

The Role of Festivals in Developing and Promoting the Urban Tourism in the Bucharest Municipality

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Abstract Nowadays, the tourism for festivals is a sector of the events tourism, in full development, being of particular interest for both the organizers and the public. The study aims to identify the phenomenon as a whole for the tourist interest, proposing a classification in several types of the identified festivals, considering the peculiarities of the time, space and mental mapping criteria of the consumers (at local, national, international level etc.). Taking into account all these, a period of seven years (2009 - 2015) were chosen for study, in order to identify the evolutionary changes which have occurred and to understand their nature. Furthermore, there have also been researched the fundamental aspects of the tourism for festivals in order to demonstrate that this type of tourism is an essential component in the development of tourism in the urban areas.

Key words Tourism for festivals, development, promotion, typologies, urban tourism, Bucharest
JEL Codes: O12, Q26, R10, Z32

1. Introduction and literature review

The festival is a type of event, with a long existence in the human history, which can be defined taking into account the peculiarities which distinguishes it from similar events.

Over time, the festivals have become a phenomenon with a very fast developing, this being the reason why it is commonly studied by various sciences. They play an important role in the cultural exchange among people in the world and provide important contributions in the development of the cities, making them a brand city (Celik and Mehmet, 2013).

Nowadays, festivals are not built on standard models, they are invented and planned in order to attract tourists and to transfer a cultural message, or simply to provide alternatives of relaxation and fun.

Getz (1991, 1997) considers the festivals and special events as a new wave of alternative tourism which offer not only tangible and intangible 'profitable activities' in the community, but also contribute to the sustainable development.

The research of the tourism for festivals is more recent than the research of the events in general. In this direction, there must be mentioned authors such as Falassi (1987) and Quinn (2005, 2009), whose studies are conducted strictly on the festivals. Also Getz (2008), through a study of the events, includes a number of references on festivals as a subset of interest for festivals.

The tourism for big festivals is based on the world yields of classical music and modern theatre, film and book. This took a great development after 1990, when free movement of people has grown, especially in Europe and Asia. Thus, a series of events such as the Festival of Mozart in Salzburg, the Film Festival in Venice, the Film Festival in Cannes, the Theatre Festival in London, the Festival for the Oscars - Los Angeles, George Enescu International Festival – Bucharest, the Jazz Festival in Sibiu, the Book Fair in Frankfurt are events which attract numerous visitors, including tourists from neighboring countries and from other continents.

After the activity carried out at festivals, these can be grouped into (Figure 1): theatre, music and film festivals, religious holidays, celebrations related to the rustic labors, games, songs and traditional dances, cultural - educational events.

'Festivals must be understood as events representing various emanations of the human culture, during which people meet, regardless their activity (except the business and sports meetings)' (Cundy, 2013).

The cities use more and more the cultural events/festivals to improve their image, to stimulate their development and to attract a large number of visitors (Richards and Wilson, 2004).

Among the world cities, one can notice the trend for festivals, by investing in the urban festivals and by entering in competitions, in order to accommodate major events (the Olympics, the Football World Cup, and the title of European Capital of Culture etc.). The reason is the wide range of benefits which come by organizing these events: tourism development, economic growth, social cohesion, education of locals and tourists, the development of culture and creativity,

promotion at international level, of a better city image. Bucharest joined the cities which organize festivals and cultural events and recorded a significant rise of this field.

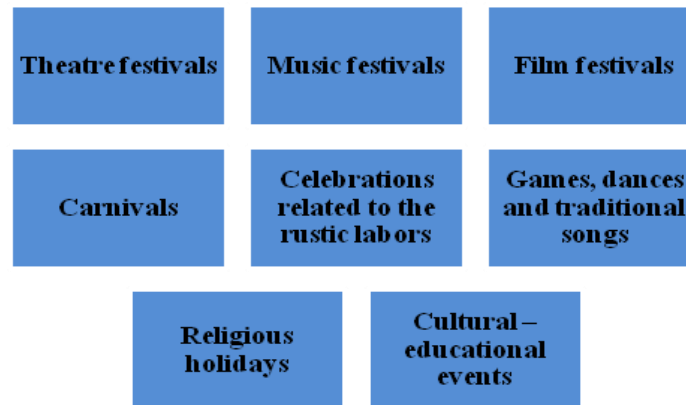


Figure 1. The types of festivals by the activity carried out

2. Methodology of research

For this analysis, there were collected data related to festivals from a number of websites in the field, data which have been quantified, classified and represented in this study as classifications, charts, lists etc. There was also studied a specialized literature in the research field, there were consulted documents and public information and there were made field research, analysis, processing and interpretation of the relevant statistical data.

For a good representation of all the events identified with the title of festival in the media, there were selected 120 of them, based on the criteria of including the name of the festival in the official title or in the event description. This serves to understand the phenomenon as a whole and it also allows the identification of all those events which can only be considered truly festivals.

For all these identified festivals, the present study proposes a classification in several types, taking into account the peculiarities of the time, space and mental mapping criteria of the consumers (at local, national, international level etc.). This aspect serves to the understanding of the dimensions of the festival phenomenon in Bucharest, in order to be further observed the significance of tourism, but it has some limitations in terms of the lack of the official data on the tourists who really participate in such events.

According to these, a period of seven years (2009 - 2015) was chosen to be studied in order to refer to the evolutionary changes that have occurred and to understand their nature. The main analysis was made for this period, only taking into account the criterion of editions registered until 2015, being also included older data than this period.

3. The emergence and development of festivals in Bucharest

The history of the festivals in Bucharest can be drawn parallel to the emergence and development of the settlement known as Bucharest today. Thus, the evolutionary line of these festivals extends to the ancient times, although it is more about some festive manifestations which differ significantly from the contemporary festivals (both in terms of size and the event itself), fact which is due to the different social and historical context. Most often, in the Romanian and implicitly, the Bucharest space, there can be identified some events with a religious ritual, economic or entertainment character, more or less pronounced, which took various forms over time. In this sense, for the space of Bucharest, there will be divided, in five stages, the evolution of the festive events of which the actual festivals have resulted (Figure 2), taking into account the way they manifested in different eras and periods.

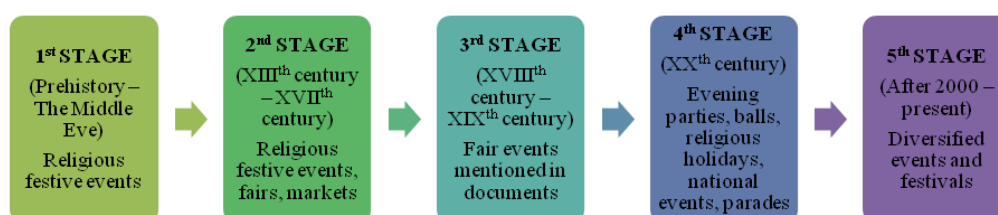


Figure 2. Development stages of the festive events on the territory of Bucharest

Bucharest joined the cities which organize festivals and cultural events and recorded a significant rise of this field. After the revolution of 1989, Bucharest has started to return to the Romanian cultural traditions, in the context of democracy and also tried to align to the standards and Western European trends and not only. If during 1990 – 2000, there were few events and somehow oriented to the classic style (classical or instrumental music) and traditional Romanian style (festivals of folk traditions), since 2000 until now, the events are becoming more numerous, diverse and attractive for tourists (Figure 3).

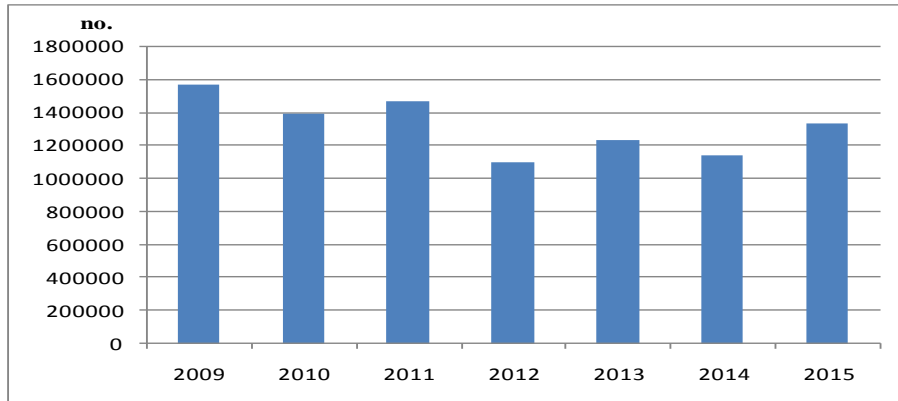


Figure 3. Spectators and auditors to the artistic performances in Bucharest (2009-2015)

Nowadays, any means of developing of a tourist destination is extremely important for attracting a large number of tourists, aiming to be the preferred top destinations. Thus, the tourism for festivals as part of the events tourism should greatly contribute to the development of the place where such an event occurs (Figure 4 and 5).

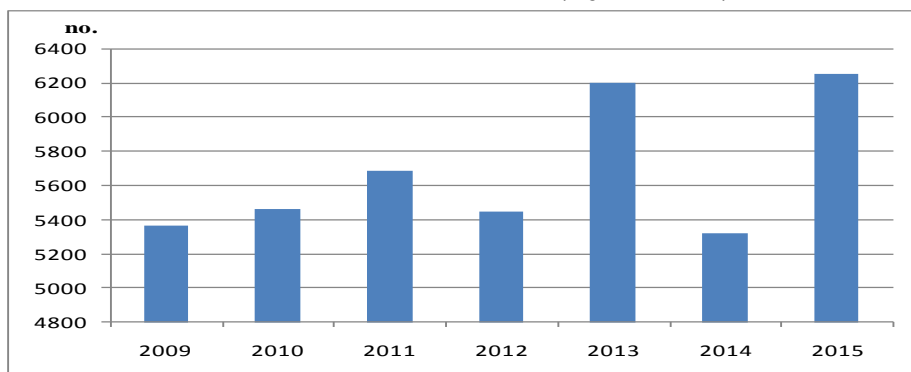


Figure 4. Shows and concerts at the show and concerts institutions and companies in the Bucharest Municipality (2009-2015)

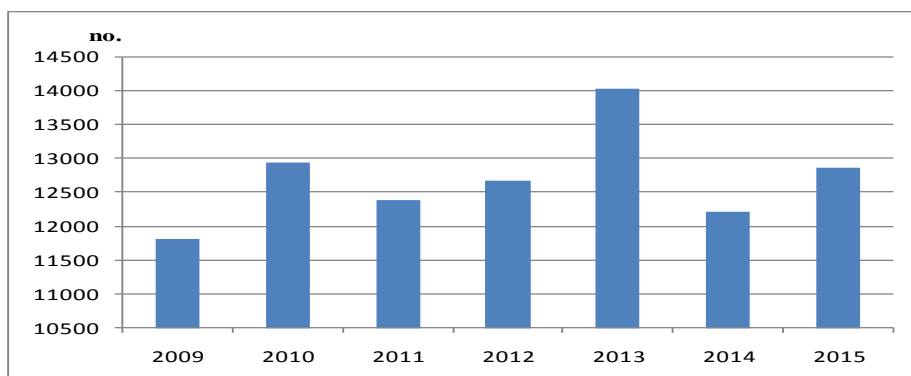


Figure 5. Places in the show and concerts halls in the Bucharest Municipality (2009-2015)

4. The typology of festivals in Bucharest

Bucharest is currently, a very dynamic city regarding the organization of events, including the festivals which occupy a special place. Analyzing 120 festive events (of which only 32 can be considered of prime importance for the tourism for

festivals in Bucharest), for the period 2009-2015, one can see a number of features which explain the interest in their organization.

Bucharest is gradually becoming a city with a wide range of events, collectively named festivals, which can allow its penetration on the international market as a true destination for festivals. Yet, the tendency is to hide under the title of *festival*, the most diverse events, which cannot always be listed in this category. The present study aims to analyze the widest part of these events in order to be identified certain specific types which may be useful in tourism.

After analysis, a number of categories based on several criteria have appeared. The most important criterion, which allows a number of classifications, is that of time. Thus, there is a wide variety of festive events easily classified by the *age*, *the number of annual editions*, *the month of organizing*, *the continuity* and *duration* (Figure 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

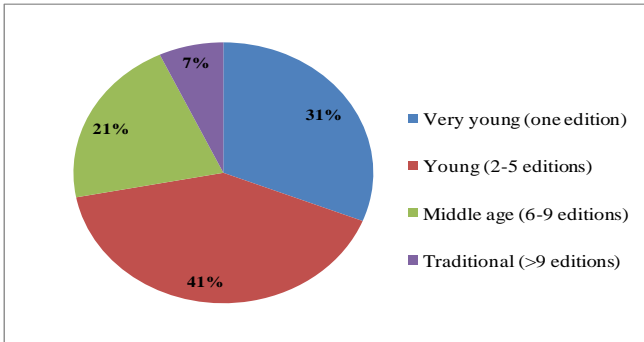


Figure 6. Classification of festivals by age

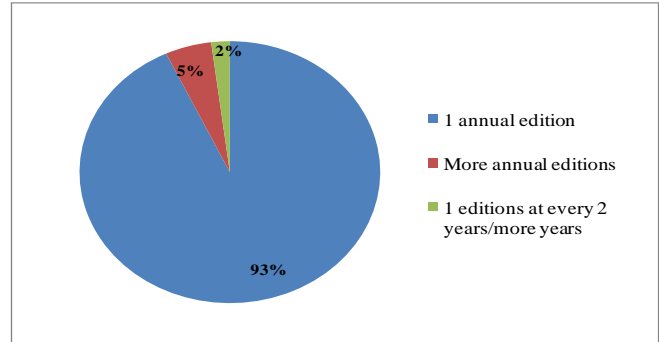


Figure 7. Classification of festivals by no. of annual editions

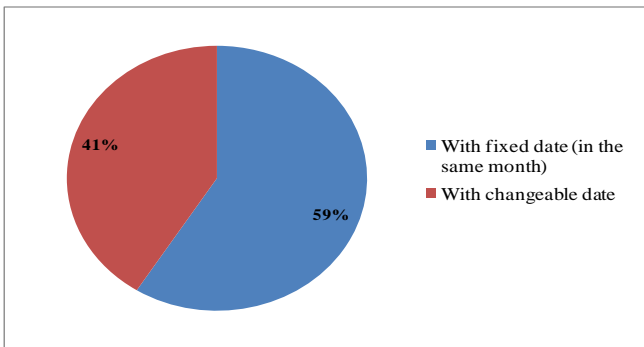


Figure 8. Classification of festivals by the month of organizing the festival

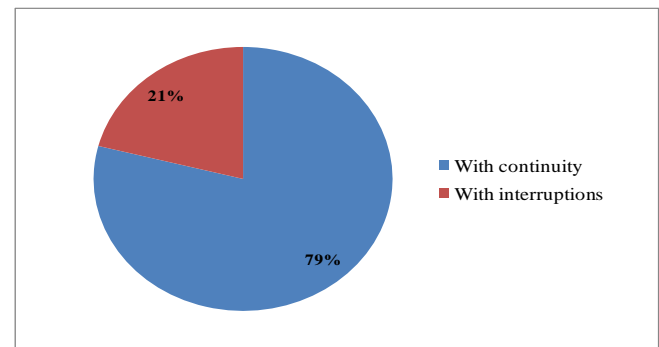


Figure 9. Classification of festivals by continuity

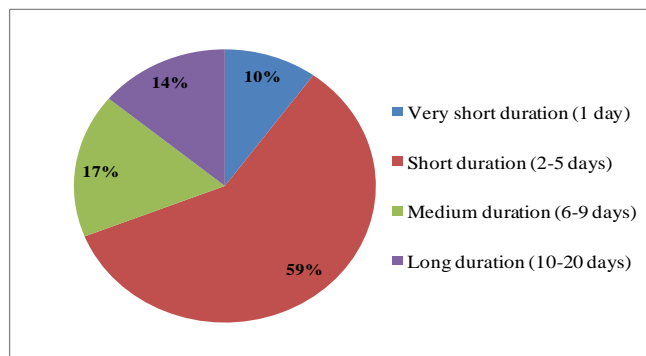


Figure 10. Classification of festivals by duration

Another essential criterion is that of the place of the event, according to which festivals are subdivided into categories, depending on the *location* and the *type of location* (Figure 11 and 12).

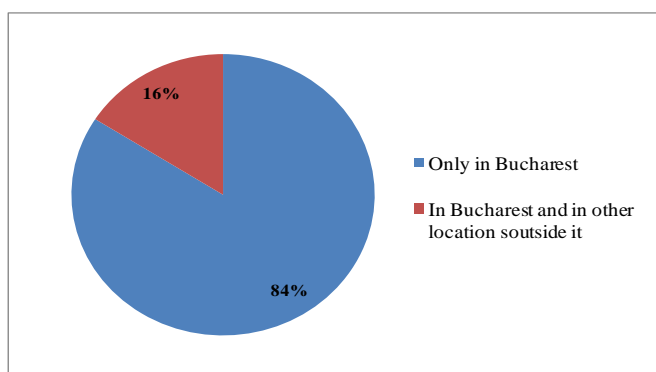


Figure 11. Classification of festivals by location

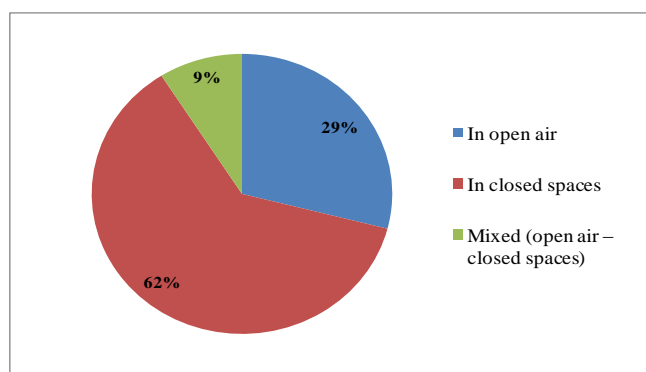


Figure 12. Classification of festivals by the type of location

Also, the financial criterion is particularly important in motivating the tourists to participate in a festival, for which the highlighting of the festival using the 'how access' criterion (charge or free entrance) turns out to be essential. Finally, a last criterion taken into account is the *importance* one (local, national or international), under which one can understand the influence those festivals can have for tourism (Figure 13 and 14).

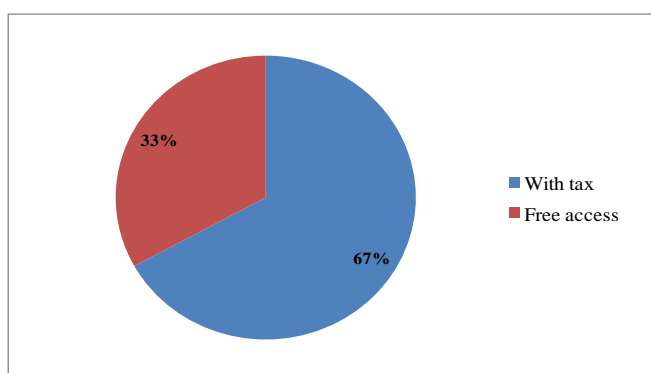


Figure 13. Classification of festivals by the type of access

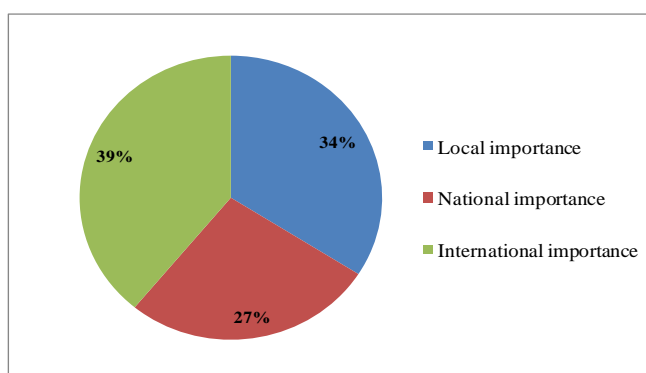


Figure 14. Classification of festivals by importance

5. Organizers of international festivals in Bucharest

Getz (2008) speaks of 'the specific role of an event organizer' which consists of how to 'promote tourism in a destination' referring to festivals as 'part of tourism for relaxation' and he said that the events that already exist 'can be regarded as resources for exploitation, which can be problematic from social and cultural perspective'. Thus, Getz speaks about the importance of an event organizer, which aims to promote tourism, and from this perspective, festivals should also be incorporated as part of the tourism for relaxation. On the other hand, the author also points out the possibility that the events may present some problems in the society, in addition to the economic benefit they bring.

Organizing a festival is a laborious process and evolves financial resources, while the organizers typology needs to be known, in this case.

Regarding the international festivals in Bucharest, one can notice that they are organized by both organizations and cultural institutions –which partially or totally get funds from the public and private companies, which invest considerable sums of money for further profit. At the 32 international festivals which have been analyzed, 34 events organizers took part, of which only nine were private companies, the rest being various associations, organizations, cultural institutions and companies. Of these, only some are registered as companies, representing 19% of the total, being private companies, while the remaining 81% are associations, public institutions, cultural societies.

Thus, the analyzed international festivals are mainly made by the organizers who benefit either from state funds or various sponsorships, while the percentage of those held by private companies is very small.

This suggests that the market interest in tourism for festivals is still underdeveloped. Yet, organizing a festival in Bucharest does not take into account the potential that festivals can have for the tourism sector and it focuses on the cultural side, viewed only in terms of immediate participants in numerical terms. Thus, the analysis suggests that the most important aspect of these festivals is to mobilize the local population (using public funds), while organizing such events for economic benefits shows different features.

6. The importance of festivals for the tourism in Bucharest

Nowadays, any strategy to improve the image of tourist destinations is essential to maintaining its popularity among the preferences of the tourists. Getz (2007), referring to the events tourism, believes that this should be seen from both the perspective of demand and supply and also underlines that the request also includes the estimation of the value of events in order to promote a positive image of the destination.

Thus, festivals as part of the events tourism should help to improve the image of the location where the event takes place. The image of Bucharest is increasingly shaped by the development of a larger number of festivals which promote culture in one way or another. Various organizations create such events, more or less, to obtain a financial return, especially for the topic itself.

Festivals attract tourists and create the tourism for the major arts festivals (Quinn, 2010). Festivals are powerful marketing opportunities that can put their mark on the area/city/region in which it takes place.

The evaluation of a festival or event is important to examine the degree of host community benefits as a result of hosting the event. An economic evaluation of an event is most commonly used, but there is a growing requirement for the environmental impact assessment and social impact of the event.

In order to understand the strategic importance of festivals for the tourism in Bucharest, it is necessary to analyze their evolution by seasons and months (Figure 15 and 16), since it conforms to the specific features of the tourism demand in urban areas.

One can notice the period September - November and a peak of the autumn tourist season. It is followed by the period from March to May, which is closely followed by the summer season from June to August. The least advantaged is the cold season, from December to February, when the fewest festivals are recorded. Analyzing the months of the year, for all the four years, it can be demonstrated the existence of some peaks, in terms of the total number of festivals that took place.

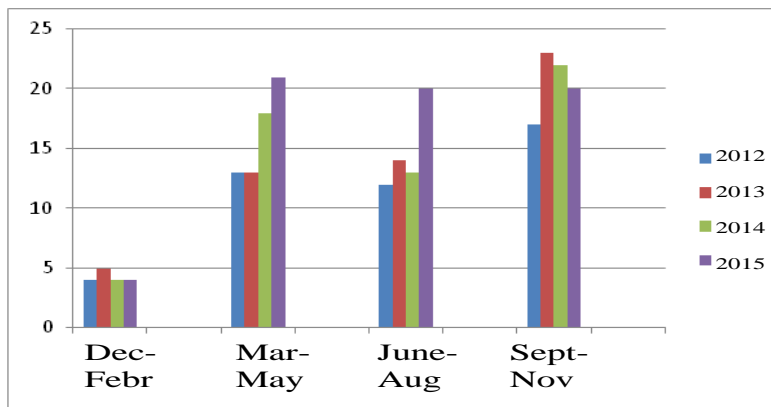


Figure 15. The number of festivals during the months of 2012-2015

There is a significant variation on monthly highs from year to year, which proves that there is still no stability in the number and types of festivals in Bucharest. This lack of stability, especially with a view of the increasing number of festivals, illustrates the lack of a common, global strategy on the way and periods in which these events should take place.

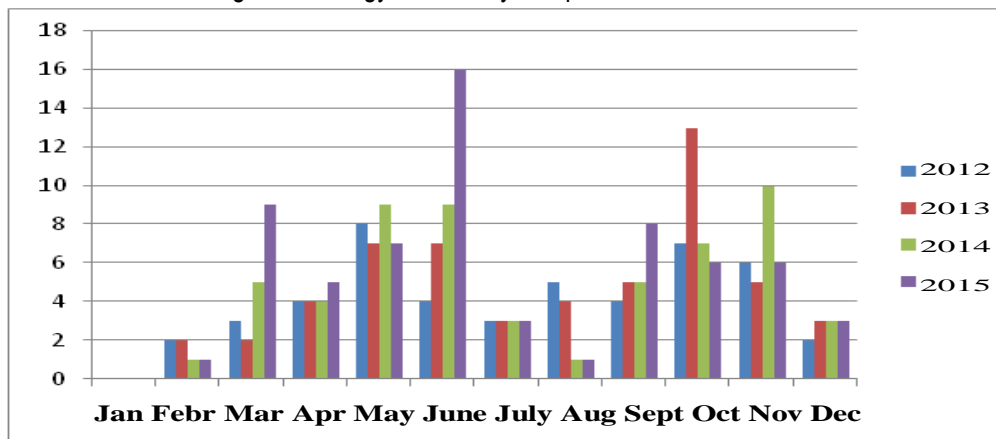


Figure 16. Distribution of the festivals in Bucharest by seasons during 2012-2015

Nowadays, there is the possibility of using the existing festivals in the tourism development strategies, but this requires a well-planned strategy to create coherence in the organization and their marketing.

There are attempts, in particular by the public authorities, to chart a development of the festivals. But there are a number of weaknesses and a degree of inconsistency in this process which need to be removed with as much caution and with as many benefits for the community. Another step is enabling the political and economic mechanisms in order to facilitate the access of the event organizers at this level. The more obvious the benefits for festivals in Bucharest are and the understanding acquires consistency by applying measures at the central level, the easier this segment can be exploited by the willing.

The potential is huge, but it requires more attention from both the authorities and organizers. In this regard, there should be harnessed the initiatives and projects that seek to capitalize on the cultural heritage of Bucharest, because they can become a niche item that will increase the image of Bucharest as a festival destination itself.

Furthermore, the urban festivals can stimulate the urban regeneration process and can simultaneously rebuild a positive image of the development area in the collective mentality.

7. Conclusions

The tourism for festivals is a booming sector of the tourism in Bucharest, less analyzed nowadays, but with perspectives for the future development.

Through an entire analysis of the festival events that occurred over time in Bucharest, one can notice the relative continuity in the history, on one hand, and an unprecedented increase today.

Through the festival events it can be appreciated how the image of Bucharest can be influenced and changed in a positive way. In this sense, the urban festivals (such as Street Delivery and Women on Mătășari) which have been hosted so far in the city are good examples of how a tourist image of the city can be designed in a different way.

Also, the particularities of the tourism for festivals are easier to be identified through the international festivals, which either generate tourist flows (like George Enescu Festival, the International Theatre Festival - NETA, the International Technical Fair - TIT, Bucharest International Jazz Competition, Spotlight - Festival Light, organized by the Cultural Center of Bucharest - ARCUB, etc.) or may become generators of such flows. From this perspective, knowing the trends regarding those who organize such festivals is very important. So far, the organizers of the international festivals proved to be among the major cultural institutions and associations that do not directly focus on the economic exploitation in tourism.

It can be said that the tourism for festivals in Bucharest is an open development field, with great prospects, but it requires attention and substantial investment of the private organizers.

Bucharest already has experience in organizing events and started to become an important point on the map of Europe by attracting international events, such as organizing concerts in some international tournaments or dedicated hosting artistic events. Festivals and cultural events need a structure, a strategy, involving several institutions (for example some cyclical events that could be introduced and promoted on tour packages by travel agencies, hotels etc.).

In conclusion, researching strategic development plans and proposing new attractive festivals in terms of tourism, can be a very valuable economic gap for Bucharest.

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