



## **THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM ON THE EXAMPLE OF EXIT FESTIVAL**

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### SUMMARY

*The goal of this research was to found out the key of success of the EXIT Festival from the sociological aspect of communication on the festival. Introduction to manifest tourism and the position of music festivals within other festivals. Symbolical value of the festival location on Petrovaradin Fortress with its sorunding as a representative example of three main festival locations (street, island, fortress). The effect of advertising of Serbian and foreign brand-names to number of tourists and promotion of the festival as Serbian brand-name. The research is especially focused on interpersonal communication with following subjects: employee-employee, employee-tourist, tourist-tourist. In the conclusion are new marketing ideas, widening of the festival activities and making them familiar to tourists, especially from the region countries, promoting tourism and mobility, breaking national, religious and political barriers, European integration.*

### KEY WORDS:

EXIT festival, communication, tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Manifestation tourism is defined by sort and significance of the manifestation (cultural, political, artistic, sports, entertainment) for which is the touristm attached. The attractivity of manifestation motives are defined, besides sort and significance, also by the time and place where the manifestation is held. The function of manifestation can be either recreation (sport and entertainment) or culture (art exhibitions). Entertainment and sport festivals are more attractive, because they are more spectacular and they have wider audience, due to insignificance of higher cultural level. EXIT is multidisciplinary and multimedial festival, therefor it attractes many tourists with very wide cultural and educational level. It combines cultural and recreation functions. With entertainment

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motives consisted in many music concerts and DJ performances (dancing to music as type of recreation), as well as with its cultural motives (theatre, cinema, art performances and exhibitions, workshops...) EXIT has become in its five year old history the biggest festival in region and second biggest music festival in Europe.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

In this research official marketing material of EXIT festival was used, as well as information found on official web site [www.exitfest.org](http://www.exitfest.org). All data comes from news reports and official bulletin "EXIT News". There are also observations from personal visits to the festival (2000-2004).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **VALUE OF NAME, PLACE AND TIME OF THE FESTIVAL**

The first EXIT festival was held in summer 2000. That was the time of the biggest isolation and repression of Serbia in every aspect: economical, political, industrial, cultural... People were very poor and they felt miserable and hopeless. Young people had no perspectives and "brain drain" was bigger than ever. In the all surrounding chaos people didn't have enough money to cover up even their basic needs, not to talk about culture and entertainment. All the people wanted was a normal life: security, safety, optimism, perspective... In that way, EXIT has a symbolic name, which was hard to have at that time: exit from the degrading system which has been pushed away by regime. Spreading hope and positive energy, and at the same time crashing melancholy and apathy which has indicated the whole society, EXIT 2000 is the best proof that enthusiasm of young people can struggle its way out with everything and bring others to "exit". In that time, it was a unique happening in Yugoslavia which lasted for 100 days. The festival had quite an impressive programme: 34 concerts (biggest bands from Serbia and Montenegro), 12 plays, 120 movie projections, 20 lectures, 11 art performances, 40 parties and 200 000 visitors. One of the most important mark of EXIT 2000 is the fact that it was non-profitable. Being aware of poorness of young people, organizers gave the programme mentioned above completely free. People felt complete freedom, they circulated, they could come and go when ever they wanted to. There were no tickets or controls. Also, flyers were printed in a small number of copies, so the programme would be found out by communicating to other visitors. This had a major psychological effect, because at that time, travelling was almost imposible because of all the visa regimes. People, maybe for the first time, felt complete freedom. In October 2000 there were democratic changes in Serbia. With those changes, the EXIT has changed as well. EXIT 2000 was one of the biggest cultural projects realised in Serbia, and indeed it was "exit". Serbia was no longer in isolation and it became receptive country. EXIT has changed its

symbolical name from "izlaz" (exit on Serbian) to "izlazak" (going out (to party) on Serbian). In the year 2001 EXIT got a revolutionary role of setting new, healthy systems of value in society, and by that, making the return of Serbia and Montenegro on the world and European cultural scene. A specific mark of every future EXIT festival after year 2000 is its internationality. At first, there were mostly young people from former Yugoslavia, which was good for breaking national, religious and political barriers in post-war period. In the following years, more and more foreign tourists came to EXIT. The best example for that is EXIT 04, where from 130 000 visitors, 30% were foreigners. In 2000 Serbs found their "exit" from the situation they were in, and today they offer that same "exit" to other people. Citizens of countries to which most young people from Serbia were immigrating, are now coming to Serbia. Since people from all over the world found their "exit" in Serbia, organizers have thought of a different approach. They have created State of EXIT in 2003. State of EXIT represents the metastate of positive energy, communication, optimism, love and unity with the Nature. The very idea for the marketing campaign bearing the title State of Exit came out of the sight of more than 700 000 visitors enjoying the unique location where music and theatre performances, movie screenings and academic programme are intertwined and simultaneous on more than 20 locations. This metastate has its symbols like any other state: coat of arm, which is consisted of disco-ball on laurels and four-coloured flag: red colour represents love, green is the colour of concord with the nature and respect for the nature, orange is the colour of optimism and blue is colour of harmony and tolerance.

In the year 2000. the festival was held behind the Faculty of Philosophy at the University campus in Novi Sad, on two locations: park, which was called "forest" and on the beach, which was called "river". There is a great symbolical value of the festivals location. Forest and river are the two basic things which were necessary to our ancestors. Total liberation of everything which has been forced by customs, society and system and returning to nature (Russo). Just like in Goa, which is the opposite of commercial Ibiza, programme was held in nature, without any flyers and banners. People needed to communicate with each other to find out about the festival programme. "Here"- "There" are the basic antithetical space-symbolical pair when it comes to traveling. Student protests (most of the visitors and organizers of festival were students) against their everyday lives and work "Here"(in Serbia) made them to think that somewhere else- "There", life can be better. But that Utopia, "There", wasn't in exotic India, in Goa; it was quite near them, behind the Faculty in the park and on the beach. So, "Here" and "There" were actually the same place, a place which was more beautiful not because of itself, but because of the atmosphere and people coming and living there. It gave people a new straight and hope to make Serbia a better place. Nature surrounding had indeed a great symbolical value and it influenced people's concense. The most significant change happened in 2001 when the location of the festival was moved across the Danube to Petrovaradin

fortress. "We raised our heads and saw the fortress"- said Dusan Kovacevic, one of the festival organizers. Since that year, until today, the festival is held on the fortress. The fortress, which has been built for 88 years (1692- 1780) is today the biggest preserved fortification object in Europe. It was the biggest fortress and most expensive project of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In that time, it was in border area and it was the first line of defense of the powerful monarchy. "Gibraltar on Danube", rock which hold a part the Austro- Hungarian Monarchy and the Turk Empire, European culture from Orient, West from the East. Civilians weren't allowed on the fortress, and non-Catholics couldn't live in the surrounding of the fortress. The fortress, which has never been conquered, was first time open for public only in 1951. For hundreds of years, the fortress was dividing people, and today it joins people from all over the world. Today it has a totally opposite function. It brings people together from all over the world. Tourist from East, West, North and South, from all around Europe, musicians from Africa, Asia, from Caribbean, unique in their differences, celebrating diversity, are partying together on Petrovaradin fortress. Young people can learn about the true meaning of integration on fortress. Eclectics is at its peak, integration of unintegrational is everywhere. Stages are between the walls of the fortress, with many loopholes for rifle fire aimed at visitors and they are all dancing. In the former lieutenants camp is a hotel for performers, bastion with gunboats is VIP. Wall, which was used for defense of bastion, is now used for movie projections. At all of the fortresses walls, which haven't changed since the fortress was built, tourists can enjoy laser shows. There is a reflector pointed to every part of the fortress. The high-technical equipment is everywhere, on the place which hasn't changed for the past 300 years. Young people, dressed explicit and ultra-modern, are walking between death-traps, narrow tunnels, surrounded by loopholes for rifle fire, without any fear that they will be killed or injured in any way. In that way, we can think of a fortress as a sensational place which tells a story about how people were divided, and today it does the opposite- it brings people together. The implosion of whole world is on Petrovaradin fortress. Unbelievable diversity and fusion of nationalities, cultures and music styles is today at one place. The place of the festival has probably the highest value. There are three basic locations for cities open-air festivals. We need to explain that Glastonbury, the biggest festival in Europe, is held on greenfield, and as such can not be treated as a city festival. First one is the street. Example for an open-air street festival is "Love parade" in Berlin. This year the festival was canceled. One of the reasons for that might be too many street festivals. Although "Love parade" was the first one and also the biggest, it couldn't keep up with competition of other local street festivals. People didn't need to go to Berlin to see a street festival, although it was the best one. Sadly, the original street festival does not exist any more. Second is the island. Example for this is "Sziget" in Budapest. "Sziget" was used as a role model for EXIT festival. But organizers of EXIT were smart enough to change the location of festival, unlike their colleagues from Belgrade.

“Echo” festival had the same concept like EXIT, and it was held on Ratno Island on Danube. If we mention that it was held just a week after EXIT, we can see all the influence of name/time/place: Echo as an echo from Novi Sad to Belgrade, at the almost same time like EXIT, and place similar to Sziget lead to a disaster. It wasn’t a surprise that festival existed only for one year (2003). EXIT organizer have launched the fortress as a third basic location for festival. It was something new, specific, and as such it is not a surprise that it has growed to be the second biggest festival in Europe for just five years of existence.

First festival lasted for 100 days, the whole summer of the year 2000. Since it was non-profitable, it could last for such a long time. As the festival became profitable, the festival period needed to be shorter. In the years 2001 and 2002 the festival lasted for 9 days and in 2003 and 2004 for 4 days. This was a good decision because the concentration of tourists is today bigger and you can calculate the incomes. Since the year 2001 the festival is held in the first week of July. The time of the festival is precisionly timed. In spring there are a lot of excursions to Novi Sad, as well as other tourists who come to Novi Sad Fair. During summer, the hotels are facing so-called “dead season”, because tourists are going rather to the seaside. Novi Sad needed something which will attract tourists also during summer time. That is why the EXIT is in July and organizers have witnessed a very interesting thing: people have started to plan their summer vacation according to EXIT! One of the other reasons why festival is in July is the fact that it is vacation time. There is also climatically factor. Novi Sad is in continental climate and climate is very unstable. July is the month with the least moisture (although it has rained at least one day of the festival since 2001). The daily schedule is also quite specific. Main events start at 18:00 (at 19:00 in 2004). During day there are art exhibitions, debates, lectures and other educational programmes on the fortress. Most visitors choose not to participate in those events. They are sleeping, and when they are awakening, they relax, chill out on the beach, and go to a barbeque party or a volleyball tournament which is held at EXIT Camp. Visitors from Novi Sad are finishing their obligations and everyday activities by the time main events start. Organizers have thought of a climatic factor while planning daily schedule. In July the temperature raise up to 30<sup>0</sup>C and it would be uncomfortable and dangerous for tourists because of their high-concentration. The parties last until morning, as long as there are still people on stage. In 2003 the party lasted until 12:00 and after-party lasted until 16:00!

All of the name/place/time values can be unfortunately seen on example of “Echo” festival. Every new festival has to have something specific and unique, which will divide it from other festivals: name of the festival has to be new and memorable, place needs to be different from other festival locations and it shouldn’t be at the same time like other festivals.

## ADVERTISING AND FESTIVAL

High number of festival visitors each year also means very high potential for possible customers. This opens a great possibility for trading and export of brand name goods. This is why big companies are giving a lot of money and building new strategic each year for advertising on festivals.

Comparing to Sziget, EXIT does not have "Pepsi" prefix which changes its finances significantly. The average price of ticket for a 4 day programme everywhere else in the world costs approximately 100- 150 €. Because of the lower standard in Serbia, tickets cost approximately 30 €, which is very limited, and commercial sponsors, big international companies, do not see a developed market in Serbia to get profit from marketing, despite 200 000 visitors each year. Than again, every year more and more brand names were sponsors of festival. From 2001 until 2003 there were a lot of foreign brand names who were sponsors of the festival. American Coca-Cola was sponsor of one stage at least each year and during festival it had many promotions. Dutch Heineken was the only foreign beer draught on festival. Swiss Swatch had an exclusive EXIT collection of watches. French E-Life had a fashion collection "EXIT Style" which is still very popular. Also from France, Gauloises found its place on the festival sponsoring the bar and making promotions. Beside these foreign brand names, also Serbian brand names sponsored the festival: in 2001 and 2003 festival T-shirts were produced in Serbia, Becej (2001,2002) and Apatin (2003) breweries were sponsors of the official beer of the festival, Guarana was official energy drink of the festival (2002) and it also sponsored one stage, Knjaz Milos as official water (2002, 2003)...

In 2004 Serbian government started a campagne "Buy domestic!" to promote Serbian products on market. EXIT Team supported this campagne, so in 2004 there were no foreign brand names on festival (except AXE deodorants that sponsored Latino stage). Water Voda was official sponsor of the festival (as a part of Si&Si group who were main sponsors on festival), official water and sponsor of Main stage. They made a big marketing promotion and presented new and exclusive bottle design which was one of the most successful marketing promotions on festival ever. Sinalco were official juices of festival, also as a part of Si&Si group. Sinalco Cola, Sinalco Orange, Sinalco Tonic, etc. came as a substitution to Coca-Cola, Fanta, and Sprite... Sinalco Energies was official energy drink of the festival. Celarevo brewery was also a major sponsor of festival, with its Lav beer as an official beer of the festival. 2004 was the last year when a hard drink was the sponsor of the festival (Gorki list as a sponsor of VIP stage). It is interesting that liquors were never sold on festival, although they were sponsors of the festival. In order to promote healthy life, cigarettes aren't being advertised or sold on festival. To continue its promotion, the organizers are concerning to stop selling alcohol drinks on

festival starting in 2005. Unfortunately, in 2004 there were no festival T-shirts or other festival souvenirs to purchase.

As for advertising of festival itself, the first marketing projects started in 2001. All Serbian major Medias were sponsoring the festival that year. Same thing happened in 2002 and 2003. EXIT commercials are like short movies. They are different from other commercials because they are promoting something beautiful, they are very artistic, and are made in such manner to be international. In 2004 official Media partner of the festival was MTV. Being the television with the most influence on music business today, marketing on MTV brought many other music TV stations and foreign Media. In 2002 foreign music magazines wrote about the festival, but television is still the most powerful Media today. From all over the world, there were more that 1500 news reporters and 40 Media houses from abroad, which might explain why 30% from all visitors in 2004 were foreigners. Advertising on most popular music television, as well as on other most popular regional and national televisions has paid off.

Festivals web site is very important in promotion of festival itself. Visually it is made originally and modern, completely following not just design, but also technical image of the festival. The site has been made in two languages: Serbian (Latin) and English. Tourist info has also been translated to Slovenian and Hungarian. On site one can find well known links: News, Programme, Venue, Tickets, Galleries, Stages, Tourist info, FAQ, Sponsors, State of EXIT, Press, Webmasters corner and Contact. Also there are plenty links to performers, companies and organizations sponsoring the festival and e-Newsletter which is free to subscribe. Since 2004 there is also chat where visitors can share their opinions. The most important link for tourists is, of course, Tourist info. There tourists can find information about Novi Sad, how to get there, visa regime, accommodation, city maps, maps of the fortress with stages and since 2002 tourists can buy the festival ticket on-line. The site is being regularly updated and each year it has a new design.

One of the oldest advertising media are poster and flyer. Each EXIT poster is carefully designed. For every new year, a new marketing concept is created and new posters and logo are being designed. The first big marketing campagne EXIT Team made in 2001 with Serbian actor Nikola Djuricko as promoter. The logo for that year were headphones. The designers are especially proud of marketing campagne in 2002. "Green fairy", little girl Ivana Stojanovic, on big green poster, showed by her look everything which EXIT represents: future and magic at the same time. The video clip for EXIT 02 with waving hand and energy spreading was one of the best EXIT videos ever. Logo for 2002 was a wave (of positive energy). In 2003 organizers promoted State of EXIT. Posters were actually a flag of this metastate and flyer was a passport. Ticket looked as an ID card. Logo was as same as coat of arm of State of EXIT. In 2004, as the organizers expected more foreign visitors, the marketing concept was based on air flights. TV commercial showed air flights from all over the

Europe flying to Serbia, flyer looked like air flight reservation, and festival ticket looked like airplane ticket. It is of great significance that each year there is a new marketing campagne, which keeps the festival fresh and original.

### **INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ON FESTIVAL**

Direct interpersonal communication "face to face" between tourists and their hosts in the most important aspect of communication in tourism. But every aspect of communication in tourism is mutual related. For the better quality of "tourism product" human factor is a value of great significance. Communication between employees is related to communication between employees and tourists, so any problem within staff would have a major negative effect on visitors' mood and overall business success. For a very high amount of tourists, travel and festival itself is not as attractive as meeting other people while traveling, or in this case, being on a festival. So, from the sociological psychology of tourism, subject of research are intragroup relationships.

Staff of the festival wants to make themselves familiar to the visitors. Main festival organizers are young people and other employees are mainly students, exclusively from Novi Sad and Belgrade. In the first couple of years when visitors of the festival were mainly students from Novi Sad and region, there was basically no barrier between visitors and employees. Employees were friends of visitors, people which visitors could see on the street, in faculty, in a café... As the festival grew, organizers have thought of new ways to make their staff familiar to visitors. They came up with an idea of T-shirts. Both, the staff and tourists, wore the same kind of festival T-shirts. The only difference was that staff had accreditations, or their rank was written on T-shirt by small letters. One of the biggest problems in employee-tourist communication was with security staff. Most of visitors have a negative opinion on security workers, especially police. Festival never had any big incidents because security of visitors and performers is one of the organizers highest priority and they took special care about it. Each year several hundred people are employed to work on festival security. Every employee has to pass a training- Service with smile. Police officers were greeting the visitors, apologizing for any inconvenience due to strict drug control, and ending their work with phrase "have a nice time". That way were all unpleasantness avoided, and it opened a door for breaking prejudgments to security workers and police.

Such a big organization as staff of EXIT festival is divided to many smaller units. We can see the connections between McDonalds and EXIT Team. In McDonalds there is a system of badges with various colours (green, yellow, white) and stars on them (from 0 to 5) which represent rank of the employee. This ranking is similar to the one used in military, so some authors may see the success of company in militarized work organization. EXIT Team has a similar system, but not as obvious as in



McDonalds. Different ranks of employees are shown by different T-shirt colour. It was already mentioned that employee T-shirt are similar to souvenir ones, so the different ranking is almost unnoticeable. Except main organizers and managers, all other employees are season workers from Novi Sad and Belgrade. Big fluctuation of employees can be a problem, but because many of them are being employed every year, that can help establish long-lasting and positive human relations, and with good organization and management, they can make positive team work.

As it was already said before, for most tourist visiting a festival is not so attractive for the programme as it is for meeting new people. And the fact that they are at the same festival means that they share the same interests. This increases possibility for their friendship. Since several thousand people visit festival each year, that tourist group has much diversity. Most of the visitors of the festival can be recognized for their extravagant clothing. In 2001 and 2002 people wore bracelets as tickets, which divided them very obviously from native inhabitants and identified them clearly as tourists from the festival. Communication between visitors was more frequent between tourists then between tourists and locals. Communication was even more lively and frequent if tourist were from same sub-culture. Concerning space limit, tourists were standing close one to each other on concerts or DJ performances which made them feel even more as members of a group. And finally, members of a same group are aimed to same interests and activities, and those are attending concerts, dancing to electronic music, visiting a play or seeing a movie, and of course, meeting new people. Of course, such a large tourist group from several thousand tourists is divided in many micro groups, which were created on personal and friendly basis. This unofficial structure is only a small part of official structure- all visitors of EXIT festival, which is consisted of foreign tourists as well as Novi Sad citizens. On festivals new friendships are born fast and feelings of belonging to a group are vivid. Also many relationships begin on festival between members of a same tourist micro group. The whole festival is full of positive energy and tolerance. You can witness paradox situations to see skinheads pass beside Rastafarians without any provocation or conflict. Representative group solidarity and feeling of friendship between visitors of festival who are together approximately 12 hours a day are a type of sociable ness. As it is mentioned in symbolic value of the festivals name, "exit" from everyday activities, temporality of being a festival tourist (since festival lasts only 4 days (9 days in 2001 and 2002)), make people much more open and friendly. All visitors are expected to have fun, to be friendly and tolerant to any kind of small unpleasantness or problems which might happen (sometimes often) on such large festivals like EXIT.

## **CONCLUSION**

The best achievement of EXIT festival was in 2004 with 30% foreign tourists. This is the result of advertising on MTV and other foreign media.

New, more aggressive marketing campagne should follow in the years coming, on MTV as well as on other media with high influence. EXIT organizers should have more support from Serbian government and Serbian national television, and also from national televisions from the region. Festival souvenirs would also help its advertising (T-shirts as the best example). In order to get higher quality of tourist product, web site should be translated to German (with Germans being the most frequent tourists) and also on languages from region countries. In accommodation link, hotel presentations should be shown, and there should be a possibility of on-line booking. Festival activities like visa freedom fighters, anti-trafficking centre, stop aids, etc. should be present on festival in future, and they should be more familiar to tourists. Activities like these have a big role in European integration. By promoting values like mobility, tourism and traveling, national, religious and political barriers would be broke.

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