

## THE ROLE OF MUSIC FESTIVALS IN SHAPING DESTINATION BRANDING AND IMAGE IN TWO HUNGARIAN REGIONAL CENTERS

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**Abstract:** Urban marketing with culture-led urban development has a growing importance for contemporary cities. In a global competition, cities must stand out and attract tourism, investment, and cultural activities. Consequently, their image should be constantly improved. City branding provides strategies for enhancing a city's public image – thus, becoming more and more attractive. Events and festivals, like popular music festivals, offer valuable opportunities for promoting cities and boosting tourism. The aim of this research is to explore the potential of music festivals in building city image and integrating it into the broader branding processes. The results are based on semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. The findings support the hypothesis that festivals can significantly raise destination awareness, and shape image, and through them, a wider audience can be reached. Festival uniqueness and appropriate venue choices facilitate seamless integration into the host city's tourism – thus decision-makers should pay attention to this issue and facilitate coordination between stakeholders.

**Keywords:** urban marketing, city branding, destination image, event tourism, music festivals

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### INTRODUCTION

Due to the ever-increasing competition over the past last decades, destinations around the world are required to constantly (re-)define their vision, build their identity and shape their image in order to become more attractive and competitive, and to increase their market position (Metaxas, 2010; Cheniki and Bazi, 2020; Hutabarat, 2022). Furthermore, neoliberal economic policies and globalization have changed the role of branding, which has also become apparent in urban development (Vanolo, 2017; Lucarelli, 2018). This was particularly evident in post-socialist countries where the promotion of tourism has become a common element of local development strategies – thus posing significant challenges to local decision-makers. The cities of post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe had to create a new urban identity as attractive destinations and they have used place marketing and branding to promote themselves as tourist destinations and ensure their competitive position (Light et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2021). These countries or cities have entered the global or regional competition later and with less experience and tradition, thus branding tools are particularly important for them.

Cities pursue specific competition policies to attract potential target markets (Ma et al., 2021; Roth-Zanker, 2001). To this aim, they try to "sell" the place as a specific market product to as many potential target markets as possible, which enhances their competitiveness. In city and destination marketing, and the development of local tourism products, image plays a crucial role in shaping the way target groups relate to them and judge their specific offerings and local products. Since the image of the sites is in the common interest of different stakeholders, the fundamental objective is to position this image, and the product as a whole, for the target groups. Besides attractive services and effective communication, aestheticizing the places is also important to showcase local heritage, economy, and competitiveness (Zukin, 1998; Boro, 2017; Luo et al., 2022). Developing an image of a place attractive for investments (Ulaga et al., 2002; Ma et al., 2021) or that of a cultural and tourism destination (McCann, 2002; Králiková et al., 2020) is a key part of the economic revitalization of places (Metaxas, 2010) – affecting both cities and their surroundings thus strengthening "satellite tourism" (Michalkó et al., 2023).

There are places where history or their representation in literature has provided an opportunity to build an image element that becomes a sellable attraction, but where this is not available, cities build their marketing market on tradition, on the reputation of local customs and values (Glińska et al., 2021). The aim is to create a unique image of the city, made up of a set of non-contradictory elements, through the design process. In shaping the image of a city, it can change the place, but it can also change the socio-cultural environment and the message it is trying to convey (Tömöri, 2017). Among the target groups, tourists are of particular importance for the marketing of the city, because if they have a positive experience when they visit the locality, they can become one of the best marketing tools to shape the image of the city.

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The image of a destination influences the behavior of potential tourists (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Castro et al., 2007; Králiková et al., 2020) influences visitors' subjective perceptions, as it affects the destination choice process and determines post-decision behavior, including participation (on-site experience), evaluation (satisfaction) and future behavioral intentions (intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) (Youngsun, 2009; Hashemi et al., 2023). Thus, understanding the decision-making process of tourists is crucial for destinations (Allen, 2010; Dai et al., 2022).

The eventual goal in shaping the image of the territory is to develop a brand of tourism products for cities and to fill it with content (Jóvér et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021). The brand is both a means for potential tourists to identify and assess the quality of the product and a tool for service providers and local decision-makers to differentiate and position itself in the supply market (Marien, 2012; Ledinek Lozej and Razpotnik Visković, 2022; Logar, 2022).

Creating the image of the destination and developing it into a brand is about building an emotional connection with the consumer, expanding awareness, and demonstrating brand values (Morgan et al., 2011). This process is based on the memories, perceptions and behavior of the potential tourist. The image of the host area plays an important role in building brand loyalty (Figure 1). By becoming more familiar with the image, the potential consumer's knowledge is broadened, and enriched with additional information. Destination branding (which has an impact on satisfaction and trust in the area) builds on this broadened information (Haarhoff and De Klerk, 2019; Fialová and Chromý, 2022). Together, satisfaction and trust create an emotional attachment through destination branding, which manifests in loyalty and then regular returns (Morgan et al., 2011; Kádár and Klaniczay, 2022).

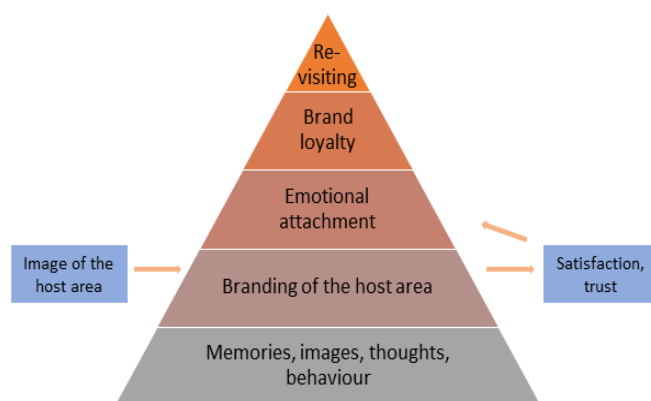


Figure 1. Impact of the branding process on the behavior of tourists arriving in a destination (Source: Own ed. based on Morgan et al., 2011)

Branding represents varied expectations and goals among the actors involved. Economically, the aim is to add value to products, support local production, and promote tourism. Socially, it fosters connections and networks enhancing social capital. Branding enables communication to raise awareness of local values and facilitate place-making processes, so it can have a positive impact on urban development (Ledinek Lozej and Razpotnik Visković, 2022). Branding can be built on several factors; events, such as festivals are among the most important. Events provide a memorable experience that is uniquely linked to the tourist destination (Zetiu and Berte, 2015; Finkel and Platt, 2020), so cities are increasingly using events as a means of promotion. Several cases can be cited where a locality has become known or shaped its image through a festival, such as Avignon (Festival d'Avignon) or Salzburg (Salzburg Festival) (Richards and Leal Londoño, 2022). The importance of festivals for cities can be approached from several angles (e.g. tourism-economic, cultural, social).

This article focuses on music festivals, but it is important to highlight that festivals with different characters can all be beneficial for urban development and branding. There is a reciprocal relationship between localities and festivals, as the setting for the event is provided by the destination's institutions and services, but the festival also shapes the locality, influencing its image and the whole brand (Kundi, 2012; Supriono and Yulianto, 2021). If the cooperation between the event and the destination is close enough, the so-called image transfer occurs, i.e. in an optimal case, the positive experiences associated with the festival become assets for the destination (Oklobdžija, 2015). Thus, the festival can be the "engine" that creates the real reason for a wide range of potential tourists to visit a destination (Derrett, 2012).

Therefore, music festivals play an important role in tourism, and researchers recently have started to pay more and more attention to the strategic importance of these events in the development of destinations (Duarte et al., 2018). One of the roles of music festivals in these new, often culture-oriented urban development strategies is to help make the city an innovative, exciting and creative place to visit (Finkel and Platt, 2020). However, despite the many positive and negative impacts that music festivals have on the economic, physical, political and social environment, research on the economic environment of festivals continues to dominate the tourism literature, while other aspects are often neglected. The most commonly highlighted are the economic and social impacts of the events, such as the number of nights spent, tax payments, temporal employment, which can be estimated for larger festivals. Some studies also have examined the relationships between brand, perceptions, loyalty and destination image in the context of music festivals (Hudson et al., 2015; Debbagh and Azouaoui, 2022). However, for almost all popular music festivals, it is difficult to measure and justify the increase in visibility, reputation and image. Thus, the question arises: whether by linking the image elements of the festival and its host destination (i.e., realizing image transfer) can enhance awareness, and what is its impact on the local tourism processes? The central element of the research was the conscious development of the destination's tourism image, its branding. In this context, we were looking for answers to the following questions: what impact does a popular music festival have on the

image of the destination, and to what extent can it be integrated into the branding process? To what extent is the destination image shaped by the local government or the popular music festival itself?

Based on this, the central element of the research was the conscious development of the destination's tourism image and branding. The aim was to explore the impact of the examined music festival on the image of the destination and its integration into the branding process. However, it is also important for place branding to take into account the images and perceptions that appear in the minds of tourists, which are designed to shape the future of the locality. To this end, our aim was to examine whether the image represented by the locality met the image in the minds of festival tourists. The study is based on the cases of two Hungarian cities (Debrecen, Szeged) and their music festivals.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study site

In the course of the research, the relationship between the image of two popular music festivals (Szeged Youth Days, Campus Festival) and the image of their host cities as destinations (Szeged, Debrecen) was analysed using a complex methodology (Figure 2). Both cities are regional centers in the Hungarian context, having a versatile tourism offer, with a special emphasis on cultural tourism (Tóth et al., 2020; Vida and Dudás, 2017; Vida, 2022).

One of the events studied is the Szeged Youth Days (SZIN), Szeged's most important and Hungary's first popular music festival, which is held in the area near the river Tisza of Szeged and Erzsébet Liget, one of the most important green areas of the town (Kolcsár et al., 2022). The other event under study, the Campus Festival, is held annually in the city of Debrecen, in the main green area of the city, the Nagyerdő (Table 1). Both festivals have similar characteristics in terms of popularity, dates, attendance, programs and age group targeted. The festivals' audiences are mainly young people and students, but both events aim to broaden the age range of the target group (Table 1).

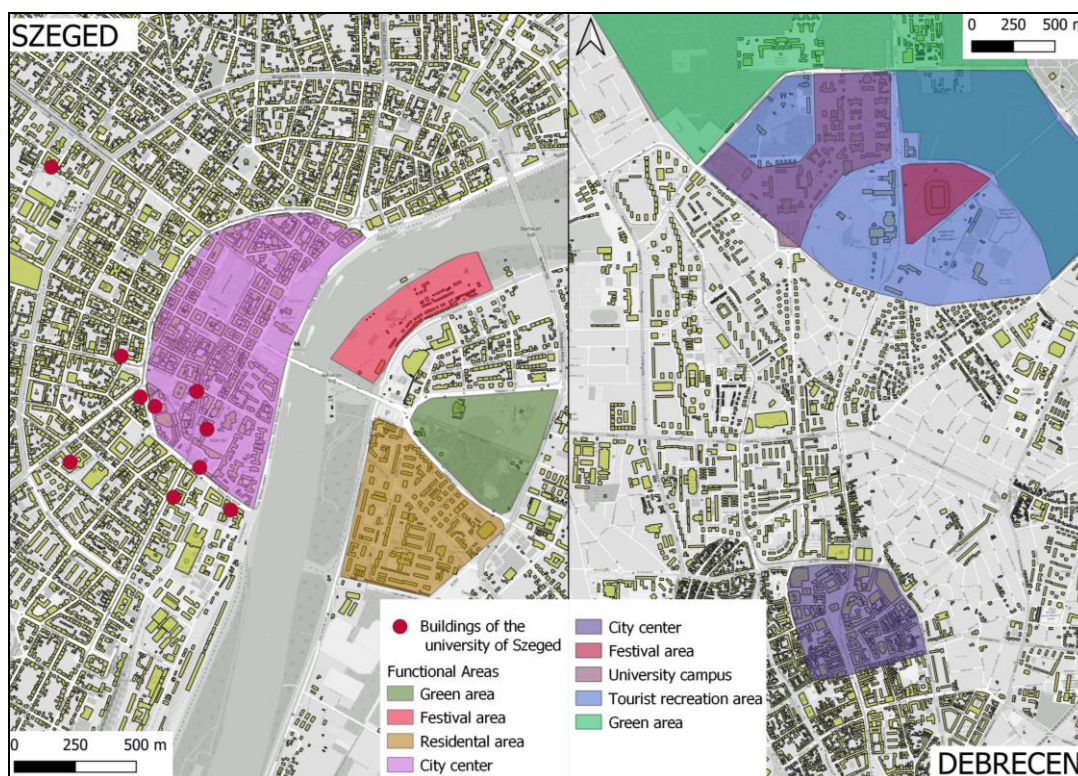


Figure 2. The map of the host cities with the festival locations and surrounding areas (Source: Own editing)

Table 1. Some features of the two festivals (Source: Own editing by [www.szin.org](http://www.szin.org); <https://www.campusfesztival.hu>)

	<b>Szeged Youth Days (SZIN)</b>	<b>Campus Festival</b>
<b>City</b>	Szeged (Partfűrdő)	Debrecen (Nagyerdő)
<b>Location of the site</b>	Close to the city center, on the riverbank	Near university campus
<b>First year of organization</b>	1967	2007
<b>Date (2022)</b>	end of summer (August 24 – 27.)	middle of summer (July 20 – 24.)
<b>Number of visitors (2022)</b>	approx. 100 thousand people	approx. 116 thousand people
<b>Organizer</b>	city event management company	university event management company
<b>Main audience</b>	young people, students (18-25 age group)	young people, students (18-25 age group)

### Research tool, sampling and data collection

Analyzing the impact of popular music festivals on the image of cities requires complexity, so we combined qualitative and quantitative methods, consisting of semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. The interviewing process required the identification of key actors in the tourism processes in Szeged and Debrecen who could be potential



interviewees. The interviewees were selected to represent five categories: the actors shaping the image of the municipality: (1) the city management and (2) tourism professionals, (3) festival organizers or marketing professionals, (4) actors involved in the tourism processes in Szeged and Debrecen, such as accommodation and catering, and (5) and the various attractions. We then used the respondents' network of contacts to further expand the range of respondents. Interviews were conducted between September 2020 and June 2021 and a total of 17 interviews were completed. The interview questions covered the touristic image of the cities, the role of the festival in local tourism, and the relation between cities and events. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The analysis identified themes under which the different opinions were grouped.

To answer further questions of the research, we interviewed festival participants at the Szeged Youth Days and Campus Festival, where both local residents and tourists were accessible. Through random sampling conducted over multiple days at various locations within the festivals, participants of different types were equally likely to be included in the sample. The survey was administered with the assistance of interviewers. For both festivals, questionnaire administration was facilitated by a research association, which had entered into official agreements with the festival organizers for conducting surveys at the events. In Szeged, 618 evaluable questionnaires were filled in for SZIN, while in Debrecen, a total of 300 evaluable questionnaires were filled in for Campus Festival. Different structured questionnaires were used in each case to suit the circumstances of the surveys. At the Szeged Youth Days, participants had the opportunity to complete a longer, more detailed questionnaire, as the partnering research association provided a separate section to their own questionnaire. Conversely, only a few questions were permitted by the research association operating at the Campus Festival, leading to the use of a shorter questionnaire at that event. The questionnaire survey covered a number of issues (e.g. destination awareness hosting the festival, number of visits, duration of participants' stay, participants' motivation, sources of information used by participants, satisfaction of participants with the services, participants' willingness to recommend or return, participants' opinion on the relationship between the festival and the destination image, participants' social media usage habits), but in this study, we focus on the impact of the music festivals on the image and visibility of the host cities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The demand and supply relations of the city's tourism image

In order to understand the role of festivals in shaping the destination image, we first present the tourism image of the city, based on the perceptions of supply and demand side stakeholders. Szeged is considered by the interviewees to be a youthful, vibrant city with a good atmosphere, thanks to the variety of programs and services available. In their opinion, tourism in the city is viewed positively by external stakeholders (Figure 3). The tourism offer is almost unanimously considered to be good, and in their opinion the two main elements of the destination's brand are the Szeged Open-Air Festival (Szabadtéri Játékok) as an event and the Dóm Square with the Church of the Votive as a venue. They believe that "...Szeged's tourism image is still dominated by summer events..." (SZ5, city administration), so Szeged is often perceived as a city of summer festivals, and this image is mainly related to the Szeged Open-Air Festival and the Szeged Youth Days. In addition, the image of Szeged is also significantly linked to sports and the related tourism: the city is well-known for its handball team and national and international events of water sports. Sports contribute to the creating the image of a vibrant, active city.



Figure 3. Tourist image of Szeged (Source: Own editing based on interview survey (2020))

The interviewees agree that "...the city is increasingly aiming to have a coherent image for tourism in Szeged, for the city institutions and companies and there is a very serious initiative and will to do so..." (SZ7, tourism service provider). However, the perception and assessment of "city of sunshine" and "Mediterranean atmosphere" as core concepts of the brand differs between tourism operators. On the one hand, some of the interviewees consider the development of this brand to be a good concept, but believes that it has not yet been achieved. In their opinion, the city has not yet developed a coherent image and the communication of the message is not good, because it is invisible and ineffective "...If I look at the overall picture now, I don't think it's as visible in as many places as it could be. So, I think while there is a concept already, which is the starting point of this whole image, and obviously this city of sunshine and this Mediterranean thing is giving itself, but it is not everywhere... and the truth is that I noticed that if you are not looking for these things, you will not find them." (SZ3, guide). According to the other point of view, the slogan "sunshine city" is not enough to attract tourists, it is not unique and distinctive because "... there are as many sunny days and Mediterranean days in the surrounding cities and countries just like here..." (SZ9, tourism service provider). In the opinion of this group, the different programs are more likely to attract visitors.

During the Szeged Youth Days, we asked festival participants what is the first thing that comes to their minds about Szeged and what associations they attribute to the name of the city. These were used to assess what image elements are associated with Szeged in the visitors' minds and whether there is an overlap with the perception of the tourism supply side.

In both cases, the festival, the Dóm, associations with the university, the city of sunshine slogan, elements related to gastronomy tourism and the zoo are all present, so that elements of the image represented by the city do indeed meet the

image in the minds of festival tourists (Figure 4). On the other hand, the supply side also tries to communicate the cultural tourism side of the city, but its success is less reflected in the respondents' opinions.



Figure 4. Most frequent associations with Szeged among respondents - SZIN festival (Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey; 2021)

In the case of Debrecen, the city's tourism image has been recreated with an emphasis on youthfulness, dynamism and color. Internationality, due to the university's character and connections also affects the tourism image. However, according to the various actors involved in local tourism, defining the image of the city is not easy because it cannot be identified with a specific attraction, "...the challenge is to give this destination an image since it is a secondary city, a big city where all the modern urban infrastructure and services are present, but there is no main attraction to represent it" (D1, tourism expert). In addition to the well-known attractions, the local council is keen to introduce new things to the city, in a way that makes it feel that this image is much more colorful and complex than a simple logo or slogan. The key message they aiming to convey is that Debrecen is a place with a rich tourist offer, and it is worth spending several days there.



Figure 5. Debrecen's most important image elements (Source: Own editing based on interview survey, 2021)

According to the service providers, the city administration's ambition is also noticeable, but they are also trying to strengthen the "Civis" factor (a civic attitude that is specifically linked to Debrecen in Hungary). Based on the survey data conducted by the city administration, domestic visitors tend to mention the emblematic building of the city, the Great Church, its oldest festival, the Flower Carnival, the university, the city's complex recreational park, the Nagyerdő. However, foreigners are less familiar with the city. At the same time, according to the surveys conducted by the local government, the Campus festival is also mentioned by young people. And if the locals wanted to show Debrecen to the visiting tourist, they would show the main square and the Great Church first. The second most important attraction would be the stadium and the surrounding lake area, where the Campus festival is held. According to some service providers,

this is complemented by the aforementioned Nagyerdő, the Great Church, the Csonka Church, the Flower Carnival, the Golden Bull Hotel, the Békás-tó and its surroundings, the beach and the Water Tower (Figure 5). As they show a high diversity, they reinforce the "city of colour" brand. These attractions are also spatially distinct, with the elements of Debrecen's image belonging to the two territorial poles of the city center and the tourist recreation zone.

The local administration believes that the experience of Hungary in Debrecen is the same as in Budapest, so potential tourists will get a big city experience in this place too. What makes it attractive is that *"within one locality, the tourist can have everything they could possibly want: hiking, swimming, church visits, entertainment"* (D1, tourism expert). In the city it is possible to go to wine-tastings and shopping in a safe environment with much more affordable services. This was confirmed by tourism operators, but they also mentioned, among other things, the Campus festival, which is an attraction and has impact for the city by stimulating tourism and enhancing its image. They believe that *"it is good to visit Debrecen because it offers tourists a cultural value that goes back to the past, but at the same time it has innovation and European standards"* (D6, tourism service provider). Service providers feel that the city administration is trying to convey the message of youthfulness and vibrancy to the target groups, but the older age group is not forgotten neither. They also convey the message that improvements are ongoing and that the area is clean. All interviewees agreed that this established image is the result of organic development over several decades and that the image is becoming richer. To sum up, the variety of programs offered in both cities was highlighted by several interviewees, thus we can conclude that a popular music festival can play a role in the tourism image.

### **The relationship between tourism image of cities and music festivals**

Highlighting the connection between the festivals and city image raises the question; how exactly music festivals fit into the image of the city. According to the expert interviews conducted with the members of the Szeged city management, Szeged Youth Days do not necessarily have an impact on the tourism of the city, but are more important from the aspect of image *"... it may contribute more to the image of the city, especially among young people, or it may be more important in terms of image building than in terms of concrete tourism revenue..."* (SZ1, city management).

According to the opinions expressed, the event can enhance the vibrant, lively image of the city, and tourism operators also believe that it offers an opportunity to create a younger, fresher image. For the festival organizers, the aim is also to contribute to the formation of the city image, as Szeged, the "city of sunshine", provides an ideal location for the festival and *"...there are many points that are unique to the city, that the festival itself is on the banks of the Tisza..."* (SZ4, festival organization). According to the festival organizers, a unique atmosphere and attraction is that during the festival you can sit on the banks of the Tisza and watch the sun set with the city's landmark buildings in the background: *"...the Szeged Youth Days itself is a decisive event in the life of the city, and thus in the marketing of the city..."* (SZ4, festival organization). This is due to the fact that the festival venue is located almost in the city center. At the same time participation in the local tourism activities is perceived differently by another actors. In their opinion, not many initiatives have been taken so far by festival organizers to involve festival guests in the city's tourism.

In Debrecen, the interviewed tourism expert stressed that the Campus Festival, along with the Flower Carnival, is also actively linked to the city's tourism and both events are among the most important local attractions. According to the festival organizers, the Campus festival is among the top 2 local events in the city because *"...it has definitely grown up alongside the Flower Carnival in the way that it has to fit into the city's two most important tourist event offerings..."* (D2, event management). The organizers also highlighted the significance of tourist experience in relation to city image. If festival goers have memorable and positive experiences, they spread the good word about the festival, thus shaping a positive image of Debrecen. According to some operators, a Campus festival is a gap filling event, increasingly attractive not only to locals but also to domestic and even foreign tourists, thus contributing to the tourist image. *"The experience is that more and more people are visiting from elsewhere. This festival has a very important role in this aspect..."* (D3, tourism service provider). The city government emphasized that *"...there is a huge brand-building potential here..."* (D7, city government) and that this is a central slogan for the students, so they acknowledge that the present circumstances represent an ongoing process, with ample opportunity for further enhancement. The festival organizers also believe that the event has a very strong multiplier effect for other service providers in the tourism sector, *"...the sales of restaurants, accommodation, other related tourism services will increase noticeably during this period..."* (D2, festival organization).

According to the interviews, there is a constant interaction between the different tourism actors, which has an impact on each other in terms of tourism processes. In this regard, the aim should be to encourage tourists not only to stay inside the festival, but also to walk around the area and see the city center. According to various interviewed actors (i.e. the city management, the tourism expert and the festival organization), the coordination between the city and the festival is excellent. The city council also supports the festival and helps with everything the festival needs, and there is also a brand building link between the event and the city through the local TDM office, which was confirmed by the festival organizers. It is therefore a mutually beneficial relationship; the interests of both parties are monitored and this can indirectly help to create image transfer points. It can be concluded that, according to the actors involved in the tourism processes of the cities, festivals are linked to tourism image and play an important role in the tourism of both cities. Thus, local tourism planning and management aims to utilize these opportunities. However, the demand side (i.e. the opinion of the festival tourists) is also an important aspect, so we assessed the reasons why the tourists visited the festival and what they experienced in Szeged during the Szeged Youth Days (SZIN). For visitors to the Campus festival, we examined whether the festival was the main motivation for visiting Debrecen. SZIN visitors came to the festival mainly for the party and friends, but the atmosphere was a very important motivation for them, as mentioned by the respondents (Figure 6).



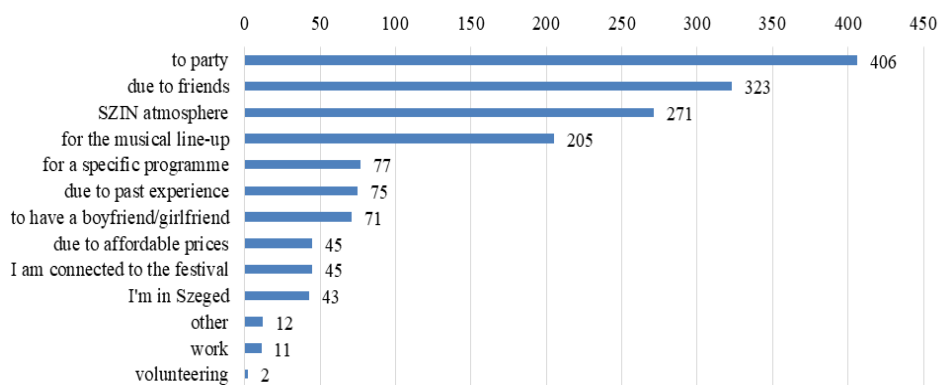


Figure 6. Motivations for attending festivals - SZIN festival (Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey, 2021)

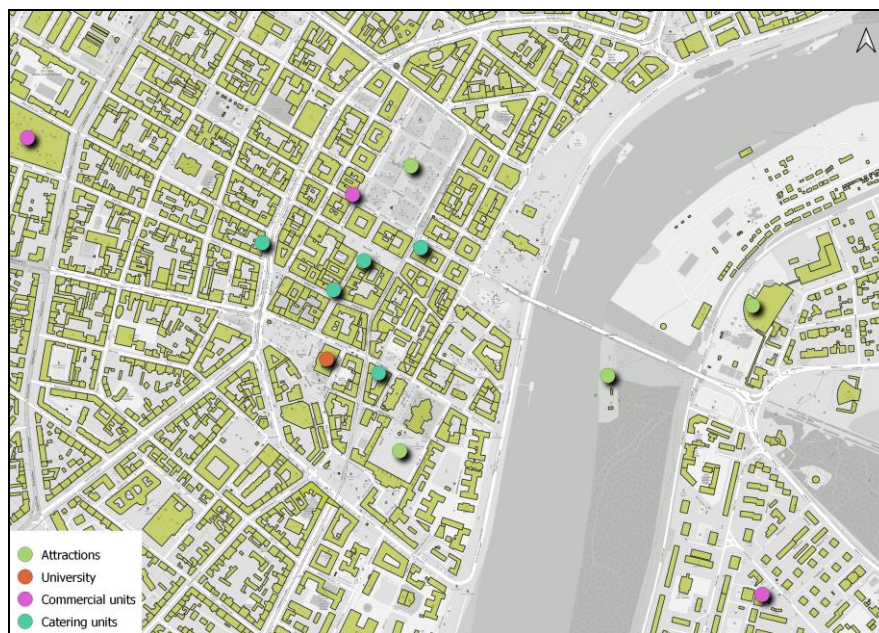


Figure 7. Festival venues visited by respondents of the questionnaire survey - SZIN festival (Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey, 2021)

In order to investigate whether the festival tourists are involved in the broader local tourism processes outside the festival, we assessed what and how the participants experienced in Szeged through the festival. The responses showed that the majority went outside the festival area, as they explored the city center, many of Szeged's attractions, catering and commercial establishments and the local beach during their stay (Figure 7).

The vast majority of visitors surveyed at Campus came to the city primarily for the festival (65.3%). In addition, 13.3% were local residents and 21.3% came for other reasons. The gender distribution of visitors shows that about the same number of women and men had the festival as their main motivation for visiting the city. In terms of age group, it was mainly 20–25-year-olds who came to the city for this reason, but this is also the main audience for the festival. Most of the respondents (132 participants) had been to Debrecen before (81.1%), of which 70% had been to the city but not to the Campus Festival, and a small number of first-time visitors (Table 2). (Unfortunately, due to the difference between the questionnaires, we do not have this information about SZIN.) Thus, it can be concluded that many of them are familiar with the city and are returning visitors, while those who visited Debrecen for the first time were probably influenced by the event.

Table 2. Awareness of Debrecen among respondents of the questionnaire survey - Campus festival (Source: Based on questionnaire survey, 2022)

	Gender		Age range		
	Female	Male	Below 20	20-25	Above 26
Yes, this is my first visit	11	14	25	5	14
No, I have been to the Campus Festival before	19	13	32	1	17
No, I have been to Debrecen before, but not to the Campus Festival	44	31	75	15	36
	Education level				
	Primary school	High school	Technical secondary school	College/university	
Yes, this is my first visit	5	12	1	7	
No, I have been to the Campus Festival before	2	7	4	19	
No, I have been to Debrecen before, but not to the Campus Festival	10	40	9	16	

These results are also confirmed by the fact that the main motivation for attending the Campus festival, in addition to the music on offer, is also Debrecen as location. Many respondents chose the festival because of the city, but the location of the festival within the city (the tourist recreation area) was also mentioned by a significant number of respondents (Figure 8).

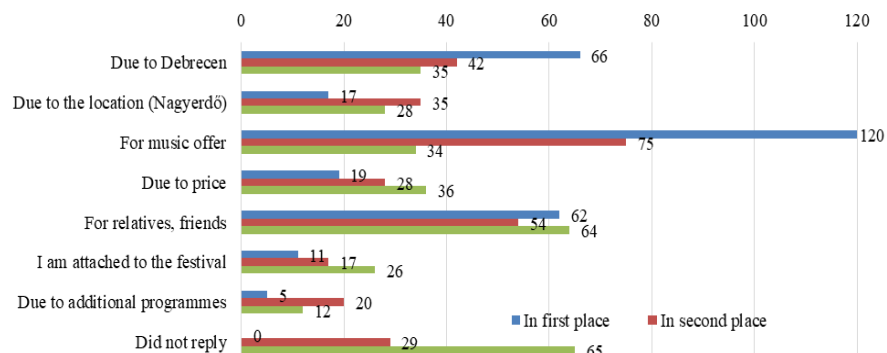


Figure 8. Motivations for attending the Campus Festival (Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey, 2022)

Thus, it can be concluded that the motivation of festival visitors includes visiting the destination where the event takes place and, in the case of SZIN, getting out of the festival area and exploring the city center area close to the festival. Thus, festivals can indeed be integrated into the tourism processes of cities and the tourism image and brand can be built on the festivals, so we examined how the role of urban image shaping is realized in these study areas.

The results also highlight the importance of location of the venues: the vicinity and accessibility of other attractions facilitate the integration of festivals into local tourism. The interview with a representative of the local government at Szeged also highlighted this aspect: "... the fact that it is located in the city center means that it is an extra service with this waterfront, access to the city, the Tisza, a triple experience and attraction..." (SZ1, city government). In the case of Campus festival, the venue is in Debrecen's prominent tourist site, the Nagyerdő – this the event is a part of the city. According to the interviews, the choice of location may not have been conscious at the beginning of the festival, but now it is important. In addition to the concerts, the festival will also bring together various communities, organizations, companies and town authorities. "...whoever goes through the Campus Festival, whether in the civic village or in the University Square, will get to know Debrecen in its entirety" (D5, tourism service provider). In the case of SZIN, based on all the opinions expressed, the festival could be integrated into Szeged's tourism image and the main point of image transfer could be the Tisza and its surroundings. According to the festival organizers, "...the Tisza is the strongest link between the city and the music festival..." (SZ4, festival organization), as it is a strong emotional factor that gives festival participants a sense of freedom and relaxation. Besides playing a major role in shaping and enhancing the image of Szeged, it can also contribute to the general visibility of the municipality, which was also highlighted by the interviewees "...well, it contributes because obviously the festival is in the news and then it was said that it is in Szeged..." (SZ1, city administration). According to one guide, the event is quite well known nationally, but not so much internationally, except from Serbia, the nearest neighboring country.

However, according to a tourism service provider, "...I am also sure that a lot of foreign tourists and foreign people know Szeged just because of this...I have heard Dutch people coming here, I have heard English, I have heard from even more distant countries..." (SZ9, tourism service provider). The festival organizers consciously use the adjective Szeged and believe that "...Szeged is a well-known city within Hungary, but even if the younger people did not know it, they also took the city to their hearts through the festival. Many people mention the festival when they hear the name of the city..." (SZ8, festival organization). According to the city management and a tourism expert, the festival will create complementary elements (e.g., a festival anthem) that will link the municipality and the festival, and in their opinion, a significant part of the visitors can be a very good tourism marketing activity in itself, if they leave with pleasant memories. The name of the festival is also linked to the city, because if the festival's brand is defined, Szeged is also included in the name – however, some of the interview experts doubt that the festival itself is a strong enough factor for identity building.

In the case of the Campus festival, the organizers also aim to strengthen the image of Debrecen at the festival. According to tourism officials, this will be achieved, and they believe that festival visitors will visit Debrecen to see the city's attractions and enjoy the hospitality. The city management also supports and promotes the festival, their aim is to link the festival and the image of the city: "...the Campus Festival is us, it is Debrecen, and how nice for everyone that it is here" (D1, tourism professional). The survey of demand-side opinions supports these findings, as respondents at the SZIN believe that the festival has helped them to get to know the city better (61%) and that the festival has a strong connection to the city. They believe that the festival and the place in the narrower and broader sense are closely intertwined. In the case of the Campus Festival, respondents' opinions are very close in terms of whether their perception of the city has changed as a result of the festival, with 49.7% saying it is the same for them as before, but 47.3% saying it has improved.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that the analyzed festivals play a major role in raising awareness of its destination, shaping the image of a place and bringing it to a wider audience. It can be said that both Szeged and Debrecen have a diverse, dynamic and colourful image, with festivals being a prominent feature of their tourism image. However, from a coordination point of view, there are still areas for improvement in the case of Szeged, since a unified, well-defined image is still missing. Furthermore, according to the interview partners, it is not even visible enough to ensure the competitiveness of the municipality in tourism.



The results of Hungarian case studies are in many respects in line with the general global processes outlined in the theoretical chapter, and there are similarities with studies in the surrounding post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Hosting culturally significant events can attract media attention, transforming city images and influencing future tourism legacies (Wise et al., 2015). Our results indicate that in many cases, various disparate elements are used to construct the city's brand identity, resulting in often unstable and contradictory representations, stemming from ad hoc branding. This approach has emerged in other post-socialist cities, such as Timișoara (Vesalon and Crețan, 2019). A comparative study between Serbia and Hungary shows consistency in the results, indicating that the local population perceives the positive effects of festivals, and participants believe that festivals contribute to the development of tourism in the region, as well as to the promotion and image of cities (Pavluković et al., 2019). The notion that significant events can turn a city into a popular tourist destination is supported by a study conducted in Romania, examining the impact of the Untold Festival. The findings of this research can be paralleled with Hungarian case studies, as innovative marketing attracts a diverse audience interested in exploring the landmarks and culture of the festival's host locality, while also boosting the region's visibility and economic growth (Cianga, 2020). Similarly to the Hungarian examples, findings from a study in Brasov also support the conclusion that a festival can play a crucial role in a post-socialist city. The results of this research suggest that all relevant stakeholders should be motivated to participate in the rebranding of the festival, providing an opportunity for enhancing placemaking (Jucu, 2020).

Our findings show that festivals in the European post-socialist region have a significant impact on local culture, traditions, and local cultural identity. Complementary programs alongside the concerts, enable tourists to explore nearby destinations, as seen both in Debrecen and Szeged. Innovative marketing campaigns attract diverse audiences, enhancing the region's appeal and offering a unique and comprehensive experience. At the same time, these diverse audiences are characterized by diverse demand and in order to satisfy them a versatile supply is required.

Despite these similarities, there are also differences from both global and Central and Eastern European processes. As the relevant theory and global trends show, for the impact of a festival on the image of a municipality to be successful and to make it competitive or unique in the competition between destinations, the political, environmental, technological, economic and community context of festivals must be considered (Derrett, 2012; Cianga, 2020). Our research reveals the importance of collaboration in branding, and when the festival's brand and the city's brand are linked, based on our results we consider this to be a sign of cooperation. The lack of partnership hinders branding and promotion of tourism. This prevents the development of comprehensive tourism products and integration of festivals into the local cultural economy and place marketing (Wise et al., 2015; Vesalon and Crețan, 2019; Pavluković et al., 2019; Pivac et al., 2019; Cianga, 2020; Jucu, 2020). However, it can also be concluded that most studies focus on the economic and social impact of festivals (Kundi, 2012; Cianga, 2020; Tóth et al., 2022) paying less attention to their effect on a location's image and the wider branding processes. Understanding these aspects is crucial for long-term planning and successful destination marketing.

International experiences show that the biggest challenge for the culture-based economies in Central and Eastern European cities is the lack of cooperation between local/regional decision-makers and actors (Light et al., 2020; Nared and Bole, 2020). Lack of cooperation and collaboration is one of the biggest problems of the Hungarian economy, a typical Central and Eastern European process (Ludvig, 2003; Tóth et al., 2020; Hardi et al., 2021). However, cooperation would be important, such as jointly building or rebuilding the image of the destinations, for example, since local governments in this region face challenges such as unemployment, ethnic tensions, social, health and education provision in a resource-poor environment, among others. These problems require complex solutions with the involvement of actors through vertical and horizontal partnerships (Medarić et al., 2021). In the case of the festivals examined in the research, image building can be achieved due to the uniqueness of the festivals and the fact that the two events offer a complex experience due to the choice of location, thus making them more easily integrated into the tourism process of the locality. This is confirmed by the results of the questionnaire survey, as participants of both festivals also visited the city's other attractions. Thus, both festivals contribute significantly to the image of the respective localities, and can strengthen their youthful, vibrant image. The results show that the importance of geographical location, the features of the venue (the Partfűrdő and the Nagyerdő) and the closeness to the city center or the tourist recreation area can provide a unique attraction and experience for festival visitors, creating a strong bond between the city and the event. In the case of the relationship between Szeged and SZIN, the main point of image transfer could be the Tisza and its surroundings, which is supported by the opinion of the interviewees, and building on this base, the identity point of the festival could be further strengthened. In Debrecen, the festival is already embedded in its environment to such an extent that it automatically promotes tourism in the city and image transfer is achieved. Debrecen and Szeged, as other post-socialist cities are both keen on attracting visitors now to contribute to broader economic development and regeneration. Festivals are suitable for this because a wide audience can be reached through them. Music and cultural events in CEE cities can widely use within broader tourism strategies intended to bring about urban regeneration, they represent a way through which placemaking can be done.

The research offers possible directions for decisionmakers as well. Local governments should facilitate cooperation between the various stakeholders within the broader sphere of cultural tourism and festival-related tourism in particular. With the coordination of the local government a well-defined image should be built and maintained. The research highlights the importance of the location of venues within the cities. Thus, these locations should be kept and the possible conflict with local due to noise or increased traffic should be managed effectively. The principles of cooperation and partnership should be taken into account during the planning and management of festivals and the branding processes.

Like any piece of research this study also has some shortcomings to be highlighted. First, the analysis focuses on two Hungarian cities, thus the generalizability of the results is limited. Furthermore, the time data collections, there is no possibility for longitudinal comparisons. Future research should explore longitudinal changes in images and visitor attitudes, deepening our knowledge on the topic. In addition, other towns and festivals should be also analyzed, strengthening the comparative nature of the research.

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