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## The Behaviour of Romanian Tourists Regarding The Attendance at Festivals

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### Abstract

Despite the importance of the festivals for the culture and the economy of nations, little research has been conducted in order to understand the behaviour of the Romanian tourists regarding the festival attendance and the intention to travel in order to participate in festivals. The originality of this study is highlighted by the analysis of the behaviour of Romanian tourists regarding the attendance at festivals, from the point of view of studying festival tourism as a form of cultural tourism. The article is based on the findings of an exploratory survey-based research carried out in February – May 2014. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the behaviour of the Romanian tourist regarding the participation in festivals, both in his town and also when he is travelling. Our objectives are to: find if Romanian people in general, and Romanian tourists, in particular, are interested in traveling with the purpose of attending a festival, identify the main motivations for attending a festival, the types of festivals that are preferred and the tourists' perception on Bucharest as potential international festival destination. The paper concludes that Romanian tourists tend to participate in one festival per year in average in their country and less than one festival per year in another countries, that music festival is the most appreciated type of festival and also we discovered that the most important motives for attending festivals in tourists' perception are psychological, cultural and emotional.

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### 1. Introduction

Festivals are cultural events (Frisby, Getz, 1989) that are considered a form of cultural tourism. (Formica, Uysal, 1998). Festivals are cultural events and tourists attractions with unique traits (Chang, 2006) due to the

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interdependence with the environment in which they are organized. (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004). Participating in festivals imply the search for opportunities that offer cultural enrichment, novelty and socialization. (Crompton, McKay, 1997). As special events, festivals have become key elements of the tourism development strategies for many cities and regions. (Jago, 1997; Felsenstein, Fleischer, 2003). Chang (2006) has remarked the spectacular growth of the number of festivals organized globally for the past decade.

The festivals nowadays are different from the first forms of festivals organized in ancient times, when they used to celebrate the most important events of communities regarding religion, folklore and agriculture. In those past times festivals were intimate events, attended only by the community members. (Picard, Robinson, 2006) Today people attend the festivals organized in their community, and they also travel to reach and experience other cultures and communities. More than this, nowadays festivals tend to be organized in order to attract tourists.

This article examines the perception of Romanian people regarding the attendance at festivals, their preference of festival types, the main motives for attending festivals and their behaviour as festival participants and tourists. Further, we investigated if Bucharest is regarded as a potential festival destination.

## 2. Festivals and tourists' behaviour

Tourism festival represents the conjunction between tangible elements, such as entertainment events, and intangible elements, such as the perceived authenticity. (Chang, 2006). When referring to “festival tourism”, we imply the activity of travelling outside the place of resident in another city, region and even country in order to participate in a festival.

Festivals bring economic gain for the host cities and regions. This is why they are used more and more as instruments for regional and local economic growth (Felsenstein, Fleischer, 2003; Sakurai et al., 2011) due to their capability to attract financial resources from both locals and tourists. (Getz, 1993).

Additional to economic gain, festivals bring a remarkable contribution to the revealing and honouring of cultural traditions (Crompton, McKay, 1997), being also extremely important for the preservation and promotion of the cultural identity of nations. They can be approached as alternative forms of tourism that can contribute to the sustainable development through the preservation of the natural and cultural fragile environment. (Getz, 1990; Backman, Backman, Uysal, Sunshine, 1995)

There are four main attributes that tourists use to describe special events: the number of participants, the international exposure of the events, the improvement brought to the image of the host region as a result of organising the events and the experience participants associate the events with. (Jago, 1997). Nevertheless, the benefits of the participants are reflected in the final value that people give to the gain obtained from the attendance at the festival. (Lee, Arcodia, Lee, 2012)

Festivals can be found in many forms and types. For this study we took into consideration the most frequent types of festivals organized in Romania, which are: music festivals, film festivals, theatre festivals, art festivals, food festivals, folkloric festivals, medieval festivals and carnivals. The identification of the types of festivals preferred by Romanian inhabitants is important in identifying their need and preferences, which can serve as a vital information for tourism and marketing specialists and also for festival organizers, which can make viable decisions regarding the choice of festival related touristic packages that can be offered to them.

Motivation is an indispensable factor of the consumer behaviour. Motivational factors are inner factors that stir and directs the behaviour of the consumer. (Iso-Ahola, 1980). The decision to participate in a festival is an action triggered by the necessity to satisfy a need. Furthermore, motivation has a central role in the decisional process of a consumer. (Crompton, McKay, 1997). Some of the motives mentioned by specialists regarding the need to understand the motivational factors of attending festivals are (Crompton, McKay, 1997):

- Understanding the motivation represent the key concept in creating the offer for the consumers and in personalising that offer according to their needs;
- Building the loyalty of the customers for festivals that are organized annually;
- Identifying and prioritizing the motivations represent a key element in understanding the decisional process of the customers.

### 3. Methodology

In order to analyze the behaviour of Romanian tourists regarding festival attendance, we conducted an exploratory research based on a pilot study. To this aim a survey instrument of 31 questions was composed, that included four sections: interest-related questions regarding the festival attendance, motive-related questions, questions regarding the types of festivals preferred and socio - demographic information.

The questionnaire was posted online on a survey platform and sent via e-mail to more than 1000 people in Romania. Answers were collected during four months in 2014, from February to May. The number of respondents is currently 407, therefore we estimate a response rate of 40,7%.

The research is exploratory because it represents only a starting point for further research regarding the behaviour of tourists in attending festivals, limitations being imposed by the small sample of respondents (407) and the fact that it is restricted to people residing in Romania.

The main objectives of the research are to find whether Romanian inhabitants are interested in participating in festivals and most important, if they are willing and use to travel with the purpose of attending festivals and also to identify the main motivations for festival attendance. Furthermore, we tried to identify the types of festivals they prefer, the frequency of attending festivals and other cultural activities, the travel party and the travel and accommodation means when travelling and their opinion regarding the festivals organized in Bucharest, the capital of Romania.

### 4. Results

The characteristics of the respondents regarding socio-demographic aspects are presented in Table 1. The respondents of the current research are more likely to be higher education personnel (35.38%) or students (33.66%), aged between 18 and 24 (40.05%) and between 25 and 34 (41.03%), with higher level of education, with a university degree (33.17%) and master degree (23.34%). They are most likely single - not married (68.80%), residing in an urban area (92.63%). The percentage of female respondents (46.68%) is almost equal to that of male respondents (53.32%).

Respondents varied in their answers regarding the frequency of their participation in cultural activities. 35.1% of them declared they attend cultural activities 2-3 times per year and 33.2%, once per month. 98.3% of respondents participate in cultural activities at least one time per year. They attend festivals that are organized in their residence town more than 2-3 times per year (63.9%) and attend festivals during their holidays 2-3 times per year (35.4%) or at least once a year (42.5%). 22.1% declared they never attended a festival during their holiday.

Asked about the frequency they travelled in order to participate in a festival, 59.2% travelled in another area of the country to attend a festival at least once a year and 13.8% travelled outside the country to attend a festival at least once a year. 40.8% never travelled in another town of the country and 73% never travelled in another country with the purpose of attending a festival.

In response to the questions “To what extent do you prefer the following types of festivals?” and “What types of festivals you prefer to attend in Bucharest?”, the following results have emerged. The first question referred to the importance of eight types of festivals: film festival, theatre festival, music festival, art festival, food festival, folkloric festival, medieval festival and carnival. The respondent was also given the option to mention and rate other type of festival. To this aim we used a semantic differential four-level scale where the answer “to a great extent” was given 4 points, “medium extent” – three points, “small extent” – two points and “never” – one point. A weighted average was computed for each of the eight types of festivals mentioned as typed festivals. As shown in Figure 1, the types of festivals received the following points: film festival (0.309), theatre festival (0.288), music festival (0.371), art festival (0.273), food festival (0.253), folkloric festival (0.314), medieval festival (0.253) and carnival (0.252).

Table 1. The demographic information of respondents (n=407)

Variables	Sample size	Percentage	Variables	Sample size	Percentage
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Age			Marital status		
16-18	4	0.98	Single	280	68.80
18-24	163	40.05	Married	115	28.25
25-34	167	41.03	Divorced	9	2.21
35-49	58	14.25	Widow(er)	3	0.74
50-64	14	3.44			
65 and above	1	0.25			
			Place of residence		
			Urban	377	92.63
Occupation			Rural	30	7.37
Higher education personnel	144	35.38			
Business people/Self-employed	20	4.91	Gender		
Managers/Directors	137	33.66	Male	190	46.68
Students	28	6.88	Female	217	53.32
Clerks/ Technicians	2	0.49			
Retired	8	1.97	Average monthly income		
Workers	1	0.25	Below 1500 RON	163	40.05
Agriculture	4	0.98	1501 - 2500 RON	122	29.98
Housewives	2	0.49	2501 – 3500 RON	65	15.97
Unemployed	36	8.85	3501 - 5000 RON	31	7.62
Others			5000 – 10000 RON	20	4.91
Educational background	6	1.47	10001 and above	6	1.47
Primary school	156	38.33			
High school	135	33.17			
University	95	23.34			
Master degree	15	3.69			
MBA/PhD					

The responses show that the music festival is the most popular type of festival among respondents (0.371), followed by film festival (0.308) and folkloric festivals (0.314). On average positions are ranked the theatre and art festivals. The lowest rates were obtained by carnival, medieval and food festivals. The hierarchy of the types of festivals attended in Bucharest had film festival on the top of the list (90.4% mentioned it), followed by music festival (86.2%), carnival (82.06%), theatre (81.65%), culinary (81.1%), art (80.8%), medieval (79.9%) and folkloric (79.4%). (Fig. 1).

In order to verify the types of festivals preferred, the questionnaire had 3 questions with lists of: a) international renowned festivals and b) national (Romanian) renowned festivals. For the first category a list of international festivals was provided and the respondents were asked which of the festivals on the list they would like to attend. The Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (27.07%), the Venice Carnival (17.57%) and Oktoberfest, Germany (14.15%) were their first choices. In response to the question asking which of the Romanian festivals mentioned in the list they have already participated, the respondents declared that they attended the Medieval Festival in Sighisoara (12.18%), Liberty Parade (11.19%), International Festival George Enescu (7.4%) and Stufstock Vama Veche (7.04%). The same list was given in order to mention the festivals that they would prefer to attend in the future, in the following two years. Their first four options were: Medieval Festival in Sighisoara (10.94%), International Festival George Enescu (8.85%), International Film Festival Transilvania TIFF (7.99%) and International Theatre Festival Sibiu (7.81%). Their choices reflect a strong interest for carnivals outside the country and for medieval (Medieval Festival in Sighisoara), for music festival (Liberty Parade – house music, International Festival George Enescu – classic music and Stufstock Vama Veche – rock music) and for film and theatre festivals (International Film Festival Transilvania TIFF and International Theatre Festival Sibiu) inside the country.



Fig. 1. The extent to which tourists prefer the types of festival mentioned

Regarding the method of travelling opted for attending festivals, the majority (83.1%) are travelling by car, choose a hotel (32.5%) or a bed & breakfast (30.13%) for spending the night and spend a day (45.2%) or two (42.38%) in the area of the festival. 35.4% attend festivals in groups of more than 4 people, 29% in small groups, with less than 4 people and 24.8% only with the spouse.

The main motivations for attending a festivals are:

- psychological (relaxation) - 23.7%;
- cultural (sightseeing, experiencing other cultures and customs) – 21%;
- emotional (nostalgia, romance, adventure, fantasy, escape, spiritual needs) – 19.4%;
- personal development (enriching knowledge, learning new skills) – 15.5;
- status (fashion, exclusivity) – 3.7.

In response to the questions asking if they believe there are enough festivals organized in Bucharest, the majority declared that it is not enough (42.8). The respondents considered that it is a good idea for Bucharest to become a renowned international destination for festivals (77.4%). The most frequent reasons regarding this choice were connected to:

- The development of tourism;
- The attraction of a higher number of tourists from other regions of the country and also from other countries;
- The generation of revenue that festivals can create for the host town;
- The possibility to promote Romania and its culture and image in the world;
- The creation of more leisure and fun activities;
- The possibility to increase the awareness of Bucharest in the world as tourist destination and to add value to the image of the city;
- The satisfaction of the need of the host community for culture and diversity.

#### 4. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to discover the extent to which Romanian people are interested in cultural events and festivals, and more than this if they travel or they are interested in travelling in order to attend festivals as form of cultural tourism, but also to discover their profile, motivations and preferred types of festivals. The findings of the present study reflect that Romanian people are interested in attending cultural activities and that they are involved in some sort of cultural activity usually 2 or 3 times per year. They use to attend festivals 2-3 times per year in their town and the majority of them (almost 60%) travel at least one time per year to another city or region of the country to participate in a festival. A small percentage (13%) attend festivals outside the country. The types of festivals preferred by Romanian inhabitants are: music festivals, film festivals and medieval festivals. When travelling to attend a festival, people prefer to travel by car, choose a hotel or a bed & breakfast and spend a day or two in the host town or region of that festival. They usually travel in groups. The main motivations for attending festivals are psychological needs, such as relaxation, and cultural needs, such as sightseeing or experiencing other cultures and

customs. The majority considers there is still room for more festivals in Bucharest. They also agreed with the idea that Bucharest can have multiple advantages from becoming a renowned international tourist destination for festivals.

This study has attempted to contribute to the knowledge concerning tourist's behaviour and preferences for attending festivals. The results showed that there is still place for improvement regarding the participation of Romania inhabitants in festivals.

In sum, the present study is a starting point for further research in the domain of consumer behaviour in festival tourism.

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