance, with potential influence at European level) (Romanian municipalities, 2015).

The tourist potential of the country is rich, varied but poorly valued.

There were 7,943,153 persons registered as tourists in 2013, and 8,465,909 persons in 2014.

The most visited cities are large cities rank 0 and 1, plus the city of Sibiu (rank 2), which has become a tourism destination also due to the 2007 title of "European Capital of Culture". Table 2 includes the hierarchy of Romanian cities according to the number of tourists arrived and registered in 2014.



Table 2. Top visited cities in Romania 2014

No.	Name of city	Number of tourists
1.	Bucharest	1510222
2.	Constanța	439496
3.	Brașov	423630
4.	Cluj Napoca	262578
5.	Sibiu	258834
6.	Timișoara	235692
	Total	3130452

Source: TEMPO Online, TUR 104E and Public information, 2015

The six most visited cities in 2014 attracted 39.41% of all tourists arriving in Romania, which means that tourists preferred business, sightseeing, seaside, mountain, cultural, and event tourism.

Timisoara is a city with a rich history and continuous development, located in the west of Romania, in the divagation area of the Timis and Bega rivers in the historical region of Banat. The city's area is 129.2 km², to which we add the metropolitan area of 1070.4 km². Its population is of 319 279 inhabitants, which ranks it third among the cities of the country. Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Roma and other nationalities live in harmony, this city being a model of multiculturalism.

The access to the city is easy and is done by road, rail and air at Traian Vuia International Airport.

The city mentioned in documents in 1222 or 1226 was built on the ruins of the Roman fortress Zambara.

We know that Timișoara, "capital of Banat" is the city of firsts, namely (Timișoara, 2015):

- ◆ 1718 - the formal mention of the oldest beer factory in Romania;
- ◆ 1728 - the beginning of the drainage of the river Bega, the first navigable canal in Romania;
- ◆ 1745 - the construction of the town hospital, the first in Romania (24 years before the one in Vienna and 34 years before the one in Budapest);
- ◆ 1753 - Timișoara, a town with permanent theatre performances (third town in the Habsburg monarchy, after Vienna and Budapest);
- ◆ 1760 - the first town of the monarchy with streets lit by lamps;
- ◆ 1771 - the editing of the first newspaper in Romania, and at the same the first German newspaper in south-east Europe: „Temeswarer Nachrichten”;
- ◆ 1815 - Joseph Klapka's library, the first public library in the Habsburg Empire and in the Romanian territories;
- ◆ 1823-1826 - Janos Bolyai, serving at the garrison in Timisoara, worked to develop the non-Euclidean geometry;
- ◆ 1847 - in the courtyard of the beer factor, the first concert outside Vienna of Johann Strauss, the son;
- ◆ 1854 - the first telegraph service in a city of present Romania;

- ◆ 1855 - the first town of the Habsburg Monarchy with streets lit by gas;
- ◆ 1881 - the first telephone network on the present territory of Romania;
- ◆ 1884 - the first European town with streets lit by electricity with 731 lamp posts;
- ◆ 1886 - the first ambulance station in Hungary and Romania;
- ◆ 1895 - the first paved street on Romania's territory;
- ◆ 1897 - the first film screenings in our country;
- ◆ 1899 - the second electric tram in a city in present Romania, after the one in Bucharest in 1894
- ◆ 1938 - world premiere, the first welding machine for rail and tram tracks, invention of professor Corneliu Micloși;
- ◆ 1953 - the only European town with three state theatres in Romanian, Hungarian and German;
- ◆ 1989 - the beginning of the Romanian revolution against the communist regime in Romania and the first free city

The anthropogenic tourist resources are numerous and arouse the interest of tourists. From the architectural point of view, the city inherits a vast patrimony of historic monuments (about 14.500), being the largest in the country. They are grouped into the districts Cetate, Iosefin and Fabric, and the predominant style was the Viennese influenced Baroque.

Concurrently, the town has a number of museums, art galleries, and cultural institutions. Being a cosmopolitan city, its cultural life marks its development.

A series of events are organized annually, some of them are already well-known, such as performing arts, festivals of music, film, theatre, literature, fashion, dance and combined arts.

Among the events organized in Timisoara we include (Annual events, 2015):

- ◆ March: Culture Week, Cinecultura Film Festival, Bookfest;
- ◆ April: the Spring Fair, Kafecultur, Musical Academic Timișoara;
- ◆ May: Romanian Drama Festival, Europe's Day, "Musical Timișoara" International Festival, Chamber Music Festival, Ezoteric Fest, European Film Festival, Studentfest, Euroregional Theatre Festival (TESZT);
- ◆ June: The Banat Ethnic Groups Festival, Street Delivery, Acces Art;
- ◆ July: the Hearts' Festival, JazzTM Festival;
- ◆ August: Timișoara's Day, "Blues for Timișoara" Festival, Opera and Operetta Festival;
- ◆ September: Timișoara's Prayer, PLAI Festival, "George Enescu – Bela Bartok" Musical Days, Early Music Festival;
- ◆ October: the Wine Festival, Simultan Video and Media Arts Festival;
- ◆ November: Jazz Timișoara International Festival, the Blues Jazz Kamo Gala, Eurothalia theatre Festival;
- ◆ December: Romania's National Day, the Sacred Music Days, and the Christmas Fair.



All these make the town on the Bega a serious candidate for the title of “European Capital of Culture”. The multitude of events clearly shows the intent for development and promotion of event tourism.

The evolution of tourism indicators can provide the image of a competitive tourism destination.

The evolution of these factors is illustrative to understand the representation of Timișoara as a tourism destination (Table 3 and 4).

In the last five years under consideration, we notice a tendency to increase the number of accommodation facilities and that of accommodation capacity. This is because of businessmen who see Timisoara as a future important European tourism destination, and they request a certain type of accommodation facilities. Unfortunately, the city currently has no hotel accommodation facilities of five-star category.

Table 3. The evolution of accommodation facilities and accommodation capacity in Timisoara

Indicator	unit	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Accommodation facilities	number	79	86	102	107	100
Existing accommodation capacity	No. of beds	4421	4739	5421	5547	5348
Functioning accommodation capacity	Beds - days	1400855	1562912	1745628	1802919	1809947

Source: TEMPO Online, TUR 101C and 103D, 2015

Table 4. The evolution of the number of tourists arriving in Timisoara and overnight stays

Indicator	unit	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Tourist arrivals	persons	176912	210879	227546	224471	235692
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities	-	331997	388104	430440	456000	482074

Source: TEMPO Online, TUR 104E and 105H, 2015

The number of tourists arriving to this city was of 235,692 people in 2014, with 58,780 people in absolute increase compared to 2010.

Table 5. Monthly distribution of tourist arrivals in Timisoara in 2014.

Month	Tourist arrivals
January	13868
February	15997
March	18790
April	18997
May	21599
June	20496
July	21114
August	18338
September	23308
October	24556
November	21638
December	16991

Source: TEMPO Online, TUR 104H, 2015

According to monthly distribution of tourist arrivals in the last year (Table 5), January and February are less preferred months, while October is the most preferred month. In the two winter months, when tourists are less numerous, we notice that there are no events organized. A more accurate image of distribution of tourist arrivals in 2014 can be seen in Figure 1. Hence, it follows that a rather important part of tourists come specifically to attend various festivals and events organized in the city.

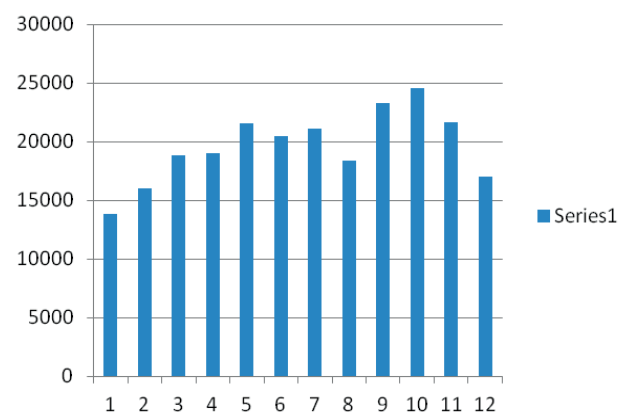


Figure 1. Monthly distribution of tourist arrivals in Timișoara in 2014



Table 6. Evolution of occupancy rate and average stay in Timisoara

Indicator	unit	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Occupancy rate	%	23,7	24,8	23,9	25,3	26,6
Average stay	days	1,9	1,8	1,9	2,0	2,0

Previous data allowed us to highlight the evolution of the degree of occupancy of average stay in Timișoara (Table 6).

With the increasing number of tourists, vacancy in accommodation facilities dropped, reaching 26.6% in 2014. The occupancy rate is low, but we must take into account the increasing accommodation capacity and especially the tourist motivation (business, knowledge, entertainment, participation in events) and the average length of stay.

Timisoara is one of Romania's urban destinations, which attempts to create a positive image among tourists. To that end, we can use the existing tourist resources, the specific and general infrastructure and the events organized.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Event tourism contributes to development of tourism destinations, and more and more cities worldwide are trying to obtain a competitive advantage over other such destinations by using the events organized.

Romania is still not among the top tourism countries, although it has sufficient and undiscovered resources.

Timisoara can become a competitive European tourism destination by promoting event tourism and city-breaks, and the benefits would be economic, social, and environmental. In support of this are geographical location, local history, multiculturalism, cultural and artistic heritage, economic development, general infrastructure, hospitality of local people. The analyzed indicators show an annual increase of tourists' interest as far as Timișoara is concerned.

The listed events are held annually and some of them are already internationally recognized. Organization is conducted by associations, NGOs, other institutions in the city and also by local populations. This contributes significantly to the development of the city both as a tourism destination and "European Cultural Capital".

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