

SIBIU INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL – AN EXPRESSION OF THE EVENT TOURISM DYNAMISM

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Abstract

The range of events, and especially those in the tourism industry, is vast enough to have real forms which allow their classification from the point of view of the motivation to participate at a certain event. From the point of view of the leisure industry, where the event management has a fundamental role, events are some carefully organized arrangements. These have the purpose of drawing public's attention and that of attracting potential local and international clients for whom events are the main travelling reason. Here we can mention an exceptional cultural event organized in Romania: Sibiu International Theatre Festival (FITS), which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2013. This event denotes the cultural dynamism of the nowadays Romania.

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JEL classification: L83, L84, M14

1. Events: meaning, types an motivation

M.I.C.E. (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions) Terminology Glossary defines the *event* as being a part of a gathering, a component of a meeting, and it defines the *meeting* as being a general term indicating the coming of a group of people in the same place to participate in a specific activity organized *ad hoc* or planned in advance. (M.I.C.E.

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Terminology Glossary, 2010). Consequently, “meeting” is used with a general meaning in English as well as “event” in Romanian.

There are many types of events. Therefore, it is very difficult to present them, if not impossible, even if the speciality literature comprises a series of classifications from several points of view such as scale, level of the commercialization, purpose, target market, type of organization, but also the target public of the event. For instance, the British representative analysts of this industry, Shone and Parry, propose a first classification. Thus, *from the point of view of their purpose* the events are: *leisure and sporting events, personal events, cultural events and organizational events*. (Shone, A., Parry, B., 2004). *From the point of view of their target public* events are classified into two large groups and within these ones they are classified as follows:

1. *Events that have an external target public* (financing, conferences/seminars/general gatherings of the shareholders, national and local fairs and exhibitions, book publications, service delivery, rebranding, itinerant spectacles, workshops, open days);
2. *Events that have a local target public* (religious holidays, trainings/team building, special occasions such as outstanding results, discoveries, etc.)

From the point of view of the scale of the event there are four categories of events:

- a) *mega-events* (the Olympic Games, Football World Championship, International Fairs);
- b) *reference events*, that is, those which are regularly organized in a certain location or tourist destination and which come to a point where they are identified with that specific place and thus gaining fame (Sibiu International Theatre Festival – Romania, the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro – Brazil, Oktoberfest – Germany, etc.)
- c) *major events* (the International Tennis Cup, Formula 1, etc.)
- d) *local or community events*, that is those which are addressed to local audience, with social and entertainment value

However, special festivals and events can evolve from local events – within limited communities with a positive economic impact and through the benefits brought to their organizers – up to mega-events – which are realized with the aim of reaching a global audience with a positive national and international impact. (O’Sullivan, Pickernell and Senyard, 2009)

Some of the most common forms of cultural holiday are public festivals which always have a specific subject. They have an important significance given by the fact that they have an educational impact on the participants – through communication, which is part of the event, they find out information about the host community and its culture.

In fact, festivals successfully take part at the creation of the so called tourism and art phenomenon, at the outlining of the cultural tourism industry generating economic benefits for the local community as well as for partners who, by organizing some events, promote the outstanding quality and the access to culture.

As far as the content is concerned, *cultural tourism* expresses “(...) in the briefest way one of the fundamental motivations of the majority of tourist travelling; this means the wish of having a direct and immediate contact with the historic, artistic and religious values which give us the picture of what cultural identity of a nation means.” (Dudău, D.B., 2010) Thus, in the opinion of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), cultural tourism represents “(...) the travelling of persons towards remote cultural attractions with the intention of finding out information and of gaining new experience so that they can satisfy their cultural needs.” (Lord B., Cultural Tourism in Ontario).

Cultural tourism is closely linked to *cultural national and international heritage* composed of cultural public movables and immovables with a great value. These represent an irreplaceable testimony of the human creating power in relationship with the natural environment, the history of a people and a national and universal civilisation. (Țigu, G. – coordonator, 2004)

2. Sibiu International Theatre Festival (FITS) – a remarkable event on the international cultural scene

After 1989 (the year marking the fall of the communist regime) it seemed that the provincial theatre was forever condemned to isolation because it was, and it still is, financially “censured”, most often ignored by a centralist critique, avoided by chroniclers whose publications did not have money for travelling, etc. However, Sibiu did not disappear from the theatrical map; on the contrary, it has even managed to become more and more famous in Europe and all over the world.

Thus, in the spring of 1994 – when the first official edition of Sibiu International Theatre Festival took place – the ambitious “Young Professional Theatre Festival” began in the first theatre hall in Central Europe built 400 years ago (the Thalia Hall in Sibiu). The Festival had achieved continuity, it had become renown from America to Japan and later it became an institution with a well defined personality and structure.

In 2007 an exceptional edition of the Festival took place as it affirmed its contribution to Sibiu’s receiving the title of European Capital of Culture, together with the City of Luxemburg and the Greater Region, and it brought together more than 2 500 guests.

Between 2008 and 2013 Sibiu International Theatre Festival evolved as a meeting place for the excellence in the performing arts. This determined the European Union to declare the Festival as “the third important performing arts festival in Europe” after those in Edinburgh (Great Britain) and Avignon (France). The Festival gradually innovated its institutional personality by:

- implementing the online ticketing system which allows the sale in advance of all tickets for the advertised spectacles in Sibiu
- setting up, for the first time in Romania, a heritage section that enhances the values of the most representative Romanian productions
- continuing the development of a performing arts market and of the creative dialogue by supporting the independent theatre
- the meeting of theatrical schools and academies
- the relaunch of the Sibiu Performing Arts Market
- hosting one of the most important book fairs in Romania – Sibiu BookFest
- initiating the Visual Arts Platform supported by Dan Perjovschi

Sibiu International Theatre Festival is organized by “Radu Stanca” Theatre of Sibiu, the Town Hall and the Local Council of Sibiu supported by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Tourism, the Romanian Cultural Institute, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, Sibiu District Council and UNITER (Union of Theatre People of Romania). Moreover, for 17 years the Festival has been organized under the patronage of the Romanian President which is an important proof of its contribution to the prestige and image of the country. Since 1999 the Festival has also been under the patronage of the European Commission, of the European Commission Representation in Bucharest and of the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth.

Each Festival is held under the slogan of some generous subjects around which the artistic planning is done:

- 1995 – Tolerance
- 1996 – Violence
- 1997 – Cultural Identity
- 1998 – Links
- 1999 – Creativity
- 2000 – Alternative
- 2001 – Challenges
- 2002 – Bridges
- 2003 – Tomorrow
- 2004 – Legacies
- 2005 – Signs
- 2006 – Together
- 2007 – Next
- 2008 – Energy
- 2009 – Inovations
- 2010 – Questions
- 2011 – Communities
- 2012 – Crisis. Culture makes a difference
- 2013 – Dialogue

As a whole, FITS subjects make obvious the European cultural diversity and they create a feeling of European cultural identity.

Now, at its 20th edition (2013), FITS is revealed as a branded event in a community aware of the fact that festivals (theatre, jazz, folklore, photography and film festivals) can improve the life, the education, the local economy and the local prestige quality. This edition's programme continues the tradition of a high culture. The 2013 events agenda is extremely rich and vast and it brought the public representative productions of big foreign and Romanian companies, street spectacles in the Old Town, theatre and dance spectacles: flamenco, ballet, contemporary dance, puppet theatre, circus, lights spectacles, pantomime; conferences, debates, photography and painting exhibitions, book release, installations and workshops taking place in conventional locations, and especially in unconventional locations. All this turns Sibiu in a genuine world cultural capital.

The 2013 FITS cultural agenda offered only “five star” spectacles to those who enjoy theatre. Either dance or theatre spectacles, all of them received positive remarks. The festival offered an impressive number of events, 300, among which street spectacles occupied a special place. As they registered the highest percentage, street spectacles represented some of the most expensive events in Sibiu. At the same time, they were important due to

the power of “attracting” those who are not very interested in theatre. This is the most important aspect of the Festival. About 60% of the spectacles are held outdoors. This is the Festival’s power and authenticity. They have always tried to make bring very good companies because this is the long-term investment of the Festival.

Apart from local and international prestige, FITS also represents a success network from a financial point of view. From the six-million euro budget for 2013 about 85% went to Sibiu services, mainly food and accommodation. Successful financial recipe for Sibiu is much more complex as the taxes paid by FITS artists and guests for their adjacent services as well as the money spent by tourists are added to the budget of the Festival. This fact is supported by the 14% tourist activity growth in 2013 as opposed to the preceding year. Finally, still from the Festival balance sheet point of view, during the ten days of activities there were more than 600 000 spectators which is a significant achievement. This was one of the best editions as it touched inexperienced domains until now, such as the opera and the underground representations held in ten locations. Moreover, the spectacles duration increased. Consequently, the power and success of the Festival lay in the fact that it is not a spontaneous Festival which lasts a few months. On the contrary, it is a living organism, a festival that has been creating projects and events for many years.

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