

The Role of Festivals and Cultural Events in the Strategic Development of Cities. Recommendations for Urban Areas in Romania

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Building a good image of a city or state so as to differentiate it and to make it unique in tourists' minds is a vital condition nowadays, in a world of global competition. This image may be created by taking advantage of local culture and values' promotion or by organizing festivals and special events. There are various festivals and events held every year somewhere in the world that add image and competitive advantages to host cities. In order to illustrate this idea, the paper presents some less common festivals hosted by different cities that are turning themselves into real "urban agglomerations" during these events. The study analyses the impact of festivals on the strategic development of cities and the importance gained by urban areas after organizing these events. In the final part of the paper there are some recommendations for Romanian cities which might enhance their image and might become more known through the organization of such festivals and cultural events.

Keywords: *Competitive Advantage, Cultural Events, Festivals, Strategic Development, Urban Development*

1 Introduction

Events and festivals are an essential part of the urban life, having generally, very diversified themes, such as thematic festivals, political events, cultural activities, sport events, religious meetings, etc., and can be held at an international level (such as: Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, World Expo), as well as at a national level (for example: Oktoberfest from Munich, Las Fallas (The Festival of Carpenters and Fire) from Valencia, The Ice Festival from Harbin (China), The "George Enescu" Festival from Bucharest, Romania). Such type of events are becoming more and more important both for the urban development (having a great impact on the image of the host city), as well as for its inhabitants, as research related to this area have developed rapidly, becoming a popular subject.

Events "represent a way of selling the city "as a product", by attracting tourists, as well as industries and investments"[6]. Events of global importance (Olympic Games, World Expo or FIFA World Cup) offer opportunities for the host cities. This way, most of the urban areas (München, Montreal, Moscow, Seoul, Barcelona, Sydney, Salt Lake, Torino, Beijing, and Vancouver) which have been the host of the Olympic Games have taken advantage of this opportunity to present and sell themselves.

According to the Romanian Explicative Dictionary, the word "festival" means "an artistic manifestation with a diversified schedule, having

an occasional or periodical character", or "an artistic manifestation (musical, theatrical etc.) comprising a series of representations and having a festive character" [1].

Generally, the festivals are organized in order to answer the specific needs of a community and in the same time to offer entertainment. These types of events have the power to offer people a feeling of social, geographical, cultural, etc. belonging. The typology of festivals, and generally of events, is a much diversified one. Usually, people find a reason to celebrate in almost every aspect that surrounds them, starting from religious rituals, military events, the day when a certain institution was established, and ending with customs less ordinary, such as ice sculptures (Japan, China, Norway, and Canada), the cheese-rolling (England), the night of the radishes (Mexico), and many others. In one of his papers dedicated to the study of festivals and events, Derret Ros has the opinion that "organizing a festival allows a community to stay united, to work together and to bloom". Even more, he states that "this connection and welding of the community can be accomplished through people's effort and creativity, resulting in skills in more areas of the social life"[2].

Events and festivals play an important part in the life of a community. In the places where people have understood this and have organized events and festivals to cheer up, to exchange knowledge and to tighten the relations between neighbors,

there was also an improvement in the way the community faces challenges and people have become more united.

Also, events and festivals can result in the improvement of the urban environment and of the infrastructure. Many of the buildings built for different important events (for example World Expo) have become with the passing of time unique and defining symbols of the host city: The Eiffel Tower (built for the World Expo from Paris, 1889), the German Hall (projected by Mies for the Barcelona Expo, from 1929), the Atomium (built for the World Expo, 1958).

During the most important events and international festivals, the host cities benefit from an intense promotion in the mass-media. As Getz has mentioned, “the most important and relevant advantage of the big events is that it allows the host city to promotion and publicity in a short time frame” [3].

As a conclusion, events and festivals represent a

good way for the city to approach an “image” crisis, to revert the negative reputation and to build up a positive image. Festivals and events attract people towards the city and determine them to travel in the area, succeeding this way to eliminate the negative imagine.

2 Successful Festival and Events around the World

Every year in the world there are a multitude of special festivals and events, some more known than others to the public. What's important is that these festivals and events generate an image boost and offer plenty of advantages to the host city. In order to exemplify this, I've chosen to present a couple of festivals hosted in different cities, which become real “urban conglomerates” when they take place.

Oktoberfest (Munich, Germany) is one of the greatest public festivities in the world (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Images from the festival
Source: <http://www.oktoberfest.de/en/>

The festival takes place every year in Munich, during 16 days, starting with the middle of

September and ending in October (see Figure 2).



Fig. 2. Festival logo
Source: <http://www.oktoberfest.de/en/>

Every year, more than 6 million people take part in Oktoberfest, from which 72% are from Bavaria, 13% come from the rest of Germany,

and 15% are foreign tourists (mainly from Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand) (see table 1 and figure 3).

Table 1. The evolution of the number of tourists during the festival in the timeline 1990-2010

Year	Visitors (million)	Year	Visitors (million)
1990	6.7	2000	6.9
1991	6.4	2001	5.5
1992	5.9	2002	5.9
1993	6.5	2003	6.3
1994	6.6	2004	5.9
1995	6.7	2005	6.1
1996	6.9	2006	6.5
1997	6.4	2007	6.2
1998	6.5	2008	6.0
1999	6.5	2009	5.7
		2010	6.4

Source: www.muenchen.de/Rathaus/tourist_office/oktobfest/126031/oktoberfest_Zahlen_Statistiken.html

Approximately 60% of the visitors have 30 years old, or less (according to the press release “Oktoberfest Munich as an economic factor”, released by the Munich City Department for

Work and Economic Development). Oktoberfest has a big contribution to the economic development of the Munich city and the neighborhood area.

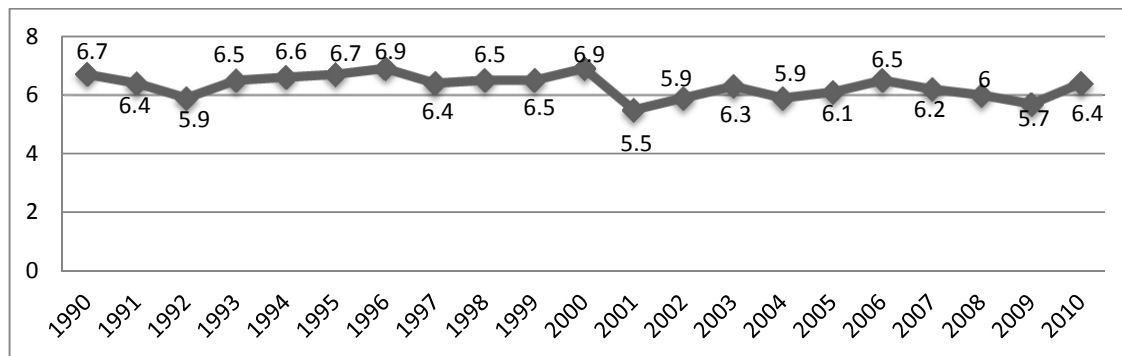


Fig. 3. The evolution of the number of tourists during the festival in the timeline 1990-2010

During the 16 days of festival, tourists spend approximately 830 million of Euros: 324 million from the food carts, drinks and entertainment, 205 million from shopping in Munich and using

the public transportation, while 301 million represents the profit of hotels and other accommodation spaces (see table 2).

Food and drink	324
Shopping and public transportation	205
Accommodation	301
Total profit	830

Source: www.muenchen.de/Rathaus/tourist_office/oktobfest/126031/oktoberfest_Zahlen_Statistiken.html

The Las Fallas festival (The Festival of Carpenters and Fire) from Valencia is famous around the world, as it is proclaimed to be an

event for international tourists around the world, which announces the arrival of Spring (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. Festival logo

Source: <http://www.fallasvalencia.es/>

During the festival hundreds of statues, called **ninot** (which can 10m taller), made from wood, carton or plastic are present during the procession. The statues represent books and movies characters, politicians, or celebrities (see

Figure 5). There are numerous of other activities which take place during the festival, such as: bull fighting, paella competitions and beauty pageants (see Figure 5).



Fig. 5. Images from the festival

Source: <http://www.fallasvalencia.es>

“Las Fallas” festival attracts more than 1 million tourists every year. 2011 was the rebirth year for this festival, as the degree of occupancy of hotels

during the festival has reached almost 100% (see Figure 6).

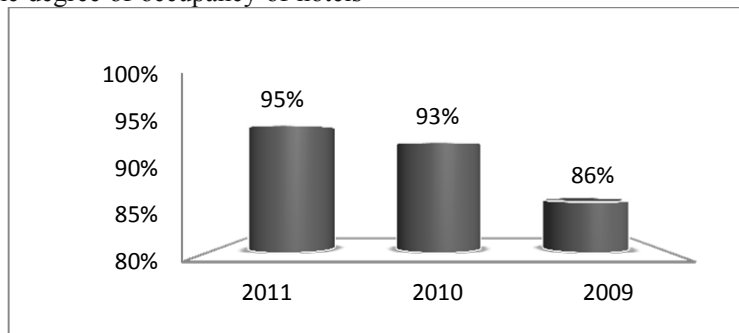


Fig.6. The degree of occupancy of hotels during the festival

Source: www.lasprovincias.es/v/20110312/valencia/ocupacion-hotelera-alcanzara-fallas-20110312.html

The Snow Festival. Around the world there are four main festivals dedicated to winter and to ice

sculptures, which take place every year in Harbin (China), Sapporo (Japan), Quebec (Canada) and

Norway. Sapporo is a city from Japan, situated in the South-West of the Hokkaido Island and it's also the biggest city on the island. Starting with 1950, every winter in the month of February, at

Sapporo takes place the Snow Festival (see Figure 7 and Figure 8) which attracts every time a big number of visitors (see Figure 9).



Fig. 7. Festival logo

Source: <http://www.snowfes.com/english/>



Fig. 8. Images from the festival

Source: <http://www.snowfes.com/english/>

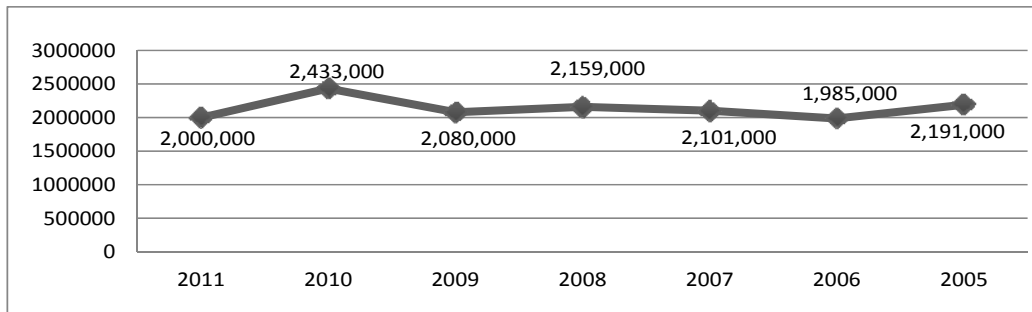


Fig. 9. The evolution of the number of visitors during the festival in the timeframe 2005-2011

Source: <http://www.snowfes.com/english/outline/index.html>

3 Festival and Events Held in Romania

The pallet of festivals from Romania is very rich. Across the entire country you can encounter different holidays and events which celebrate a certain thematic (Christmas or Ester traditions, popular traditions from different regions, music, film or art, popular cuisine, or even thematic less encountered - although in Romania the rebel and nonconformist style is still regarded with

suspicion), and which attract every year a big number of both Romanian and foreign tourists.

In order to understand better the festivals and cultural events which take place in Romania, further on there will be presented a classification of the festivals according to their area of interest:

- music festivals (The “George Enescu” Festival and International Competition, Sibiu Jazz Festival, The International Festival “George Grigoriu”, EUROPAfest, BestFest,

The International Festival “The Golden Deer”, The Callatis Festival, The “Gaudeamus” Festival, The “Mamaia” Music Festival, The Musical Autumn from Cluj etc.);

- movie and Animation Festivals (The International Festival “Transilvania” (TIFF), “Anonymous” Festival, Anim'est Festival, The Historian Movie Festival from Rasnov, Asta Movie Festival, BEST Movie Festival, DaKino Festival, “Bucharest” International Movie Festival etc.);
- theatre Festivals (SibFest, the National Theater Festival (FNT), “Workshop” International Festival, B-Fit - Street Theater Festival etc.).

From the above, I'll summarize one of the events which have a great economic and social impact: **The “George Enescu” Festival** (see figure 10). Held once every two years, since 1958, when it was established in memoriam of the composer and pianist George Enescu (considered the founder of the Romanian school of composition), the festival (now at its XX edition) has kept its tradition offering in 2011 an impressive number (almost 200) of symphonic and chamber concerts, recitals, opera and ballet performances, together with composition workshops, musicology symposium, exhibitions of art, musical instruments, records, scores and books, and performances in the Festival Piazza. All these make the “George Enescu” Festival to be in the “galaxy of the virtuosus”, next to the festivals from Bayreuth (Germany), Verbier (Switzerland), Aix-en-Provence and Saint-Denis (France).



Fig.10.The Logo of the festival

Source: <http://www.festivalenescu.ro>

The festival was held between September 1 - September 25, has 7 sections (“Great orchestras of the world”, “Recitals and chamber concerts”, “Midnight concerts”, “Opera and ballet performances”, “Enescu and his contemporaries” and “Music in the XXI century”, “World music”), and had in its agenda classic music and contemporary rhythms, merged with folk, tango

and jazz echoes. The music of Liszt, Berlioz, Bach, Debussy, Schumann, Leonard Bernstein was heard in the performances of some of the world's greatest orchestra (Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Paris Orchestra, The London Symphonic Orchestra, The Vienna Philharmonic, The “George Enescu” Orchestra and Choir), and pianists such as: Helene Grimaud - from France, Antonio Pappano - from England, Akeiko Ebi - from Japan, Yundi Li - from China, and performers such as: soprano Nuria Rial - from Spain, soprano Valentina Coladonato - from Italy. Altogether, at this event has participated over 3,500 performers from approximately 45 countries.

One of the event's sponsors, Luca D'Agnesse, the president and general director of Enel Romania, has said that this festival “is the event which places Romania best on the cultural map of the world, defining it as a space of civilization, and especially of creativity” [5].

The performances have taken place in more Romanian cities - Bucharest (the Romanian Athenaeum, the Palace Hall, and the “Mihail Jora” Concert Studio), Cluj-Napoca (the Targu-Mures State Philharmonic) and Timisoara (the Banat Philharmonic). In order for all melomaniacs to feel as if they are part of the festival, the organizers have implemented the live streaming technology, allowing some of the festival's events to be followed live on www.festivalenescu.ro.

In 2011, the budget of the festival has surpassed 8.1 millions of euros, from which approximately 7.6 millions of euros have come from public funding, and the rest from sponsors (approximately 500.000 euros) and from the selling of tickets (over 125.000 tickets - subscriptions and single tickets). According to the organizers, the price of one ticket was between 40 and 90 lei (9.5 and 21.5 euros). At an average price of 65 lei, the organizers have succeeded to rise only from the selling of tickets 8.1 mil. lei (approximately 1.9 mil. euro). Even from the first days of selling individual tickets, 29 events have been “sold-out”, and two days before the festival started, 42 events have been exhausted. In other words, the occupancy rate has surpassed 96%.

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In 2011, the festival has registered a total record of people: 10.000 spectators per day. The “George Enescu” festival has brought almost 16.000 foreign tourists in Romania who have taken part in the performances in Bucharest and the rest of the country.

According to Mediafax, the 2011 “George Enescu” Festival has been included in an annual selection of the most prestigious thematic (cultural, musical and artistic) destinations for tourists, made by the Austrian economic magazine “Gewinn” [4]. This selection has been published in the first number of 2011 of the bi-monthly Austrian magazine which had as thematic the most important cultural, musical and artistic events from 2011. Although, this wasn't an actual ranking, Romania has occupied the 16 place as destination, being recommended for the 2011 “George Enescu” Festival [4].

4 Conclusions

“The industry of festivals and events has started developing from the beginning of the 1990, and today there is a vivid interest for any kind of

festival and event, at an international, national and local level. Festivals help promoting the areas in which they take place, attract numerous tourists, and can be regarded as a new type of tourism”[2]. The image of a destination, product or service can be improved or worsen thanks or due to the success or failure of a festival or event. The characteristics of festivals and events are unique, and this is the main reason why we can't have a standard management model to fit all of them. No matter the reason why an event was organized, there are numerous participants, and each has his own expectations.

In Romania, festivals and events have started to conquer new grounds, and organizers try to bring to Romania the ideas from abroad, and to organize international festivals. It's highly important, when such a festival or event is organized, to take into consideration all the aspects: economic, social, cultural, and also the future aspects which are going to have an impact on that certain area, after the festival is over. If, at the end the festival the outcome isn't the desired one, and the tourists and participants aren't satisfied, they'll keep in mind to never come back to this event, and it will be difficult for the organizers to win back their public.

This is way, a big event needs to be very well planned and to take into account all aspects, in such a way that everybody has to win.

For a greater impact, organizers should take into consideration organizing the event in a logical order (see Figure 11), in such a way that the impact will be the greatest, the organization will be thorough, and the participants will be satisfied.

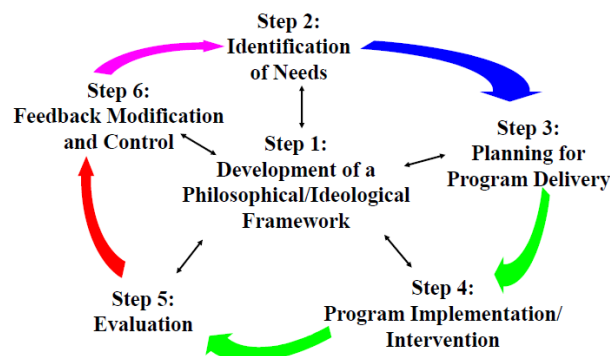


Fig. 11.The logical schema when planning an event
Source:[7]

For a good development it's essential to respect Step 2: Identifying the needs (see table 3). This step sets the organizational requirements, and also the needs of the public/tourists, as well as participants. The stage of identifying the needs

can have exceptional results and all the „actors” can win, if it's well done. Step 3 can be made directly by the company which organizes the event, or by a consultancy firm. It's important that these needs cover in an objective way the

idea of the festival and the expectations of all involved parties.

Table 3.Identifying the needs of a cultural event/festival

Organizational needs	Public/ tourists needs	Participants needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the number of tourists and visitors during the festival; • increasing the resulted profit • positioning the festival on newer market segments (generally on foreign musical markets); •introducing new attractions for the spectators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participating in a quality contest/event/ festival; • having a proper musical setting, professional and competitive; • having quality music conditions; • having consistent prizes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfying the interest towards culture and music; • satisfying the interest towards the tourist attractions from that certain city, or Romania; • participating in a quality festival

Also, the cultural festivals organized in Bucharest, or in any other big city, should focus on Step 3: Planning the event, and on Step 4: Implementing the event. These two stages are essential for the success or failure of the festival. Even if planning the event goes exceptional, implementing the event should be done according to the initial plan, without any successive changes or modifications during the event. For any festival it's important that the plan of the event to comprise modern and attractive tools, in such a way that the public is satisfied and willing to come to future editions. Regarding Step 3 (see

Figure 12), the ones who project the cultural festival need to take into account the benefits of the festival, the established objectives (number of spectators/participants, satisfying the interest for culture, a certain level of profit, etc.), budgets, the management program, promotion and marketing etc. Projecting and planning the event are two very difficult procedures, upon which depends the success or failure of the event. This is why these two activities need to be taken care of by a team of specialists, or by a consultancy firm, in such a way that the final result will match the festival type and the goals of the festival.

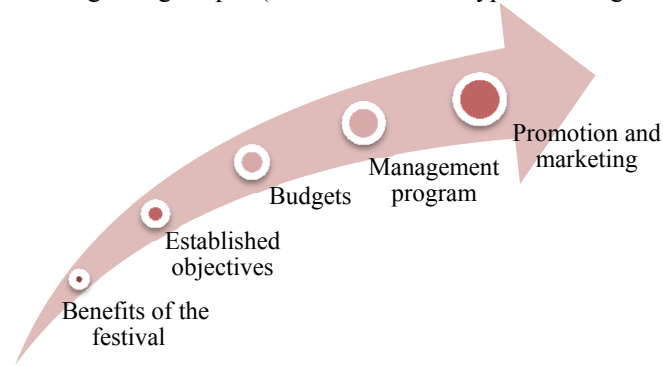


Fig. 12.Planning a cultural event/festival

Step 4: Implementing the event requires putting into practice the plan of the event. This stage needs to also include: backup plans, a team of volunteers, the necessary and specific equipment (see figure 13). It's recommendable that the team of volunteers is the same as in previous editions,

as this way the risk of misunderstandings during the implementation of the festival will be smaller, while the planning and the actual performance will be better. Each volunteer needs to know very well the role he has and his responsibilities.

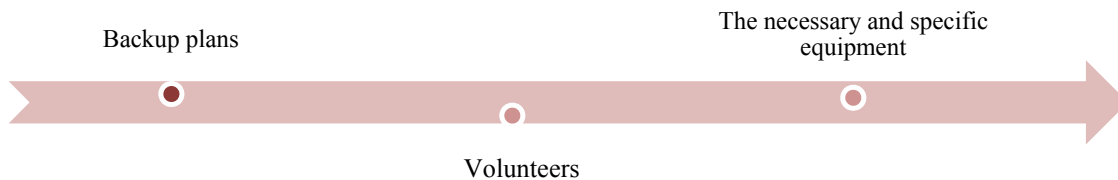


Fig. 13. Implementing a cultural event or festival

The equipment is very important for offering the public and participants a memorable performance, and also the right development tools. For example, the local authorities have been criticized because for the Enescu Festival, the 2011 edition, the performance areas have been inadequate. The Romanian Athenaeum has been considered too small, and not having the capacity to host large orchestras, such as the ones from London, Israel, France or Liverpool. The Palace Hall, the only place in Bucharest where a

large orchestra could perform, has been considered improper due to its air which was dusty, old and depressing, and to the acoustic. The festivals organized in Romanian cities and especially in the capital, need to focus more on the economic effects and the effects on tourism. A way to improve these effects would be to improve the festival, to offer quality services, to raise the satisfaction of the public/participants, to reduce costs, to grow the profit, etc. (Figure 14).

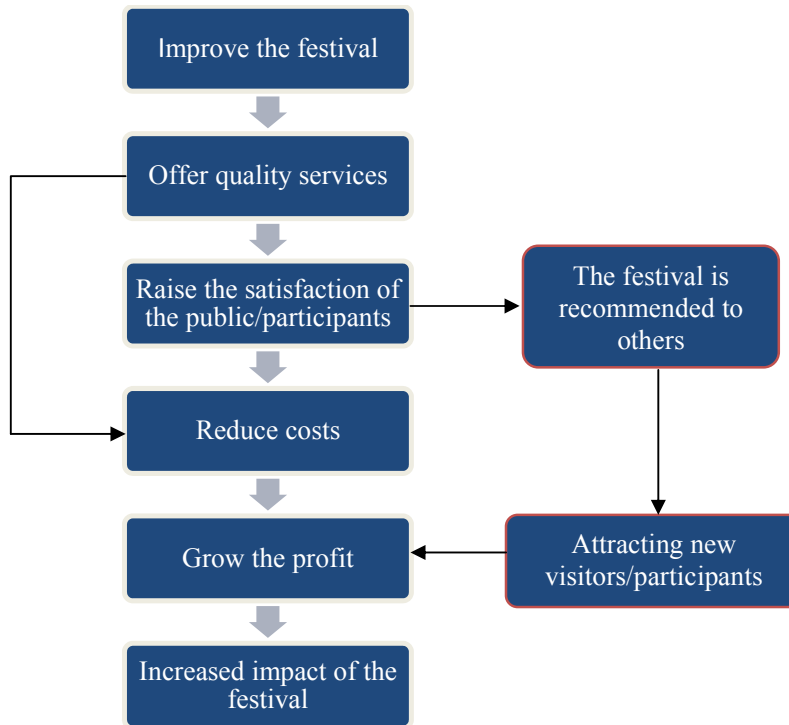


Fig.14. Improving the organization, profit and quality of the Romanian cultural festivals
Adapted from:[7]

A last recommendation regarding organizing a cultural festival or event would be promoting the festival abroad. Such a media promotion should include TV spots, posters and articles in the written press, but also online (on different sites). For example the “George Enescu” Festival was promoted through an extensive international tour organized by the Romania Cultural Institute. Among the countries which have hosted events have been: Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Italy (Venice, Verona, Torino, and Rome), SUA (New York), Portugal and Germany. In the same time with the concerts from the Romanian composer's creations, the Romanian Cultural Institute has organized exhibitions with personal objects of George Enescu and open

lessons for students from the conservatoires, from the cities where such events were held. Also, important foreign TV stations have helped promoting the event, and according to the organizers of the Enescu Festival, in the time frame November 1, 2010 - February 6, 2011, the visibility of the prestigious event was assured by broadcasting a spot in the CNN network (345 broadcasts) which has covered the entire Europe, Middle Orient and Africa. This has also been an online campaign through the banners posted on CNNIntl.com, CNN.com, CNNMoney.com. Starting March 25, 2011, for nine weeks the TV station Euronews has broadcasted the spot of the promotion 14 times per week, also with an online

visibility, and has made special mentions in the “Rendez-vous” and “Le mag” shows. Another way of promoting the festival is the collaboration with the tourism agencies from abroad, which can offer attractive packages for the duration of the festival. Foreign tourists succeed this way to combine the desire for culture with the desire for the unknown (discovering the city or the country).

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