

## EVENTS AS A FACTOR SHAPING THE IMAGE OF A TOURIST CITY

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### **Annotation**

*The aim of this paper is to analyze events regarded as elements of the urban image connected with cultural tourism. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire was given to tourists (250 respondents) who visited Toruń during the summer season (June) of 2016. The study established the spatial resonance of the events, demonstrated by the permanent addresses of the tourists who declared that they had heard of particular events. Then the features of the events were assessed in order to check whether those shown to have the greatest reach have a specific profile. The events were ranked according to a multiple-feature point based scale, which confirmed that combination of such elements as high uniqueness of the event, its cohesion with the image of the place, well-established position, broad accessibility and resonance more than local make it possible to achieve optimum marketing effects with regard to the spatial scope of promotional actions. The collected results can be treated as guidelines on the effectiveness of the past actions as well as on the best direction for optimizing such actions in the future.*

### **Key words**

*Poland, city, cultural tourism, event tourism, urban tourism*

**JEL classification:** *R19, Z10, Z32*

## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is one of the most dynamically developing branches of economy, thus it is often described as a 21<sup>st</sup> century industry. Wanting to satisfy their needs, tourists generate a demand involving purchase of tourist products at a specific time and for a particular price (Grzelak-Kostulska et al., 2015). Among the relatively new tourist products that generate tourist demand are events of various types (Kim et al., 2007). The word “event” signifies here an event for people that is unusual and unique, yet planned, and which - using specific funds and labour input – is to provide experiences and emotions that are the aim of the organizer (Bączek, 2011; cf. Getz, 1989). This concept has a very broad meaning. The literature on the subject distinguishes multiple types of events, which include (a) cultural events

(festivals, carnivals, anniversaries, religious celebrations); (b) entertainment and art-related events (concerts, recitals, award ceremonies); (c) political and state events; (d) business and economy-related events (business meeting and conferences, fairs and exhibitions); (e) educational and scholarly events (conferences, seminars, symposiums, workshops); (f) sports events (contests, games, play games, competitions); (h) private events (parties, meetings) (Getz, 2008).

An event can be organized once or repeated at certain intervals, yet it is always something that exceeds the customary agendas, programs or actions of the subject funding or organising them (Ratkowska, 2010). The aims of the subject can be analyzed in many aspects: psychological, social, cultural etc. (Silberberg, 1995; Goldblatt, 2014). However, considering that it is one of the most promising directions in the development of the methods of communicating with customers, we must above all stress its marketing aspect. Thus we arrive at the broadly and narrowly understood meaning of an event. In its broad sense, an event is identified with a celebration or happening. In its narrow meaning, an event serves as a promotion of a particular brand through evoking specific emotions (Ratkowska, 2010). Therefore the importance of events for the tourism market increases constantly, due to their interactivity, a chance to reach a large group of recipients and the ability to arise the interest of the media (Poczta, Malchrowicz-Moško, 2016; cf. Ćwikła, 2012; Cieślowski, Kantyka, 2015). These elements make events a modern form of promoting a brand or a product, make it possible to stand out among the competition, enhance the attractiveness of a given place, create or boost the positive image of a tourist destination, and if the current image is not the expected one, they are able to change it (Richards, 2001; Borzyszkowski, 2011; Poczta, Malchrowicz-Moško, 2016).

Another characteristic feature of events is large participation, both of the inhabitants of the place and of the tourists currently staying there. It is the growing interest of the latter group that specifically makes it possible to analyze events in the context of tourism. Trips connected with events are called in literature event tourism. However, it must be noted that event tourism on the one hand involves tourists' participation in specially organized cultural events, and on the other it concerns actions such as planning, development and promotion of events as tourist attractions. The aim of this activity is to increase the number of tourists participating in the events which are primary or secondary deciding factor in undertaking the trip (Getz, 1997; Marczak, 2015). As events are considered to be among the most effective tools of promotion in modern tourism (they increase the attractiveness of the place for tourists, increase their number and may entice them to prolong their stay), the significance of event tourism is visibly increasing (Borzyszkowski, 2011).

To understand well the essence of event tourism and to appreciate its role more fully, one must include in the considerations also its close connections to other kinds of tourism, particularly to cultural tourism and urban tourism. As event tourism is also called the tourism of cultural events and happenings, it is understandable that event tourism is combined with cultural tourism. To be more precise, event tourism derives from cultural tourism (Ratkowska, 2010), while the event itself is a product, a result of cultural tourism understood as experiencing cultural phenomena, getting to know something new or original, participation in the broadly understood culture (active participation in cultural events, trips to places of historical and cultural value connected with sightseeing buildings and other architectural objects) (Marczak, 2015; see also Alejziak, Biliński, 2003; Szczepankiewicz-Battek, Dąbrowska, 2010; Van der Merwe, 2016). What is more, an event can also be a factor that decides about the so-called cultural attractiveness of the place, which constitutes the cultural potential for tourism. In turn, cultural attractiveness of the place, which influences the development of cultural tourism, can constitute the basis or the starting point for the organization of events which become tourist products. Thus event tourism is very closely connected with cultural tourism. Event tourism is also strongly interwoven with urban tourism, as the majority of events is organized by cities (Biegańska et al., 2014; Środa-Murawska et al., 2015). From the point of view of a city, events can build its positive image, increase the attractiveness of the place for investors and inhabitants, stimulate development of infrastructure, support business, accelerate renovations in the city and improve the quality of life. The common aim of event tourism and urban tourism is to increase the demand for city's tourist attractions including events (by encouraging people to visit the destination for the first

time or to return there), and to increase the length of stay and the amount of money spent (cf. Borzyszkowski, 2011).

## 2. Aim and methods

As mentioned above, the influence of events can be analyzed in several aspects, yet they are particularly significant in the context of tourism development. Therefore the aim of this article is the analysis of events treated as an element that creates the urban image perceived through the lens of cultural tourism. For the research purposes it was assumed that events play a very significant role, not only as a factor attracting potential participants, but also as a help in promoting the city, particularly with a view to the increasing significance of urban tourism, where cultural offer plays an important role. A unique and attractive offer in this sphere may, through its widespread resonance, stimulate the development of tourism. With a thesis postulated in this way, it seems essential to analyze and diagnose the character of events. This is to allow us to point out such features of events that can have influence on the construction of the image of the place as an attractive tourist destination. The features connected with the uniqueness of an event, its repeatability (long tradition) and the way it matches the character of the place were considered significant features, and if they are considered together, they should expand the resonance of such events.

This issue was analyzed on the basis of the city of Toruń, due to its size and character of. It is one of the oldest and largest cities in Poland with the population of 202 689 inhabitants (in 2015). The population density is 1.747 people/km<sup>2</sup>, while the city area equals 116 km<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, Toruń is considered to be one of the best preserved and richest in monuments medieval towns in Poland, which has an interesting and varied cultural offer. This can be confirmed by the fact that on 4 December 1997 the Toruń Old Town was put on the UNESCO's World Heritage List. It is also the city which bases its tourism economy and image on rich cultural and tourist offer, which also includes events on more than local scale.

According to the data from the Tourist Information Centre, in 2014 Toruń was visited by 1,724,536 tourists, and in 2015 – 2,020,997. The preliminary data for 2016 reveal that it will see a record number of visitors (<http://www.it.torun.pl>). Considering all this, Toruń was regarded as a good area to study cultural tourism and its perception.

To investigate the specific feature of the events taking place in Toruń together with their influence on the tourists visiting the town, it was decided to use the opinions collected from respondents, whose purpose of the visit did not include participating in any specific event. This allowed us to collect more credible evaluations and simultaneously showed whether the event resonance can reach beyond the group of its participants.

The questionnaire survey was conducted using the PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interview) technique among the people visiting Toruń in June 2016, on a group of 250 tourists with non-random selection scheme used (the number of filled questionnaires depended on the possibility to gain responders). The analysis of the collected answers was carried out with the IBM SPSS software.

Among the questioned people women were the dominant element (56% women to 44% men). The age brackets for this group were determined as 16 to 74 years, and the most numerous group were responders aged 20-35 years. A significant element in the characteristics of the participants was their permanent address. The participants in the study included the 41.2% of the citizens from the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship (voivodeship is administrative region of the first order in Poland) 11.6% - from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie; 9.6% - from the Mazowieckie; 8% - from the Wielkopolskie; 6.8% - from the Pomorskie; and less numerous representations of other regions. As the tourists were divided according to their permanent residence, the questionnaire was given to the people coming both from the area (mainly from Bydgoszcz, Wrocław and Inowrocław) and from the neighbouring territories (including Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk and Elbląg). 4.4% of the respondents visiting Toruń had elementary education; 11.6% - vocational education; 42.8% - secondary education

and 40.8% - tertiary. The most frequently stated income bracket was 501-1000 zlotys net income per family member – 38% answers; and 1001-1500 zlotys in 22% of cases.

### 3. Results

The analysis was based on the results of the above described questionnaire, in which the respondents referred to the most popular cultural events taking place in Toruń. The list was compiled from the calendar of the city events and consulted with a promotion specialist. The events connected with happenings of the same character, taking place in multiple areas of the country at the same time and not identified with a single place (such as the Night at the Museum) were excluded from the list.

The first stage involved discovering the reach of each event included in the study. It was determined on the basis of the permanent residence of tourists who declared that they had heard of a given event. The premise was that the larger the percentage of confirming respondents came from beyond the borders of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship, in which Toruń is located, the broader the influence on the recipients from outside the area is and thus the broader the marketing effect of a given event is. According to the study, tourists from the regions other than the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship who declared that they knew of the events included in the study constituted from 58.6% (41.4% from the region) to 40% (60% from the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship). This was the basis for ranking the events, where on top of the list were the events with the broadest resonance outside the region. This category includes among others the Gingerbread Day, the International Film Festival “Tofifest”, the Santa Claus Run or the Bella Skyway Festival (Tab. 1, Fig. 1).

**Tab. 1: Permanent residence of tourists able to identify the specific events**

Event	Voivodeships											
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l
Gingerbread Day	41.4	12.5	10.9	8.6	7.8	5.5	4.7	3.9	2.3	1.6	0.8	0.0
International Film Festival Tofifest	43.5	9.8	9.8	10.9	7.6	4.3	3.3	6.5	2.2	1.1	0.0	1.1
Santa Claus Run	48.1	10.4	13.0	7.8	11.7	1.3	1.3	2.6	2.6	1.3	0.0	0.0
Bella Skyway Festival	48.6	9.3	11.2	10.3	2.8	4.7	2.8	7.5	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Festival of Science and Art	48.9	12.0	8.3	9.8	3.8	3.8	2.3	5.3	2.3	2.3	0.8	0.8
Probaltica Festival	49.1	17.0	15.1	3.8	0.0	0.0	1.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	0.0	1.9
Juwenalia Student Festival at NCU	49.5	13.6	9.2	8.7	4.9	4.3	3.3	4.3	1.6	0.5	0.0	0.0
Theatre Festival Kontakt	50.0	9.6	15.4	5.8	3.8	3.8	1.9	7.7	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Od Nowa Jazz Festival	52.1	13.7	11.0	9.6	1.4	0.0	1.4	2.7	4.1	4.1	0.0	0.0
Alternative Theatre Meetings Klamra	56.0	18.0	10.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	6.0	0.0	0.0
Toruń Book Festival	56.7	10.0	13.3	8.3	3.3	0.0	3.3	1.7	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Festivals organized by theatres (Horzycy or Baj Pomorski)	58.0	8.0	10.0	10.0	4.0	0.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
May Day in the Old Town	59.0	8.4	8.4	9.6	2.4	0.0	1.2	1.2	4.8	4.8	0.0	0.0
Toruń Blues Meeting Festival	60.0	6.7	11.7	6.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	3.3	5.0	0.0	0.0	1.7

*Explanation: voivodeships: a) Kujawsko-Pomorskie, b) Warmińsko-Mazurskie, c) Mazowieckie, d) Wielkopolskie, e) pomorskie, f) Małopolskie, g) Zachodniopomorskie, h) Łódzkie, i) Dolnośląskie, j) Podlaskie, k) Śląskie, l) Opolskie*

*Source: own elaboration on the basis of questionnaire survey*

The second stage of the analysis was devoted to verification of the assumption regarding the character of the events most effective in promoting the city (those with wider than regional resonance). Initially it was presupposed that the significant features include a) cyclical returns (tradition-related), which increases the importance of the event; b) uniqueness – original subject matter attracts broader interest, draws attention not only of the participants, but can also inspire people to visit the place; c) cohesion with the image of the place (it was hypothesized that it is important that the event should evoke

associations with the place, strengthening its image); d) mass availability (the more available and appealing the event is, the larger the audience may be – although a high-culture event may have broad resonance, the recipient group can be very narrow); e) spatial dimension or star recognition factor, understood as the rank of people creating the event (e.g. artists of local, national or international fame).

**Fig. 1: Permanent residence of tourists recognizing the following events: A – Gingerbread Day, B – Tofifest, C – Santa Claus Run, D – Skyway**



*Explanation: administrative regions of the 1<sup>st</sup> order: 1 – Zachodniopomorskie; 2 – Pomorskie; 3 – Warmińsko-Mazurskie; 4 – Podlaskie; 5 – Kujawsko-Pomorskie; 6 – Lubuskie; 7 – Wielkopolskie; 8 – Mazowieckie; 9 – Łódzkie; 10 – Lubelskie; 11 – Dolnośląskie; 12 – Opolskie; 13 – Śląskie; 14 – Świętokrzyskie; 15 – Małopolskie; 16 – Podkarpackie*

*Source: own elaboration on the basis of questionnaire survey*

The selected features of each event were awarded from 1 to 3 points, where 3 signified the most advantageous event character in a given category. The points collected in each category were then added up to obtain the classification results. The highest scores were achieved by (listing from the top) the Gingerbread Day, the Santa Claus Run, the Bella Skyway Festival and the International Film Festival Tofifest (Tab. 2). It is thus worth analyzing which features, besides the resonance outside the region, ensured top placing of these events. As each event could get maximum 15 points in the

classification, the Gingerbread Day got as many as 14. It is an event with a long tradition in the city. Its main theme is closely connected with one of the most important symbols of Toruń, which are gingerbreads. Every year the main celebrations of the holiday, involving production and tasting of the cookies, are accompanied by concerts and workshops open for all the city inhabitants and tourists. What is important, all the elements of the event are concentrated in the area of the Old Town, which highlights the link between the event topic and the space. The Multi-category point based classification distinguished the cyclicity, uniqueness, cohesion with city image and mass availability. Another highly evaluated event in Toruń is the Santa Claus Run (11 points). The event can be treated as a part of the trend of promoting physical activity through its very popular form, i.e. running. The unusual clothes of the participants add to the uniqueness of this holiday, also attracting the attention of a large group of spectators – the runners wear elements of clothing characteristic for Santa Claus. This event also reflects the main tenet of the city motto “Toruń - a city of sport”. Thus considering the discussed features, the Santa Claus Run stands out mainly thanks to its uniqueness, mass availability, and – to a slightly smaller degree – cyclicity. The list of the most significant Toruń events also includes the Bella Skyway Festival (11 pts). This is a unique event, organized each year at the end of August in the area of the Old Town in Toruń. During the festival the most famous places in the Old Town gain a new appearance, becoming elements of light shows and artistic installations. Original projects underline the historical character of the Old Town and for a moment give a new life to the old monuments. Also its territorial range within Toruń adds to its uniqueness – in order to see all the installations and participate in all shows, one must walk through the whole Old Town. The main advantages of this event are its uniqueness and mass availability. A highly classified event was also the International Film Festival Tofifest (10 pts), whose assets include cyclical returns and spatial dimension or recognition factor. Each subsequent festival is attended by creators from many countries, representing different viewpoints on cinematography. Film showings and reviews are also accompanied by meetings with the personalities from the world of film.

**Tab. 2: Evaluation of the features of the studied events**

Event	Event features					Total
	a	b	c	d	e	
Gingerbread Day	3	3	3	3	2	14
International Film Festival Tofifest	3	2	1	1	3	10
Santa Claus Run	2	3	1	3	2	11
Bella Skyway Festival	2	3	1	3	2	11
Festival of Science and Art	2	2	2	2	1	9
Probaltica Festival	3	1	1	1	3	9
Juwenalia Student Festival at NCU	3	1	1	2	1	8
Theatre Festival Kontakt	3	1	1	1	2	8
Od Nowa Jazz Festival	2	1	1	1	2	7
Alternative Theatre Meetings Klamra	3	1	1	1	2	8
Toruń Book Festival	3	1	1	1	1	7
Festivals organized by theatres (Horzycy or Baj Pomorski)	3	1	1	1	2	8
May Day in the Old Town	1	1	1	3	1	7
Toruń Blues Meeting Festival	3	1	1	1	2	8

*Explanation: a) cyclicity (1-new, 2 - average, 3- well-founded); b) uniqueness (1 - low, 2 - average, 3 – high); c) cohesion with the image of the place (1 - low, 2 - average, 3 – high); d) mass availability (1 – narrow, 2 – average, 3 – broad); e) spatial dimension or star recognition level (1-local, 2-national, 3-international)*

*Source: own elaboration on the basis of questionnaire survey*

Other events, with weaker resonance, did not meet the criteria of uniqueness, mass availability and cohesion with the city image; they also more frequently involved locally recognized people than the four events described above. It must be noted, however, that the sum of points awarded to the second-

tier events does not differ very much from that of the leading events, placing the former in the middle of the classification point scale.

## Conclusion

The gathered data confirm that the resonance range of events is closely related to their characteristics. To achieve the optimum marketing effect, it should be ensured that the given event is unique, cyclically repeated and available to a large population. It is also important that the events should match the promoted image of the town well, as the cohesion of the message can enhance the positive effects, particularly if the planned spatial dimension - or star recognition factor - is as broad as possible. As it was pointed out in the introduction, events can fulfill various roles, yet with a view to tourism development in the city, it is important to create an offer with the described features, which will thus facilitate improved promotion of the city.

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