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The Role of Social Media in Promoting Timișoara 2023 - European Capital of Culture

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Abstract: *Social media has profoundly transformed event marketing and event experiences, becoming essential tools for communication and mobilisation. From promoting concerts and organising protests to planning parties, these platforms are crucial to the success of an event. Social media marketing, while seemingly spontaneous, requires careful planning and phasing of campaigns to ensure effectiveness. This study details the three phases of promoting events on social media and provides strategies for each step. Timișoara, designated European Capital of Culture in 2023, provides an excellent opportunity to examine the impact of social media on the promotion of major cultural events. In a world where information circulates rapidly, these platforms are crucial for disseminating cultural messages and engaging audiences. This paper examines the role of social media in promoting Timișoara 2023, highlighting how it amplifies cultural messages and encourages participation in events. Social networks, which include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and apps such as TikTok and Instagram, are central to modern*

communication, allowing information to be shared globally and providing new ways for businesses and consumers to interact.

Keywords: *social media campaign, cultural event, social media marketing, cultural promotion, European Capital of Culture, Timișoara 2023, cultural heritage*

1. Introduction

Recent technological advances have rapidly transformed the world, with computing and media having a significant impact. However, social networks have had the greatest effect on accelerating change, altering the social structure and the way we communicate.

Social networks have introduced a new style of relating, especially among young people, through virtual communication without the need for physical presence. These platforms have become spaces for the free expression of opinions and feelings, strongly influencing the decisions and behaviours of others, turning some users into influencers.

In the context of cultural and urban development, major events such as Timișoara 2023 - European Capital of Culture, are crucial for the promotion of cultural identity. Timișoara used this opportunity to promote cultural diversity, inclusiveness, local development and European cultural interaction. The cultural programme attracted tourists, generated local consumption and promoted cultural activities, contributing to the economic and social development of the city.

The Spotlight Heritage by UPT project, in partnership with Timișoara 2023, highlighted the cultural and historical heritage of the city through various events and activities. This project strengthened the links between academia, the local community and the cultural sector, promoting the active participation of the inhabitants in the preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage. Timișoara has thus established itself as a cultural and historical centre of excellence in Europe, inspiring and educating current and future generations.

2. Research methods

To precisely determine the influence of social media on Timișoara 2023, a case study was conducted, analysing the social media platforms utilized and the major events featured. Additionally, the study examined the online promotional campaigns and assessed the impact of digital promotion in attracting participants.

Another research method was a questionnaire, created with Google forms. The questionnaire aimed to collect data on the use and effectiveness of social media in promoting Timișoara 2023 - European Capital of Culture. Timișoara residents as well as people from other cities or abroad, who were exposed to the promotion of events through social networks, could participate in this survey.

3. Results

Social networks are now indispensable for promoting cultural events and beyond in the digital era. In this context, Timișoara 2023 - European Capital of Culture - was a unique opportunity to analyse how these platforms can influence the success of such a large-scale event. In order to understand exactly the impact of social networks on the promotion of Timișoara, we conducted a detailed case study and applied a questionnaire, collecting relevant data on the use and effectiveness of these platforms.

The first step in this analysis was to carry out a case study, which involved a detailed examination of the social networks used and the major events presented online. We analysed promotional campaigns run on digital platforms and assessed their impact in attracting participants. We also created a questionnaire using Google Forms, aimed at both Timișoara residents and people from other cities or abroad who were exposed to the promotion of events through social networks.

The case study analysis revealed significant trends in the use of social media to promote Timișoara 2023. The most used platforms were Facebook and Instagram, due to their popularity and ability to reach a

wide and diverse audience. Twitter was used for quick updates and engagement with journalists and influencers, while YouTube was used to distribute quality video content, including interviews, promotional videos and live streams of events.

Major events, such as the opening and closing ceremonies, received the most intense promotion, generating significant interest and participation. Online promotion campaigns included the use of specific hashtags (#Timișoara2023, #EuropeanCapitalofCulture), which facilitated user tracking and engagement. Competitions and giveaways increased interaction and visibility of the events, and collaborations with local and international influencers brought in a considerable number of participants.

The impact of online promotion was evident, with heavily promoted events having 20-30% higher participation compared to less promoted events. This underlined the importance of well thought-out and executed social media campaigns for the success of cultural events.

The questionnaire included 15 questions aimed at determining the age of the respondents. Most respondents (54.1%) were aged between 20-25 years, indicating the subject's relevance to students and young professionals. Almost a quarter of the respondents were over 25 years old, providing different perspectives on the questionnaire's topic. Those aged between 18-20 years accounted for 17.6% of the respondents, while the smallest percentage (3.5%) was represented by teenagers under 18 years old.

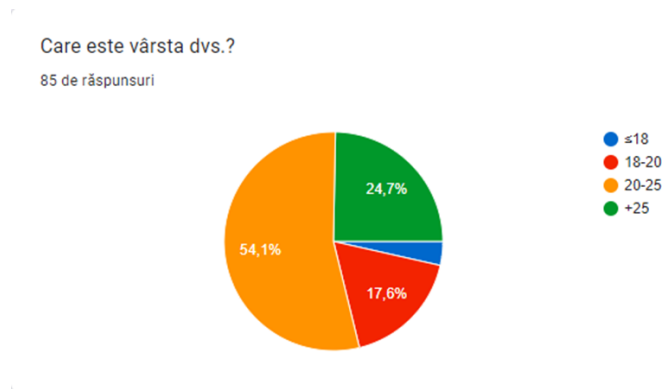


Fig. 1. Respondents' age

The survey asked respondents about their most frequently used social media platforms, revealing insights into their perceptions of platform effectiveness. Instagram emerged as the top choice, with 76.5% of respondents using it prominently for content distribution. TikTok followed closely at 63.5%, known for its appeal in sharing short, engaging videos. Facebook was a frequent choice for 55.3%, valued for personal connections and diverse interest groups. YouTube, selected by 36.5%, offers both educational and marketing opportunities through longer video content. LinkedIn (25.9%) and Twitter (5.9%) received lower percentages, likely due to LinkedIn's professional focus and Twitter's lower popularity in Romania. The survey's multiple-choice format provided a comprehensive view of social media usage preferences among respondents.

Care sunt rețelele de socializare pe care le utilizați cel mai frecvent?



85 de răspunsuri

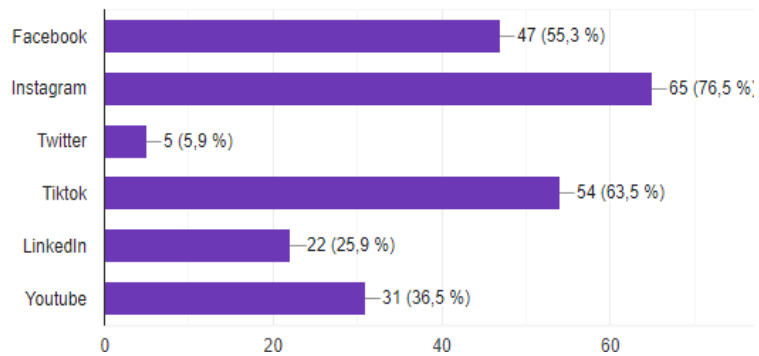


Fig. 2: Social media platforms used

People who answered affirmatively to the previous question were asked, "How did you hear about this event?". 94% of respondents selected "Social media". Social media once again demonstrate their importance in event promotion. 36.9% said they heard about it from friends or family. Although older individuals typically rely on traditional media like newspapers or television, our respondents also selected these options (14.3% press and 17.9% television). Another significant promotional channel for major events is radio. 17.9% of respondents stated they learnt about Timișoara 2023 from the radio.

Dacă da, cum ați aflat despre acest eveniment?

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84 de răspunsuri

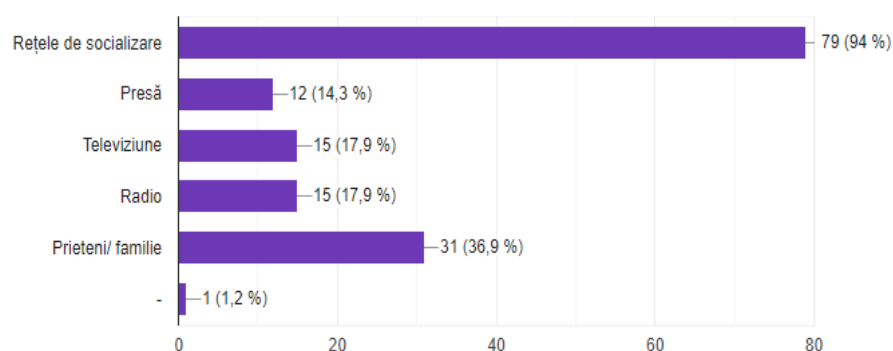


Fig. 3: Where did you hear about Timișoara 2023?

The promotion of Timișoara during its year as the European Capital of Culture focused on various initiatives aimed at highlighting the city as a cultural and tourist hub. We wanted to find out from respondents to what extent they believed social media contributed to the city's promotion. Accordingly, 76.5% stated that social media greatly contributed to the online promotion, making the city visible internationally. 18.8% of respondents considered the contribution level to be moderate, indicating significant but not maximum involvement in the evaluated activities. Responses such as "A little" or "Not at all" each gathered only 2.4% of the percentage. The low percentage suggests that the majority of participants perceived a certain level of impact or contribution.

În ce măsură considerați că rețelele de socializare au contribuit la promovarea Timișoarei 2023?

85 de răspunsuri

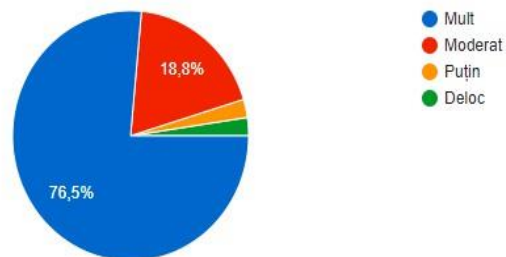


Fig. 4: The promotion of Timișoara in 2023

Respondents were asked how useful the information found on social media was. The question aimed to gauge the importance of the information found online for the respondents. As such, the response "Very useful" recorded the highest percentage, namely 74.7%, followed by 21.7% indicating "Moderately useful". The response with the lowest percentage was "Not useful at all", at 4.8%. In this question, participants could choose only one answer. What was observed, however, was that 2 out of the 85 participants refused to answer.

Dacă da, cât de utilă a fost informația găsită pe rețelele de socializare pentru a vă decide să participați?

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83 de răspunsuri

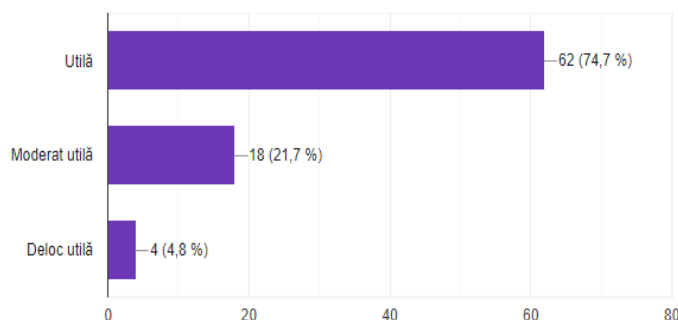


Fig. 5: The importance of information on social media

The study also aimed to observe the type of content users preferred regarding Timișoara 2023 on social media. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of these preferences, participants were allowed to select multiple response options.

Artistic photos and videos emerged as the clear favorites, chosen by 66.7% of respondents. This result underscores a strong user preference for creative visual content, which is valued for its capacity to convey emotions and engage viewers.

Live events broadcasted on various social networks were also quite popular, receiving a percentage of 45.2%. This suggests that people value real-time experiences and direct interaction. Live streams offer authenticity and spontaneity, making them attractive to a wide audience.

Articles and posts about culture, alongside contests and interactive activities, were each selected by 26.2% of respondents. Articles and cultural posts were essential for those seeking in-depth information about events in Timișoara. On the other hand, contests and interactive activities directly involved users, giving them the opportunity to actively engage in the online community.

Respondents' preferences reflect a diversity of interests. The results obtained from this question have provided us with a clear direction regarding the content needs that people prefer.

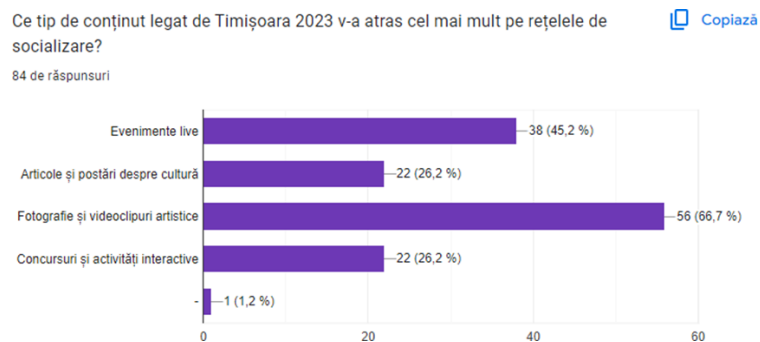


Fig. 6: The type of content promoted online

4. Conclusions

Social media has facilitated bi-directional interaction between organisers and the public, providing a space for continuous feedback and dialogue. By segmenting and targeting its messages, Timișoara 2023 successfully reached its appropriate target audience, thereby maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of its advertising campaigns.

Social networks provided a convenient and efficient platform for promoting cultural events during Timișoara 2023. Organisers successfully reached a large and diverse international audience using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others. Engaging posts, live videos, and well-planned activities contributed to increasing the event's visibility and attracting a large number of participants. Social networks enabled direct and continuous interaction with the audience. Users were actively encouraged to participate by commenting, sharing, and using the official hashtag. This interaction was crucial for creating dedicated online communities and promoting public participation in cultural events. Additionally, immediate feedback and audience reaction provided valuable insights for organisers to adjust and improve cultural programs.

By consistently producing captivating and original content, Timișoara also maintained interest and attractiveness throughout its journey towards achieving the status of European Capital of Culture.

Involvement of influencers and content creators amplified the impact of promotional campaigns. These collaborations extended the reach of cultural events to a wider and more diverse audience, benefiting from the credibility and popularity of these online personalities. Sponsored videos, story posts, and strategic partnerships proved effective tools for increasing presence and enhancing media coverage.

Continued exploitation and innovation in the digital space will allow Timișoara to maintain its leadership position in the European cultural landscape and continue to inspire and connect communities worldwide through art and culture.

In conclusion, social networks had a significant impact on promoting Timișoara as the European Capital of Culture 2023. These platforms played a crucial role in the success of cultural projects by increasing visibility, stimulating interaction, collaborating with influencers, documenting events, and adapting communication strategies. Social networks have proven to be an indispensable tool in promoting and managing large-scale cultural events, contributing to transforming Timișoara into an important cultural hub in Europe.

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