

CHARACTERISTICS OF EVENT TOURISM MARKETING. CASE STUDY: THE EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL, BRASOV 2013

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Abstract: *Event tourism is a very important branch of tourism, not only from the economic point of view, but also as the cultural and social development of a tourism destination. Organizing sporting events is considered, by the managers of tourism destinations, as an improvement strategy regarding the destination image, and as a competitive advantage. This article brings forward the features of event tourism concerning the marketing mix policies and the importance of events in the development of an area. The chosen study case is Brasov County area, which will host, in 2013, the winter edition of the European Youth Olympic Festival.*

Key words: *event tourism, sporting events, tourism marketing.*

1. Introduction

Events represent an important motivation factor in tourism, and stands within the development schemes of a tourism destination, producing a competitive advantage as compared to other holiday destinations.

From a different perspective, event tourism can promote an area through association, co-branding with destination names, the tourist associating the name of the destination with the name of the event (European Capitals of Culture, the Olympics, Oktoberfest, Berlin's Tourism Convention, Sibiu's International Theatre Festival). Event tourism can develop an area from a touristic point of view, a fact already proven worldwide by organizing festivals or events in many destinations.

Event tourism implies not only investments, as well as good organization skills, suitable advertising, on long term, weather conditions suitable for performing certain outdoor activities.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the present study consists in establishing the potential importance of EYOF at the level of promoting Brasov and Romania as a touristic destination for winter sports and more. At the same time, this study is meant to emphasize the importance of using a well built marketing mix and the importance of features that intercede with the marketing of a sporting event of such extent. Regarding the methods of study/research, this article used the EYOF marketing mix analysis, displaying the

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strategic paths to be followed in order for this sporting event to have the desired effect.

3. Representation of Brasov County as an event tourism destination

In order to expose the results that EYOF can provide to the image of Brasov County, but also of Romania as a tourism destination, regarding the undergoing of the festival, as well in the future, this study will show the present situation of tourism in the area.

3.1. The analysis of tourism – Brasov County

The City of Brasov is situated in the heart of Romania and it offers many natural (it is surrounded on three sides by mountains), and historic (one of Romania's best preserved medieval sites) tourism development opportunities. Its culture and architectural heritage, which come from the mixture of Romanian and Saxon traditions, provide a multitude of sightseeing experiences.

Brasov is a touristic area which offers the most complete mix of visitor services including several excellent hotels, good restaurants, a complete variety of stores and retail outlets and inbound tour operators. Brasov's accommodation market is dominated by small hotels and guesthouses, mostly classified at 3 stars. Their small capacity is a function of the financial resources available to their owners and, in some cases, the space available for developing the building.

The year 2008 was the best period of tourism development in Brasov county after 1991, as it is characterized by maximum values for all tourism indicators: accommodation capacity (15.729 places), tourist arrivals (582.000), overnight stays (1.279.600 nights), occupancy rate (26.1%). Due to the effects of the international economic crisis, there has been a notable decrease of all tourism indicators in 2009

but starting with March 2010 Brasov tourism has started to recover. The County Statistics Institute reported at the end of 2010 a growth of all tourism indicators (between 2.2% and 20.7%) except the average length of stay - 2.1 days, which was lower than the previous year (2.2 days). Tourist arrivals registered a growth of 14.1% in 2010 compared to the previous year (12.8% for Romanian tourists and 20.7% for foreign tourists). The overnight stays were 10.7% higher in 2010 than in 2009 and the occupancy rate in Brasov County was of 20.6% (a 2.2% growth compared to the previous year). Most of Brasov County visitors came from Germany, Israel, Italy, France, Republic of Moldavia, USA, UK, Spain, Greece and Austria. In the Brasov County, in January 2011, comparing with the same month of the previous year, both arrivals as well as check-ins in accommodation structures have registered growth of 13.38% and 11.46%. Compared to the previous year, in 2011, the net usage index has grown with 7.79%. The arrivals in main accommodation units have had an ascending trend during the whole year 2010, with the majority registered in August, 843,333. These figures prove the recovery of Brasov County's tourism, after the recession caused by the economic crisis from the last years.

3.2. Sporting event tourism in Brasov County

Considering its natural potential, it can be alleged that the sporting events of the Brasov County are developed locally, regional and national, though less international. Among the sporting events reeled on the county's territory, it can be spotted: mountain marathons (Piatra Craiului Marathon, Marathon 7500); mountain bike contests (Bike Fest Sinaia, On the Rocks-Bunloc); climbing competitions; duatlon contests (Duatlon

Cetatea Brasovului); ski competitions; snowboard; ice climbing (Ice Climbing World Cup - Busteni); ice hockey and more. As it can be observed, most of the competitions have a mountain characteristic, which permits the undergoing of the European Youth Olympic Festival, the winter edition.

To fully understand the extent of this event, an analysis of previous Olympic Festivals of European Youth is required:

starting with the first edition of EYOF, the winter edition, which took place in Aosta, Italy and finishing with the latest, the winter edition that took place in Liberec, the Czech Republic. Considering the fact that most attending tourists to the event are those who compete, the evolution, in time, of attending figures of the Olympic Festival of the European Youth is analysed.

The evolution of the number of attendants at EYOF

Table 1

Organizing country	Year	Number of attendants	Attending countries
Aosta (Italy)	1993	708	33
Andorra la Vella (Andorra)	1995	447	40
Sundsvall (Sweden)	1997	991	41
Poprad (Slovakia)	1999	819	40
Vuokatti (Finland)	2001	1111	40
Bled (Slovenia)	2003	1242	41
Monthey (Switzerland)	2005	1200	41
Jaca (Spain)	2007	1284	43
Szczyrk (Poland)	2009	1620	47
Liberec (Czech Republic)	2011	1500	49
Brasov (Romania)*	2013	1500	45

*expected

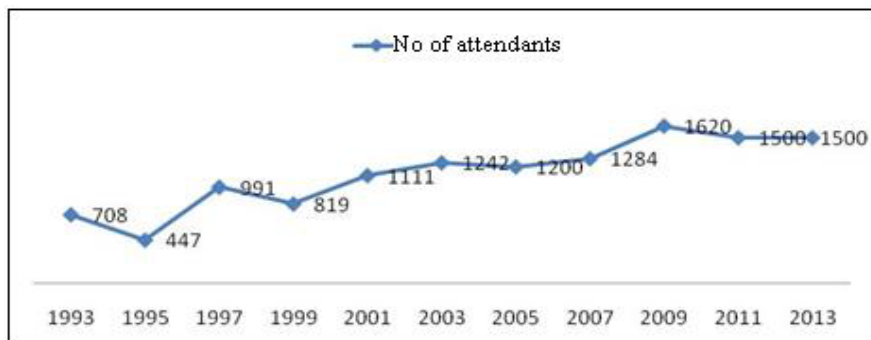


Fig. 1. *The evolution of the number of attendants at EYOF*

Judging from previous information, the number of attendants to EYOF tends to grow, generally, except the last edition (2011), where the numbers dropped with 7% in comparison with the former edition. The explanation for this reduction

might consist in the present world economic and financial situation, but we can observe an extension in the number of attending countries. Therefore, we can conclude that, at the tenth edition of the event, the numbers of attendance had

doubled in comparison with the first edition.

The assessments for the eleventh edition, due to take place in Brasov, Romania are quite positive. At the festival, some 1,500 athletes from over 45 countries are expected, along with coaches and staff members, but also 1,000 journalists from all over the world and a couple of thousands tourists, according to the organizers. Therefore, the Romanian government decided on February 9th 2011 that the European Youth Olympic Festival - winter edition 2013 to be declared an event of national interest [15].

On the agenda of the winter edition of EYOF 2013 the following locations had been included: Sinaia, Busteni, Azuga, Predeal, Rasnov, Poiana Brasov, Brasov and Dambovita: Padina - Pestera area.

The sporting programme of EYOF – 2013, established by the Olympic European Committee (in which Romania is represented by Octavian Morariu), includes 8 sport divisions[15]:

- alpine ski: masculine & feminine, with the following trials: special slalom, giant slalom, super-giant slalom.
- ski jumping: masculine & feminine (K 70, K 90 teams)
- cross-country ski: masculine & feminine, with the following trials: classic, sprint, free, mixed relay.
- biathlon: masculine & feminine, with the following trials: sprint, pursuit, mixed relay
- figure skating: masculine & feminine: short programme, free programme.
- short-track: masculine & feminine, with the following trials: 500 m; 1,000m; 1,500m; 2,000m mixed relay.
- Ice hockey.
- Snowboard: masculine & feminine, with the following trials: bordercross, parallel slalom.

EYOF - 2013 opening ceremony will take place in the Council Square from Brasov on the February the 7th 2013. The competition will take course within 6 days, beginning with the Opening ceremony and finishing with the Closing ceremony on February the 22nd 2013 at the same place.

4. The Marketing Mix of EYOF

The challenge of all touristic organizations which apply marketing concepts lies in the fact that the necessary under goings are beyond the reach of the traditional '4P's', therefore additional instruments are being used, which serve to the tangibility of different components of touristic production [12]. That's why, also considering the destination of travels as an important choice factor, the analysts A. Morrison and D. Cowell suggested the enlargement of traditional marketing variables with other 3, ending up to the system of the 7 variables of touristic marketing:

1. *The touristic product;*
2. *The price;*
3. *Placement (distribution);*
4. *Promotion;*
5. *People and attendance;*
6. *Physical evidence of the environment;*
7. *Processing of services.*

Other authors have completed the 7 tools of marketing with the following additional variables [19]:

8. *The services pack*
9. *Programming*
10. *Positioning*
11. *Power,*
12. *Partnership*
13. *The public or collectivity*

Recently, Morrison, [16] acts towards combining the previous mentioned 13 P's, reducing the number of variables from the marketing mix to 8: product policy (1P) and partnership (2P), staff policy (people – 3P), packaging (4P) and programming

(5P), distribution policy (6P), advertising policy (7P) and the price policy (8P).

It appears necessary to detail the relevant components of the mix in the case of marketing involved in the lay-out of EYOF Brasov 2013.

4.1. Product policy

The European Youth Olympic Festival is an international cyclic event, performed once every two years, in February or March, in uneven years, the first edition dated in 1993, and the summer edition, in 1991, in Brussels, Belgium. Analyzed as service experiences of a product, the festivals contain 3 elements[3]:

1. The services and benefits which the client experiences (artistic and sporting events)
2. Additional services and features, that separates the event from its competitors (the artists, service quality, type of visitors, ways of transport and commercial merchandise)
3. Delivery process (the tourist's part in obtaining the tourism experience, the period, level and character of the event.).

4.2 Price/cost policy

The price policy of the events is restricted by the price of the entrance ticket to the event and the type of the event and of organizers, the packaging, booking, the desired location (the area where the tourist wishes to participate to the event, the cost of the event, etc). The tickets have to mind the capacity of the area where the event takes course. The entrance price differs depending on the location, the booking area, and the tickets divide between the VIP section and loge to those further away from the interest spot of the event, the spot where the action takes place.

Considering that the EYOF attendants are the main tourists, complete touristic packages must be provided for them: accommodation, food, access to

recreation facilities and the registration charge also adding to the price of the touristic packages.

4.3. Distribution policy

Distribution depends mainly on the way the event is being sold: as a touristic package including services (also all-inclusive) and as individual product. For touristic packages, the organizers recourse to tourism agencies, that can 'pack' an event adding connected services such as: accommodation, food and transport; and auxiliary services: city tour, trips to surroundings, etc. A ticket agency takes charge of the selling process of the main product for the physical selling and those you manage the sites for on line booking[3]

The distribution channels of EYOF should include:

- Direct channels: thru sites, e-mails or the special designed entrance stalls.
- Indirect channels: tourism agencies, radio stations, bookshops, etc.
- Short channels: Organizer → Client.
- Medium channels: Organizer Intermediary → Client.

4.4. Advertising policy

Among the specific promotional activities of the event tourism, which should be included in the process of organising the EYOF, several points are:

- Public relations built through Olympic associations and mostly through the official site of the festival. The personal website of the EYOF 2013 event should include [13]: general information concerning the European Youth Olympic Festival (history, editions, the logo the event motto), information about the country and the touristic destination, information about the event organization (the organizing committee), details about methods of transport, accommodation, food, recreation, a section reserved for spectators and one reserved for sponsors

and partners, presentation of the competing sports and a detailed description of the competitions' schedule along with details about the methods of access. A separate section within the event promoting site has to be reserved for the media members, which to include locations of the press centers, the possibilities of journalists for accreditation, press releases, details regarding the touristic destination and the event, the possibility to download the EYOF logo.[13]

- Direct marketing – postal services can be used, by sending invitations to those who attended previous edition, other sport competitions and to a certain profile firms within the business type of events.
- Promoting sales through price reduction, contests (radio), additional commission, brochures, catalogues, leaflets, tourism fairs and professional meetings, containing such a wide range of event type touristic products, there are only few which can be advertised through fairs, FOTE being one of them.
- Advertising – The main action is the advertising campaign which consists in issuing a logo, a sign, a TV commercial, posters and flayers, that can be posted on TV (commercials and news), radio, newspapers, outdoor (street banners, light-boards, local transport network, public places) and cinemas. A significant profile source originates from the selling of products printed with the event logo (clothing, souvenirs, etc.). EYOF requires aggressive advertising on a long period of time.

The existence of a couple of marketing strategic directions are initially suggested by the organizers [11]:

- Creating a positive image of EYOF;
- Promoting the image of Romania as a touristic destination for winter-sports practitioners;
- Promoting the locations included in the EYOF-2013 agenda as objectives of touristic interest concerning the practice of winter-sports;
- Creating an English/Romanian website, due to contain all relevant and practical details, as well as the results of the competitions;
- Motivating the children and the young people in the purpose of involving them in sporting and physical education activities;
- Setting partnerships between European sport institutions and Romania;
- Attracting children and young people to the ground-values of the Olympic movement, as components of educational programs for schools, naming fair-play, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation and friendship.

4.5. Partnership and sponsorship policy

The concepts between marketing connections, key shareholders management and consumers are recently acknowledged in marketing literature[3]. A lot of festivals and events start their life-cycles on the premise of a 'partner relationship' within a group of dedicated people. Being an Olympic festival, the partnerships that have to be concluded first of all, are with the national and international Olympic organizations (Romanian Olympic and Sport Committee, European Olympic Committee Association, International Olympic Committee). Furthermore, the relationship between these organizations and the local authorities has to be based on communication and mutual support.



Fig.2. *The main partnerships that should be established in the case of EYOF*

The collaboration between authorities, government, local population, touristic agencies within the country or abroad and volunteers is very important for this festival. The key members are not only the personnel, the volunteers and those attending, but also the large community of residents: the marketing of an event being at the initial stage should build partnerships with the community. The residents are important actors concerning the development and promotion of a touristic destination, but also in the deployment of events. A negative attitude on the behalf of the local population could ensure the failure of an event.

4.6. The physical evidence policy

From the point of view of the marketing-mix, the location of the EYOF states the following:

- the space where the event will take place
 - both outdoor and indoor, on a stadium, requiring more locations. Whatever the location, its capacity has to keep in mind the selling of a certain number of tickets is based on it;
- the architecture of the space where the event will take place – the zoning is very important. In the case of events taken place in the outdoors, the zoning is performed with the use of metallic fences;

- the place where tickets can be purchased; long queues have to be avoided;

The organizers must keep in mind the area and the fact that the event poses a certain pressure on the environment. The organizers must promote an eco-friendly, responsible character.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to underline that event tourism is a very important branch of tourism, which can not only bring short-term profits, but also can promote a touristic destination on long-term.

This international sporting event will bring a variety of benefits to Brasov as a city, and especially as a touristic destination [13]:

- Boosting the local economy outside the touristic season;
- Increasing the demand for touristic services: accommodation, food, transport, etc;
- Increasing the length of stay of tourists for visiting the area;
- Allows a better position of the Brasov destination on the international touristic market;
- Can improve the image of the destination and contribute to the promotion of its brand.

The long-term advantages of organizing such an event refers to: improvement of the infrastructure, attracting foreign investments, improvement of the local quality of life, ensuring an unique experience for tourists and promoting the destination brand.

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