

St.-Petersburg festivals: aspects of cultural policy and cultural tourism

Valery E. Gordin, Marina V. Matetskaya

Management Department, State University – Higher School of Economics (Saint-Petersburg Branch), Saint-Petersburg, Russia

Email address: (vegordin@gmail.com, matetskaya@hse.spb.ru)

Abstract

The article presents the results of the research which objectives are as follows. First, we would like to specify the role of festivals in realizing basic directions of cultural policy in Saint-Petersburg. Second, the research aims at defining the factors underpinning the city administration decision to support festivals and third, to highlight the importance of festivals for synchromarketing of St.-Petersburg as a tourist destination.

Keywords: cultural policy, event management, cultural tourism.

Introduction

First of all it should be noted that the existing management system in St.-Petersburg cultural sphere impedes the development of organizations involved in culture and tourism and does not promote cooperation between them. Cultural sphere is well-known for its cumulative effect. The essence of this effect lies in the fact that the demand for cultural products increases considerably in case cultural events are organized jointly by several cultural agents as compared to routine individual practices. Mutual efforts result in practical applicability of such events in the framework of city cultural policy. This can be proved by the increased number of local festival events. At the same time the experience of the leading cultural centres shows that festivals do not only contribute to the increase of domestic consumption but enhance tourist attractiveness of the cities which can boast of highly topical festival programmes. The authors hypothesize that festivals can play a significant role in forming the image of St.-Petersburg as a world tourist centre. The analysis carried out by the authors allowed to discriminate between internal and external festivals and celebrations which play different roles in the city cultural policy. The authors conclude that festival movement in St.-Petersburg of today is directed towards satisfying cultural requirements of the city dwellers as well as performers' creative ambitions while the goal of attracting external tourists who may be interested in cultural events remains neglected.

Research into the nature of festivals: analysing approaches

There is a variety of festival definitions. Some of them focus on the significance and peculiarities of festivals as forms of cultural activity, highlighting communicative, enlightening and entertaining functions of festivals as public events (Goldblatt, 1997; Ali-Knight and Robertson, 2004; Quinn, 2006; Manuel L, pez-Bonilla; Luis, pez-Bonilla; Sanz-Altamira, 2010). For instance, Getz (1993) defines festivals as “public themed celebrations”. Besides, festivals can be qualified as ‘artistically responsible’ (Degreef, 1994, p.18) events as they provide the opportunity for the expertise and assessment in different arts, thus becoming means of dialogue between different actors of cultural life.

It should be mentioned that the word *festival* derives from *feast* and implies a time of celebration. Goldblatt (1997) defines a festival event as a special occasion which is ‘a unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs’. In this sense a retrospective

view of festivals in Russia reveals their connection with the long-standing Russian tradition of holiday celebration.

Globalization makes festivals more and more integrated into the world culture assigning them the function of unique informational channels. Festivals become more and more wide spread sprouting almost everywhere and involving more and more participants. Consequently, the researchers specify the role of festivals and cultural events as travel attractions. (Chacko and Schaffer 1993; Getz 2007; Dimmock and Tiyce, 2001; Grant and Paliwoda 1998; Rolfe, 1992; Prentice, 2003; Chang, 2006). As McKercher et al. (2006) points out, festivals must be tourism attractions in their own right appealing to non-local visitors. In this sense festivals are emerging worldwide as a growing and vibrant sector of the tourism and leisure industries and are seen to have significant economic, socio-cultural and political impacts on a destination or host community (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006).

The viewpoint on festivals as a system of cultural events is shared by most experts. The general position splits into several directions of research. Some authors speak of festivals as an organizational form of culture processes in regional communities, paying special attention to organizational and marketing peculiarities of festival movement (Getz, 1991; Derrett et al. (eds) 2004). Another approach focuses on the role festivals play in promoting places and communities on different markets (investment, tourism, human resources markets), in forming the creative image of the region, as well as in the building up a system of concomitant events which provide a multiplier effect on regional development (Chhabral & Cabbage, 2003; Crompton & Shuster, 2001; Thomason & Perdue, 1987; Gibson & Davidson, 2004; Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003; Prentice, & Andersen, 2003; Gursoy et al. 2004). To assist with place promotion, urban communities adopt marketing strategies that promote urban areas as unique places and use festivals as part of urban regeneration projects (Harcup, 2000; Hughes, 1999; Pugh & Wood, 2004; Yeoh, 2005). Thus, a renewed focus on place marketing, image branding, and civic boosterism is occurring in urban areas. This is a result of an economic shift in urban management that suggests minimizing state intervention, and instead, valuing public-private partnerships, private enterprise, and deregulation policies (Waitt, 2008)

The third view considers festivals through the prism of their influence on the development of regional tourism, highlight the role festivals play in creating tourist attractions and present festivals as instruments of regional synchromarketing (Dimmock and el. (eds), 2002; Douglas and el. (eds), 2001; O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002; López-Bonilla et al., 2010). The research findings mentioned above are all important in that they stress the fact that festivals and special events are the underpinnings of tourism in many communities and are frequently used as “an instrument for tourism development” (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). It's obvious that the focus of festival research is often on the economic impact of a festival.

Longitudinal studies are becoming topical issues of festival development research. These are cross-comparative studies of different festivals within a city or a region; comparative analyses of festival organizers' diversity; and participant observation when the researcher is involved in festival planning. Getz's (2002) suggests that such kind of explorations should focus on the study of festivals within the same region and researchers should be participant observers participating in the planning process (Getz, 2002).

Festivals in the context of cultural policy

Issues related to the interconnections between festivals and cultural policy have been considered by many researchers Weisbrod, 1997; Moscardo, 2007; Getz and Andersson, 2008; Palmer, 2004).

There have been changes to cultural policy in many countries over the last 30 years or so that have affected cultural economics. Cultural policy, once concerned only with “high culture” arts and heritage, has broadened out to include crafts, cultural industries, community arts, minority arts, etc. (Towse, 2003). Furthermore, it is appropriate to limit the analysis of cultural tourism to the supply and demand of heritage services associated with visits to museums,

monuments, historic buildings, archaeological sites and natural parks. However, along with these elements, cultural tourism also includes participation in any manifestation of a cultural tradition (such as folkloric celebrations and local festivals), fairs displaying art, crafts, recording or books and festivals presenting cinema, theatre, dance or opera (Bonet, 2003. Frey, 2005; Bianchini, F. and Parkinson, M. (eds) (1993); Sawicki. 1989; Quinn, 2005; Landry and el. 1996).

However when analysing Russian experience in the field one should take into account the transitional nature both of socio-economic life of the country, and of cultural policy as well. It could be stated that the last few years have seen the formation of cardinally different cultural policy which combined elements of pre-perestroikan etatic model of cultural policy as well as post-perestroikan market, pluralist approaches¹.

There have been held many festivals recently, and many of them have become the subject of thorough cultural research. However, many are devoted either to the management of a certain festival (something like a success story (Hui, 2004; Getz et al., 2007; Richards and Ryan, 2004; Clarke & Hoas, 2007; MacMillan, Wardrop Robertson 2004; Arnold, Faulkner, Moscardo & Laws, (2000), or focus on the analysis of separate kinds of festivals, for instance, theatre or film festivals (Acheson, Maule and Filleul, 1996; de Valck, 2006), or concentrate on the analysis of cooperation between festival organizers and local authorities from the point of view of cultural tourism development. At the same time up to now there have been no attempts in Russia to analyse festival strategies highlighting festivals as a special form of cultural management. The current research analyses the cluster of festivals held in St-Petersburg, forms of cooperation between festival organizers and culture management bodies, organizational formats and legal bases of the festivals.

The primary goal of the analysis set by the current research is disclosing strategic tendencies in St.-Petersburg festival movement development and defining prospects for increasing efficiency of the festivals both from the point of view of the local communities' interests as well in the context of promoting inbound tourism. Goals set in this way are meant to assist in defining the multiplier effect from festivals on the cultural and tourism aspects of the territories concerned.

The report is based on the data provided the state statistics (concerning cultural issues), branch statistics, results of expert interviewing which involved top managers of cultural institutions, marketing research data collected by the research structures in the spheres of culture and tourism. In 2009-2010 the authors of the report carried out several research projects analysing the directions and efficiency of cooperation between organizations and institutions of culture and tourism². Highly representative corpus of information sources allowed to view festival strategies in the context of cultural and tourist policy in the region, compare the role festivals play in cultural life and creating tourist attractions in the regions with role of other organizational forms of cultural life.

The research allowed to view festival movement through the prism of the conception which discriminates between two types of festivals, i.e. external and internal festivals.

External festivals perform the function of attracting foreign and Russian tourists interested in getting acquainted with the unique cultural and artistic works. This motive adds attractiveness to visiting St.-Petersburg. At the same time acquaintance with the masterpieces broadens the awareness of the best samples of St.-Petersburg and Russian culture which in some cases can be qualified as representing the world culture as well.

¹ The Council of Europe/ERICarts "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, 11th edition", 2010 (<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/russia.php?aid=41>); Elst, 2004 Copyright, Freedom Of Speech, And Cultural Policy In The Russian Federation (Law in Eastern Europe) (Hardcover).

² Among these research projects are the following ones: Preservation and exploitation of cultural heritage in Russia, funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Efficiency estimation of cultural organizations in St.-Petersburg; Exploration in cultural tourism development potential in St.-Petersburg. The above-mentioned research projects involved expert interviews of top managers of cultural and tourism institutions and organizations in St.-Petersburg and North-West regions of Russia, heads of local executive bodies int he sphere of culture and tourism. The total number of experts interviewed was more than 100 from 5 regions of Russia.

Internal festivals mostly appeal to local spectators and aim at promoting new trends and forms of art, creative teams and individual performers. Besides, they assist in opinion exchange and mutual assessment among the professionals as well as in marking certain events.

On the basis of experts' appraisal the authors have come up with the classification of the city festivals and celebrations held in 2010. According to the experts they are distributed between the two festival types almost proportionally: 52 internal and 54 external festivals. This kind of distribution allows to assess the effects of festival activities as both internal and external ones.

Historically St.-Petersburg has been considered the cultural capital of Russia. The city can boast of considerable cultural and intellectual potential. Festivals of different kinds have become an important component of St.-Petersburg cultural life. It is this very organizational form that has been accepted by various actors on the cultural services market. Festival format is widely spread in different branches of culture. The number of festivals and their diversity are impressive: more than 100 events formatted as festivals are held annually (Table 1). Most festivals are short-term events: 57% of St.-Petersburg festivals last for less than two weeks, and every fourth festival lasts for less than a week (The source: Analytical data, 2010).

Table 1

Duration of St.-Petersburg festivals in 2010

Duration	1-3 days	4-7 days	8-14 days	1 month	2 months	More than 2 months
Number of festivals	15	27	19	32	9	5

The analysis of festival practices in St.-Petersburg over the last few years shows that most widely spread events were musical, multigenre, theatre and film festivals (Table 2). This is obviously due to the high level of music and artistic culture the city has been proud of for the decades. Another important contributing factor is a great number of music teams and performers as well as suitable festival sites.

Table 2

Number of St.-Petersburg festivals (according to genres) held in 2007-2010

Year	Music	Theatre	Film	Multigenre	Dance	Fashion, design
2010	42	10	15	26	4	9
2009	43	14	9	29	2	7
2008	36	4	10	29	3	2
2007	39	15	12	25	6	3

It should be noted that despite the fact that many festival stages in St.-Petersburg leave much to be desired from the point of view of equipment availability, most of them are located on highly attractive premises – in historical buildings of theatres, concert halls, royal palaces (it's not accidental that one of the festivals is called "St.-Petersburg Palaces"). These renowned premises create attractive aura for festivals highlighting classic background of St.-Petersburg culture.

At the same time the main peculiarity of festival movement in St.-Petersburg is that there are practically no major international festivals which could be qualified as cultural events of the world scale. Such events could add momentum to tourist attractiveness of the city and bring about changes in the local culture policy – as is the case in many other cities. One of the exceptions is the festival "White Night Stars" held in Mariinsky Theatre. This festival competes with major European festivals in programme scale and impressive entry list which includes world opera and ballet celebrities. However, this festival has not yet attracted the attention of art

enthusiasts from other countries like, for instance, Salzburg Whitsun Festival featuring opera in Mozart birth-place or Edinburgh International Festival.

We believe that there are a number of reasons accounting for the fact that St-Petersburg, being a major cultural centre, lacks a 'brand name' festival of international standing. Among others we can enumerate the following reasons:

- marketing weakness of the city as a tourist destination, the first (and up to now – the only one) plan of tourism development in St-Petersburg was adopted in 2005 (Development Programme, 2005);
- underdeveloped hospitality and culture infrastructure (first and foremost – lack of adequately equipped spacious theatre and concert halls). According to the statistics available in 2009 there were 38 concert halls of which only 14 were capacious enough (Analytical data, 2010)
- lack of coordination between the city executive bodies responsible for culture and tourism and culture institutions of different levels (leading culture institutions are under federal control and the rest are under city or municipal control, there are private institutions as well);
- lack of adequate cooperation of St.-Petersburg culture management bodies with international creative associations and unions, festival cities associations, major international producing companies. It's characteristic of the current situation that neither of St.-Petersburg art festivals is a member of international associations of festival and culture events (European Festivals Association, <http://www.efaaef.eu/en/festivals>; International Festivals And Events Association, <http://www.ifeaeuropa.com>), or of the specialised associations like classic music, dancing art or jazz music (like 'Jazz Music Association', <http://www.ijfo.org>).

Festivals under the auspices of the state

The success of a festival lies primarily on the city administration support of the festival. St.-Petersburg city administration supports a significant number of festivals by means of direct funding via specialised committees of the city administration or municipalities or allocating resources via culture institutions which are under the control of the City Administration's Committee on Culture.

It's worth noting that the city administration allocates considerable funding for city festivals and celebration which are of internal character. Thus the subsidies from St.-Petersburg city budget allocated only for events 2010 make up € 585 000, out of which € 235 000 go for the Family, Love and Fidelity Day (July, 8), € 250 000 – for the Navy Day celebrations (July, 25), € 79 000 – for the Russian Federation State Flag Day (August, 22), € 21 000 – for the Day of Knowledge (September, 1).

It must be stressed that any festival event irrespective of format, genre, scale, or law status of the organizing company can rely on the support of the City Administration. Another important fact is that many St.-Petersburg festivals are organized by non-governmental institutions, organizations and performers' teams. For instance, in 2010 about 40% of festival organizers are non-governmental commercial and non-profit organizations; 40% are represented by all sectors (governmental, non-governmental commercial and non-profit organizations); 20% are represented by governmental institutions and government bodies (Analytical data, 2010). The statistics are of great interest as compared to the practices 20 years ago when there existed only state cultural institutions in Russia.

Such a diversity of organizational forms and legal statuses means that financial support and investment in festival movement are provided not only by government bodies but by other actors as well – those who are ready to allocate funds for non-profit projects and participate in commercial projects of festival movement.

The current investigation helped to define the factors affecting festival support by the above-mentioned institutions. According to the opinion of the experts interviewed in the course of the survey, these factors include the following:

- a festival should be a multiple, long-term event and should enjoy positive image established over the years;
- the organizers of a festival event should be of high status;
- there must be informal relations between festival organizers and city administration officials;
- the festival must be included into the city programmes of culture development support;
- the organizing committee should include ‘token names’ of St.-Petersburg culture;
- there must be a possibility to attract sponsors to cover major expenses of the festival;
- a festival should be related to certain jubilees and important dates in Russian culture and history;
- there must be foreseen prospective influence of the festival on the international or national image of St.-Petersburg;
- the festival should provide possibilities of establishing international contacts of culture institutions and culture management bodies;
- a festival event should be ‘in demand’ which provides interest on the part of local authorities, businesses as sponsors, commercial and non-commercial structures in the sphere of culture. This factor predetermines the mode, sources and volume of festival funding.

Although there are no reliable statistics on St.-Petersburg festival funding (due to multisectoral and multichannel character of financing), the volume of governmental support by means of allocating city budget funds on festivals allows to draw a conclusion that most events are funded by the City Administration’s Committee on Culture. At the same time the Committee on Culture makes every effort to attract non-governmental resources to provide the basis for festival efficiency.

Festivals and cultural tourism: expectations exceed realization

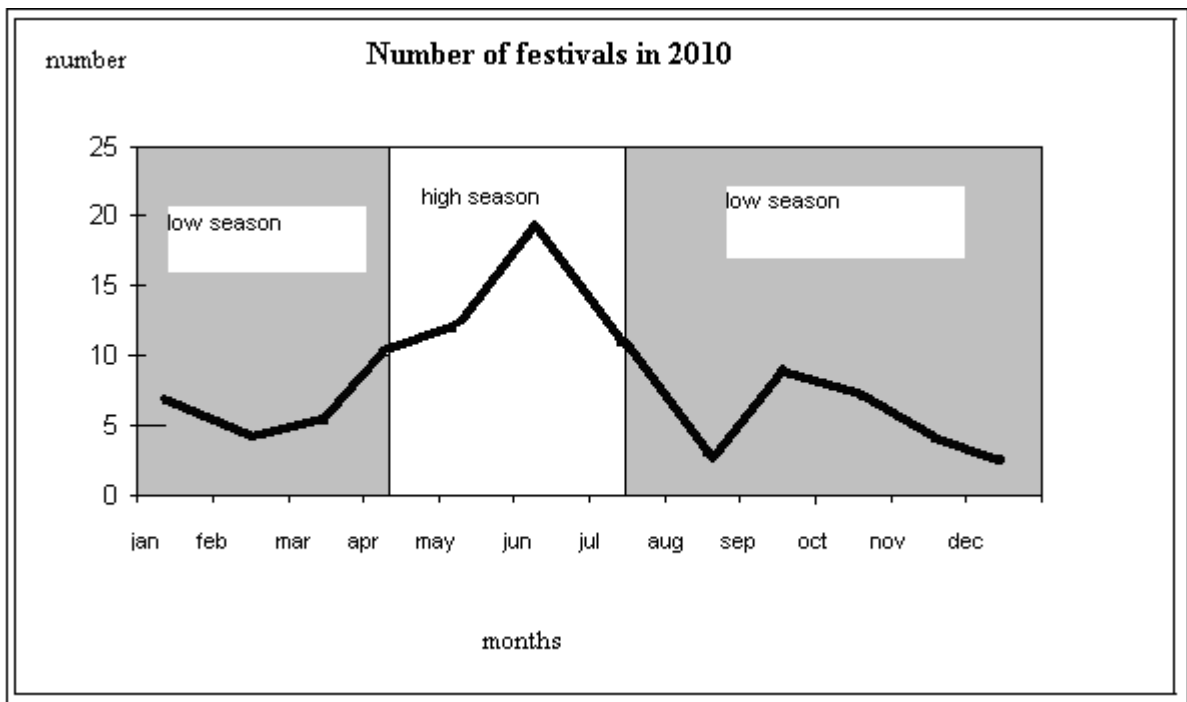
Many authors have paid special attention to various aspects of festival influence on inbound cultural tourism (for review see Getz, 2008; Hitters, 2007; Richards, 2007; Herrero 2007).

The results of the research held by the above-mentioned authors allow to state that the key role in increasing the attraction of a tourist destination should be assigned to adequate strategy in working-out, promotion and holding of festivals. Being interactive by their very nature, festivals themselves to a certain extent can serve as means to compensate deficiency in interactivity and lack of creative presentations which is characteristic of most cultural tourism objects.

Considering St.-Petersburg festivals in the context of increasing tourist attractiveness of the city we can make a conclusion which may seem paradoxical: the impact of St.-Petersburg festivals on the development of cultural tourism in the city can be qualified as negligible as the periods of festivals have not been marked by the significant increase of tourist flow.

There can be several reasons accounting for this contradiction. One of them is the minor role festivals play in synchromarketing events. In other words, most festivals are held in high season (April – October) when the demand for visiting St.-Petersburg is traditionally high (Analytical data, 2010). The situation can be illustrated with Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Number of festivals held in 2010



At the same time all the attempts to enhance tourist attractiveness of St.-Petersburg in low season with the aid of festivals (e.g. festivals ‘Arts Square’, ‘Christmas Festival’ which are held at the end of December – beginning of January) did not result in the significant increase in the number of tourists visiting St.-Petersburg. One of the reasons could be the eliticism of festival programmes which were almost academic and failed to attract tourists to St.-Petersburg.

Another reason accounting for the fact that, despite a great number of festivals held in the city, they have not yet become a significant factor enhancing the attractiveness of St.-Petersburg as a tourist attraction, is absence of city festival support strategy which should be selective and take into consideration festival impact upon the tourist attractiveness of the city.

Declarations of the important role events play in the development of cultural tourism (as is directly stipulated in the Programme for Tourism Development for 2005-2010, Programme for Development, 2005) remain only words. The city authorities failed to provide these declarations with clear and transparent system of selecting festivals for financial, marketing and organizational backup on the basis of their prospective contribution into tourism development. As a result organizers of many festivals targeting at tourists tend to exploit commercial attractiveness of this market segment rather than rely on illusive benefits of cooperation with city administration.

Another highly important reason is non-systemic approach to spotlighting cultural events as is clear from the existing news and advertising policy, carried out by specialised governmental agencies. The situation becomes even more deplorable if we note weakness of festival PR-campaigns which limits the prospects of promoting these festivals on international and even national markets. St.-Petersburg festivals are seriously underrepresented on relevant tourist sites, in social networks and in specialized tourist editions. The natural victim of passive news policy are small-scale festivals most of which (especially music festivals) could become an important element in the range of cultural tourism products – provided the system of tourist information is improved.

As goals and objectives set for different festivals can be quite specific it’s worth noting that target audience of some festivals is limited by the professionals. In this case the number of tourists attracted can not be significant even if the festival features overseas participants. The mission of these festivals can be qualified as crucial – it’s establishing mutual cooperation between professionals in different cultural spheres. This fact should not be underestimated in St.-Petersburg as the city is the location of numerous artistic educational institutions, which students and graduates aspire to position themselves in the world creative community. International

experience proves that festivals of all genres are perfect sites for establishing international cooperation. In this respect it's worth mentioning that half of St.-Petersburg festivals held for the last few years were international events (Table 3) (Analytical data, 2010).

Table 3

Total number of festivals held in St.-Petersburg in 2007-2010, international events including

Years	Total number of festivals	Number of international festivals
2010	106	64
2009	104	63
2008	84	46
2007	100	60

We would like to underline the fact that some city festivals have been positioned as internal ones from the very onset – their conceptions do not involve tourist participation. These are primarily children festivals (the year of 2010 will see more than 30 children festivals) which may attract young overseas participants of the festival itself at best (which means several dozens). However, even if a festival is only partially an internal one, it is primarily interested in resident spectators, judging by the nature of events specified in the festival programme. This fact denies their contribution into culture tourism development in the city.

Analysing the role festivals play in realization of the city cultural policy we may conclude that for the last 20 years festivals have become the most effective form of implementing major goals and objectives of the cultural policy by means of supporting non-material forms of cultural heritage, creative activities of the younger generation, new forms of performance arts, strengthening of international communication.

We consider the reasons of rapid development of festival forms in implementing goals and objectives stipulated by the city cultural policy to be as follows:

1. Synergetic effect which stems from combining different genres, attracting performers representing diverse artistic trends, involving creative teams which exploit various means of interaction with spectators and visitors.
2. PR-advantages which consist in the festival brand awareness, eventuality as news topic and coverage opportunity, placement of a festival into major PR-projects.
3. Ease of festival project management for officials and organizers.
4. Ease of festival design as a set of events, 'LEGO'-design of festival as a conglomerate of cultural events.
5. Improvement of festival management, clear design of all festival components.
6. Stability of most festivals which simplifies the planning process for organizers, officials and fundraisers.
7. Growth in professional competence of fundraisers and sponsors.

Conclusion

The survey showed that the majority of festivals held in St.-Petersburg were targeting mostly local residents as spectators. However, the festival format contribute to attracting attention not only to the well-known performers but to new creative teams who are just starting up. According to experts, combining various genres, artistic styles, levels of competence within the conceptual framework of a festival makes festivals a specific site for implementing synesthetic approaches in the city culture policy.

At the same time tourist experts interviewed by the authors stress that St.-Petersburg significantly lack major international theatre, music and film festivals. Current festivals are of local significance despite the participation of world celebrities. Lack of globality prevents these festivals from becoming major world cultural events. However, the image of St.-Petersburg as well as creative potential of its cultural institutions suggest that the city can effectively handle major international festivals if appropriate management and economic efforts are undertaken.

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