

Tourism&Theatre
To be or not to be?

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ABSTRACT

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This investigation seeks to study the Tourism&Theatre phenomenon. The main proposal of the research is to highlight strategies of how an urban destination can make, from its inherent theatre products and theatrical culture, a tourist attraction.

The methodology undertaken has been an exploratory search of qualitative information thanks to exhaustive in-depth interviews with theatrical and tourism professionals and companies. Currently, London and New York are the most successful examples of Tourism&Theatre destinations. However, examples from other western destinations are devising alternative strategies.

Surprisingly, the conclusion that the project has unearthed is that tourism accessibility is the key to Tourism&Theatre phenomenon. In destinations where theatre is not yet a tourist attraction, tourist managers should focus on making the art form more reachable for tourist consumption (content accessibility, communication campaigns, distribution channels, etc.). Thus, the creation of a tourism accessibility company applied to theatre could be the most feasible strategy to adopt.

1. INTRODUCTION

To be, or not to be, that is the question.

—*Hamlet*. Act III, Scene I. William Shakespeare

Is it only due to local audiences that Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* is still running after 65 consecutive years in London's West End? How many tourists have may attended to a performance of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway? What has helped the cooking theatre show *Nanta!* to be performed simultaneously in three different theatres in Seoul for more than 20 years? Who occupies the streets and stages of Edinburgh theatre festivals every summer? Is it accessible for tourists to attend to a Molière performance in Paris?

In 2013, theatre attracted more than twice as many tourists to the UK as sporting events, according to a research published by VisitBritain (Smith, 2013). In London, around 2.8 million visits to the city included a trip to the theatre, a musical, the opera or ballet,

representing 14% of all overseas visits. How did those productions and destinations manage to achieve this?

Currently, London and New York are the most successful examples of destinations where theatre is a tourist attraction. However, from a tourism management academic perspective, there is a knowledge gap in trying to define the reasons and dynamics of this phenomenon. In this line, this investigation proposes to study the phenomenon *Tourism&Theatre*. An occurrence intertwines the dynamics of the tourism and theatrical sector that may drive a visitor to attend a theatre show during a trip to a destination.

The main proposal of the research is to highlight strategies of how an urban destination can make a tourist attraction, from its inherent theatre products and culture. Hence, understanding theatre not as a way to intermeditate with other types of heritage, but as a cultural tourism attraction *per se*.

2. OBJECTIVES

Below the aforementioned general objective of this research, as well as its specific objectives are defined:

1. To highlight strategies of how an urban destination can make a tourist attraction from its inherent theatre culture and theatrical products.
 - 1.1. To identify the tourist-appealing peculiarities of some specific theatre productions.
 - 1.2. To point out the benefits of the Tourism& Theatre phenomenon for both, tourism and theatre sector.

The main purpose of the investigation is to identify plausible strategies that could help an urban destination to offer its theatre productions and culture as tourist asset. By doing this, the research seeks to present the benefits of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon in an academic context and prove that a development of well-planned *Tourism&Theatre* strategies would be beneficial to both the tourism and theatre sectors of an urban destination. By doing this, the research seeks to confirm that theatre can be both consumed as a tourist cultural asset and belong to a touristic “city brand architecture” (Bennett, 2005) of an urban destination.

3. STATE OF THE ART

Even though the tourist and theatre sectors are very different and present distinctive organizational structures and values, the investigation decides to study both fields with a similar approach: the *cultural product*.

Following Chias (2005), and as we can see in Figure 1, any tourist offer has four constituents:

- I. Resources. They are the natural assets of a territory that generate the tourist interest and motivation for visiting a destination. They can be classified in categories such as natural, historic, cultural and artificial attractions.

- II. Products. Every resource that has been planned modified or considered for the use of tourism, becomes a product. A resource can be considered a product when by the actions and plans of managers; it has been opened to the public.
- III. Offers. A product becomes a part of an offer when it is promoted outside of its location.
- IV. Market. The market is the final objective of the process, as all tourism strategies aim to reach tourism markets where the target tourists will consume the products planned.

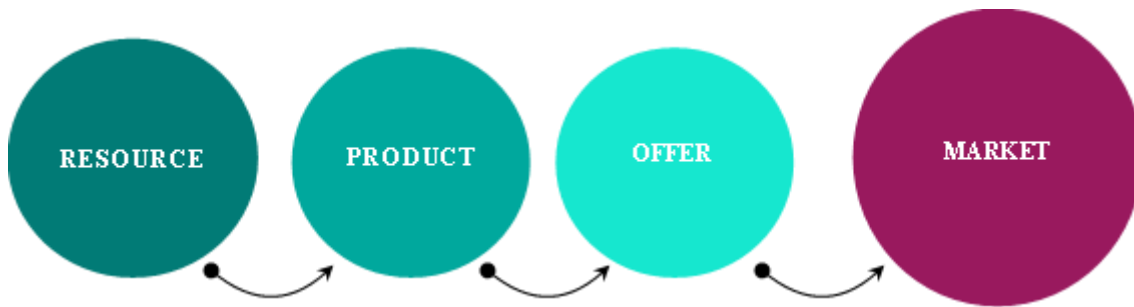


Figure 1. *Tourism offer constituents*. Own elaboration based on Chias (2005).

On the other hand, the second approach consists of three main phases that destinations and product managers should embrace when designing cultural tourism products from cultural resources (Osácar, 2017):

- I. Valorization. In order to make a heritage resource appealing for tourists, it is extremely important to give it value. This is accomplished through identifying the singularities and reasons for the element's importance, and grouping the element with others.
- II. Planning. Also understood as a marketing strategy, this phase includes the strategic planning, branding, and commercialization and communication strategies that have to be done to the element.
- III. Usage and preservation. In order to ensure the usability of the product, it is important to consider its accessibility, profitability, sustainability and seasonality redistribution.

With the aim of understanding how tourist can go to *see theatre*, it is important to understand this art form as a cultural product. In this sense, using the afore-mentioned scheme described by Chias (2005) it is possible to identify the text as the main 'resource' in which any theatre performance is based upon. In this fashion, the result of the complex transformation process of theatre resources into theatrical productions becomes the 'product' from a management perspective. And finally the 'offer' is understood as the how and where these theatre productions are staged. With this approach the research understands theatre as an intangible cultural heritage element that can be of tourist

interest, revealing that theatre presents enough characteristics to be of tourist interest. The question now is, how can we *make it more tourist-friendly*?

Written in 2005 by Susan Bennett, the article *Theatre and Tourism* is the most clear and concise paper that talks about this relationship. From a theatrical perspective, the context of the paper is the “scholarly myopia” that commercial theatre has received by theatre academics. By putting the standard of comparison with the English-speaking theatre districts of New York and London (and Las Vegas) the author asserts that there is a tight relationship between tourism and commercial theatres that should be studied (Bennett, 2005). Other studies draw attention to aspects such as the fact that cultural tourism can lead to a demand for performing arts manifestations and shows in a region where a performing arts organizations are already developed (Zieba, 2015); the behavior and the preferences of cultural tourist towards the performing arts (Barbieri&Mahoney, 2010); the tourism impact in a theatre festival (Leguizamón, 2013), or how ancient Greek drama can reinforce tourism in Greece (Loukia & Amalia, 2014). On the other hand there are authors like Kennedy (1998), Huges (1998) and Gapinski (1982), that wrote articles related to theatre in London and Shakespeare’s relationship with tourism. Whilst introducing some interesting ideas, none of these studies and papers analyze this phenomenon from a tourism academic perspective nor describe the general strategies of how to offer theatre to tourism.

Nonetheless, there are already some cases that manifest the existence of initiatives and approaches that relate theatre and tourism. To mention three:

- The city of London promotes and distributes theatre to tourism. It has been found that London presents an existing model of tourism and theatre that has worked over a considerable period of time, but that unfortunately is complex to export to other destinations.
- The case of the international theatre company Stage Entertainment in the context of Madrid. This company builds a wide offer of successful theatre performances (for instance, the production of *El Rey León (Lion King)*) in the city of Madrid, where it generates a huge national tourism flow. By doing this, it contributes to the city’s transformation into a musical theatre city.
- The start-up Theatre in Paris (n.d.). A Parisian company that offers a tourism-theatre accessibility emerging model that approaches tourism and theatre with tourism accessibility which is proving to be successful in showing the potentialities of theatre as a complementary tourism attraction.

3. METHODOLOGY

Due to the lack of previous research on the topic, the methodology that the research has undertaken is an exploratory research of qualitative information. As mentioned before, the main goal of the investigation is to identify plausible strategies and present initial benefits of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. For this reason, instead of looking for conclusions and strong final results, the investigation strives for the perceptions, understandings, and the generation of ideas and debates.

The context of the research is the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. A paradigm that, as described before, takes place in urban tourist destinations with a significant cultural offer, subject to a complementary theatrical tourist offer.

Among the tools used during the research, the ones that give more results are a series of exhaustive in-depth interviews with theatrical and tourism professionals, two opinion surveys to Destinations Marketing Organisations (DMO) and theatre professionals, and an observational trip to London. These are concisely explained below:

- In-depth interviews. 14 different in-depth interviews were carried out with professionals from both the theatre and tourism industry to ascertain their opinion of *Tourism&Theatre*. Their structure is in the shape of a semi-structured interview with a flexible scheme depending on the interviewee, and with informative and flexible questions that could give rise to alternative speculations. The general questions can be classified in topics such as: if theatre can become a tourist attraction in a city; on what can motivate tourists to go to the theatre; to know what is necessary to make theatre become a tourist resource; the opinion of the interviewees on a theatre accessibility model like the one of the company *Theatre in Paris*. Lastly, the majority of the sample is composed by professionals who work in Barcelona; however it also includes professionals from Madrid, Paris and Berlin. The interviewed people are listed in Figure 2:

In-depth interview interviewees	
Interviewee Number	General Information
1	Actor, singer, director of musicals in Catalan and Spanish and art director of <i>Teatre Condal</i> in Barcelona.
2	Principal of the performing arts academy <i>Eolia</i> in Barcelona.
3	CEO of the company <i>Theatre in Paris</i> .
4	Independent stage manager and theatre teacher in Spain.
5	Main executive producer of the Catalan theatre company <i>Dagoll Dagom</i> . President of the <i>Asociación de Compañías de Teatro Profesional de Cataluña</i> (CIATRE).
6	Current vice-president of <i>Grup Focus</i> and former Resources and Cultural Action director of the <i>ICUB</i> .
7	Current artistic director of the public theatre <i>Teatre Nacional de Catalunya</i> (TNC).
8	Sales and Marketing manager of the <i>Teatre del Liceu</i> .
9	Vice-president and CEO in Germany of the company <i>Panthea</i> .
10	Vice-president of Contents and Art of <i>Focus Grup</i> .
11	One of the main musical theatre producers both in Europe and Spain. It is the main company in charge of bringing Broadway and West End musicals to Europe audiences.
11 and 12	Marketing and public relations managers of the <i>Teatre Lliure</i> (public theatre).

Figure 2. *In-depth interview interviewees*. Source: Own elaboration (2018).

- Theatre promotion DMO surveys. These questionnaires analyze the role of theatre in the cultural tourism promotion of 12 different DMO. Classified in information blocks, the DMO were asked fixed qualitative questions regarding the position of culture and theatre inside the city brand and their opinion regarding the promotion of theatre inside the destination WebPages. The research collects opinions from the destinations listed in Figure 3:

Respondents Theatre promotion DMO surveys

City and DMO	
Amsterdam (<i>City of Amsterdam</i>)	New York (NYC+Company)
Berlín (<i>Visit Berlin</i>)	Prague (Prague City Tourism)
Chicago (<i>Choose Chicago</i>)	Rome (Roma Capitale - Tourism Department)
London (<i>London & Partners</i>)	Washington DC (Destination DC)
Los Angeles (<i>Discover Los Angeles</i>)	Vienna (WienTourismus)
Mineapolis (Meet Mineapolis)	Zürich (Zürich Tourism)

Figure 3. Respondents *Theatre promotion DMO surveys*. Source: Own elaboration (2018).

- Theatre professionals' opinion survey. 67 theatre professionals from Barcelona, Madrid, New York and London, respond to this survey giving their opinions on the relationship between theatre and tourism. The survey uses a snowball sampling method where it is sent among theatre professionals that later pass it to others, and it asked fixed qualitative questions regarding their opinion on the possibilities of relating the tourism and theatre industries.

4. RESULTS.

After gathering and analyzing the results obtained from the in-depth interviews, the results can be divided into three variables and eight common traits of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. On the one hand, variables are listed as follows:

1. Content/container duality. Tourists can become interested in attending to a theatre performance due to the container where the production is held (theatre venue or theatre festival), or the content (the production itself). For example in the city of London, tourists might be inclined to attend to a theatre play at the

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre to experience how did watching a performance in such theatre felt like and admiring the building(container). But if then they move to the Cambridge Theatre in Earlham St to watch the show Matilda, the focus of attraction becomes the production of Matilda rather than the house (content).

2. Theatre experience. Theatre has to be sold as an experience to tourists. Like when the before mentioned start-up company Theatre in Paris marketing campaigns promote the attendance of performance in a Parisian playhouse as an experience that most travelers should not miss.
3. The cultural importance of the destination. In a location that is already a large cultural urban destination, it is easier to offer theatre to tourists. This is the case of New York Broadway shows, where the main goal for tourist is to be able to see a show in that renowned theatre avenue.

On the other hand, eight common traits that future *Tourism&Theatre* products should take into account:

1. The language-barrier management. The productions that attract tourist attention overcome the language barrier that theatre might present (use of English, national tourism, translating technologies, etc.).
2. The life-span of a production. It has been proven that the longer the show last on billboards and on stage, the easier it becomes to position it as a tourist attraction.
3. The type of play. A classification of different types of plays that attract tourism attention can be: classical plays, musicals and comedy shows.
4. The container. If the production is staged in the context of an important theatre festival or in an important theatre venue, it becomes easier to distribute it to tourism.
5. The destination. If the production has a fixed location, a sense of *pilgrimage* is developed for the tourist who wishes to attend it. In powerful cultural destinations it becomes easier to offer theatre to tourism.
6. The consumer. The main types of *Tourism&Theatre* consumers are: theatre-goers, travel repeaters, middle-aged couples and school groups in organized trips.
7. The marketing. Both promotion and distribution strategies need to be: accessible to tourism, transmitted within tourism marketing channels, have to stimulate the values of the destination, and promote the cultural experience factor.
8. In-house services. Productions that attract tourist attention tend to offer in-house services targeted to tourism (bars, guided tours, merchandising, etc.). As an example, as Stage Entertainment Spain explained during the interview for this research, the Theatre Lope de Vega where the production is of *El Rey Leon* offers in-house services such three bars and a merchandising shop.

After analyzing and reviewing these traits, it is possible to describe five plausible benefits that the *Tourism&Theatre* presents for a destination’s tourism and theatre industry. Those are listed in Figure 4 as follows:

<i>Tourism&Theatre</i> benefits.	
To Tourism	To Theatre
1. A theatre offer promoted to tourism can help the reinforcement of the cultural brand of a destination.	1. Tourism can offer international promotion and generate new sources of income.
2. Theatre can offer local experiences.	2. Tourism can generate new audiences (nationally and internationally).
3. Theatre is an interesting resource for literary tourism.	3. Tourism can provide new job opportunities and boost the creation of new productions.
4. Theatre can be a driver of national tourism and visitor-repetition.	4. Tourism can enlarge theatre seasons.
5. Theatre offers a solution to tourism seasonality issues.	5. Tourism can lengthen the life-span of a production.

Figure 4. *Tourism&Theatre* benefits. Source: Own elaboration (2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The evidence of the study points towards the idea that theatre can be consumed as a tourism attraction and be an element of the tourist brand of an urban destination. Hence, the existence of a *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon is confirmed. Although the results show that the phenomenon is reduced to a limited number of destinations, the mere fact of proving its existence implies that there should be ways to *export* the phenomenon. Thus, if the supposition is correct, the fact that there are *strategies* that could make it feasible are undeniable and the main goal of the research (“to highlight strategies”) is reached.

The research concludes that in order for theatres of *non-theatricals* destinations to be *touristified* a general process of conceptualization needs to be undertaken. This one should include the participation of all the actors of the phenomenon (public and private) and the use of the ‘Valorisation, Planning, and Usage and Preservation’ model (Osácar, 2017). This way, the theatre sector would acquire a position within the tourist brand of the city, as well as an acknowledgement of the benefits that *Tourism&Theatre* present.

The research suggests a list of three plausible strategies that DMOs, tourism companies and theatres could take, as we can see in Figure 5:

<i>Tourism&Theatre strategies.</i>		
DMO	Tourism companies	Theatres
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They should enhance the promotion of theatre and position it better. 2. They should develop communication campaigns and strategies with theatre venues. 3. They should identify the types of <i>Tourism&Theatre</i> consumers and the types of productions they are interested in. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tour operators should create tourism packages that can include theatre. 2. They should contribute to the distribution of theatre products. 3. Companies like hotels, restaurants and those offering guided tours should promote theatre to their customers through promotion actions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The production of shows that combine local and touristic interests should be considered in the early stages of the phenomenon. 2. The production of shows in iconic spaces that are likely to attract the attention of tourism to attend a theatre show. 3. Develop tourism content accessibility infrastructures in theatres, such as <i>surtitles</i>.

Figure 5. *Tourism&Theatre* strategies. Source: Own elaboration (2018).

However, with the *Tourism&Theatre* 'traits and variables' described in the Results section the research concludes that there is a specific strategy that an urban destination should take in the first place: to make theatre offer 'tourist-accessible'.

Thus, inspired by the *Theatre in Paris* company model, it is proposed the creation of a similar company in *non-theatricals* destinations. Ideally, in order to promote and make theatre accessible to tourism this organization should be a private and non-profit. This company would not only mediate between the tourism and theatrical sector of the destination, but also between public and private theatre organizations. Furthermore, an organization as such would also be able to raise awareness of the benefits of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon that could launch the strategies described earlier.

One of the main missions of the said company would be to ensure *tourism accessibility* in theatres. The scope of accessibility would include content accessibility (visitors have to comprehend what they see), commercial accessibility (visitors need a theatre offer easily accessible and pre-selected) and in-house services to meet the standard visitor necessities. By these means, the main traits that make theatre a difficult tourist asset to *touristify* could be overcome.

The research considers six actions that the mentioned company should undertake:

1. Pre-select the productions for tourism. The company should ascertain the productions suitable for tourism and develop a *Tourism&Theatre* billboard.
2. Make theatre shows content-accessible. This can be achieved by providing content interpretation technologies, like *surtitles*.

3. Design the theatre customer journey. The company should promote the implementation of in-house services and the generation of a tourist complementary offer for each theatre.
4. Distribute theatre tickets. The company should distribute tickets to visitors through tourism channels, and collaborate in the creation of tourism packages with tour operators.
5. Promote the theatre offer of the destination. Through different tourism communication channels, the company should interact with marketers from theatres and the DMO of the city in order to make this promotion as clear as possible.
6. Progress in the study of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. The company should seek to fill the knowledge gap that surrounds this topic.

In a nutshell, the findings of the investigation suggest several courses of action that can be taken in order to make theatre a tourist attraction. Main strategies for Tourism&Theatre development have been identified as well as a list of the main traits and variables of the *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that this one is still an exploratory search of an under-researched topic and that further studies can and should be derived from the investigation: a segmentation study of plausible *Tourism&Theatre* visitors or an extensive inventory of *Tourism&Theatre* products.

This research is a first step in proving the existence of a *Tourism&Theatre* phenomenon. A phenomenon that currently exists in specific destinations, but that can be exported. Whether it is by a tourism accessibility to theatre company, or a conceptualization and valorization process, theatre has the potential to become a tourist product. It just needs to start with both sectors sitting at the same table.

After all, tourism and theatre may not be that different or as Shakespeare wisely described:

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.*

—As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII. William Shakespeare

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