

EVENT TOURISM IN THE TOURIST OFFER OF THE CITY OF SARAJEVO

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Abstract

Event tourism in the tourist offer of the City of Sarajevo

The purpose of this paper is to analyse event tourism in the tourist offer of the City of Sarajevo, i.e., to what extent does event tourism in the tourist destination of the Sarajevo Canton affects the increase or decrease in demand for the destination, and the economic and social significance of the various events, present or past, for the Sarajevo Canton. The paper used a quantitative research approach, which included data collection through an online survey (Google Forms). The research was conducted from September 1st until September 11th in year 2021, on a convenience sample of 40 respondents. The survey consisted of two parts, where the first one is related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second part was based on the satisfaction with the quality of the offer of tourist events in Sarajevo and on the interest of tourists in the development of potential events in Sarajevo (Advent). The methods of analysis, synthesis, and descriptive statistics were used to interpret the obtained data.

Keywords

Event tourism, events, Sarajevo, tourism, tourist offer

1. Introduction

Event tourism is extremely important, but also a complex segment of the tourist offer of each destination. Event tourism is a very broad term that can be divided into many types, that is, there are many different types of events, such as cultural and entertainment events, sports competitions, business congresses, religious events, and many others.

The topic of this paper is »Event tourism in the tourist offer of the City of Sarajevo«. The paper will define the concept of event tourism as a special segment of tourism, determine the extent to which event tourism in the tourist destination of the Sarajevo Canton affects the increase or decrease in demand for the destination, and the economic and social significance of the various events, past or present, for the Sarajevo Canton as a destination. Also, the article will list and explain potential events that could be organized in the Sarajevo Canton, which, supported by facts, could contribute to the development of the destination, and therefore to the expansion of the offer of this tourist destination, to the increase in the number of tourists and, what is very important, to increasing number of overnight stays in Sarajevo Canton, as well as many other positive effects on the destination.

1.1 Literature review

There are different views among existing authors on what the term »event« encompasses. It is considered that the common feature of all events is periodicity and that each manifestation is an exceptional driving force for the conceptual combination of management, program, decorations, and people (Getz 2005).

The event in question, seen from the perspective of tourism and the subject of this paper, is called a »special event« by a large number of authors, referring, of course, to public special events. Special events include a wide range of events, from national holidays and celebrations to important civic events, special cultural performances, major sporting events, and trade promotions. Today, the industry of these events is so large that it is very difficult to find a definition that includes all types and forms of special events (Čaušević-Ribić and Čizmić 2016).

Author Getz (2005) offers two definitions of special events, one from the organizer's point of view and the other from the guest's point of view:

- A special event is a one-time or periodic event that goes beyond normal programs and activities in the field of organization and sponsorship.
- For guests, a special event is an opportunity for a vacation, social, and/or cultural experience that goes beyond the usual choices and everyday events.

Based on their research, the authors Jago and Shaw (1998) note six characteristics of special event:

- it is attractive for tourists and promotes tourism development,
- has a limited duration,
- happens once or periodically,
- increases awareness of the region, its image, and characteristics,
- provides a social experience,
- in terms of content, it deviates significantly from everyday events.

Events affect tourist perception, but they can also affect the motivation of foreign tourists to visit the host city. In many destinations, special events represent an important element of the tourist product, they attract a certain segment of consumers, they help create a better image, and when they are organized at the level of international events, they influence the creation of the image of the entire country. Events are used as a means of attracting both foreign and domestic tourists and as a solution to the problem of »product« differentiation in the increasingly competitive tourist market (Vrtiprah 2004). Events play a significant role in society by attracting tourists, having a positive economic impact, creating opportunities for participation in community life and togetherness, and strengthening the image of the destination. Festivals and special events have developed in all destinations and are the fastest-growing segment in the field of tourism (Park, Reisinger and Kang 2008). Special interest in festivals and events such as cultural preservation, research of local specialties and culture, and involvement in the functioning of the local community has led to an increased emphasis on regional and local festivals.

The attractiveness of a tourist destination can be created by affirming its own cultural heritage (such as concerts, festivals, exhibitions, etc.), by connecting the tourist offer with cultural identity (historical traditions, natural beauty, and local customs), events, and manifestations, entertainment programs, all to attract the largest possible number of tourists, the extension of the season and the efficiency of increasing the attractiveness of the tourist destination (Gračan and Rudančić-Lugarić 2013).

Events can affect the perception of foreign tourists about the image of the city where the event is held (Čaušević and Čizmić 2017). In addition to the increase in tourist visits to the organized event, the event itself can improve the tourist offer, attract media attention and increase access to the destination, which improves the reputation (image) of the host city or tourist region. Media coverage of a successfully organized event can illustrate the capabilities, innovations, and achievements of the host destination in organizing the event (Bowdin, Allen, Harris, McDonnell and O'Toole 2012).

When it comes to event tourism, the advantage and attractiveness of a tourist destination are superiorly imposed by employing comparative advantages and derived competitive advantages. Comparative advantages are reflected in the following: natural values or natural assets (types of sports and celebration themes), location (target markets, sponsorships, event owners), culture (local celebrations of interest to visitors), and climate (seasonal events). Derived competitive advantages relate to event organization (leadership, unified vision and goals, integrated, strategic approach, partnership, and cooperation), investment (operations for all events, event portfolio, event ownership, event competition), marketing (branding and positioning, effective-targeted communications), expertise and professionalism (education, training of human resources, quality and innovation of events), intelligence (influential event, creating a legacy, research, evaluation and labelling of events and thinking about future events) (Getz 2008).

Due to the simultaneous nature of production and consumption in the tourism sector, the development of event tourism has far wider implications in tourist destinations than other activities. Event tourism or events themselves affect almost every aspect of human life, be it social, cultural, economic, ecological, or political. Events have a range of positive and negative impacts on a specific host destination and business entities. Nevertheless, all the benefits resulting from positive connections and effects on the tourist destination are the reasons for supporting the increasing development of event tourism and the popularity of organizing events (Getz 2008).

Therefore, a series of conclusions reached through more studious analyses of event tourism showed that, with the right approach to event planning and organization, not only economic effects, but also the impact that events have on the formation of the tourist offer and image of the destination can be improved (Čaušević and Čizmić 2017; Čizmić and Čaušević 2017).

1.2 Events organized in Sarajevo with an exceptional impact on the attractiveness of the tourist offer of the destination

During the summer months, numerous festivals are held in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and events that attract different interest groups are organized. However, it is important to point out that not all events have the same level of attraction in tourism when it comes to visitors, and therefore their significance for supplementing Sarajevo's tourist offer does not have the same value and importance. The spectrum of events is large, although only a small number of them, considering their attractiveness to visitors and the tradition of holding them, can be included in the tourist offer of Sarajevo. Sarajevo tourist destination includes about fifteen European-level events, which attract the attention of numerous visitors and participants from various parts of the world to this day. Year by year, the growth of these manifestations increases, as they acquire a regional international character. The tourism offer of Sarajevo includes numerous objects and institutions from the cultural sector, the most important of which are: festivals and large manifestations, museums, galleries, theatres, the Sarajevo Opera and Philharmonic, and the offer of film programs (Žunić 2016).

The biggest event ever organized in Sarajevo, to this day, are the XIV Olympic Games, held in 1984. It was an event that opened Sarajevo's doors to the world, and promoted it in the best possible light, as the best organization of a sporting event of wider international significance until then (Topalović 2021).

The second biggest event was EYOF – European Winter Olympic Youth Festival. EYOF 2019 was the largest sports competition organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the Winter Olympics in 1984. It was held in the period from February 9-16, 2019. With the organization of EYOF 2019, Bosnia and Herzegovina has once again become the center of the world of sports. It was an event that returned the flame to the hearts of citizens, 35 years after the Winter Olympic Games were held in Sarajevo (Topalović 2021).

The third manifestation that makes the tourist offer of Sarajevo as a destination, with a continuous tradition, is the Sarajevo Film Festival. This festival, which is extremely important for the area of Southeastern Europe, has manifold significance for the development of tourism and other related activities not only in Sarajevo but also in the entire country of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Topalović 2021). Today, the Sarajevo Film Festival is recognized as a development project not only for the City of Sarajevo but also for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole. First of all, the Sarajevo Film Festival creates a different image of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the constellation of news coming from our country. Also, the Sarajevo Film Festival proved that it wants and can be a strong factor in the development of the film industry, which has proven to be one of the best products of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the City of Sarajevo, for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its cinematography, the Sarajevo Film Festival is like a small Olympics. Considering the positive spirit, good atmosphere, size of the event, and business potential, it represents a great event. Festival greatly contributes to the promotion of the country. To this day, many prominent figures from the world of film have walked the red carpet in front of the National Theatre in Sarajevo, and the Sarajevo Film Festival is one of the events for which tickets are always sought after. During the days of the Sarajevo Film Festival, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina comes alive 24 hours a day, with visits of tourists and media from all over the world. An event of any kind, which gathers more than 100000 visitors in Sarajevo, hosts an impressive number of world media, employs a large number of young people, fills the capacities of hotels and restaurants, draws on the offers of the tourist community, and is the best promoter not only of the City of Sarajevo but also of the entire country and the initiator of the development of the country in other areas as well. These are its greatest strength and significance. The Sarajevo Film Festival is of decisive importance when it comes to the image and competitiveness of Sarajevo's tourist product. The wealth of history and culture sets it apart from all other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Sarajevo Film Festival is an ideal way of valorising and affirming precisely these values (Čaušević-Ribić and Čizmić 2016).

Other events and manifestations that take place in Sarajevo, which need to be highlighted are Baščaršijske noći, Sarajevo Street Food festival, MESS festival, Sarajevo Winter Market, Coca-Cola Sarajevo Holiday Market, Diving in Bentbaša, Jazz Fest Sarajevo, Javorwood, Ilidža Rock Fest and many others (Topalović 2021).

2. Materials and methods

In the preparation and implementation of an online survey for research purposes, the Google Forms application was used. The research lasted from September 1st to September 11th, 2021, on a convenience sample of 40 respondents. The survey was anonymous, conducted in English, and consisted of a total of 11 open-ended and closed-ended questions. The survey was created in two parts, where the first one related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second part was based on the satisfaction with the quality of the offer of tourist events in Sarajevo and the interest of tourists in the development of potential events in Sarajevo (Advent). The methods of analysis, synthesis, and descriptive statistics were used in the interpretation of the obtained data (Topalović 2021).

3. Results and discussion

When it comes to the demographic picture of the respondents of this survey, the situation is as follows:

The sample consisted mostly of the female population, namely 62.5%, where the middle age group prevailed, i.e., 60% of the respondents belonged to the "middle-aged population" between 30 and 60 years old, followed by the younger age group up to 30 years of age (37.5%), while only 2.5% of the population belonged to the mature age group. The highest number of respondents have completed tertiary education with a percentage of 65%, 25% have attended some tertiary education, while 10% have a secondary education. The largest number of respondents came from neighbouring Serbia, namely 57.5%, followed by Croatia at 20%, domestic tourists from Bosnia and Herzegovina at 10%, while the rest of the respondents were from Botswana, Germany, Turkey, Sweden, and Ireland (1 respondent from each of the countries, i.e., 2.5%) (Topalović 2021).

In the second part of the questionnaire, the data on tourists' satisfaction with the quality of the tourist offer in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as their opinion on existing and potential events, are as follows:

Respondents rated the tourist offer of the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina as excellent (5), namely 47.5% of them, followed by 37.5% of respondents rating Sarajevo's tourist offer as very good (4), 12.5% as good (3), and only 2.5% believe that Sarajevo's tourist offer is bad (Topalović 2021).

Analysing the respondents' responses, it was noted that 52.5% of them, i.e., just over half, visited any festival/event in Sarajevo during their visit and stay. Given that the respondents in the next question were supposed to indicate the festival or events they attended during their stay, more than 90% of them indicated the Sarajevo Film Festival in their answers. Also, when answering the question about which event they heard about through social networks, the media, or any advertising channel, in most cases the respondents mentioned the Sarajevo Film Festival, followed by festivals and events such as Bašćaršijske noći, Jazz festival, Beer Fest, and Sarajevo Čevap Fest.

The opinion of the majority of respondents, namely 55%, is that Sarajevo offers a sufficient number of organized events of any type. However, the majority, 85%, believe that the organization of Advent would complete Sarajevo's winter tourist offer. As answers to the last question in the questionnaire, the respondents were supposed to list events that, in their personal opinion, would complement and positively influence the attractiveness and content of their stay in Sarajevo. The following suggestions were found as answers: Advent, Beer fest, music festivals (including techno music parties and festivals such as Ultra in Croatia and Exit festival in Serbia), sports events and manifestations (including winter sports such as skiing, in connection with Olympic events in Sarajevo), summer festivals and gastro festivals (food and drink) (Topalović 2021).

4. Conclusion

The organization, marketing, and promotion of events in a specific destination play a significant role in the final tourist offer and the further development of tourism in that destination. The City of Sarajevo has all the necessary predispositions and potential for the development of event tourism, as well as the fact that part of its offer is based on events that positively influence the image of the destination in the perception of tourists who revisit this destination. Additionally, through research, it was determined that the Sarajevo Film Festival is not only a leading film festival, but also an event of an entertaining character, not only in Sarajevo, but also in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, and that this festival is the best promoted and organized event, which confirms the satisfaction of tourists who have been visiting for years. Through the interpretation and analysis of other responses to the formed questionnaire, we concluded that, in the opinion of respondents, Sarajevo lacks music manifestations, gastronomic events, as well as sports competitions, and events that would complete the content and attractiveness of the tourist stay of all visitors. During the research, the respondents reacted positively to the organization of Advent as an additional content in Sarajevo's winter tourist offer, which is the most realistic option considering that the City of Sarajevo has been organizing a public celebration of New Year's Eve for many years, with a program that lasts only 3 days. Following the example of the capital of the neighbouring country of Croatia, Sarajevo could use its potential for organizing Advent as a manifestation that will greatly contribute to the longer stay of visitors as well as the content of their visit in the form of entertaining content, the rich gastronomic offer that Sarajevo can boast of, additional content for children and young people of all ages, and many more. If the organization of the mentioned event was to be started, the choice of location would play a big role in the success of the realization, and it would be desirable to include the mountains surrounding the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given that Sarajevo is an Olympic city, and a known winter tourist center when it comes to winter sports, so the offer would be comprehensive and would have precisely the events that are missing to complete the attractiveness and content of a tourist's stay. Also, during the summer tourist season, it would be desirable to organize music events, in the period before or after the Sarajevo Film Festival, to enrich the offer of the summer season and at the same time extend the stay of all those who come to visit (Topalović 2021).

Therefore, it can be concluded that event tourism is one of the youngest but also the most promising types of tourism, where the commercialization of events initiates a more active interest of tourism participants and entire economies in the study of this area, all intending to increase the economic and other benefits that the community achieves. The City of Sarajevo, with the well-known Sarajevo Film Festival, but also with other lesser-known events, has the potential to enrich the tourist offer, build an image, and brand the destination itself on the current market, all with good planning, organization, marketing and promotion of the event, and thus the destinations itself.

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Summary

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