

**TRADITIONAL VS. DIGITAL PR IN ROMANIAN AGRITOURISM:  
THE CASE OF MANSIONS**

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**Abstract:** *A lot of things have changed in the Public Relations (PR) field in recent years. Thus, bloggers, customer relationship management, customized e-mail management tools, Excel sheets, influencers, journalists, mass press releases, etc. – all are rooted in the evolution of an industry where information is available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Traditional PR and digital PR are compared in this study. The comparative method has been used in this study with focus on the way each mansion operator has emphasised the best assets of his/her mansion in online PR. Though Romanian practitioners understand the rules and ideas around social media, they have not necessarily adopted them in their practice; in addition, they lack a strategic approach to the use of social media to achieve PR objectives. The limitations of the research concern the sample choice. This study suggests strategies about how to use digital PR in Romanian agritourism (with focus on mansions) to make it more attractive.*

**Keywords:** *Romania, agritourism, online Public Relations, mansions*

**INTRODUCTION**

Traditional PR managers ignore the importance of involving a blogger/influencer in their communication campaign because they do not understand the importance of the digerati/digirati (“people with expertise or professional involvement in information technology” –[10]) to expand a campaign’s digital footprint [11]. However, research shows that communicators of corporate online communication are responsible, trustworthy, and efficient informants, while receivers of corporate online communication are confident and perceptive [18].

Traditional and digital/e-/online PR or PR 2.0 [16] differ in at least five components (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**Components of traditional and digital PR**

Components	PR	
	Traditional	Digital
Channels	Fact sheet, letter/memo, news conference, press release, Q & A, radio, television	Audio/visual, blogs, links, online chat, real-time, social media, two-way communication, websites (all within everybody’s reach)
Formats	Articles, press releases	Platforms and resources (company logs, social media, multimedia content for content distribution)
Message	Brands communicated by talking about themselves (monologue)	Content talks subtly about brands (dialogue)
Tone	Formal way of addressing audiences	A more personal tone when addressing audiences
Tools	Manual tools (e-mail software, Excel spreadsheets)	Customer Relationship Management tools (e-mail, influencer databases, social media)

*Source: Taylor & Perry, 2005 and Macnamara, 2008*

Social media are mentioned three times in Figure 1 in relation to digital PR: indeed, they have become PR tools [7,22,17,9,12,13,3,6,5,14].

Using new technologies in PR has both “advantages (effectiveness measurement of communications efforts; facilitation of interaction and dialogue; high demographic selectivity; image enhancement opportunities through accentuating features (e.g., an organization's being modern, flexible in adjusting to changing market conditions, and receptive to new technologies); increased consumers' awareness of the company's existence; large information capacities (the possibility to offer detailed information); low costs of reaching out to target audiences compared to other channels; possibility of updating content in real time; possibility to access Internet resources at any place and time via a computer or a mobile device; possibility to reach out to a precisely defined target audience; quick feedback to users' activities)”[21] and “disadvantages (sheer amount of information accumulated in the Internet)”[21]. It is worth mentioning that digital communication is ruled by a code of conduct regarding “addressees, author transparency in online communication, compliance with journalistic principles in editorial online communication, corporate responsibility for social media presence, fair and respectful communication on the Internet, labelling of paid content, and shared responsibility of principal and agency” [1].

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The material of this study consisted in the presentation of Romanian mansions on the site “Ghid turistic România”, more precisely, the section “De vizitat” (Conace renumite din România care merită vizitate). The eight mansions presented are SWOT-analysed and compared to see what is right and what is wrong from a PR perspective in an attempt to show how they could become more attracting agritourist destinations.

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

Unfortunately, as far as Romanian agritourism is concerned, digital PR is not yet the norm across the industry. Robson & James [19] conducted a qualitative study on the use of digital PR by American practitioners over a decade ago and found that “All participants understood the rules and ideas around social media (authenticity, interactivity, two-way communication, etc.) but they are not necessarily adopting them in their practice: they primarily used social media platforms, or believed they are best for, one-way communication and message dissemination; All practitioners lacked a strategic approach to the use of social media to achieve public relations objectives; The majority of interviewees suggested that passion for and interest in social media plays an important role in overcoming barriers to use; The majority of interviewees used social media to achieve public relations objectives on an ad hoc basis [...]”

Unfortunately, this seems to be the case of Romanian practitioners as well. The investigation of an online Romanian tourist guide [8] shows that Romanian practitioners understood the rules and ideas around social media but did not necessarily adopt them in their practice, and that “they lacked a strategic approach to the use of social media to achieve public relations objectives”[19]. The button “To Visit” invites tourists to visit caves, cities & towns, mansions, monasteries, and tourist destinations, places, and sites. This study analyses new and restored mansions in Romania presented on the site as “famous Romanian mansions that are worth visiting”: Dintre Vii Mansion (Urlați, Prahova County), Drahneilor Mansion (Ruscova, Maramureș County), Hagianoff Mansion (Manasia, Ialomița County), Maldăr's Mansion (Măldărești, Vâlcea County), Polizu Mansion (Maxut, Iași County), Popeci Mansion (Padea, Dolj County), Princely Mansion (Șcheia, Suceava County), and Secuilor Mansion (Colțești, Alba County).

Dintre Vii Mansion (Urlați, Prahova County). Logo (Figure 1a). Type: former boyar mansion, remodelled according to current hospitality standards (Figure 2a).

Location: on the outskirts of Urlați, Prahova County, 1 h from Bucharest. Accommodation: 1 suite, 2 junior suites, 19 double rooms. Restaurant: fresh vegetables, good wine (Figure 3a). Wine cellar: jam jars, pickle jars, sherbet jars, wine barrels (Figure 4a). Barbeque terrace: 80 places. Indoor & outdoor activities: archery, cart ride, champagne, spirits, and wine tasting and presentation, cycling, darts, discotheque, picnic in the vineyard, and ping-pong. Leisure point: 200 places. Party garden: 500 people. Bathroom, Minibar, Pool, TV.



**Figure 1. Logos of mansions**

Source: a([www.winetaste.ro](http://www.winetaste.ro)), b(<https://conaculmaldar.ro/>), c(<https://www.robelo.ro/>), d [www.conaculpopeci.ro](http://www.conaculpopeci.ro)

Drahneilor Mansion (Ruscova, Maramureș County) (Figure 2b). Location: Ruscova, Maramureș County. Built/history: from wood and shingles (on the roof). Restaurant: 70 places, traditional food, fresh foods (Figure 3b). Indoor & outdoor activities: boar and deer tray. Tourism in the neighbourhoods: Bârsana Monastery (1761), Merry Cemetery of Săpânda, mocănița (narrow railway train operating in mountain areas) in the Vaser Valley, Sighetul Marmației.

Hagianoff Mansion (Manasia, Ialomița County) (Figure 2c). Type: Restored mansion. Location: Manasia, Ialomița County, 50 km from Bucharest. Built/history: Built in 1899 by Ion Hagianoff, former Bulgarian Foreign Minister, the mansion was confiscated by the Communist rule after World War II and turned into a kindergarten. In 2006, the mansion was restored by restorer Dorin Dănilă, who also decorated the rooms with furniture and accessories from Romanian and foreign antiques shops. Restaurant: 70 places, traditional food, fresh foods (Figure 3c). Wine cellar: 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (the largest in Romania), 1 million l capacity (3b). Indoor & outdoor activities: corporate/personal events, walking in the park (2 ha), wine tasting.

Maldăr's Mansion (Măldărești, Vâlcea County) (Figure 1d). Logo (Figure 1). Type: Old fortified boyar house with several storeys, widespread in 18<sup>th</sup> century Oltenia, preserving all specific architectural details: thick walls, whitewashed outer wall, high tower, inside staircase, secret exits, arcaded porch upstairs. Location: Măldărești, Vâlcea County. Built/history: It bears the name of Captain Tudor Maldăr, captured by the Tatars, but released after falling in love with the beautiful daughter of the Tatar Khan. Accommodation: The rooms, named after famous characters, have genuine historical

pieces of furniture, old beams, and traditional carpets. Restaurant: traditional cuisine from Oltenia, international cuisine inspired by boyars' menus (Figure 3d). Wine cellar: wines from the best-known wineries in the area: Cetate, Corcova, Sâmburești, Vânu Mare. Indoor & outdoor activities: movies, walking in the park, wine tasting. Gazebo, Pool.

Polizu Mansion (Maxut, Iași County) (Figure 2e). Logo (Figure 1). Type: Mansion. Location: Maxut, Iași County. Built/history: Built 1880-1997 by politician Constantin Ghiika-Deleni, it was a meeting place for royalty and Moldavian and Bucharest boyars from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of World War II: Queen Maria, Princess Ileana and Prince Nicolae. After 1946, it became a military shack, the headquarters of an agricultural cooperative and of a state agricultural enterprise, and a fruit farm. Books, pieces of furniture were destroyed or stolen.



**Figure 2. Mansions**

Source: a([www.winetaste.ro](http://www.winetaste.ro)), b(<https://conaculdrahneilor.ro/>), c(<https://planiada.ro/0>)  
d(<https://conaculmaldar.ro/>), e(<https://www.robelo.ro/>), f([www.conaculpopeci.ro](http://www.conaculpopeci.ro)), g(<https://olimpiaturism.ro>), h([www.travlocals.com](http://www.travlocals.com))

It was renovated between 2006-2011 by Irina-Ioana Riscuția. Accommodation: 19 Neoclassical rooms with elements from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indoor & outdoor activities: private parties, wine tasting. Garden, Restaurant (Figure 3e) Wine cellar.

Popeci Mansion (Padea, Dolj County) (Figure 2f). Logo (Figure 2). Type: Mansion. Location: Padea, Dolj County, 4 ha of area. Built/history: 1907, by banker and agriculturist N. N. Popp, in French eclectic style. in 2013, it was restored. Accommodation: 7 rooms and a suite. Indoor & outdoor activities: billiards, fitness, lawn tennis, swimming. Fitness, Minibar, Playground, Pool, Restaurant (Figure 3f), Tennis court, TV, Wireless.

Princely Mansion (Șcheia, Suceava County) (Figure 2g). Type: Old boyar mansion completely renovated. Location: Șcheia, Suceava County, 5 km from Suceava, 200 m from E85, 17 km from Salcea Airport, 10 ha of area within a dendrologic park. Built/history: 1820 by a rich family. Restaurant: Romanian and international cuisine (Figure 3g). Indoor & outdoor activities: events for about 180 people, waking in the park. Spa: jacuzzi, massage (relaxation and therapeutic), pool, Swedish sauna. Accommodation, Fitness, Football field, Indoor pool, Multifunctional Hall, Private Lake, Summer terrace, Tennis court, Wine cellar.

Secuilor Mansion (Colțești, Alba County) (Figure 2h). Type: New mansion. Location: Colțești, Alba County, 3.5 ha. Built/history: 2005-2007, with traditional architectural elements of the villages of Colțești and Rimetea. Accommodation: 23 rooms for 50 people. Restaurant: traditional and international cuisine (Figure 3h). Indoor & outdoor activities: cheese and Aiud wine tasting. Playground: yes. Tourism in the neighbourhoods: Ardascheia Peak (1,249 m), Catholic, Reformed, and Unitarian churches, folk art exhibition, Piatra Secuiului Peak (1,128 m), ruins of the Colțești Citadel (13<sup>th</sup> century).

The presentations of the eight old and new Romanian mansions show the following:

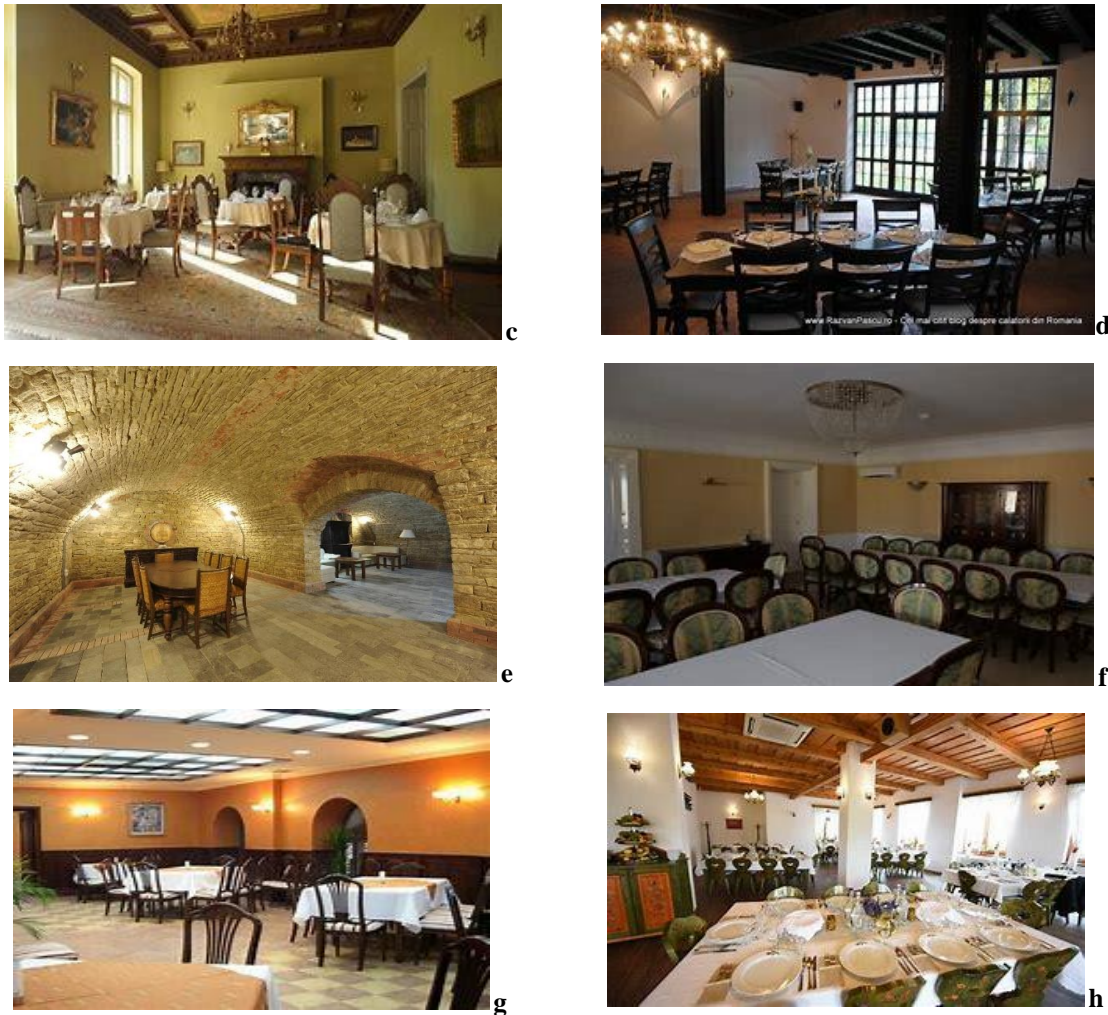
- Location and contact details (address, e-mail address, fax, GPS coordinates, location on Google Map, land/mobile phone, website): clearly mentioned for (not quite) all eight mansions;
- Type: seven of the eight mansions are old but restored, one is newly built;
- Built/history: the history of only seven of the eight mansions is presented (given that one of them has been recently built);
- Indoor & outdoor activities: seven of the eight mansions provide details;
- Restaurant & Wine cellar: six of the eight mansions provide details;
- Accommodation, Logo & Pool: four of the eight mansions provide details;



a



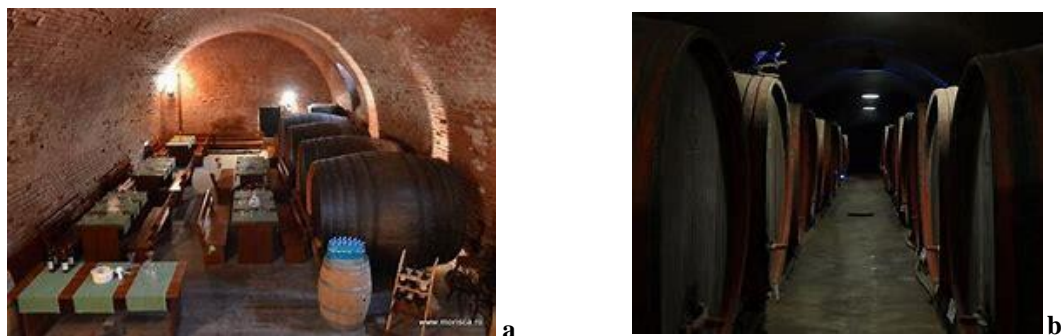
b



**Figure 3. Mansion restaurants**

Source: a([www.eventist.ro](http://www.eventist.ro)), b(<https://cazaredinromania.ro/>), c(<https://crispres.ro/>) d(<https://razyanpascu.ro/>), e(<https://epicvisits.com/>), f([www.conaculpopeci.ro](http://www.conaculpopeci.ro)), g([www.alegecazare.ro](http://www.alegecazare.ro)), h(<https://cabanesipensiuni.ro/>)

- Minibar, Playground, Tennis court, Tourism in the neighbourhoods & TV: two of the eight mansions provide details;
- Barbeque terrace, Bathroom, Fitness, Football field, Leisure point, Multifunctional Hall, Party Garden, Private Lake, Spa, Summer terrace & Wireless: one of the eight mansions provides details.



**Figure 4. Mansion wine cellars**

Source: a([www.morisca.ro](http://www.morisca.ro)), b(<https://domeniulmanasia.ro/>)

## CONCLUSIONS

The following general conclusion can be drawn: the presentation of the eight Romanian old and new mansions lacks a common vision – the “black holes” could have been completed with details supplied by the mansions’ websites. The strengths and weaknesses of the site Ghid turistic România are as follows:

- Strengths:
  - Location and contact details (address, e-mail address, fax, GPS coordinates, location on Google Map, land/mobile phone, website) provided (though not all for each mansion);
  - Type: seven of the eight mansions are old but restored;
  - Built/history: the history of seven of the eight mansions is presented;
  - Indoor & outdoor activities: seven of the eight mansions provide details;
  - Restaurant & Wine cellar: six of the eight mansions provide details (though all of them should provide such details since tourists need both accommodation and food);
- Weaknesses:
  - Accommodation, Logo & Pool: four of the eight mansions provide details (all of them should provide accommodation details since tourists need both accommodation and food);
  - Minibar, Playground, Tennis court, Tourism in the neighbourhoods & TV: two of the eight mansions provide details (all of them should provide tourism in the neighbourhoods’ details since tourists need, besides accommodation and food, tourism activities);
  - Barbeque terrace, Bathroom, Fitness, Football field, Leisure point, Multifunctional Hall, Party Garden, Private Lake, Spa, Summer terrace & Wireless: one of the eight mansions provides details (all of them should provide wireless details since tourists need, besides accommodation, food, and tourism activities, to be able to keep in touch with their homes/work places).

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