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Article

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Amfiteatru Economic Journal

Provided in Cooperation with:

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Suggested Citation: Coroş, Monica Maria; Pop, Cornelia; Micu (Tăuţan), Diana-Roua (2016) : The Profile of Romanian Urban Inns, Amfiteatru Economic Journal, ISSN 2247-9104, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Vol. 18, Iss. Special Issue No. 10, pp. 885-897

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/169043>

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THE PROFILE OF ROMANIAN URBAN INNS

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Coroş, M.M, Pop, C and Micu (Tăuţan), D.R., 2016.
The Profile of Romanian Urban Inns. *Amfiteatru
Economic*, 18(Special Issue No. 10), pp. 885-897

Article History

Received: 30 June 2016

Revised: 9 August 2016

Accepted: 15 September 2016

Abstract

This paper is the third of a series of studies dedicated to tourist inns on the Romanian market. The previous papers focused on the identification of the tourist inns that currently function on the domestic market. Further, their potential as rural facilities was highlighted and their authenticity was discussed. The relevance of this research is linked to the fact that in the early 1990s tourist inns were excluded from the lists of lodging and food-serving facilities, ceasing to be officially ranked. Consequently, the inns' owners were forced to reclassify as other accepted types or, even worse, to function in the shadow economy, without any official ranking. Moreover, the absence of inns on the market and the incoherent development of certain types of lodgings in Romania, have also led to the fact that entrepreneurs and tourists tend to be confused and, sometimes, not able to differentiate one type of accommodation unit from another. The main purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which urban inns can contribute to the authenticity of the Romanian tourism. From a methodological perspective, the paper relies on both official data (collected and processed based on the official *Lists of Hospitality Facilities*) and on the information available on specialized websites. Thorough analyses have been run in order to identify the tourist structures pretending to be inns, to further categorize and discuss them according to various criteria. The main findings and conclusions of this paper reveal that inns have the potential to contribute to the authenticity of Romania's hospitality industry.

Keywords: tourist inns, officially ranked facilities, differentiation, online presence, urban inns, Transylvania, Romania.

JEL Classification: C46, L83, Z32.

Introduction

Hospitality has been a comprising element of the human's past ever since ancient times. It is a part of the history of civilization, referring to how people use their capacity of social interaction (Cărămidă, 2012, p.102).

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The development of road networks and the human's need to explore have led throughout history to the increase in the number of travellers, who eventually also became more sophisticated. Inns have begun to develop along the sides of the most important (commercial) roads. Similar to Europe, within Romania's historic provinces, inns were the main structures offering accommodation to the travellers of those times. The contemporary development of inns is presented in figure no 1.

The present paper investigates the extent to which urban inns can contribute to the authenticity of Romanian tourism. Further, the paper is structured in a part dedicated to literature review, followed by the research methodology; the results and discussions constitute another section, while the conclusions are synthesized in the last part.

1. Literature Review

As far as we are aware of there are very few academic papers dedicated to the matter of tourist inns. Jennings (2008) and Manco (2013) present brief histories of British inns. Thus, at the end of the 17th Century, in England and in Wales there were approximately 60,000 inns. Their number increased continuously, reaching 119,000 by 1896. Currently, there function around 50,000 such units but their number decreases on a daily basis. Inns developed along with coach services. Throughout times they became important business centres. Moreover, until the 19th century they used to host social events of people belonging to all social classes but also political reunions. They developed both in urban and in rural areas, being frequented for social events, for food and drinks (beer or wine) and, quite often, for singing and music shows (British History online). The innkeepers of those times were among the wealthiest members of their communities, being included among the urban elites (Medieval Histories, 2013). Today, English inns appear most commonly as *pubs* and *taverns* (Jennings, 2008). Within the Francophone and the German space, inns used to be and are frequently met in rural areas. Usually, inns tend to be especially associated food-services, which are considered to be somewhat more developed and diversified compared to accommodation ones. In Germany, inns were quite often managed by women. Inns used to function similarly to the British ones. (Stewart, 2002, p.102). Within the British space, inns provided a second occupation for innkeepers, who could be carpenters, blacksmiths, millers etc. (Medieval Histories, 2013). It is highly interesting to note that there are clear intentions and attempts to capitalize on the gastronomic and architectural heritage of inns, to establish in France a volunteer chain of inns and bistros – *Auberges et Bistrots de France*, which includes already more than 650 units (Bellemare, 2007).

The Romanian hotel industry has one of its roots in Sibiu. More exactly, on the place where today functions the renowned hotel *Împăratul Romanilor*, in 1555 there used to function an inn, named *La Sultanul Turcilor* (Cărmădă, 2012, p.126). Another notorious inn is *Carul cu Bere*, opened in 1879 in the space of the former inn *Zlătari*, and moved to Stravropoleos street, where it continues to function today in Bucharest as a very well-known beer pub, renowned for the beer produced based on a secret own recipe and for its tasty culinary products with which it welcomes its guest. (Cărmădă, 2012, p.128).

No matter how they used to be called, *făgădău*, *cârciumă*, *han* or *caravanserai*, in the Romanian space, inns used to be shelter places for travellers and merchants, at crossroads, aiming at providing them the needed rest and food. Within the notes taken during a trip to Bucharest made together with Timotei Cipariu, George Barițiu observes the similarities and

also the differences between the inns in Transylvania (*făgădaie/cârciumi*) and those from Bucharest (*caravanşerai*). At crossroads, at town barriers, in the middle of fairs these lodgings existed, pulsating according to the political trend of the times: either under the Turkish yataghan, or under the Russian heel, or under the Habsburg cloak, witnessing the events that took place in-between their thick walls. Hosting merchants and their merchandise, travellers on their way to other destinations or political reunions, conspiracies and hidden intrigues, inns were mainly a source of revenues for those who managed them: princely Courts, noblemen, merchants or monasteries (Potra, 1985, p.25).

Regarding the contemporary development of hospitality services in Romania, Cărmădă (2012, pp.131-134) addresses sharply the lack of vision that, unfortunately, characterizes the attitude and the activity of many entrepreneurs and/or managers from the field of the local contemporary hospitality industry. At the same time, the author also points out the great importance of branding, respectively the outstanding potential granted in this respect by the hospitality facilities that have tradition or historic roots. Still, he also reveals that it seems that entrepreneurs and managers perceive tradition as a rather obsolete asset (Cărmădă, 2012, p.136).

Based on the results obtained within our previous research (Coroş, Pop, and Micu (Tăuţan), 2015a; 2015b) along with the aspects described above, one may conclude that Romania's tourist inns do not enjoy a much better position compared to that of other traditional hospitality units, wherefrom, their need for increased attention.

The context of inns' development in the Romanian Principalities was determined by the changes occurring throughout Europe during the 17th and the 18th Centuries, regarding the socio-economic and political development which determined the increase of travel movement, and consequently the travellers' need for shelter and food (Corvin and Makra, 1967, p.44). Several types of inns appeared over time. Thus, a first classification (Potra, 1985, pp.27-30) considered those who established and managed them, comprising four categories: princely inns, inns of the noblemen, merchant inns and monastery and church-owned inns. The second criterion identified by Potra (1985, p.27-30) regarded their location, four types being distinguished: the inn as active centre, the inn functioning nearby markets/fairs, the slum inns, and the inns located at the town entry-barriers.

Two architects, Corvin and Makra (1967, p.44), addressed the issue of inns' development in Romania explaining that the old traditional inns from Romania's historic provinces (Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania) resemble modern motels in terms of architectural features. Corvin and Makra (1967, pp.44-45) also pointed out that: "An artistic overtaking of these ones [inns], their transposing into a new and actual manner [motels], shall generate interesting outcomes." Furthermore, the development of tourist inns in Romania under communist ruling was described by the same authors (Corvin and Makra, 1967, pp.44-45) who indicated how inns were supposed to be integrated in Romania's international tourism: the revival of the old inns, located on the post coach route, by attaching them novel elements in terms of theme and elements specific to the Romanian space (wine cellar, regional or national specific cuisine, restaurants specialized in game and fish dishes, etc.); the exploitation of the ethno-folkloric heritage in their refurbishing, and their valorisation for the promotion of rural tourism. The development of tourist inns was supposed to take place especially in the existing tourist destinations and along the established tourist routes. At the time (1960-1970), the development of inns was planned to be complementary to that of motels, which were perceived as modern lodgings, with similar functionalities but without

the traditional features specific to inns. The contemporary development of inns is presented in figure no 1.

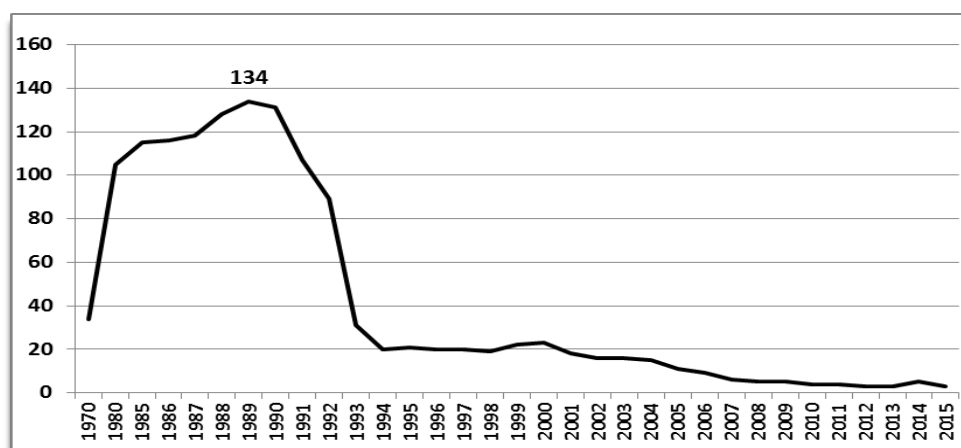


Figure no. 1: Development of inns in Romania (number of units)

Source: Authors' calculations based on NIS (RSY 1975-2012 and TempoOnline, 2016)

Despite the promising plans, from a qualitative point of view, the development and the exploitation of tourist inns in the Romanian space did not occur at the established level. As previous researches (Coroş, Pop, and Micu (Tăuţan) 2015a; 2015b) have already revealed, during the 1970-1990 time-span, these units have registered an important development, increasing from 34 inns to 134 and offering 8,013 beds in 1989 compared to 1,395 in 1970. Still, inns have continued to have a negligible presence on the market compared to the 3,213 lodgings concentrating a total of 353,236 beds in 1990. Moreover, after the change of the political regime in Romania from December 1989, tourist inns registered a decreasing trend (figure no. 1), dropping from 131 inns with 8,036 beds in 1990 to 5 unclassified inns with 143 beds, in 2014, respectively to 3 inns with 63 beds in 2015. Similarly, their occupancy rates fell from 47 % in 1990 to a little above 12 % in 2009 (NIS – National Institute of Statistics/INS – Institutul Naţional de Statistică, 2016a; 2016b).

Unfortunately, most of the inns with historic tradition were seriously affected by the communist renovations and/or transformation works, respectively by the authorities' lack of interest in this respect. The decades after 1989 were not better, either. The lack of vision of the contemporary tourism officials determined their exclusion beginning with 1992/1993 from among the officially ranked accommodation and food-serving units (Coroş, Pop şi Micu (Tăuţan) 2015a; 2015b). As previously shown, this reality is also reflected in the considerable number of inns that function under the umbrella of other types of lodgings and food-service units, respectively in that of the inns that function in the shadow economy; furthermore, tourists are also more likely to get confused (Coroş, Pop, and Micu (Tăuţan) 2015a; 2015b).

2. Research Methodology

A database of the tourist inns active on the Romanian market was elaborated based on the available official sources (8 different versions of the databases containing accommodation and food-service units from the 2005 – February 2015 timespan were considered) and on

commercial sources (88 websites especially dedicated to tourist but also to commercial activities). The research process relied on identifying inns by making use of keywords associated to the inn-related terminology relevant for the Romanian market: *han*, *hanul nostru*, *hangiu*, *hangiu*, *jupâniță*, *jupân*, *cârciumăriță*, *cârciumăreasă*, *cârciumă*, *birt*, *birtuț*, *șăgădău*, *fogadó*, *inn*, *Gasthof*, *răscruce*, and *la răscruce*.

All of the identified inns were cross-checked in all of the available official databases in order to be able to establish under what type of unit they function and if they are officially ranked. Further, the hospitality facilities were analysed and classified based on various criteria. Due to the fact that one of the particularities of the Romanian hospitality market is the high number of facilities that function without any official certification, all of the identified units were considered for further analyses.

The researches and investigations conducted at the beginning of 2015 (Coroș, Pop, and Micu (Tăușan), 2015a; 2015b) have led to the identification of 288 facilities pretending to be inns (figure no. 2). Of these, 152 provide both accommodation and food-services, 90 offer exclusively accommodation services, and 46 provide only food-services. These establishments are further referred to as inns/identified inns.

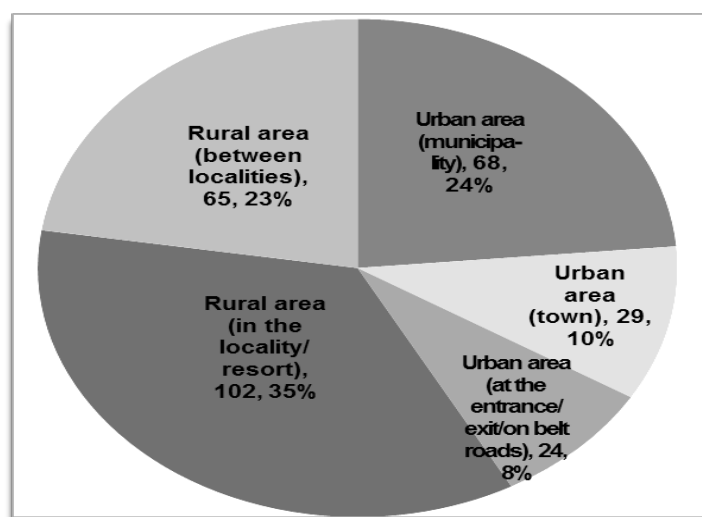


Figure no. 2: Initial distribution of identified inns by their location

Source: Authors' calculations based on collected data

The 121 inns located in urban areas are interesting for the current research; these are distributed as it follows: 68 function in the urban environment, in municipalities and in large towns; 29 are located in small towns; the remainder of 24 inns can be found in urban areas, nearby municipalities/towns, at the city/town entrance or exit, respectively on belt roads. Their distribution by regions and areas of location is presented in table no. 1. Due to the historic implications of inns, both historic provinces (Transylvania, Dobruja, Wallachia, and Moldavia) and modern regions of development are considered.

Table no. 1. Regional Distribution of the Initially Identified Inns in Romania

| | TOTAL | Of which, in URBAN areas: | | | |
|--------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---|
| | | Total urban inns | In municipi- palities | In cities/ towns | At the entrance/ exit; on belt roads |
| ROMANIA | 288 | 121 | 68 | 29 | 24 |
| Transylvania | 141 | 59 | 34 | 13 | 12 |
| Dobrudja | 20 | 10 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Wallachia | 77 | 35 | 23 | 6 | 6 |
| Moldavia | 50 | 17 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| North-East | 35 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| South-East | 35 | 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| South-Wallachia | 38 | 16 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| South-West-Oltenia | 23 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| West | 23 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| North-West | 38 | 18 | 13 | 3 | 2 |
| Centre | 80 | 29 | 15 | 8 | 6 |
| Bucharest-Ilfov | 16 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Authors' calculations based on collected data

A thorough web-based research has been conducted aiming at identifying the inns' websites and/or other websites they use for promotional activities. An analysis grid has been developed for the gathering and the analyses of the information collected referring to the identified inns. The main purpose of the conducted investigation was that of determining the inns' main features in terms of: architecture; overall aspect of the accommodation/food-service structure; served menu; provided leisure services; hosted events; and received awards.

Given the fact that not all of the identified inns could be further analysed online, only a total of 209 inns were maintained for the research, 81 located in the urban environment (around 39 %), and 128 (approximately 61 %) are functioning in the rural environment. In fact, a number of 40 units were excluded during the web-based analyses, as they cannot be assimilated to urban inns, not having anything in common with this concept, of not functioning anymore, or of not being present online and, thus, impossible to investigate. Therefore, this paper analyses only 81 inns, which function in cities, towns, and suburbs. Still, for a complete picture, the distribution of the initially identified inns is considered relevant, and consequently presented in the first part of the Results and Discussion section. Moreover, for all inns providing accommodation and/or food-services in more than one unit all relevant units have been considered and counted separately.

This research concentrates on the online presence of the urban and/or suburban identified tourist inns. While, many of the most popular types of lodgings present on the Romanian market seem to have lost their identity, tourist inns were identified as a potential source of authenticity in Romania's urban tourism.

3. Results and Discussions

The main results of the analyses carried out regarding the types of accommodation units are presented briefly below, referring to the 209 inns maintained in the analyses and focusing on the 81 inns (nearly 39 %) which function in cities, towns and suburbs.

Regarding their regional distribution (table no. 1), the findings reveal that: Transylvania concentrates half of the identified inns, being followed by Wallachia and Oltenia with

approximately a quarter, respectively by Moldova and Bukovina, with around a fifth, the remainder being located in Dobrudja. The distribution of urban inns follows and respects the national pattern. Furthermore, the destinations with a more intense tourist activity enjoy the presence of a higher number of inns.

Another finding is that boarding houses and classic restaurants are by far the most popular types under which Romanian innkeepers opt to run their businesses in this field. Moreover, about 27 % of the inns providing accommodation services and 30 % of the food-serving units function without any official classification, while more than two thirds of them pretend in their promotional activities that they function legally. This sad reality cannot but be reflected by the poor performance of Romania's tourism. Regarding the officially ranked inns, the market is dominated by units ranking 3 stars/flowers, followed by those classified at 2 stars/flowers (Coroş, Pop, and Micu (Tăuţan), 2015a; 2015b).

Concerning the 81 urban inns taken into consideration for the online analysis, the following distribution occurs: 42 units (nearly 52 %) offer both accommodation and food-services; other 22 facilities (about 27 %) provide only accommodation services, while the remainder of 17 inns (around 21 %) focus exclusively on the provision of food-services (figure no. 3). The distribution is similar to the one initially determined at national level: 53 % of the inns providing accommodation along with food services, 32 % only lodging and 16 % exclusively food services (Coroş, Pop, and Micu (Tăuţan), 2015a; 2015b). It may be noticed that rural inns, rather than urban ones, tend to be trend setters at national level (figure no. 3)

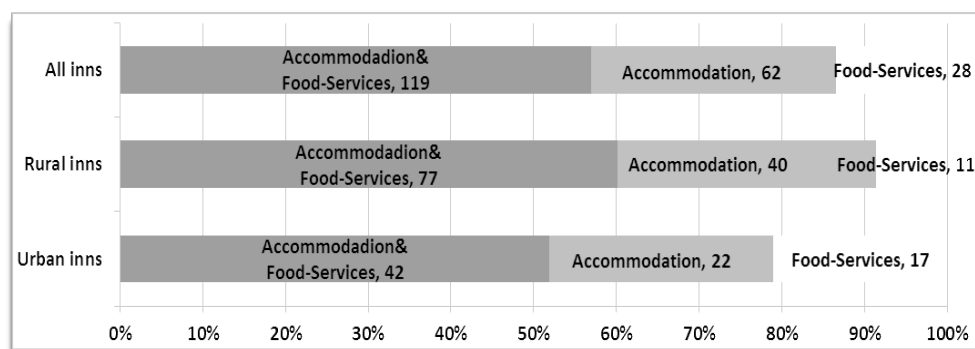
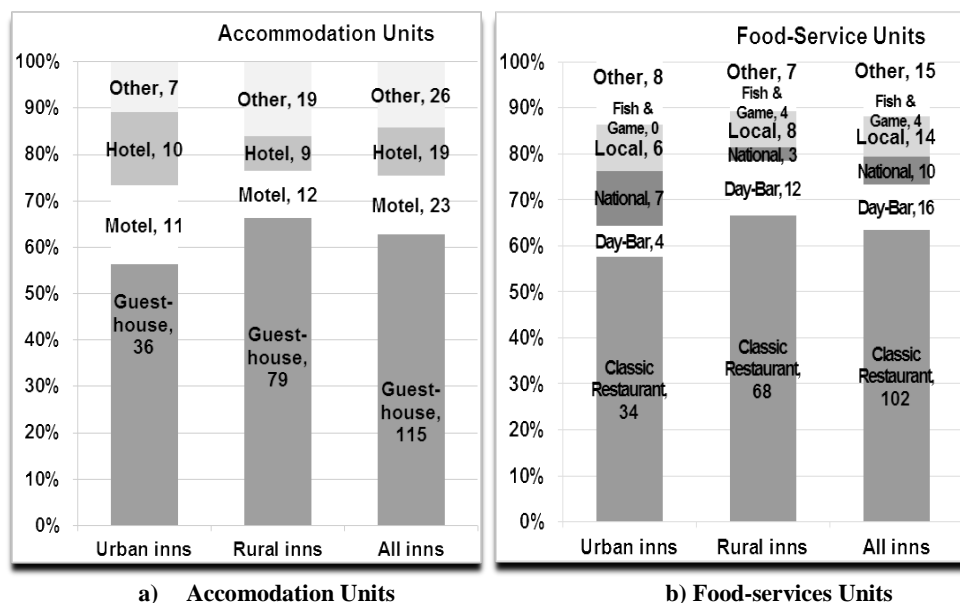


Figure no. 3: Types of services provided by inns in urban and rural areas

Source: Authors' calculations based on collected data

The fact that urban inns match the pattern of the urban tourist market, both in terms of accommodation and of food-serving units, is reflected by the two charts below (figure no. 4, a) and b)). It is interesting to observe that, despite the authorities' efforts to assimilate inns to motels during communist times, these accommodation units have managed to absorb only few of the inns (accounting for approximately 10 % of them). Guesthouses are obviously the preferred type of accommodation units of innkeepers. This preference may also be interpreted as a consequence of a less complicated solution in terms of size, management and of authorization process (if considered!). Up to a point (especially in rural areas), these units contribute to the preservation of certain inns' authentic features.



Figures no. 4: Types of inns in urban and rural areas

Source: Authors' calculations based on collected data

Overall, classic restaurants dominate the urban food-service provided by inns; this fact is far from being appropriate, as such units do not offer any sources of differentiation and are far from being consistent with the idea of providing traditional dishes. Day-bars only manage to add up to this dissatisfactory situation. Still, a positive aspect regarding urban inns, as compared to rural ones, is the fact that around 10 % of the outlets promote the national cuisine, serving traditional dishes. Also, one must note that, on the urban market, there was impossible to identify any specialized restaurants (with game or fish dishes) and no fast-food serving units. It is important to keep in mind that restaurants with specific (local, regional or national cuisine) and wine cellars have an increased potential of ensuring a source of differentiation as opposed to other eating outlets, and have higher chances of being competitive.

The undertaken researches have led to the conclusion that many of the identified inns, providing accommodation and/or food-services, do not meet the specific features of the typology (of *inns*, as defined within the literature review section) suggested by the chosen names, referring to inns. In fact, some providers of hospitality services, registered as hotels declare themselves *inns* without having anything in common with the concept. Another negative aspect results from the fact that, for example, some providers of food-services officially ranked especially as classic restaurants tend to promote their eateries either as specialized restaurants or as restaurants with a certain specific (national, regional or local). Obviously, this situation reveals the limits of the Romanian classification system and the poor implication of those responsible to verify if the official ranking criteria are respected.

The online analyses focused on revealing more aspects concerning the particularities of the services provided by urban inns. Obviously, their offer, especially in terms of hosted events, is significant in this respect. Regarding the events they host, one may note that these structures tend to be oriented especially towards average-sized and large events. Thus, 70

inns, of which 42 urban and 28 rural ones, advertise that they are able to organize and host family-events for over 100 participants, some for even 300-400, respectively 600 persons; in fact, these units (especially the urban ones) tend to focus on organizing (large) weddings, promoting a so-called “traditional” offer which is in most cases rather kitschy. At the opposite end, there is a number of 32 inns (of which only 5 are urban and 27 rural) that stand forward because they host other types of events, like: special personalized events, business reunions and corporate events, shows, contests, festivals, etc. Worth to be noted is the fact that 37 inns (of which just 9 urban and 28 rural) prove a high flexibility in terms of the possibility to organize various events. At the same time, one may also observe how inns choose to promote the types of menus they provide or the types of dishes they consider representative for their profile.

Today, online communication is essential in almost all fields and, especially in that of tourism. Consequently, a special attention has been to the online presence of inns. One may note that only 179 of the 209 tourist reception facilities identified as inns are more or less present on the Internet. From among these, 139 inns (or 67 % of those considered authentic) have their own website and/or a Facebook profile (55 inns from the urban environment and 84 from rural areas) while a number of 40 inns (or 19 %) promote themselves exclusively on different Romanian online platforms dedicated to reservations for accommodation and food-services. The remainder either do not have their own website, or promote links for websites that do not function anymore.

Another finding concerns the use of foreign languages in their online communication. The inns that do not possess a website make use of Romanian online platforms for tourism, which most commonly offer translation services based on Google, reason why they have not been considered as providing information in various foreign languages; in their case, only the Romanian language has been taken into consideration as communication language. Therefore, the analyses proceeded with 205 inns (namely 79 urban and 126 rural ones). On the other hand, two urban inns and other two rural ones do not provide any information in Romanian, their online communication being carried out exclusively in English or in Hungarian, their orientation towards international markets (Hungary or other countries) becoming obvious. From the 149 inns that do not use any foreign modern language in their online communication 70 % are urban (more exactly 57 inns). At the same time, from among those inns that possess a website exclusively realized in the Romanian language, 29 are urban (about 37 %).

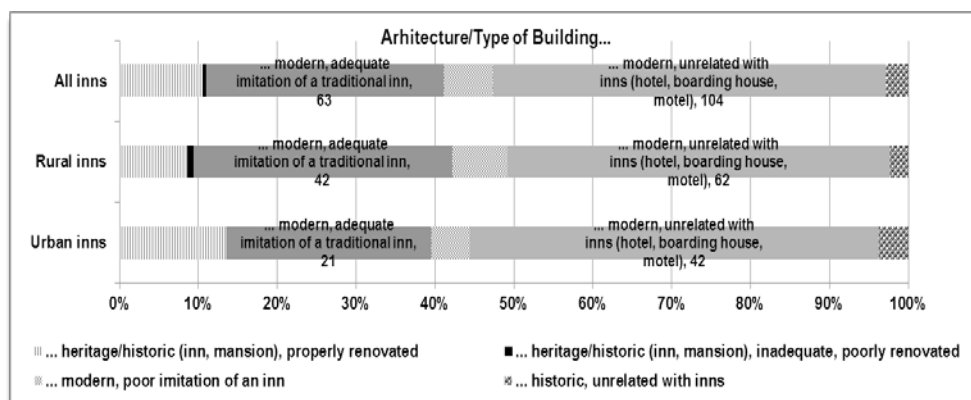
The number of inns that use in their online communication at least one foreign language is very low, starting with 13 cases for one language, decreasing to 10 users of two other languages, while only one inn uses for its online communication three foreign languages; no inn uses more than three modern foreign languages. Most of the inns use English, followed by Hungarian, and German. Obviously, the low interest granted to communication in other languages can be associated to factors such as: the lack of professionalism of those who have produced the websites, the poor understanding of the importance of foreign languages for online communication, and, finally, the rather missing language competencies of the entrepreneurs and/or managers. Moreover, the lack of professionalism is also proven by the many identified websites abundant in typos, and in totally unacceptable Romanian grammar and expression mistakes. As the purpose of online promotion is that of communicating one’s authenticity with the intention of attracting

(especially foreign) tourist, this reality is far from being to the benefit of an appropriate development of the inns' tourist activity.

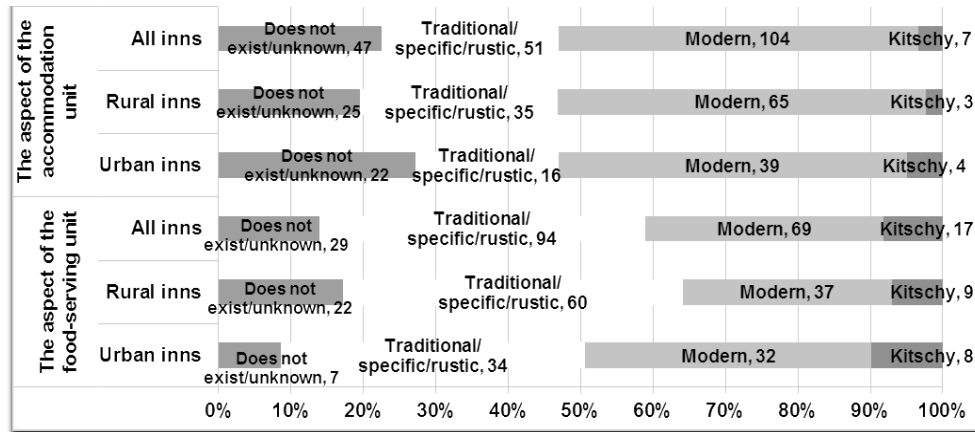
Another aspect that must be mentioned regards the type of information provided online. Thus, only some 10 inns from among the urban ones (not even 12 % of the 81 identified) choose to provide information about their history. Obviously, such an approach can be considered acceptable for the relatively new or for the small units but it raises important questions in the cases of larger inns that enjoy the existence of a historic background or which can build one based on the area where they are located.

The main purpose of any promotional tool, and especially that of the website or of an online platform, is to provide information regarding the advertised inn. Thus, the fact that 11 urban inns do not have an online section dedicated to their own presentation is more than just a mere happening. Even more, 8 urban inns do not provide any information regarding their location, respectively their contact details. This approach is also rather difficult to understand.

The research continued with the analysis of the aspect of the inns' buildings, relying on the pictures available online. Briefly (as figure no. 5 a) reveals), more than half of the identified inns (56 %) do not have anything whatsoever in common with the traditional concept, being rather appropriate for hotels, boarding houses, and motels. Only 5 % are included in the category of poor modern imitators of traditional inns. Nearly 40 % either use heritage buildings such as old inns, mansions, noblemen's palaces, etc. (13 %) or modern buildings that are appropriate imitators (26 %). Regarding their aspect, most inns (both those providing accommodation, and also those dedicated to food-services, either have a modern furnishing or present traditional/rustic features; only a few can be considered kitschy (figure no. 5 b)).



a) Architecture of urban and rural inns



b) Aspects of urban and rural inns

Figure no. 5: Architecture and aspect of urban and rural inns

Source: Authors' calculations based on collected data

From the point of view of the inns' architecture, it becomes obvious that half of the identified ones do not match the historic concept.

Moreover, an analysis (figure no. 6) of the official list of historic monuments and heritage buildings from Romania permits the identification of 69 heritage buildings or ruins that host or have hosted inns (Ministry of Culture, 2010). In fact, only a little more than a quarter of the old historic inns are, or could be valorised today within the hospitality industry (7 such buildings being even today functional accommodation and/or food-service units, while other 11 buildings could be included in the tourist circuit). The situation is much more serious in the case of around half of the historic tourist inns (of which 20 % are ruins, respectively nearly a third which are still under litigation and/or which face a severe degradation). The remaining quarter includes inns that cannot be used for tourist activities because today they have other functionalities (they are civil homes, 15 %, or the headquarters of various public institutions, 10 %).

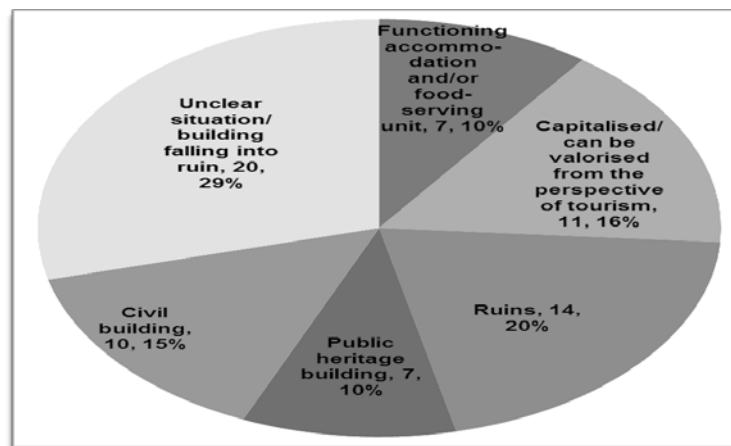


Figure no. 6: The situation of the inns included in the list of heritage buildings

Source: Authors' calculations based on the data provided by the Ministry of Culture, 2010

Still, regarding the inns' architecture and their interior design, a positive aspect comes through: only a few of the inns are entirely kitschy. Less than half of the identified inns are improper imitations of inns, resulted from the unfortunate combination of modern features with the traditional/rustic/specific design. Such examples can be found in the refurbishing of an accommodation structure in a modern style, while the associated food-serving unit is decorated in a traditional style. Combinations like this are wrong and not desired.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that inns function today more or less legitimate, using specific terms, as the analyses undertaken during the first half of 2015 reveal, Romanian inns have not lost their initial roles, although, many of the analysed inns, providing accommodation and/or food-services, do not meet the specific features of the traditional inns (as some hotels are declared inns without having anything in common with the concept). One of the major problems of inns is that a significant proportion of them function without any official classification. Further, while most urban inns provide accommodation services as guesthouses (55 %), followed by motels and hotels in equal quotas (around 17 %, each), the majority of the food-serving units are classic restaurants (around 65 %), and only few are specialized restaurants (less than 10 %). Even more, many food-serving units, registered as classic restaurants, pretend to serve specialized or specific cuisine. Such situations only reveal an unclear legal framework of the Romanian hospitality classification system and the poor involvement of the authorities in this sector. In terms of provided services, nearly half of the urban food-serving inns focus on hosting average-sized or large-scale events, and especially kitschy weddings.

While the purpose of online promotion is that of communicating the inn's authenticity aiming at attracting (especially foreign) tourists, this aspect is far from being positive, as around 70 % of the urban inns communicate exclusively in Romanian. Even more, less than 12 % of the inns manage to capitalize on their historic background. One cannot but wonder about the purpose of online communication in the case of the nearly 10 % of the urban inns that do not provide any information concerning their location! Furthermore, when it comes to written communication, both in Romanian and in foreign languages, the general conclusion is that innkeepers pay very little attention to the quality of their language skills.

Inns should be developed in a coherent manner, with the preservation of authentic traditional values. Obviously, the desire to be perceived by tourists as comfortable accommodation units, determines the entrepreneurs'/managers' orientation towards modern material refurbishing, while exactly the same desire for authenticity among the tourists, makes the same inn to provide traditional cuisine and to refurbish their food-service units in a traditional/rustic way. At the same time, the official ranking of inns must be seriously taken into consideration.

The main findings and conclusions of this paper reveal that inns have the potential to contribute to the authenticity of Romania's hospitality industry.

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