

TOURIST PERCEPTION OF THE „NIGHT OF THE MUSEUMS” EVENT. CASE STUDY IN ORADEA MUNICIPALITY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: Cultural events have a significant influence on the local economy. Cultural festivals can attract tourists, extend the tourist season and add vitality to a city. However, there is relatively little research on how festivals influence a destination's tourist experience or outcomes, such as satisfaction. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the tourist perception of the participants on the Night of the Museums event held in Oradea municipality, Bihor County, Romania, assuming that a good tourist perception among the population can represent an element of identity for a destination, thus contributing to the increase of its capacity to attract tourists. The results emphasize the positive effects at the socio-cultural level. The festival provides multiple possibilities to spend free time in a pleasant way, it sustains the development of cultural life, and it improves the educational and the cultural level of community.

Key words: cultural event, cultural tourism, museum, tourist perception

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INTRODUCTION

The night of the museums is a particularly complex event that was initiated for the first time in 1997, in Berlin under the name “Lange Nacht der Museen” – Long Night of the Museums Bjeljac et al., 2011). A reissue of this event took place two years later in Paris, under the name “Le Printemps des Musées” - The Spring of the Museums (International Council of Museums, 2014). Ever since, the “Night of the Museums” event has expanded in space so that it is currently a European event that takes place every year on May 14. Numerous institutions contribute to its organization: museums, churches, town halls, cultural associations, etc.

This event involves free access of the population and is addressed especially to young families with children.

The success of such event from one edition to another can be explained in view of the population’s need for cultural activities, leisure (Stephen, 2001; Easson and Leask, 2020) and the significance, respectively the functions and the roles performed by the museum institution in society (Ilies et al., 2014, 2021, 2022; Deffener et al., 2009). Thus, museums are: time capsules with an instructive-educational role; bridges between generations; silent witnesses of times gone by; informative sources regarding past, present and future; sources of inspiration and comfort; useful tools in cultivating and strengthening feelings of attachment to the values of humanity, belonging to a social group; instruments of manipulation and mass control, with a role in strengthening nationalist feelings; factors generating tourist motivation; forms of diversification of the tourist offer with a role in extending the duration of stay in a destination; forms of conservation and superior capitalization of the material and intangible cultural heritage etc. (Hamnett and Shoval, 2003; Gulyás, 2009; Westervelt, 2010; Herman, 2020a; Gozner et al., 2017, 2021; Berdenov et al., 2021; Ilieș et al., 2020, 2021).

In Romania the tradition of organizing the Night of the Museums event dates to 2005 (Dumbrăveanu et al., 2014). In 2022, the 18th edition of the Night of the Museums in Romania was held in 210 locations, from 87 localities, respectively 40 counties (Herman et al., 2023). Bihor county has been organizing this event since 2005. In 2022, the Night of the Museums was organized in 19 locations in 2 localities, Salonta and Oradea (<https://noapteamuzeelor.org/>). Among these, Oradea municipality stood out by organizing the event in 18 locations, which was attended by numerous state and cultural institutions as well as 24,730 participants (Herman et al., 2023).

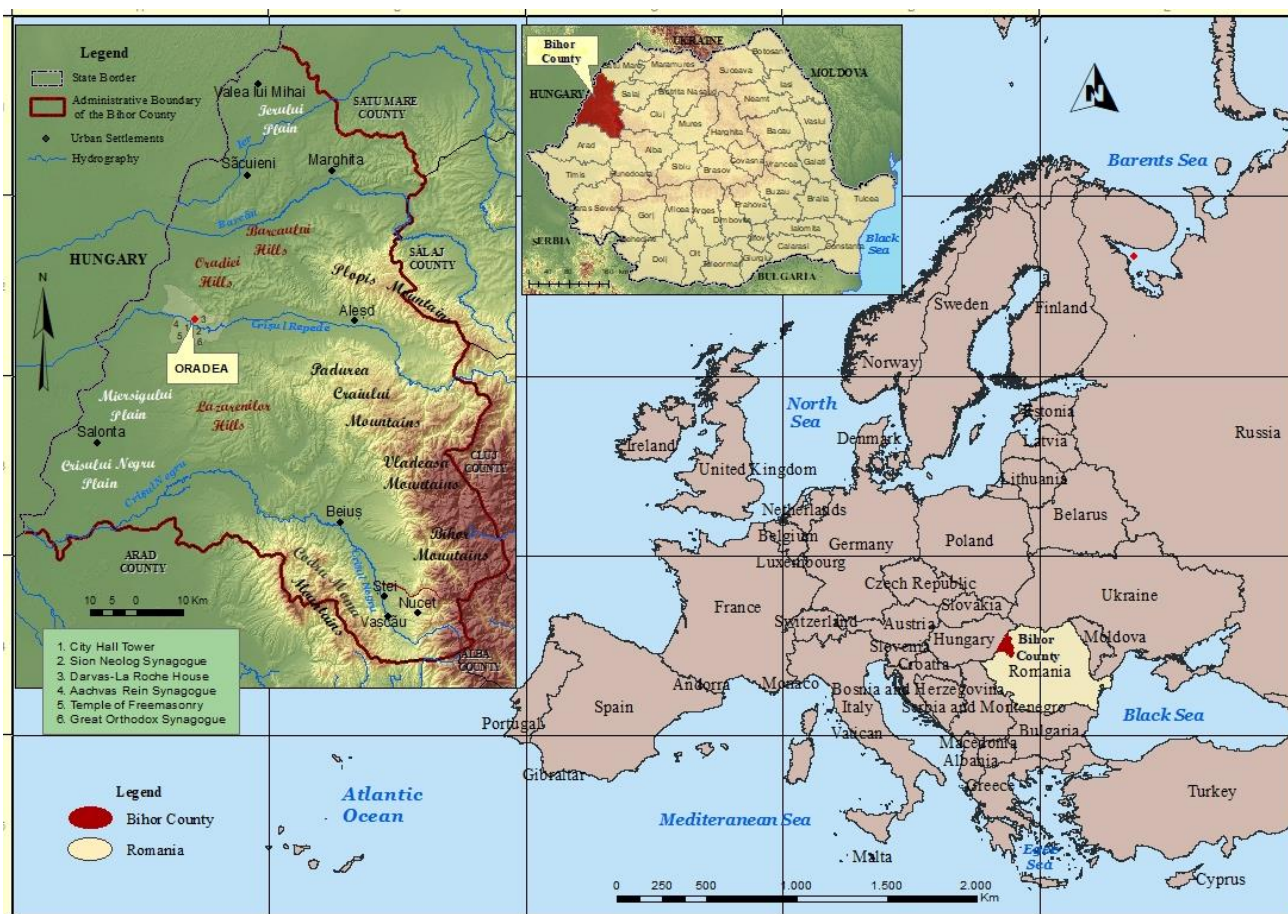


Figure 1. Lands and areas Oradea - Bihor and the location on the territory of Romania and Europe

In this context, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the tourist perception of the participants on the Night of the Museums event held in Oradea municipality, Bihor County, Romania. Oradea is the converging pole of one of the most emerging tourist destinations in Romania, located on its northwestern border, in the proximity of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area, at the contact between the Pannonian Plain and the Carpathian Mountains, in the Crișul Repede river basin, right tributary of the Tisa River (Herman et al., 2020b).

The working hypothesis from which the present study started was that a good tourist perception among the population participating in the Night of the Museums event can represent an element of identity for a destination, thus contributing to the increase of its capacity to attracts tourists.

The research questions that prevailed were: What is the perception of the participating population regarding the Night of the Museums event? Are there any swings in the perception of the event induced by the socio-demographic characteristics? Are there correlations between the event and tourism? Please note that the results and responses are within the limits of the information obtained by means of the survey method.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain the data necessary to carry out this study, the method of sociological survey based on a questionnaire was used (Bryman, 2012; Chelcea, 2007; Herman et al., 2023). This questionnaire was applied on May 14, 2022, in six locations (City Hall Tower, Sion Neolog Synagogue, Darvas-La Roche House, Aachvas Rein Synagogue, Temple of Freemasonry, Great Orthodox Synagogue) in Oradea, Bihor County, Romania (Figure 1).

The methodology used involved consulting 129 people through the questionnaire method on “Perception of the participating population regarding the Night of the Museums”.

In terms of structure, the questionnaire consisted of five items with reference to: degree of awareness, motivation for participation, perception regarding the role, importance and usefulness (from a cultural, economic, tourist and social perspective) of the Night of the Museums event.

Also, within the questionnaire, socio-demographic data relevant to tourism were included, namely the respondents’ nationality, gender, age, level of completed studies and residence.

The analysis of the responding participants highlighted the ratio of Romanians (69.8%), followed by Hungarians (29.5%) and other ethnicities (0.7%). Female was the predominant gender of the respondents (54.2%). The distribution of respondents by age groups showed us people predominance between 21-30 years old (50.4%), followed by the age groups ranging 17-20 years old (17.8%), 31-40 years old (17.8%), 41-50 years (9.3%), 51-60 years (3.9%) and over 61 years (0.8%). Regarding the level of completed studies, the ratio of people with higher education was noted (54.3%, 47.3 with university degree, 7% with postgraduate degree), while 45.7% benefit from secondary education (44.2% high school, 1.6% middle school) (Table 1). The analysis of the respondents in terms of residence revealed that they resided in 10 counties, respectively 39 localities in Romania.

Table 1. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Characteristics	Variables	Number of Respondents (N = 129)	% of Respondents
Gender	Female	70.0	54.3
	Male	59.0	45.7
Education	High school	59.0	45.7
	University degree	61.0	47.3
	Postgraduate degree	9.0	7.0
Age	17–20 years	23.0	17.8
	21–30 years	65.0	50.4
	31–40 years	23.0	17.8
	41–50 years	12.0	9.3
	51–60 years	5.0	3.9
	>61 years	1.0	0.8
Ethnicity	Romanian	90.0	69.8
	Hungarian	39.0	30.2
Residence	Rural	42.0	32.6
	Urban	87.0	67.4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Tourist perception of the event “Night of the Museums”

In terms of methodology, in the quantification of the tourist perception regarding the Night of the Museums event in Oradea, Bihor County, Romania, the maximum results were used, compared to the value of the entire consulted specimen (129 people), expressed in percentage (%), regarding the degree of awareness, the motivation for participation, the perception of the role/importance and usefulness of the Night of the Museums event. Based on these percentage values, a value scale was drawn up regarding the perception of the Night of the Museums event, ranging between 0% and 25% (very weak); 26% and 50% (weak); 51% and 75% (good); 76% and 100% (very good) (Table 2, Herman et al., 2021a, 2022a).

Tourist perception is a process of awareness and understanding the tourist reality by the participants in the tourist act as a result of the experiences and feelings they had due to tourism activity in various destinations (Petrosillo et al., 2007; Linc et al., 2017, 2019; He et al., 2020; Stasac et al., 2020; Erul and Woosnam, 2021; Filimon et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2023).

Considering that the Night of the Museums event can be a tourist motivational factor, having a role in diversifying the way of spending time and in extending the duration of the tourist act, the awareness of the tourist perception represents an important strategic tourist objective in establishing the organizational strategy of the subsequent editions, from the years to come. The results obtained showed a good perception (75.6%, good), which originated from the degree of awareness

(53.88%, good), the motivation for people’s participation (40.8%, weak), the importance (96.1%, very good) and usefulness of the event “the Night of the Museums” (94.4%, very good) (Table 2).

The degree of awareness has been the object of numerous scientific concerns, among which the ones carried out by Herman et coll., from the year 2021, 2022b concerning the awareness of two tourist destinations in Bihor County (the mountain destination Pădurea Craiului Mountains and the spa destination Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai) and one in Alba County (Arieșeni tourist destination). In this study, the degree of awareness of the Night of the Museums event among the participants was good (53.88%). Poor awareness of the event from the past experiences of participating at previous editions has contributed to this fact (44.19%, weak). The share of respondents who participated for the first time in this event was 55.81%. However, 63.57% of them have stated that they know the role and importance of the event they took part in (Table 2). Making use of awareness is an essential component in shaping the perception on the Night of the Museums event which derives from the experience gained from the previous participations of the interviewees and from collecting information and knowledge, in this way, about its economic, social and cultural significance. Capturing the degree of awareness is a prerequisite both in tourism (Deac et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2020b) and in establishing and evaluating the perception of the Night of the Museums event. Therefore, the main aspects targeted were the awareness of the event (by the people interviewed from the experience of taking part in previous editions) and its importance.

Table 2. Quantifying the perception of participants at the Night of the Museums event

N o.	Criteria used in perception assessment		Perception value				Perception value
			Very weak	Weak	Good	Very good	
			0% - 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%	
1	The degree of awareness	1. The experience of participating in other editions of the event	-	44.19	-	-	Weak
2		5. Role and importance of the event	-	-	63.57	-	Good
107.8 / 2 = 53.88			-	44.19	63.57	-	Good
3	2. Motivation for participation	Curiosities	-	-	51.16	-	Good
4		Free of charge	-	31.78	-	-	Weak
5		Need for cultural activities	-	34.11	-	-	Weak
6		Spending free time in the most pleasant way	-	45.74	-	-	Weak
163.2 / 4 = 40.8			-	116.63	51.16	-	Weak
7	6. Role and importance of the Night of the Museums event	Instructive-educational	-	-	-	94.57	Very good
8		Promoting museums	-	-	-	99.22	Very good
9		It contributes to improving the image of the tourist destination	-	-	-	98.45	Very good
10		It contributes to increasing economic efficiency	-	-	-	91.47	Very good
11		It contributes to increasing social efficiency	-	-	-	96.90	Very good
480.6 / 5 = 96.1			-	-	-	480.6	Very good
12	4. Usefulness of the Night of the Museums event	Cultural	-	-	-	97.67	Very good
13		Economic	-	-	-	86.82	Very good
14		Tourist	-	-	-	97.67	Very good
15		Social	-	-	-	95.35	Very good
377.5 / 4 = 94.4			-	-	-	377.5	Very good
Total - 1133.6 / 15 = 75.6			-	160.8	114.7	858.1	Good

Motivation is a complex mechanism structured from people’s needs and desires with a direct impact on their behavior and actions (Stupariu, 2017; Stupariu and Morar, 2018; Tătar et al., 2018; Lee, and Kim, 2023: 34; Telbisz et al., 2023; Gaetjens et al., 2023). Studying the reasons (curiosity, free of charge, the need for cultural activities, spending free time in the most pleasant way) that led to the participation of the population in the Night of the Museums event was necessary from the perspective of substantiating the perception of this event at the participants’ level. The motivation of people to participate in the Night of the Museums event was weak (40.8%) (Table 2). This emerged from the percentage values obtained in terms of motive: curiosity (51.16%), free of charge (31.78%), the need for cultural activities (34.11%); spending free time in the most pleasant way (45.74%) (Table 2). We can observe that the reasons analyzed are those specific to the tourist activity, except for free of charge. Thus, the result is that for the population participating in the Night of the Museums event, the 2022 edition, tourist activity and tourism are not a priority. This is justified by the membership of the participants in Oradea Destination, which is one of the most emerging tourist destinations in Romania.

In order to identify and quantify the responders’ perception on the role and significance of the event “Night of the Museums” from a tourist perspective, which took place in Oradea Municipality, Bihor County, Romania, five tourist functions achieved by this event were analyzed: instructive-educational (94.57%); promotion (99.22%); improving the image of the tourist destination (98.45%); increase of economic efficiency (91.47%); increase of social efficiency (96.90%). The results obtained highlighted a very good perception (96.1%) regarding the role and significance of the Night of the Museums event in terms of the previously mentioned tourist functions (Table 2). The perception of the usefulness of the event “Night of the Museums” among the participants was very good (94.4%, very good), given the usefulness of the event from a cultural perspective (97.67%, very good); economic approach (86.82%, very good); tourist (97.67%, very good) and social (95.35%, very good) approach (Table 2). We mention that all these fields are also specific to tourism.

Tourist perception according to the main socio-demographic characteristics

In establishing the tourist perception, the following socio-demographic characteristics were used: gender, level of education, age of the interviewed persons, residence and ethnicity (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012; Huh and Vogt, 2008; Kuvan and Akan, 2005; Almeida-García et al., 2016; Aksöz and Çay, 2022; Gross et al., 2023; Vasiljević et al., 2023). It should be noted that the share of the tourist perception was calculated according to the number of people interviewed for each socio-demographic characteristic. The value of the tourist perception was given by the ratio between the sum of the characteristics The degree of awareness, The motivation for participation, The role and importance of the Night of the Museums event, The usefulness of the Night of the Museums event. Gender is an important feature that induces some changes in the structure of the population generally and in terms of tourist perception. The consultation of the target group (70 female, 59 male) resulted in a difference in perception of 2.11% between the two typological categories, so female have a better perception (72.04%, good) compared to male (70.29%, good) (Table 3).

The level of education is an excellent filter in relation to people’s predisposition to participate in cultural events and how they are perceived on an individual level. From the analysis of the perception of the interviewed persons according to the level of education, it emerged the existence of a good perception in persons with university degree (74.18%, good), followed by those with secondary education (69.79%, good) and postgraduate degree (61.25%, good) (Table 3).

The age of people was another variable taken into consideration while drafting the perception analysis, with results highlighting the following hierarchical order: >61 years (81.25%, very good), 51–60 years (76.25%, very good), 21–30 years (74.56%, good), 31–40 years (69.68%, good), 41–50 years (67.31%, good), and 17–20 years (66.47%, good) (Table 3).

As for the tourist perception of the Night of the Museums event according to the residence, a better perception was found in the urban environment (71.5%, good) compared to the rural one (70.81%, good). Ethnicity underlined the existence of significant differences between Hungarians (74.84%, good) and Romanians (69.73%, good) (Table 3).

Table 3. Tourist perception according to the main socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Variables	Number of Respondents	The degree of awareness	Motivation for participation	Role and importance of the Night of the Museums event	Usefulness of the Night of the Museums event	Perception
Gender	Female	70	56.43	41.07	96	94.64	72.04
	Male	59	50.58	40.25	96.27	94.07	70.29
Education	High school	59	45.76	38.98	98.64	95.76	69.79
	University degree	61	60.66	43.44	96.72	95.9	74.18
	Postgraduate degree	9	61.11	33.33	75.56	75	61.25
Age	17–20 years	23	39.13	33.7	97.39	95.65	66.47
	21–30 years	65	56.15	46.15	99.38	96.54	74.56
	31–40 years	23	54.35	35.87	93.91	94.57	69.68
	41–50 years	12	54.17	39.58	78.33	97.17	67.31
	51–60 years	5	80	30	100	95	76.25
	>61 years	1	100	25	100	100	81.25
Residence	Rural	42	47.62	43.45	98.1	94.05	70.81
	Urban	87	56.9	39.37	95.17	94.54	71.5
Ethnicity	Romanians	90	50	40.56	95.56	92.78	69.73
	Hungarians	39	62.82	41.03	97.44	98.08	74.84
			58.38	38.12	94.56	94.25	71.33

Relation between the Night of the Museums and tourism

A relevant indicator in highlighting the relation between the Night of the Museums event and tourism is the analysis of the place of residence of the participants consulted during this event. Thus, it can be noted that 54.4% of them had their residence in Oradea, the remaining 49.6% residing outside the host city of Oradea.

However, this percentage presents a certain subjectivity because it incorporates a large ratio (65.6%) of the event participants who lived in Bihor County and who did not spend the night in the city, returning home at the end of the day. The participants ratio from outside Oradea who lived in other counties, participating in the event as tourists was 34.4%, respectively 17.05% (22 people from nine counties in Romania) of the total number of participants consulted on knowing the perception of the Night of the Museums event (Figure 2).

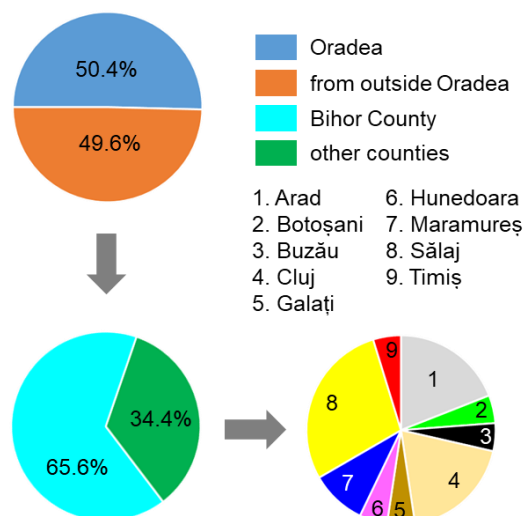


Figure 2. Analysis of the participants to the Night of the Museums event according to the place of residence

CONCLUSIONS

The Night of the Museums, due to the scale of the organizing institutions, the number of locations where it takes place and the number of mobilized participants, is one of the most important and representative cultural events related to Oradea tourist destination. Held annually on May 14, it benefits from excellent weather conditions facilitating the movement of the population from one objective to another. The perception of the event among the participating population was good (75.6%), based on the degree of awareness, the motivation for people to participate, the importance and usefulness of the Night of the Museums event (Table 2). The analysis of perception depending on the main socio-demographic categories revealed some perception swings according to gender, level of education, age of people, residence and ethnicity. The biggest differences in perception were recorded for the age indicator, ranging between 81.25%, very good (>61 years) and 66.47%, good (17–20 years) (Table 3). Regarding the relation between the Night of the Museums event in Oradea municipality and tourism using as a defining indicator the residence of the interviewed persons, it resulted that 17.05% of the participants were tourists from nine counties in Romania (Figure 2).

Therefore, we can say that the Night of the Museums event held in Oradea municipality, against the background of a good perception among the participating population, including tourists, represents a significant motivational tourist factor with an important role in promoting, consolidating and diversifying the local tourist offer.

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