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SHARING ECONOMY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TOURISM

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Abstract

In the last decades, our society and the economy have undergone great changes that led to the emergence of new economic models. These models emerged in the developed countries. Subsequently, the informational revolution has expanded across the globe, and contributed to the development of these new models. The sharing economy is one of them. Through technology and the internet, tools that provide instant access to information from anywhere in the world, the collaborative economy expands and grows continuously. This allows for easier interaction between people of all categories.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the challenges, opportunities and benefits brought by the sharing economy regarding the national and international tourism, as well as to find out to what extent is the availability, accessibility, consumer and stakeholders’ degree of acceptance towards the current technological infrastructure.

The paper contains the analysis of a study case regarding the Airbnb business model, company that has been involved in the economic transition of the last years and contributed to the emergence of the sharing economy. As well, the article contains a study of collected data with regards to the distributed spaces on the company’s site from 5 Romanian cities, and 5 European cities, in a certain period, statistical data regarding the online bookings made in member countries of the European Union, and data about the accommodation units in Romania, the number of overnight stays and arrivals.

This research is useful for all individuals or legal entities involved in the tourism field in order to acknowledge in what way and to what extent the accommodation units in Romania are evaluated and rated. Moreover, the possible options for touristic improvement and development through the sharing economy, in terms of quality, technological infrastructure and approach are evaluated. We consider that it is important how the sharing economy impacts and influences Romania to a lesser extent, and what repercussions or changes will occur in the future.

Keywords: tourism, sharing economy, platforms, accommodation units, Internet, quality.

JEL Classification: Z32, O32.

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Introduction

In the present dynamic environment, access to information as well as the possibility of processing it, is theoretically unlimited due to the existing technologies. With the help of the internet, attracting potential customers, depends directly on service providers' speed of reaction and response. From this point of view, the degree of quality regarding the services offered by a provider can be correlated with the image of the social media. Due to the features and technologies of today's society, the new consumer has the opportunity to get in touch with service providers and share views with other consumers regarding their experiences derived from the quality of service received, and vice-versa. The Internet offers this opportunity by providing platforms where one can distribute various information in different ways (Farronato and Fradkin, 2015).

According to past research, modern consumers are more demanding, sophisticated and populate an interactive market. They have a value-centred philosophy that focuses on defining, creating and delivering the value that they want to buy from an organization. The reciprocity of benefits obtained by both parties is recognized, establishing a symbiotic relationship. Managing the new relationship between the organization and the consumer, requires an alternative approach in command and control practices of the production-based era. Consumers look for value because they have "power to see and understand things, imaginative penetration, knowledge and practical awareness." The service provider may begin the process of connecting with consumers in a way that will provide him a sustainable competitive advantage. This competitive advantage is based on building and maintaining reciprocal relationships that have significant long-term implications and therefore affects the strategic and marketing planning of the firm (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

Zohar (2005) interprets social capital as an asset that makes communities and organizations work efficiently for prosperity. It can be defined as the ability of people to work for common purposes in groups or organizations. Social capital is born of trust and common ethical values and is reflected by the type of relationships the human being builds in family, community and organization, and by the extent to which one fulfils his/her responsibilities towards the community. Therefore, social capital, in the context of a technology information era, can be associated with the social media. The latter refers to collaborative or media-sharing products and networked communities. Social media applications are interactive, giving users the opportunity to share their experiences, insights, perspectives about the consumed services. Responsible social and ecologic marketing in business, including the online environment, focuses on meeting the current needs of consumers and businesses, while preserving and developing the deftness of the following generations to meet their needs. Starting from the idea that in the digital age business is done on the Internet, Kotler and Keller (2012) propose that through social marketing, businesses deliver value to customers through a middle way: to improve and maintain both the welfare and the wellbeing of the society and consumer (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

The digital era is a social force that has created new opportunities, challenges and behaviors in business. It is not disputed that the Internet is a powerful channel of information and sales. Companies can collect complete and diversified data about consumers, prospects, outlets and competition. (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The technological development and financial crisis of 2008-2009, have conducted to changes regarding possessions and the shifting of the co-owner model into the co-sharing one. If individuals were wittingly with regards to the co-ownership model, they would have to get accustomed to sharing cars, bikes, apartments, washing machines, and so on (Lietaert, 2010), emerging the phenomenon of "product as a service".

The symbiosis between a product and a service creates a sustainable business environment for all parties involved (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

Big companies such as Philips and Microsoft have begun to adopt this concept because it generates improvements of resource productivity in innovative ways. This concept is an alternative to the traditional "buy and own" model. The products are used by one or more consumers through a lease contract or payment agreement for use, resulting longevity, reuse and sharing, not being seen as cannibalization risks, but as income and cost drivers. Promoting these services that are based on a collaborative economy, has created a change in the possession of goods culture (Accenture, 2017).

Although the exchange of products or services between people is an old process, since mankind, the reason for the emergence of a sharing model was detected in the Western countries, by the decline of incomes in the middle-class (Hacker and Pierson, 2011). This has led to lower consumption. People have begun to realize the costs of ownership and the sub-optimal use of cars, real estate and others. They no longer need the actual products, but their benefits. Among the first collaborative economy applications, were the sustainable goods, such as apartments (rentals) and cars (Dominici, Roblek and Lombardi, 2016).

The sharing phenomenon differs significantly from classical trading prototypes. Because it involves interactions between strangers and surpasses a geographically defined community. Exchange is most often monetary, systematized in a business model and facilitated by technology through platforms. The emergence of these peer-to-peer platforms, collectively referred to as "sharing economy", allowed individuals to collaboratively use underutilized inventory through cost-sharing. People have so far happily accepted the services provided by companies such as Uber, Airbnb, TaskRabbit and Lyft. The rapid increase of these platforms was obviously due to two key factors: technological innovation and demands flexibility. Technological innovations have simplified the market entry process for suppliers, have facilitated search lists for consumers, and maintained low overall transaction costs. Demands flexibility is another distinctive sign on the platforms: The drivers on Uber can add or withdraw themselves from the available offer of drivers with an application, and similarly other vendors can easily list and remove the selection of services they put at service (Zervas, Proserpio and Byers, 2016).

Rifkin (2000) says in his influential book "The Age of Access", that temporary access to possessions becomes more important as effective property over a good. Such business models become attractive innovation opportunities in a wide range of areas (Dredge and Gyimóthy, 2015).

Taking into account the importance of the collaborative economy's benefits to society, to find out what are the possible options for improving and developing tourism in Romania through the collaborative economy in terms of quality, infrastructure and technological approach and to find how much it is affected or influenced our country by this model and what repercussions or changes will occur in the future, data was collected on the available spaces on Aibnb website, from 5 Romanian and 5 European cities, statistical data on reservations made online in European Union countries, and data regarding the accommodation units in Romania, the number of overnight stays and arrivals. This paper also contains a case study regarding the Airbnb business model, a company that has been involved in the economic transition in recent years and led to the birth of the collaborative economy. The methodological section contains the data specified above in order to draw some conclusions regarding Romania's position on the collaborative economy.

1. State of knowledge

There is a connection between the sharing economics, e-commerce, tourism and social media. Through the social media, tourism and e-commerce have developed, which has led to the emergence of collaborative economy.

1.1. The sharing economy

The collaborative economy is growing globally. It should be outlined, that the momentum of this economic model has occurred in South America and Asia, where urbanization has had an important influence (Shanghai, Seoul, Rio de Janeiro), where most of the Y generation lives, and where smart phones are particularly popular (Australia is in the same category).

However, in emerging countries, the main limitation of economic growth is simply poverty, lack of education and less Internet infrastructure. Access to new technologies motivates small entrepreneurs to reconsider how they manage and develop their customer relationships. Even if this has happened, it is not enough to bring just value to the consumer, but also sustainability, stability, due to the competition. When purchasing a product or service, people are not only influenced by reasoning, seeking only the best value-for-money ratio to convince them to make the purchases, but also they are influenced by feelings and perceptions (Roblek, Štok and Meško, 2016).

On February the 2nd, 2014, Amsterdam launched its Amsterdam Sharing City campaign and officially became Europe's first sharing city. This was not at all an isolated initiative in a country that has a long history of pluralist and community-based politics. Other major cities, such as San Francisco, Paris, London and Singapore, have opened doors for political reforms that could facilitate the collaborative economy. While exchange economies, donations, and bargaining have always existed in small communities, the confluence of multiple conditions has facilitated the exchange of experience and collaboration on a much wider scale (Belk, 2014; Botsman and Rogers, 2011). The dispelling effects of the financial global crisis, starting with 2008, have also led to an increase in demands for alternatives in unsustainable consumption and industrial capitalism (Ranchordás, 2015). The sharing economy incorporates: (1) models of economic systems (circuit, regime, networks and links, transactions, relationships); (2) cultural and moral perspectives on human coexistence (negotiation, lifestyle, administration, prosocial / altruistic behavior, collaborative symbiosis); and (3) ideas of efficiency and creation of increased values (zero marginal costs, total interconnection, direct exchange, optimized capacity utilization, re-circulation of unnecessary resources). The term "collaborative consumption" was first conceived by Felson and Spaeth (1978), who were interested in studies on joint and social consumption activities such as the common purchase of a large beer container as a more effective option than the purchase of individual glasses. Published 20 years before the Internet, there was clearly no explicit focus on the mediation process or technological platforms in their work. Botsman and Rogers (2011) have taken over and reinterpreted the term to include sharing, negotiation, loan, trading, donation and barter, publicized by both automated and market means. For Botsman and Rogers (2011), the collaborative consumption is a superior and enlightened economy: "a system that activates unused goods resources through models and markets that allow for a greater efficiency and access." More recently, a new notion of collaborative economy has taken a step forward in recognizing that these constellations of collaboration extend beyond consumption. Collaborative economy denotes the use of the

internet technologies in order to connect groups of people territorially dispersed, for a better use of skills, goods and other useful things (Stokes, Clarence and Rinne, 2014).

1.2. e-Commerce

Novelties in web and digital technologies include e-commerce as a new dimension of business. E-commerce offers an opportunity in various fields, because the internet technologies influence millions of consumers. With the explosive growth of online technologies that took place in the last decade, there has been a growth of online service offerings in all areas, especially in tourism and transports. This portal have emerged as sites like Booking.com, booking and information portals, railway portals (Trenitalia, DB Bahn, etc.) and airline ticket providers (Expedia.com). Customers were offered the opportunity to search online and compare deals from various hotels, travel agencies, airlines, destinations, and other service providers. With the peer-to-peer model, the collaborative economy has changed the additional value chain. In this case, providers temporarily share their resources with consumers, either free of charge or against a financial or other change. The platform is an interfacing between consumers and providers (Dervojeda, et al., 2013). Platforms, such as, Airbnb, that have launched the collaborative consumption, succeed especially when the process gets more efficient by means of technology. Knowledge management operations are becoming intensely more dependent on search processes, data collection, processing, evaluation, information and concepts that are outside the organization. Service users disseminate information regarding the satisfaction or dissatisfaction communicated by "word-of-mouth", and their perception and behaviour are influenced on the information received from other consumers, service providers, media etc. Workers in the tourism industry need to adapt to the new web - digital (for example, mobile technologies with a digital signage system). It is suggested that they incorporate into their strategies, technologies, mobile applications (mobile application development, QR codes, discount coupons, purchases via. mobile applications), which allows flexibility with regards to time and space and results the increase of interactive marketing services in real-time. Oral electronic transmission of information is an important key in the marketing and performance sector. Goldsmith, Litvin and Pan (2008) revealed that the most significant source of information is obtained when consumers make decisions about purchasing, in general. The authors emphasize that a marketing tool in the evolution of this industry could be a cost-effective use, in viral marketing. In this case, consumers (users of on-line technologies) become the new marketers, with a significant influence on public opinion as to the quality and reputation of each service or product (Roblek, Štok and Meško, 2016).

1.3. Tourism

In the current concept of the World Tourism Organization, "tourism covers the activities of a person who travels outside her/ his ordinary environment for less than a specified period of time and whose purpose is other than the exert of a paid activity at the place of visit." Tourism is a stimulating factor for the global economic system (Neguț et al., 2006).

Tourism is the set of activities whereby an individual spends his spare time in other places or countries than his/her residence. Tourism is considered to be a form of recreation alongside other leisure activities, "the temporary movement of people to destinations, outside their usual residence and the activities carried out at those destinations." (Minciu, 2005).

The tourist is the backbone of the tourism sector. "All the travelers who engage in travel are described as visitors" (Goeldner, Ritchie and McIntosh, 2006). Goeldner defines visitors as

"people traveling to a country other than the one in which they live for a period of maximum 12 months, whose main purpose is other than the exert of remunerated activities within the visited country." There are two categories of visitors: 1 day visitors (excursionists) and tourists ((Rodzi, Zaki and Subly, 2013).

Tourism is the most competitive and dynamic industry that demands the ability to adapt continuously to tourists' changing perceptions and needs, as the tourist's safety, satisfaction, and enjoyment are especially the centre of tourism businesses.

Benckendorff (2008) founds a shift towards global standardization in tourism. Bramwell and Lane (2011) examined the effects of tourism's impact on the earth's resources, which was applied to management in the context of responsible tourism. Bramwell and Lane (2011) discussed this element of management responsibility as presented through sustainability and policy creation, towards a network control system which continues to evolve.

1.4. Social Media

Social media have fundamentally changed consumer processes Hudson and Thal (2013) found social media savvy distribution systems will be the future of emergent brands, with notation this changing digital environment is influencing the entire delivery system of travel services. They stated that technology and new channel penetration will drive business applications further into new dimensions of tourism product innovation and tourism economies are currently on the brink of new dimensions and will require cultural effect through innovation. Characteristics of the firm, market, and the range of choices a service delivers will influence international expansion opportunities for hospitality and tourism entities. Technology driven systems and e-business network solutions are creating an easier entry mode into new markets, providing reasons for why Expedia and other travel trade companies have expanded further into international markets through. Raposo et al. (2010) inferred that market orientation is based upon the whole company, and that the hotel sector is the most important contributor to global tourism economies. Jelassi and Enders (2008) reframed that technology can streamline processes through the exploitation of economies of scale, and mass customization activities, which may act counter-intuitively. They constructed that soft customization of the polycentric configuration of online customized booking modules for individualized tourism customer profiling could formulate the future process of tourism. Healy and Nelson (2006) alluded to such a fact in their article—*There's Room at the Inn, But How to Tax It?*—which indicated that online booking patterns are gaining prominence: almost 20 percent of global accommodation bookings are conducted by online consumers; for example, AirBnb is becoming a market disrupter. Healy and Nelson (2006) suggested that the issue continues today with defining between state taxes and lodging taxes, and are under review as to which collection should be mandated within a new proposed structure of global online charges. For these authors, a lot of money is at stake within this area of tax considerations. Various authors in this literature have indicated that human resources, the physical infrastructure, and technological communications are all indicators of tourism system defragmentation. Wijesinghe (2014) stated the commercialism and capitalist globalization continue to challenge the survival of the world as morality concerns toward responsible sustainability are at cross-roads with development. Therefore, the control of tourism continues to be challenged within the many areas and entities of tourism management. For long-term global tourism economic approaches to success, Bramwell and Lane (2011) stated a need for cultivating governance and collective stewardship; as tourism industry actions of alignment in knowledge, power, resources, and

rules are needed to bring upon good governance. Tourism market segments, targets, and sector positioning are ongoing competitive factors in tourism's complex revenue channels system and structure (Gellatly, 2016).

2. Methodology

The research is formative and quantitative. Information has been collected from Eurostat.com and Airbnb.com, on online bookings through platforms at a European level, and the number of rooms and apartments listed for rental, on the complete set of users, in several Romanian and international cities. As well, we collected information from insse.ro on accommodation units, number of overnights and arrivals from several cities in Romania, in order to have an overview of the touristic traffic as well.

2.1. Data from Airbnb

Airbnb, established in August 2008, in San Francisco, California, is a purveyor of travel accommodation and an initiator of the sharing economy. It has developed in over 90 countries, and approximately 35.000 cities (Zervas, Proserpio and Byers, 2016).

The company is describing itself as a worthy community marketplace for people to discover, list, and book unique housings around the globe, and illustrates a peer-to-peer marketplace in the collaborative economy. Forthcoming hosts list their available rooms, apartments or houses on the Airbnb platform, determine their own price in terms of duration, and give accommodation to guests. Airbnb is gaining revenue from both hosts and guests for the services intermediated: guests are charged with a 9-12% fee for each booking they make, depending on the duration of their stay, and hosts are charged with a 3% service fee to drop the cost of processing payments. Since its emergence in 2008, the Airbnb platform has experienced a very rapid increase, having more than three million properties worldwide and over 160 million guests. Airbnb is operating with minimal regulation controls in most cities, users have stimulants in order to use signalling techniques to create trust and maximize the probability of a successful booking. To strengthen this behaviour, Airbnb has conceived an online reputation system that allows and stimulates users to rate and review each stay. Guests are using star ratings to evaluate features of their stay, e.g., location, cleanliness, and communication, while all users are encouraged to post reviews of each stay, on the platform. The new review process makes it easier for guests to provide feedback, giving more valuable information. Hosts get this feedback via email, once the guests have left a review (Zervas, Proserpio and Byers, 2016).

Airbnb accommodations provide guests with a feeling of "home", thus creating a sense of belonging (AirBnB, 2015). Airbnb's philosophy is to make guests feel at home and connect with the local people. Accordingly, the host is encouraged to "treat guests like friends or family", "share favourite places with guests", and "teach guests something local and unforgettable" because no one knows the place and the neighbourhood better than the host (AirBnB, 2015). Indeed, the desire for social belonging is a fundamental human need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). To attract consumers, Airbnb highlights a wide range of "atypical places to stay" in its marketing communication, such as the artist mirrored house, the seashell house on a Mexican island, and charming castles (AirBnB, 2015). People have a fundamental need to differentiate themselves from others (Lynn and Snyder, 2002; Snyder and Fromkin, 1980), and Airbnb's idiosyncratic offerings provide guests distinctive lodging experiences that are different from traditional hotel stays. Indeed, as individual

uniqueness is highly valued in general (Bellah et al., 2007), consumers tend to signal their uniqueness through distinctive consumption choices (Ames and Iyengar, 2005). Airbnb provides an opportunity to satisfy the need for uniqueness. To summarize, the essence of the Airbnb concept is the “belongingness” and “uniqueness” brought to the guest’s experience (Liu and Mattila, 2016).

Although there are a variety of places and spaces on the platform, there are significant differences with regards to the rent choices made according to the culture and nationality.

Each host has their listings, a photo, guest reviews of the properties, a personal statement and Airbnb-certified contact information. Similarly, each listing relates photos, location, availability, price, cleaning fees, a brief textual description, capacity, check-in time and check-out time. Unfortunately, the Airbnb’s number of overnights and arrivals, cannot be quantified yet, due to the system and legislation. Airbnb is not covered by any specific regulation. Therefore, we cannot estimate the correct number of listings. With this data, a comparison can be made between the Romanian requests and demands regarding the use of platforms for online bookings, as well a comparison between Romania and other European countries.

2.2. Data on the European Union level

In the EU top, with regards to the sharing economy, Romania is among the last countries in terms of choosing accommodation at private providers, through Airbnb (figure no.1).

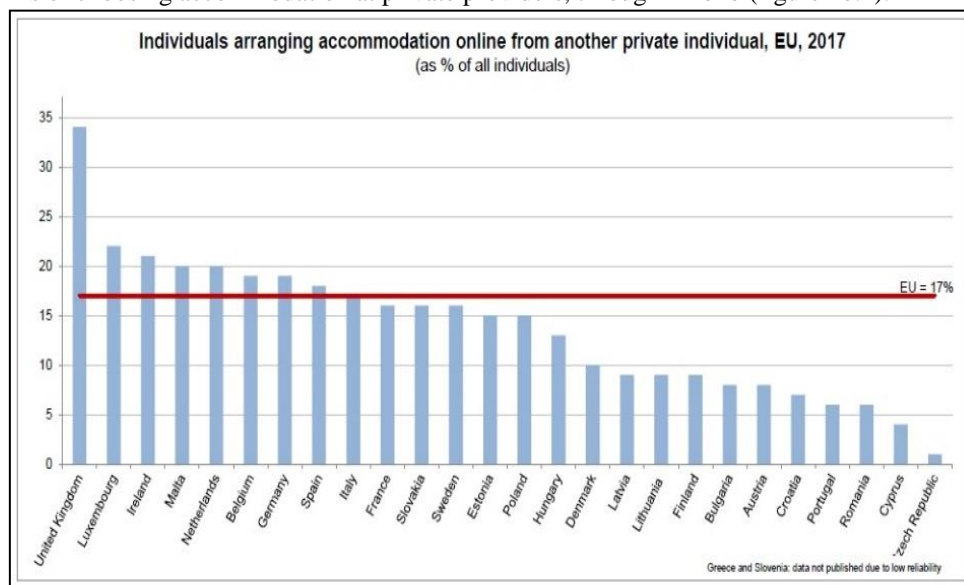


Figure no. 1: Online reservations through platforms

Source: Eurostat, 2017

According to the results of the survey made in the year 2017, in the last 12 months, 17% of the European Union population has booked accommodation (one room, one apartment, a house, a holiday cottage etc.) through sites or applications that intermediates the accommodation from private providers. The most have used websites and special applications (table no.1). As well, there are websites or applications (including those on social networks) that make an important contribution to facilitating these activities. Online

booking through dedicated sites or apps was primarily done by people aged between 25-54 years (22%) (figure no. 2). This information, issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, is part of the results of the 2017 survey, on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households (Zamfir, 2017).

Table no. 1: Individuals arranging accommodation/ transport online from another private individual, 2017

	Websites or apps (%)	Dedicated websites or apps (%)
EU	17	14
Belgium	19	13
Bulgaria	8	3
Czech Republic	1	0
Denmark	10	8
Germany	19	15
Estonia	15	13
Ireland	21	17
Greece	:(u)	:(u)
Spain	18	15
France	16	14
Croatia	7	4
Italy	17	13
Cyprus	4	2
Latvia	9	5
Lithuania	9	5
Luxembourg	22	18
Hungary	13	7
Malta	20	17
Netherlands	20	17
Austria	8	6
Poland	15	11
Portugal	6	4
Romania	6	5
Slovenia	:(u)	:(u)
Slovakia	16	8
Finland	9	6
Sweden	16	12
United Kindom	34	31
Iceland	17	12
Norway	11	9
Switzerland	:(u)	:(u)
Montenegro	15	12
FYR of Macedonia	8	4
Serbia	12	9
Turkey	:(u)	:(u)

Note: “0” Not significant; :(u) Data not published due to lower reliability;

* Possibly overestimated as the data include both demand and supply.

Source: Eurostat, 2017

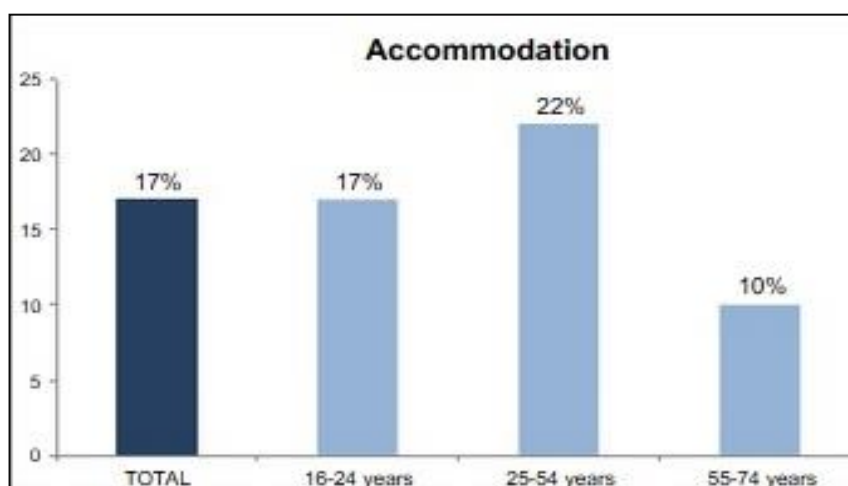


Figure no. 2: Individuals that book online from other individuals, by age groups, in EU, 2017

Source: Eurostat, 2017

Online reservation at private accommodations is very common in the United Kingdom and Luxembourg. Approximately 1 out of 3 people aged between 16 and 74 years, have booked from private individuals through a website or app in the United Kingdom (34%), 1 out of 5 in Luxembourg (22%), Ireland (21%), Malta and the Netherlands (20%). Conversely, the Czech Republic (1%) recorded the smallest proportion of available data, followed by Cyprus (4%), Portugal and Romania (6% each), as well as Croatia (7%).

3. Analysis of absolute data

The accommodation service is one of the most demanded basic tourism service that makes up the touristic package. The accommodation unit is any individual or legal person, who is offering accommodation services. The number of overnights, is the number which represents the periods of one night, spent in a touristic unit. The number of arrivals represents the records, in the tourist registers, of each person accommodated in a touristic unit (National Institute of Statistics - INSSE, 2017a-c).

3.1. Data on the spaces distributed on the Airbnb site

We can see in the table no. 2 that Airbnb is extending in the Romanian market, as well. The biggest number of rentals is in the capital of Romania, followed by Braşov, which means that in Bucharest the demand of alternative accommodation and touristic traffic have increased.

Table no. 2: Data from August the 4-5th, 2017

No. of guests/City	Bucharest	Constanța	Braşov	Timișoara	Iași
1 guest	306	90	128	51	34
1 guest + 1 child	306	88	122	49	26

Source: Developed by authors based on data from Airbnb, 2017a-e

In the table no. 3, we can see that Paris has the biggest number of rentals, followed by Rome. Athens has the lowest number. This means that the most touristic demands are for Paris and Rome. Comparing both tables above, surprisingly, Bucharest is placed amongst the top, which denotes that it is a required destination. The increased demands for alternative accommodation can be also due to the higher hotel prices.

Table no. 3: Data from August the 4-5th, 2017

No. of guests/City	Paris	Berlin	Rome	Amsterdam	Athens
1 guest	303	162	293	128	64
1 guest + 1 child	300	141	289	113	60

Source: Developed by authors based on data from Airbnb, 2017f-j

From the figure no. 3, we can see an overview of the cities that have the biggest number of rentals. Bucharest, Paris and Rome.

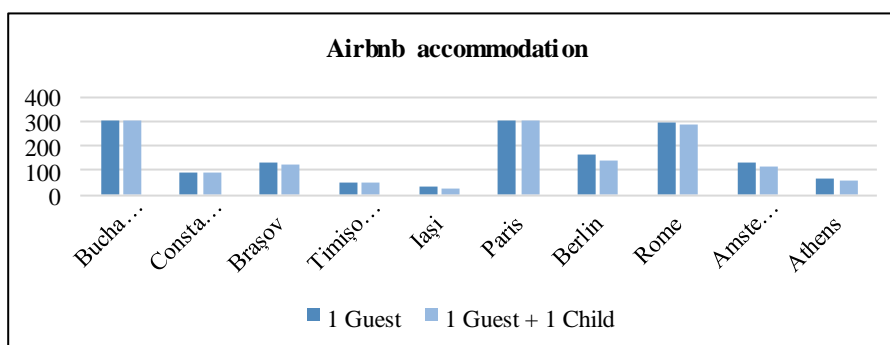


Figure no. 3: Data from August the 4-5th, 2017

Source: Developed by authors based on data from Airbnb, 2017a-j

3.2. Data regarding the accommodation units, number of arrivals and overnight stays from the INSSE site

The two type of units listed in the table no. 4 and figure no. 4 are the most affected by Airbnb rentals, in general. The number of hotels is bigger than the number of boarding houses in all the cities, except Braşov, which is an opposite case. The biggest differences between the two types of units are found in Bucharest and Constanța. Many travels are made in these cities for different purposes, due to their location. Bucharest city is the capital of Romania, and it is preferred due to its attractions and for the development of the commercial and business centres. The city of Constanța is located at the Black Sea, being the main attraction. This destination is demanded due to its activity with regards to business, being facilitated by the seaport in the city.

Table no. 4: Number of accommodation units, 2016

Acc. Units / City	Bucharest	Constanța	Braşov	Timișoara	Iași
Hotels	119	100	57	44	25
Boarding houses	4	8	86	37	23
Total	123	108	143	81	48

Source: INSSE, 2017a

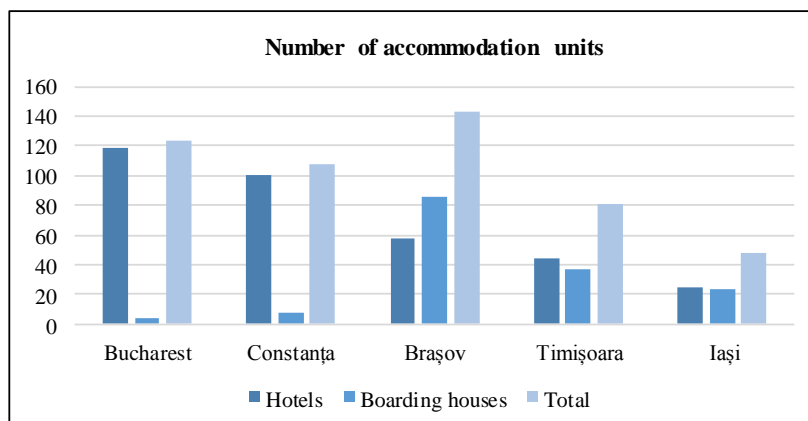


Figure no. 4: Number of accommodation units, 2016

Source: Developed by authors based on data from INSSE, 2017a

Despite the lower number of hotels, Brașov has the biggest number of accommodation units, compared to the other cities. Which means that Brașov is demanded for holidays, for the familiar and cosy locations. Another reason is the low degree of business tourism, being located between the mountains.

From the table no. 5, it's visible that the biggest traffic is in Bucharest and Constanța, due to the summer season and business tourism. The hotel infrastructure has developed for these reasons. Hotels offer better stay conditions, providing the tourist or business traveller a higher degree of convenience. As well, another reason can be the distance between these cities, and the infrastructure, facilitating the business tourism.

Table no. 5: Number of overnights in June, 2017

No. of overnights stays/City	Bucharest	Constanța	Brașov	Timișoara	Iași
Hotels	286,643	212,435	75,133	46,213	42,827
Boarding houses	1,691	576	13,286	7,005	3,476
Total	288,334	213,011	88,419	53,218	46,303
Average per day	9,611	7,100	2,947	1,774	1,543

Source: INSSE, 2017b

The biggest number of arrivals is in Bucharest, followed by Constanța (table no. 6 and figure no.5).

Table no. 6: Number of arrivals in June, 2017

No. of arrivals/City	Bucharest	Constanța	Brașov	Timișoara	Iași
Hotels	177,963	78,341	40,025	25,250	23,243
Boarding houses	653	368	7,465	3,603	2,527
Total	178,616	78,709	47,490	28,853	25,770
Average per day	5,954	2,624	1,583	962	859

Source: INSSE, 2017c

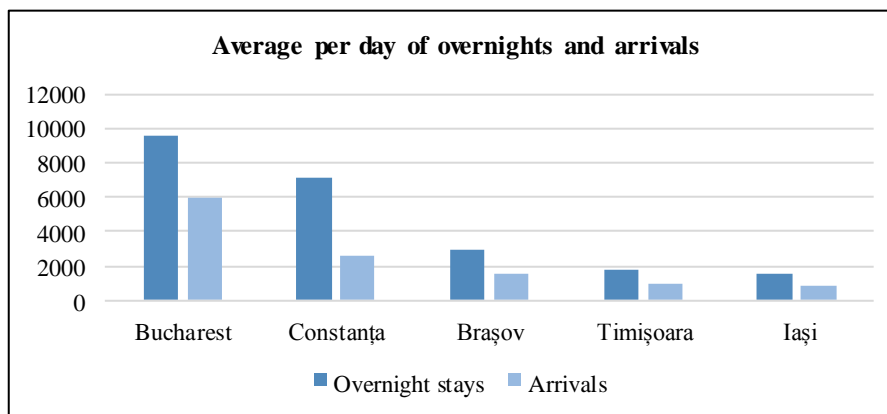


Figure no. 5: Average per day of overnights and arrivals in June, 2017

Source: Developed by authors based on data from INSSE, 2017b-c

In Bucharest can be found several types of tourism, such as cultural, educational, recreational, business and city-breaks. The Romanian capital is becoming increasingly known in Europe for its beautiful architecture, history, welcoming people, monuments, night life etc. As well, Constanța, being at a short distance from Bucharest, owns locations and beaches that are very demanding. For this motive, more and more tourists visit Romania from year to year.

Comparing the two variables, from each selected city, we can observe that the overnight stays are almost twice as much as the arrivals. This means that more and more Romanians are choosing to spend their holidays in the country.

Conclusions

In tourism, the concept of sharing economy is best represented by the Airbnb giant, through which private owners rent their immobile for a relatively short period of time in exchange for a fee.

Zervas, Proserpio and Byers (2015) concluded that the sharing economy emerged as a viable alternative to meet the various needs of consumers. As the size of the collaborative economy grew, so did its economic impact. They consider that the sharing economy changes consumption patterns significantly, as opposed to generating a purely elementary economic activity. Hotels in the major European cities are exposed to higher competition due to the expansion of Airbnb's locations. Hotels have reacted by lowering their prices, this affecting their revenue. In addition to the reduced prices, consumers benefit from an increased variety of services offered by the peer-to-peer platforms. And the owners benefit from additional revenue, generated from the goods and services provided through the peer-to-peer platforms.

In conclusion, the sharing economy is growing by second, and it brings many benefits and challenges regarding the national and international tourism. Such as, a change in the consumption pattern and customer perception, competition growth by lower prices and alternative accommodation, increased social welfare, new jobs, fulfilling a variety of customer needs, encouraging small entrepreneurs, better communication and collaboration

between consumers and providers, increased quality, knowledge of other cultures, traditions, habits, innovative technologies and so on.

Airbnb offers the opportunity to travel at low prices, even by last minute booking, personalized services, and many other benefits, such as discounts, gift cards etc. It has a negative impact on local hotel revenue, due to the viable, familiar types of accommodation, as opposed to the traditional types of standardized accommodation, as well as, the infrastructure and instant accessibility. As well, Airbnb has been accused of tax evasion and unfair competition towards hotels, hostels, motels. However, it continues to expand.

Regarding the Romanian tourism, it is directly affected by the sharing economy. More and more Romanians are starting to open to the online environment and services. This happens due to the interaction with foreign tourists, innovative technologies and easy access to internet and information.

Compared to other European countries, Romania is placed on the bottom regarding the use of collaborative economy services, in terms of accommodation, in the European Union, according to the data provided by Eurostat. The statistics show that collaborative business ventures risk being cut from the roots. Although at the European Union level, or worldwide, it is considered to be the future, in Romania, the collaborative economy is at the beginning, according to the data published by Eurostat. In 2017, Eurostat reported that 6% of Romania's population has booked accommodation at private owners through the internet and 5% through a site or app dedicated for these kinds of services. Romania is far below average in comparison with other European Union countries, which recorded values of 17% and 14%, respectively.

The reasons for Romania's lower position may be the low incomes of population and lack of information or less openness to the online environment. Also, the lack of trust regarding the Romanian owners, or the impact of business tourism on statistical values, preferring renting hotel rooms.

The number of accommodation units in Romania is significant compared to the private spaces available, especially in Bucharest. But compared to other European cities, Bucharest has a big number of rentals on the Airbnb platform, which means that the offer is high.

In the European space, Paris has the biggest number of rentals available on the Airbnb site, followed by Rome. Athens has the lowest number. This means that the greatest tourist demands are for Paris and Rome, due to their popularity, culture and attractions. What is also viewed from the data published by Eurostat. The Western Europe is more opened to this kind of accommodation than Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, there is little data available on the Airbnb site, and the existing one is not complete.

The rating and nomination of the Romanian rentals on the Airbnb platform are similar to the European ones because they are carried out by the same intermediary.

In order to improve and develop the Romanian tourism through the sharing economy, it is necessary certain measures to be taken, such as: infrastructure development, informing the Romanian and foreign tourists by different means, other than Airbnb, implementation of a beneficial legislation for the service intermediaries and private owners, higher quality services, and constant promotion of various attractions in Romania. Putting emphasis on quality is very important and in concordance with the European Union services.

The collaborative economy and online platforms facilitate the increase of quality through transparency and a stable relationship between providers and tourists.

The sharing economy has a significant impact on Romania, as it is a country in the development process and change. The demand for alternative accommodation may increase due to the low incomes, which would allow space for intermediaries, such as Airbnb, to grow. Romania could attract many changes because it did not reach its full potential in terms of tourism.

The article has some limitations that will be the subject of future researches. Firstly, the study was limited to just a few cities, located in Romania and Europe. Secondly, the data was collected just from Airbnb, INSSE, Eurostat sites, and was analysed over a short period of time, because the economic model is quite new. Lastly, the research has been limited to tourism, respectively Airbnb.

In future research on the collaborative economy, questionnaires will be conducted to get in touch with tourists in order to find some subjective opinions on Airbnb. As well, the research area will be expanded in order to make a comparison between the opinions of the Romanian and foreign tourists, and more data from various scientific papers will be collected.

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