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ONLINE TOURIST IMAGE ON INSTAGRAM.
STUDY CASE: OBCINA MARE, SUCEAVA

During the past decades tourism has evolved, and along with it also the technology. So, it makes only sense to be studied together. The present study focuses on the online Instagram image of Obcina Mare, an area located in northern Romania, known for its UNESCO monasteries and long-living traditions, also popular as a tourist destination. As the area was not studied before under the lens of Instagram, the present study does that, with an emphasis on gender representation.

A thorough literature review on the subject of Instagram tourism was made, revealing the scattered research that is present so far as regards spatial coverage of the study area and several other in terms of areas studied, as well as the effect of Instagram in tourism being intense and profound. The methodology included manually retrieving 564 Instagram posts with hashtags associated with Obcina Mare and its compound localities, including the geotag, images, post description, hashtags used and engagement metrics for each of them. The results show tourists that come mostly from Romania, but also from other countries worldwide, three main concentration areas along the area, a focus on monasteries when it comes to the text posted, yet more general when it comes to the images along, as well as a less gendered content. Practical implications include, but are not limited to the stakeholders taking advantage on these results for a better view of the tourism in Obcina Mare, along with targeted promotion and marketing campaigns taking into account social media as well. Future studies should imply expanding the scale of analysis and with automated methods for an easier analysis of more posts.

Keywords: *Instagram, tourism, Romania, social media, posts analysis, gender analysis.*

Problem definition. In the continuous era of digitalization, social media seems to dictate users' preferences in any aspect of life. The most relevant for the actual research and, among the newest, is tourism. Entities and individuals that propose a tourist brand don't have the absolute control anymore for modeling the destination's image (Shuqair & Cragg, 2017), and the tourists have the chance to intervene by user generated content (UGC). UGC changes radically the semiotic of tourism brand (Arefieva et al., 2021), since the influence of tourists offers a bigger picture, that is more clear and precise towards the visited destinations.

In the past years, we assist worldwide and locally to the popularization of several new aspects of tourism in destinations that are no longer constrained by the traditional tourism agency and even activities that can be included in the tourism circuit (Gauna Ruiz de León et al., 2025). Besides influencers, that have the capacity to share new information and ideas or to modify users' perception in their choices (Palazzo et al., 2021) and the big actors in tourism, tourists take control towards the distribution of images created by them, considering themselves stakeholders.

The novelty the present subject raises is considerable, giving the fact that the impact of social media, such as Instagram towards tourism has been researched until now (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Kilipiri et al., 2023; Mele et al., 2021; Smith, 2018), but Romania seems to have little approaches of the subject in the scientific literature (Băneş et al., 2017; Jitariu et al., 2024; Surugiu & Surugiu, 2015; Ţuclea et al., 2020), yet very few about the social media platform mentioned (STOLERIU & MIHĂILĂ, 2025). Internationally, such studies have been made at the global scale (Palazzo et al., 2021) and country level for: Turkey (Turancı, 2019), Portugal (Kuhzady et al., 2017), Indonesia (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015), Norway (Justianto & Morley, 2020), UK, Croatia, New Zeeland, USA, Italy, Canada (Šegota, 2018) etc. Yet the research seems very fragmented and still evolving.

Even so, practices like electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Fanea-Ivanovici et al., 2025; Le & Ryu, 2023) do not represent a novelty from the Romanian view, as people tend to visit destinations and points of interest seen on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok etc. for several years now. The digital media pushed the trend of indirect promotion of the destinations to bigger levels, so the social media represents an environment for active study when it comes to the study of Obcina Mare.

Even if the influence of social media towards travel

behavior is constantly growing, the online tourist image of Romanian destinations is still insufficiently studied when it comes to digital environments (Jitariu et al., 2024; Lupu et al., 2021; Palade, 2014; Stoleriu et al., 2023; STOLERIU & MIHĂILĂ, 2025; Surugiu & Surugiu, 2015). In spite of the fact that Instagram serves as a major online platform for visual and destination branding, through the use of user-generated content, there is still limited understanding on the specifics of how the content shapes the perceived online image of smaller destinations and how real does this image reflect the reality of tourist dynamics (Guerreiro et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2020). This gap is even more problematic since tourism actors do not have the clarity of the entire dimension of their destination as represented online, what elements tend to attract tourists more, and which local resources risk on remaining underpromoted or even invisible.

Understanding destination image production and formation through social media platforms as Instagram contributes to the international research (Beerli & Martín, 2004) on the subject and advances theoretical discussions on how UGC and eWOM help individuals co-create tourism (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Palazzo et al., 2021). At the same time, it helps identifying patterns in visitation and in gender representation, attraction popularity, contributing on the discussions about the Instagram gaze (Arts et al., 2021). The present study also adds to the studies proving Instagram as a research tool, showing that this data is relevant in geography and tourism statistics and it responds to the need of integrating new data and adapt to newer technologies when it comes to tourism research.

The results of this study should help stakeholders understand better the tourist flows in Obcina Mare, as well as encourage further similar studies in different areas. Even more, better targeted promotion and marketing strategies should be put in place for the attraction of new potential tourists yet unaware of this destination. Besides that, tourism actors may have a better chance on proposing alternative routes and places to visit during the crowded seasons of the year, enhancing the local and regional competitiveness on the market.

Analysis of recent research. Obicina Mare is a relief unit located near the Ukrainian border, part of the historic region of Bucovina, part of the historic country of Moldova, very well known for its rich culture and heritage (Barbu & Ionesi, 1987). Its natural resources make it perfect for a tourist destination that has beautiful landscapes modeled by geology, climate, hydrography and vegetation (României III, 1987). Anthropic resources help even more, for example its densely populated area, hence being one of the most populated mountain regions in Romania (României III, 1987). Also, it has a diverse population, taking into account its minorities (Polish, Hutsuls, Roma etc.), its settlements are along medium and large-sized communication routes and tourism represents a major economic activity (Barbu & Ionesi, 1987) supported by the factors listed above. Obcina Mare offers the possibility to practice winter sports in Gura Humorului, rural and agrotourism in Moldovita,

religious tourism in Putna, Sucevita, Gura Humorului, wellness tourism in Cacica and cultural tourism all over.

The launch of social media platform made possible the communication of people to an apparently unlimited number of other individuals about various products or companies that they enter in contact to (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). In the past decade, social media has become a reliable resource for promotion (Turancı, 2019), nowadays present in many aspects of our daily life.

However, social media can be defined as application, activity or behavior that is done to distribute information or ideas through interactive media, that allows the creation and sharing of text, images, videos and sounds among online groups (Turancı, 2019). Another definition, proposed by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) says that social networking sites are apps that help its users to connect through the creation of profiles containing personal information, inviting friends and colleagues to access those profiles and send instant messages among them, the profiles including any type of information, images, videos, files and blogs.

Instagram was launched in 2010 as a social media platform (Smith, 2018), becoming widely used among smartphone users, primarily for posting images and/or videos by its users. This step is mandatory, while inserting text is only possible after uploading visual content. According to the application's blog, Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app available on iPhone and Android, where users can share, view, comments on, and like posts shared by others (Instagram, 2025). Initially designed primarily for photographs, Instagram has evolved into a platform for marketing, advertising, and promotion, among other uses (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). A single post can include between one and ten images, the text can contain up to 2,200 characters, and up to 30 hashtags (#) (Smith, 2021).

The user interface (as related by the authors) includes basic and complex functions such as: adding a post/story/reel/live video; viewing and editing the personal profile, as well as checking the activity of other users in relation to one's personal profile or based on user preferences; sending messages through an instant messaging system to individual users or groups; initiating video and audio calls; viewing content posted by followed users on the main feed, including the possibility to like, comment, forward the post to another user or group via instant messaging or into a story, and saving the post in a personal collection visible only from the user's profile or a selected group; searching for profiles, geolocations, or hashtags (#), and viewing short videos of random users, known as reels, selected according to personal preferences; purchasing products. When a platform user wants to create a post, they have two options: taking a photo with their phone or selecting already existing photos and/or videos. Users can choose up to 10 items. After selection, the app offers standard filters and manual editing tools, such as brightness, contrast, structure, highlights, and sharpness. The final step before posting includes adding a description, hashtags, tagging people, specifying a location, adding a song, and sharing

the post on interconnected platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and Tumblr.

This process enforces the "image first, text second" approach (Falk & Hagsten, 2021), stimulating a culture that prioritizes photography and visual communication. As a result, information spreads rapidly, making it increasingly difficult to stay up-to-date and measure its volume. In addition, beyond platform-enabled research frameworks, the specialized literature offers numerous terms describing posted content, content creators, and the dynamics of this process. *Influencers* are defined as individuals or groups capable of creating impact by spreading information or behaviors (Bakshy et al., 2011), holding the power to influence various audiences interested in the presented topic. *User-generated content (UGC)* refers to any content created online by platform users (Shuqair & Cragg, 2017). According to Bahtar & Muda (Bahtar & Muda, 2016), UGC encompasses any material created and uploaded to the internet by non-media entities and has a strong influence on consumer behavior, with content typically shared on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. *eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth)* refers to all types of informal communication facilitated by internet-based technologies about any kind of product or service, whether tangible or intangible (Litvin et al., 2008). This includes communication between producers and consumers as well as strictly between consumers. The influence of eWOM is very strong among social media users, especially on Instagram, because people tend to depend on the opinions of acquaintances (family, friends, colleagues) and those who can share detailed accounts (influencers) (Le & Ryu, 2023; Litvin et al., 2008).

Through its interface, Instagram creates few major effects: it imposes certain aesthetic norms regarding the entire travel process, long before the trip even begins, and it encourages the expression of opinions through the monetization of content produced by individuals (Smith, 2021). Instagram is gradually being used by both official and unofficial entities and is considered an effective promotional channel (Rahman, 2020). Through the large-scale use of social media, experts and non-experts can reach far more individuals than before, surging their influence (Belanche et al., 2021). Some speak of a so-called Instagram effect, which refers to the fact that a tourist destination or place becomes significantly more popular once it reaches the platform's trending topics, regardless of the location's capacity to receive tourists (Falk & Hagsten, 2021), which can raise serious issues for destination management and sustainability.

Unlike many other forms of technology use that have not enjoyed significant popularity, photography is unanimously accepted as one of the key leisure-related technological utilities, alongside distance-measuring applications (Arts et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, tourists and locals can share their experiences in an environment beneficial to the distribution of such information (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). The same authors say that one advantage is users have the opportunity to introduce information, extend it, and most important, directly participate in this process. Moreover, a key advantage is to encourage tourists to share their experiences as Instagram users, thus promoting destinations through social media (Arefieva et al., 2021; Kuhzady et al., 2017). Currently, tourists consider Instagram a valid means of obtaining information when choosing a vacation destination (Madinga et al., 2020).

Given the power of photographs to influence tourists, Instagram, by enabling the uploading and sharing of such content and adding short descriptions, has developed as an active platform in the tourism sector (Kim et al., 2021). Currently, many tourists consider Instagram a key source of information for choosing their vacation destinations (Madinga et al., 2020). Multiple studies demonstrate and support Instagram's influence in inducing tourism destinations among users (Belanche et al., 2021; Daxböck et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Kusherdyana et al., 2020; Razak & Mansor, 2021; Yhee et al., 2021). Instagram directly impacts the decision-making process of vacation planning, with the platform having a massive influence on shaping user perceptions (Kusherdyana et al., 2020). In recent years, Instagram has become the most popular platform among young users seeking inspiration and making pre-travel decisions (Tešin et al., 2022). Cohen et al. (2021) argue that a vacation destination perceived as *Instagrammable* immediately gains the attention of Millennials, becoming a key decision-making criterion. Considering that people seeking unique experiences, destination competitiveness is encouraged, in order to remain on the tourism market and differentiate from the competition (Arefieva et al., 2021).

Photography can be considered a fundamental part of the tourism experience (Kusherdyana et al., 2020). Judging by recent years, UGC becomes an essential tool for tourists, particularly considering the intangible nature of the tourism product, thus significantly reducing purchasing risk. Kusherdyana et al. (2020) argue that destination descriptions obtained through images can influence the decision to visit the destination. Many users tend to perceive some landscapes as more Instagrammable than others, generating similar content, and thus a dominant aesthetic (Arts et al., 2021). Influencers, as UGC producers, are identified as the main motivators behind Instagram-induces tourism (Razak & Mansor, 2021). Unlike other niches promoted on Instagram (e.g., makeup, self-care, bodybuilding), collaborations between brands and influencers are rare (Belanche et al., 2021), thus tourists place greater trust in content produced by travel influencers.

Pointing out unresolved part of the problem. Despite the fact that international research acknowledges Instagram as a real influence towards destination image and tourist behavior, there are several aspects that are not tackled in the context of Romanian tourism, more specific, areas such as Obcina Mare, as said in the sections before. There is still limited comprehension on how accurately Instagram reflets actual tourism dynamics (tourist flows, spatial patterns) (Diposumarto et al., 2015; Zulzilah et al., 2019). Existing studies have not sufficiently examined the discrepancy between iconic cultural attractions and lesser-known local resources. In the case of Obcina Mare, UNESCO monasteries seem to dominate the online image (Hincu, 2015), while traditional craftsmanship, rural life, and natural landscapes

remain underpromoted. This creates (and may deepen) a tension between the region's real tourism potential and its digital constructed identity.

Although international research points to persistent gender biases in tourism imagery (E. Smith et al., 2023; Mecca, 2021; Paül i Agustí, 2021; Salvador-Almela, 2023; Wijesinghe et al., 2020), it is not yet clear whether Instagram perpetuates or challenges these patterns in Romanian rural destinations. The extent to which user-generated visuals contribute to gender-balanced depictions in Obcina Mare remains largely unexplored. Lastly, from a methodological perspective, there is an unresolved need for systematic frameworks to analyze Instagram data in the Romanian tourism context. Most existing studies rely on small datasets or focus on major urban destinations, leaving rural regions understudied. The lack of standardized analytical approaches limits the ability of tourism stakeholders to interpret online content and integrate it into strategic planning.

Formulation of the purpose of the article. The present study aims to become a foundation or a starting point for future research on the impact of Instagram in tourism for other areas in Romania. By quantifying the impact of social media, tourism marketing can evolve, and Instagram data may help better profile and anticipate their needs, more than official statistics. Besides establishing the online image on social media for Obcina Mare, there is a high relevance in understanding the influence of gender when posting on Instagram and their actions in the images for users' perception towards the destination. The quantification of tourism in destinations such as Obcina Mare and discovering more efficient ways for tourism promotion sets up a new way to conduct marketing for this area and in Romania as well. There is also, a discussion starter, regarding an opening for the understanding of tourist consumers in Romania and the attraction of new visitors on the marketing and promotion side of tourism studies.

The purpose of this article is to examine how the tourist image of Obcina Mare is constructed on Instagram through user-generated visual and textual content. By analyzing patterns in posted images, text, user demographics, and engagement metrics, the study aims to identify the dominant themes that shape the online representation of the area, highlight underrepresented attractions, and evaluate the role of gender in the construction of tourism imagery, in the Romanian landscape. Through this approach, the article seeks to address the gap in current scientific knowledge regarding the digital portrayal of Romanian rural destinations and to provide insights that can support evidence-based tourism marketing and planning.

The main material

1. Methodology. The research approach is multifaceted, so there are multiple analyses made that need to be discussed separately, in the next paragraphs. The main part was creating a database of the posts that have hashtags (#) including the name of the main localities in Obcina Mare, as well as the hashtag for the overall area (#obcinamare). Even if some of them have more than 10.000 posts, only the first 100 were selected for each, or under if there were less. For empiric purposes, the localities Frasin, Solca, Vama and Arbore were eliminated

after the search, since the posts were showing anything but tourist content of the area due to name overlapping with trees (Frasin, Arbore), brands based by the locality name (Solca-beer) and Vama being at the same time the name of another locality in Romania, Vama Veche, that has more popularity and more posts about its tourism, and the band. Based on the fact that most of the popular posts were irrelevant to the subject, these localities were eliminated from the study.

For the database mentioned in the paragraph from above there were selected 564 posts. For each of them there were retrieved: the images (that can be up to 10) and their number, user name, number of likes, number of comments, the name of the tourist attraction, description, hashtags in description and the number, geolocation. Using this data, other data was obtained for the analyses, that will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

For the spatial analysis, the number of posts and the main hashtag for the search were used and data regarding the users, in order to create maps of the spatial distribution of the posts in the area studied and a map that shows the provenance of the tourists. Besides Excel, used to process all the data, PhilCarto (Waniez, 2010) was used for maps creation, and Adobe Illustrator, for image refinement.

For the text part of the data, the descriptions were translated into English, since there were retrieved in their original languages, including: Romanian, Spanish, Italian, Russian. After that, they were cleared for linking words and emojis. This process was done using a Python code. After that, the results were represented using VosViewer in the form of conceptual maps. The same analysis was done for the hashtags found in descriptions, but the results showed no relevant connections, besides the names of the localities that are used together.

The images were classified and tagged according to the main destination attributes illustrated, using the Beerli & Martin (2004) classification. This includes 9 categories: natural resources (NR), general infrastructure (GI), tourist infrastructure (TI), tourist leisure and recreation (TLR), culture, history and art+traditions (CHA), political and economic factors (PEF), built environment (BE), social environment (SE) and atmosphere (A). All the primary attributes seen in images were identified and classified in one of the above categories. A gender analysis was also done using the people present in the images and the actions they were seen to do. These analyses resulted in graphs and tables. The images were retrieved by screenshotting each of them using Lightshot, having a total of 1.202 screenshots. The most representative picture was selected for each Instagram post that had more than one. Not all the images could be analyzed for the gender depicted, because of the lack of representation of humans.

The engagement metrics (like, comment) were analyzed in comparison with the gender data retrieved from the personal profiles of the users, resulting in graphs.

2. Results

a. Spatial Analysis

When it comes to the spatial distribution of the posts in Obcina Mare (Figure 1), we can see there are three major concentration poles: Moldovita, Sucevita and Gura Humorului.

The major one around Moldovita, includes also Vatra Moldovitei and Frumosu. This area includes posts of the Moldovita monastery, Mocanita Hutulca narrow gauge, which are very popular tourist destinations, as well as Lucia Condrea Egg Museum and Via Transilvanica, which is a long walkable route that starts in the country of Suceava and expands in the entire country. The posts for this area also include natural and rural landscapes, especially for Frumosu which is more of a rising tourist destination in the area.

The Sucevita concentration pole, includes Putna, Vicovu de Jos and Marginea. Putna has the monastery with the same name, Vicovu de Jos has many posts depicting the architecture of the traditional homes, the users, personalized products and local offered services.

Marginea is known for its representative black pottery, also shown in the Instagram posts by the users promoting pottery workshops and the products.

The southernmost concentration around Gura Humorului, also includes Manastirea Humorului, Cacica, Partestii de Jos and Paltinoasa. Humor Monastery is highlighted strictly by posts related to the monastery with the same name. Cacica with #cacica includes most of the posts that needed to be removed, however, the posts that illustrate the traditional architecture of the houses, the Roman Catholic Basilica of the Assumption, traditions and local life remain. Pârteştii de Jos is one of the few exceptions in that most of the posts are created by one user, who promotes the traditional and unaltered architecture and lifestyle that the locality offers.
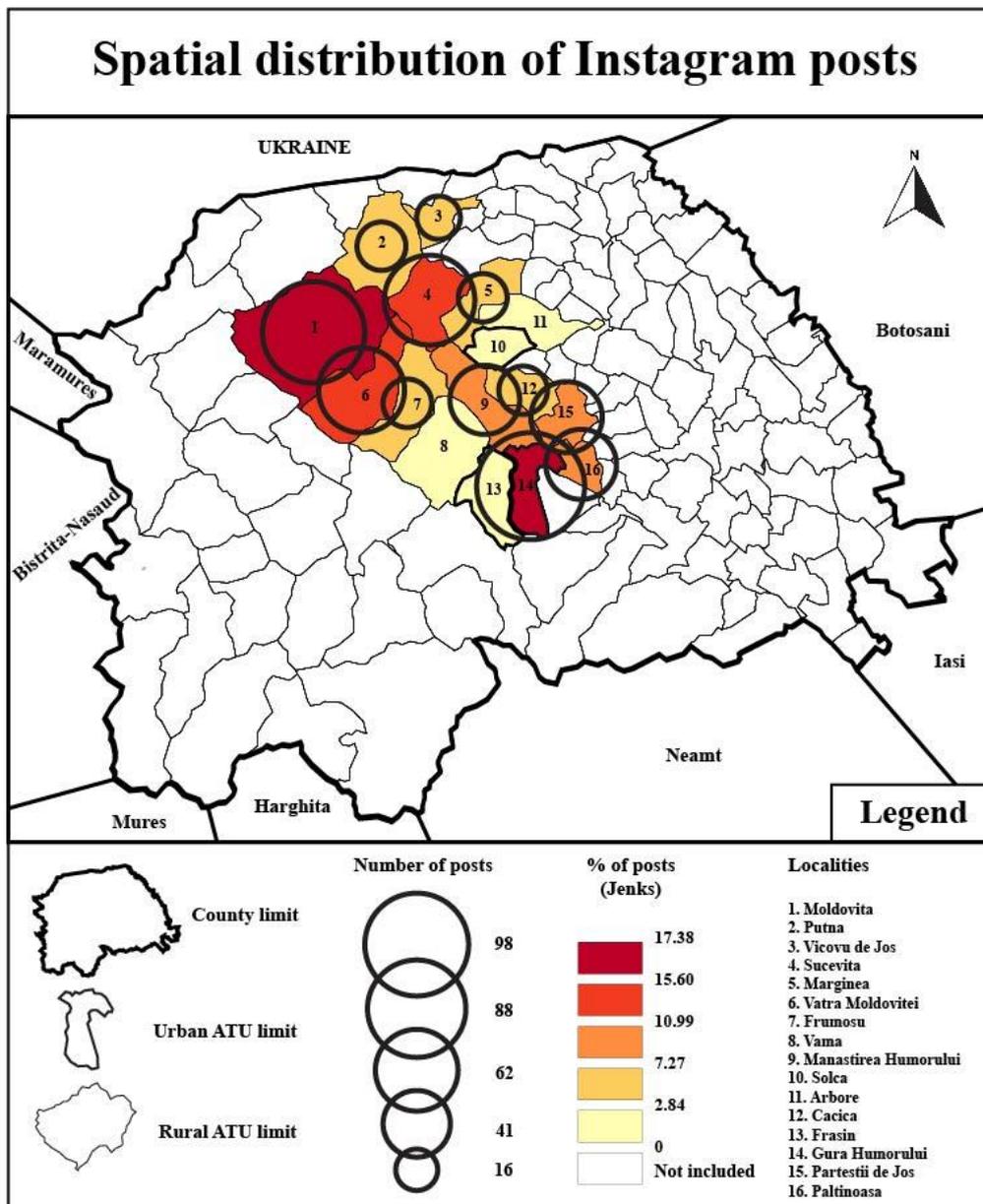

Fig. 1. Spatial distribution of Instagram posts

Gura Humorului and Moldovita are the most popular localities on Instagram, according to their share in the total number of posts (over 15%). They are followed by Sucevita and Vatra Moldovitei, with shared over 10%.

The other localities with values of 0%-10% seem to attract lower interest.

According to the username (Figure 2), post descriptions and hashtags used, popele who post about Obcina

Mare come mostly from Europe (96%), very few from Asia (2,5%), or North and South America (1,5%). As expected, Romanians have the largest share. Other origin countries are Spain, Japan, Switzerland and Italy. The strong presence of European countries may be attributed to spatial and cultural proximity, or migration flows. Another key reason that could also explain visitors from other countries/continents is the generally increasing interest for authenticity (cultural and natural in this case).
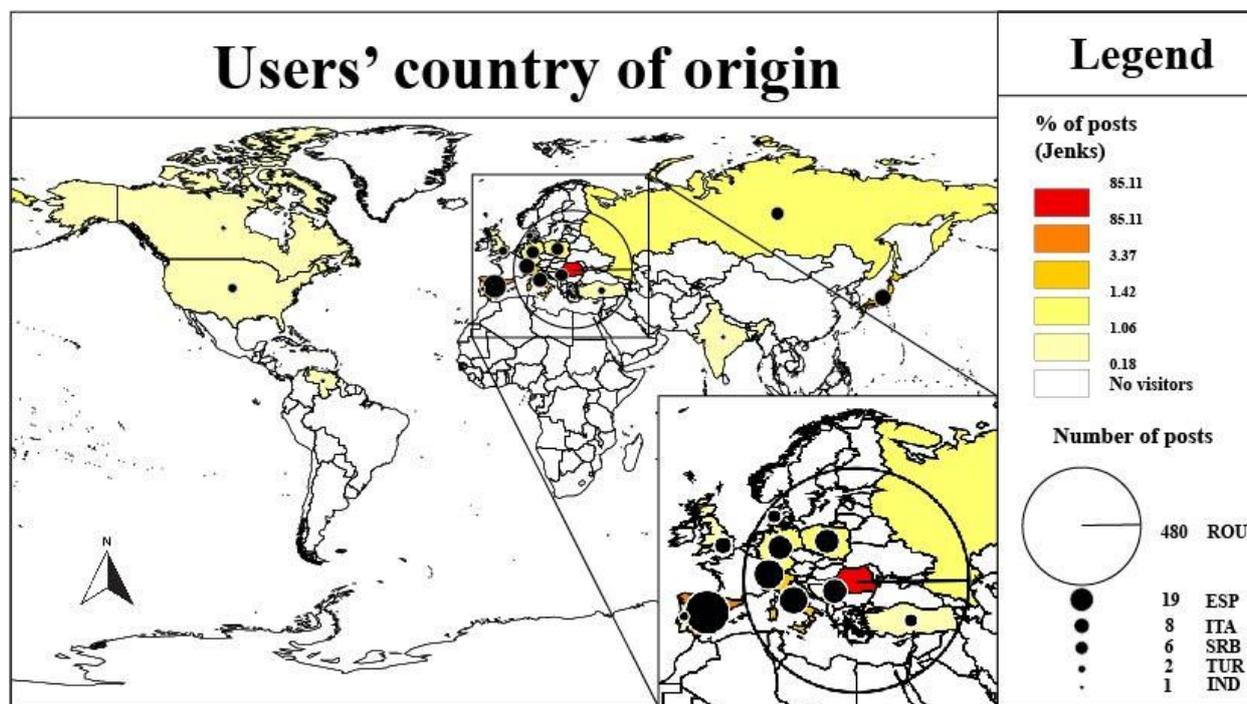

Fig. 2. Users' country of origin

b. Text analysis

The average for every locality in Obcina Mare is over 8 hashtags per post (Figure 3), showing that many of them are made by users who want more visibility, particularly influencers, but also users aspiring to similar status. It is important to mention that for every hashtag, we collected the most popular 100 or less posts, so this means that the use of more hashtags may be indeed part of the key of making posts more popular. Also, the fact that posts linked to the overall area have a lower number of hashtags (10#/post on average) than many included localities, shows a lack of knowledge or visibility for Obcina Mare as a whole. Patrautii de Jos stands out by having the highest average (18#/post on average), with only one consistent user posting, thus indicating the role of an active online presence. Gura Humorului and Vatra Moldovitei come next, also being the most visited locations and the most popular destinations so far, followed by Manastirea Humorului, Putna and Sucevita.
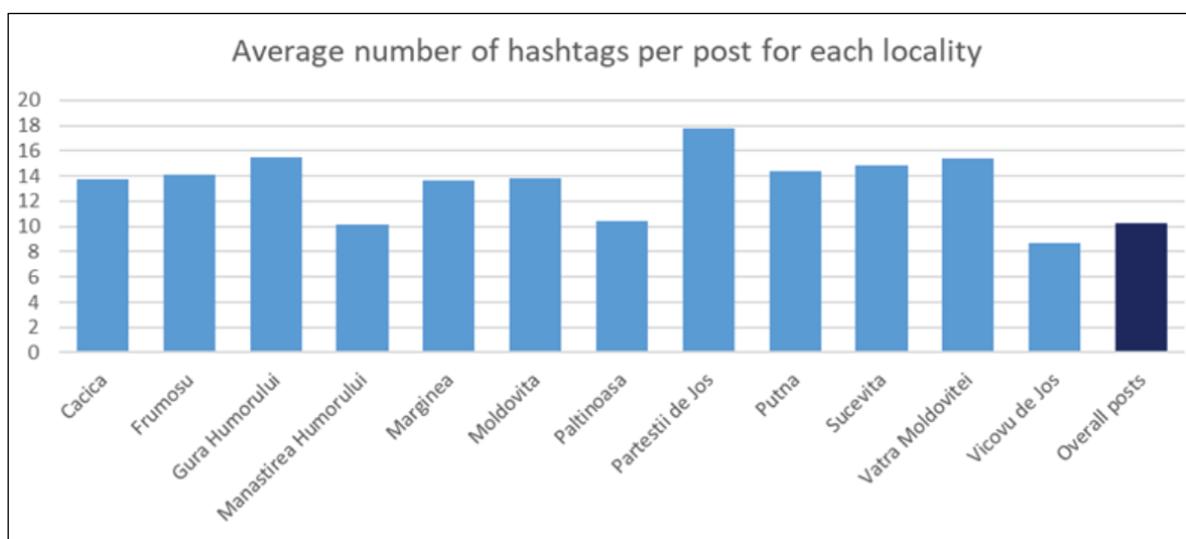

Fig. 3. Average number of hashtags per post for each locality

Patrautii de Jos stands out by having the highest average, suggesting a want or need for higher visibility, judging by the fact that there is one consistent user making posts about this locality. Gura Humorului and Vatra Moldovitei come next, also being the most visited locations and the most popular destinations so far, as well as Manastirea Humorului, Putna and Sucevita that come next, all of them showing a higher-than-average users.

The content analysis of text from Instagram posts (Figure 4) indicates a clear connection to the regional umbrella brand of Bucovina, as Obcina Mare is geographically a part of this Romanian destination (that largely overlaps Suceava county), very famous for its authentic rural traditions (STOLERIU & MIHĂILĂ, 2025). This explains the connection to the *epicenter of Romanian traditions* and the focus on rural local heritage

with connection like *Easter Bucovina*. The *monastery*-themed cluster is clearly linked to the well-known, UNESCO-labeled monastery of *Moldovita* and *Humor*. Another cluster is focused on visit organization, with focus on duration (*time*), place history (i.e. *today*), all of them being connected to the *everything* cluster, meaning short, yet dense trips, in terms of points of interest visited. Accessibility is also an important dimension (i.e. *village* and *car*), the posts underlining the appropriate transport means for move around. A more individualized cluster (mainly associated professional photographers) with indicates the role of visual content and natural and cultural landscape esthetics that make this region a benchmark destination for Romania's tourist heritage photo (i.e. *Romania, photo, tag*).
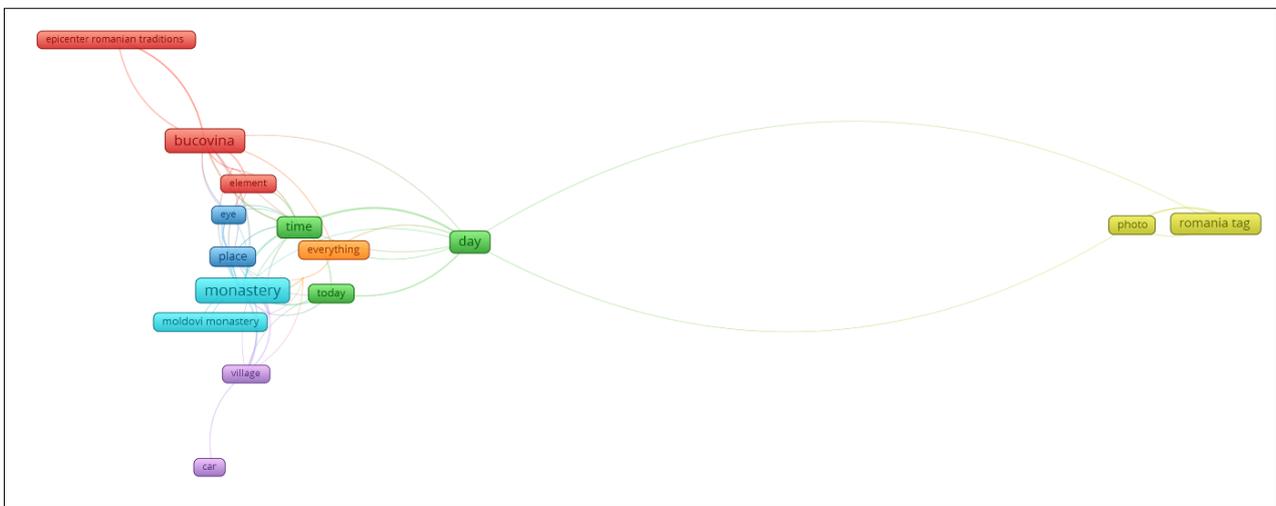

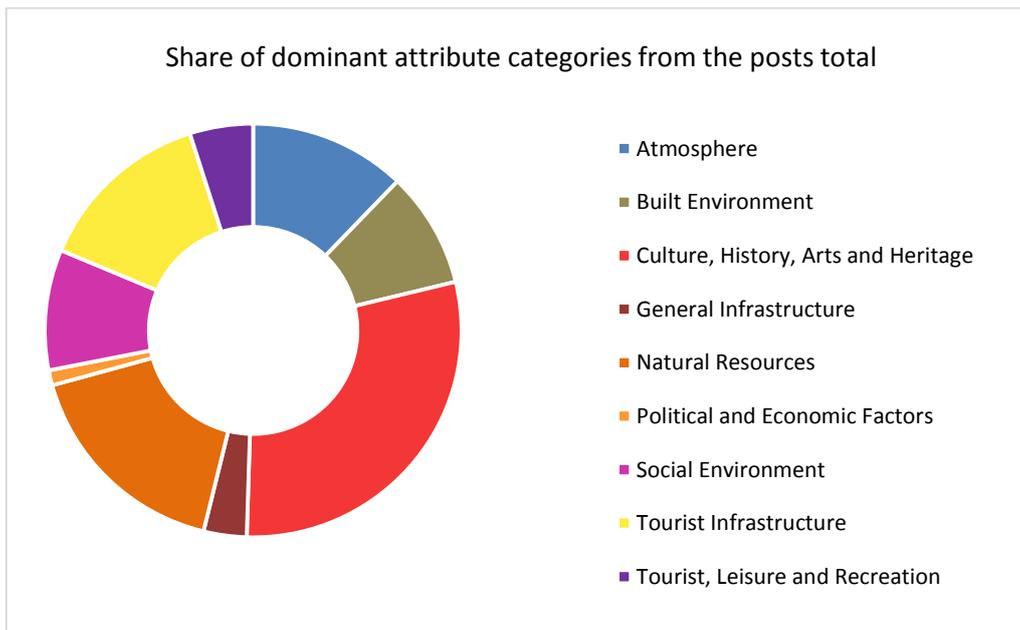*Fig. 4. Conceptual map of the linking words in Instagram posts' descriptions*

Fig. 5. Share of dominant attribute categories from the posts total

c. Image and engagement metrics under the view of gender representation

For the analysis of destination attributes present in Instagram photos, the authors used the Beerli & Martin (2004) categories – Figure 5. The *culture, history, arts and heritage* category dominates, with images of museums, cultural points of interest and traditional activities. These were photos of people with traditional painted eggs for Easter, national costumes, traditional food, historical buildings, churches etc. The next category is *natural landscape*, with images of nature aspects such as small animals, plants, trees, rainbows etc. The *tourist infrastructure* and *atmosphere* categories rank really close with images depicting accommodations (interior and exterior), restaurants and other tourist facilities, as well as the general place atmosphere like their orientation for families, luxury or relaxation.

Social environment and *built environment* complement each other, the first one showcasing welcoming residents in their daily activities of a simple rural life, and the second showing sometimes crowding, pollution and traffic congestion, which are not posted frequently by Obcina Mare visitors that share content on Instagram. The categories of *tourist, leisure and recreation*, *general infrastructure* and *political and economic factors* are underrepresented - they do not seem to be aesthetic or impressive enough for visitors.

A further analysis was done on the actions of people illustrated in the images posted – Figure 6. The frequency of the action *pose* (85 for women, 50 men, 13 children) is the highest in all groups, showing the *image first, text second,* character of Instagram, mentioned before, meaning here that people tend to pose for photos in the faith that they know these will be posted on social media, not necessarily on Instagram in particular. There are as well active instances of the people in the images posted, showing a general preference among the tourists in the area to be physically active. The *pray* action is espected, since there are several famous monasteries in Obcina Mare.

Overall, the dataset captures pretty much a wide range of activities, dominated by posing and lightly expressive actions, especially among the adults, reflecting some common patterns in staged tourism and/or social media photography. Children are more frequently depicted in playful or dynamic activities, showed by the verbs *run, play, throw rice* (the last is a wedding tradition in Romania, throwing rice on grooms when they exit church being a wish for them to be rich). Men show rather more involvement in technical or mobility tasks (*drive, ride a bike, workout*), while women seem to appear a bit more often in expressive or creative actions (*smile, potter, egg painting*).

Even if men appear as more active than women, given the small study sample, it may be a bit rushed to say that there are notable differences. In general, the activities represent a mix of tourism, day to day life and outdoor sports.

Somehow there seem to be more women than men who post on Instagram about Obcina Mare, with a 14% gap between them – Figure 7. Several precedent studies showed that women tend to post more than men, this difference proving again to the knowledge (Rose et al., 2012).

Action	Frequency		
	Women	Men	Children
Pose	85	50	13
Walk	7	1	1
Glance	5	6	5
Dance	3	2	2
Pray	1	3	1
Speak	4	3	0
Equitation	1	2	0
Sing	1	2	0
Hike	1	3	0
Eat	1	1	0
Take Picture	3	1	0
Listen	0	1	1
Potter	0	2	1
Play	0	1	2
Grimace	1	0	0
Climb Stairs	1	0	0
Climb	1	0	0
Egg Painting	1	0	0
Laugh	1	0	0
Sit Down	2	0	0
Holds a Dog	1	0	0
Smile	1	0	0
Ring Bells	0	1	0
Cut Hair	0	1	0
Rest	0	1	0
Read	0	1	0
Drive	0	7	0
Work	0	3	0
Ride a Bike	0	4	0
Jump	0	1	0
Phone Scroll	0	1	0
Stand Up	0	1	0
Workout	0	1	0
Run	0	0	1
Throw rice	0	0	1
Knead	0	0	1

Fig. 6. Analysis of the actions done by people in the images by gender

In the images analyzed, men and women are depicted almost in the same proportion (Figure 8), not consolidating a gender disparity, but rather referring to less gender-based occurrences. Children appear less, as expected, given the fact that the population that uses Instagram is in between the ages of 18-35 years old, meaning that the younger part may not have children or overall, there is also a reluctancy to posting children's photos on Instagram, even if Obcina Mare can be depicted as a family area for spending holidays.
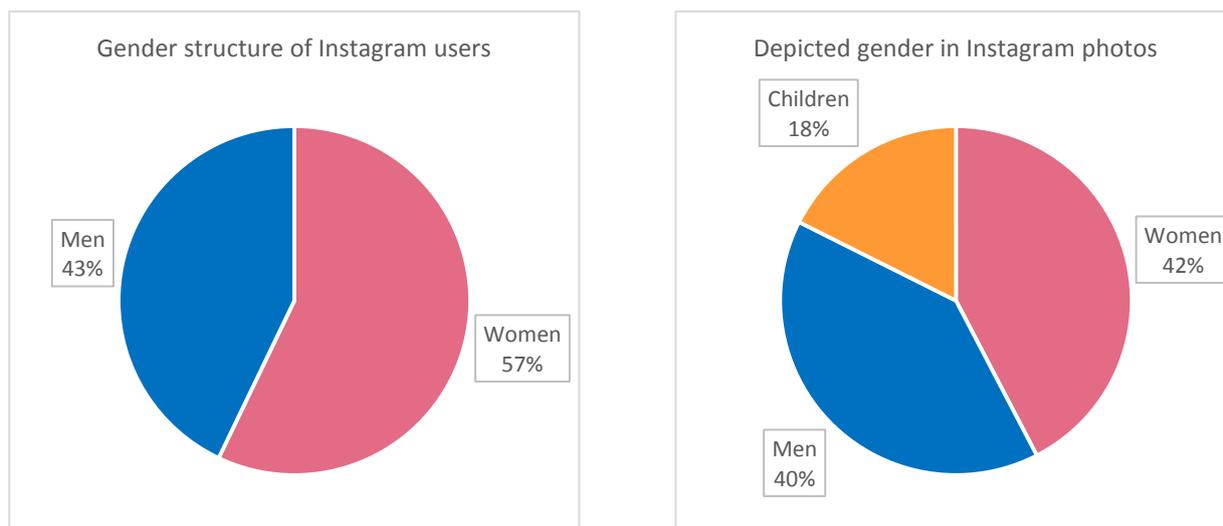
Fig. 7& 8. Gender structure of Instagram users AND Depicted gender in Instagram photos

Overall, women tend to post more and receive in average more likes and comments than men. This may add up to gender differences, but Mosseri (Mosseri, 2023), the CEO of Instagram, talks about a specific algorithm (or ranking). Even if not giving specific numbers, he explained that the more a user posts and the more the person uses hashtags, posts on a specific time and so on, can affect a post appearance in the feed (more hashtags meaning here selecting the type of audience, so more

hashtags, more targeted), attracting a bigger or lower number of likes and, as well, comments. The same ranking appeals to the frequency of posting, so it may mean that man actually post less on their account. But at the same time, the numbers that seem far from 4eachother in the graph, are not actually that far, and this can mean that even they exist, we are still closer to a genderless view regarding Instagram posting in Obcina Mare.
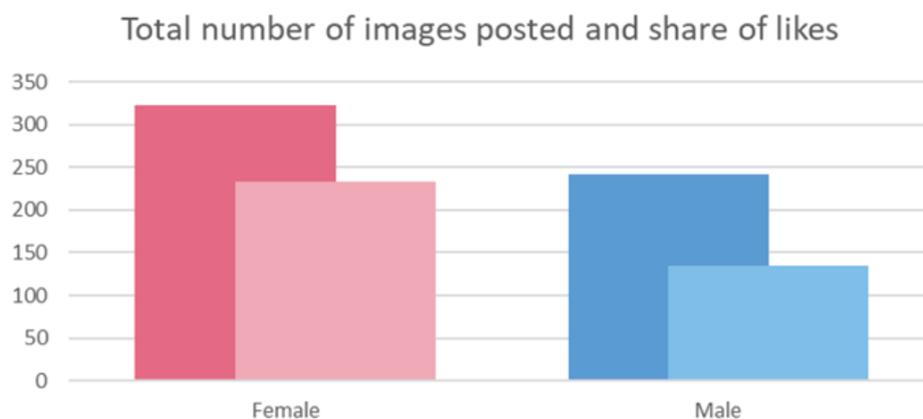
Fig. 9. Total number of images posted and share of likes
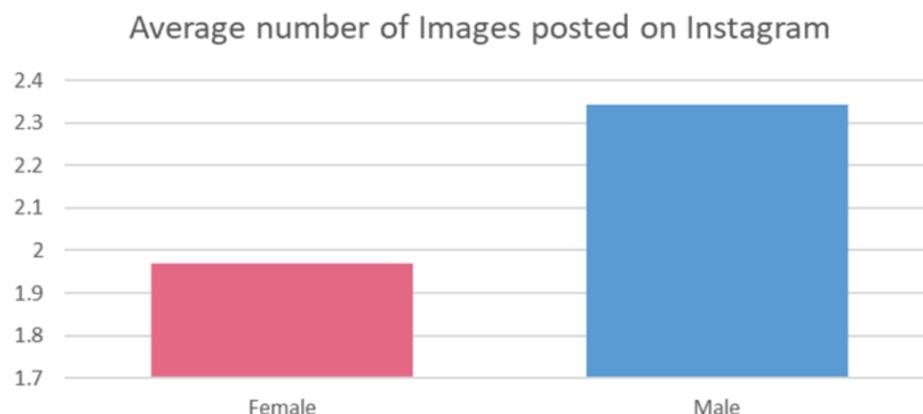
Fig. 10. Average number of images posted on Instagram

The same thing as mentioned before can go for the average number of posted images. Can really a difference of less than 0,4 of shared photographs dictate that man and women have different patterns in posting on Instagram? Even if the literature proved many times that women engage more on social media (Carrotte et al., 2017; Ramsey & Horan, 2018; Rose et al., 2012), this data says that not only that men also engage, but they seem very close in their Instagram usage.

Conclusion. The analysis of Instagram posts related to the case study area of Obcina Mare proves that its online destination image is mainly built on content highlighting an authentic cultural and historical heritage. The UNESCO monasteries of Voronet, Sucevita and Moldovita, appear as the most visible tourist attractions, underlining a cultural-religious tourism profile, a dimension specific also to Bukovina, the larger tourist region and destination that Obcina Mare is part of. Even if the area has a diverse range of resources, these elements appear less frequently in Instagram posts, indicating an uneven representation that favors more popular landmarks, such as rural life, traditional crafts or landscape diversity. This confirms that Instagram operates as a selective filter that amplifies the most visually appealing and culturally recognizable features of the destination (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Kusherdyana et al., 2020).

The gender analysis shows that activities in tourism at the area level are very close to balanced, with both women and men equally represented in posted images, and with a slightly higher representation of men in active, outdoor activities, and more women in passive postures or creative activities. Most frequent common activities for both genders are hiking, sightseeing and cultural visits. This shift opposes usual gendered tourism representations and points toward a more inclusive and diversified participation in leisure activities across the area.

From a practical point of view, the results call attention to the possibility of local authorities and tourism actors to pay more attention and start using Instagram in their efforts for marketing and destination promotion. Strengthening institutional engagement on this platform (and other social media channels) — through official accounts, curated hashtags, or coordinated promotional campaigns—could help diversify the online representation of Obcina Mare and increase awareness of lesser-known attractions. As Instagram is already proved to influence travel decisions, maybe it's time to influence more on the younger generations and consider UGC as a data source for shedding more light on tourism preferences, perceptions and behaviors This could also involve them more in cocreating destination image promotion and destination management.

Overall, the present study reveals that Instagram does provide a rich lens for the study of Obcina Mare's tourist image, in the idea of nuancing, understanding and interpretation, at least. It also underlines the need for a strategy in digital promotion, and not only on Instagram, to ensure that the area's tourism potential is more visible and better communicated. Further research should extend this work by enhancing and automating the methodology, and using it at a larger scale (at country level, for example).

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ОНЛАЙН-ТУРИСТИЧНЕ ЗОБРАЖЕННЯ В INSTAGRAM. ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ КЕЙСУ: ОБЧИНА МАРЕ, СУЧАВА

Протягом останніх десятиліть туризм розвивався, а разом з ним і технології. Тому має сенс досліджувати їх разом. Це дослідження зосереджено на онлайн-зображенні Обчина Маре, району на півночі Румунії, відомого своїми монастирями, що входять до списку ЮНЕСКО, та давніми традиціями, а також популярного туристичного напрямку. Оскільки цей район раніше не досліджувався через призму Instagram, це дослідження спрямоване саме на це, з акцентом на гендерній представленості.

Було проведено ретельний огляд літератури за туристичною тематикою в Instagram, який показав розрізнені дослідження, що проводяться на даний момент щодо просторового охоплення досліджуваної території та кількох інших досліджуваних територій, а також інтенсивний та глибокий вплив Instagram на туризм. Методологія включала ручне отримання 564 публікацій в Instagram з хештегами, пов'язаними з Обчина Маре та її складовими населеними пунктами, включаючи геотег, зображення, опис публікації, використані хештеги та показники залученості для кожної з них. Результати показують, що туристи приїжджають переважно з Румунії, а також і з інших країн світу, утворюючи три основні райони концентрації в цьому регіоні. Акцент робиться на монастирях, що відображається в опублікованих текстах, більш загальний акцент зроблено на зображеннях. Практичні наслідки включають, але не обмежуються, використанням зацікавленими сторонами цих результатів для кращого уявлення про туризм в Обчина Маре, а також цілеспрямовані на рекламні та маркетингові кампанії з урахуванням соціальних мереж. Подальші дослідження повинні передбачати розширення масштабу аналізу та використання автоматизованих методів для більш легкого аналізу більшої кількості публікацій.

Ключові слова: *Instagram, туризм, Румунія, соціальні мережі, аналіз публікацій, гендерний аналіз.*