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Drumuri bune! Exploring the language of drivers (and others)

CRISTINA BLEORȚU, MIGUEL CUEVAS ALONSO & LAVINIA SEICIUC

Abstract This research aims to contribute valuable insights into the linguistic dynamics of nonstandard Romanian language, with a specific focus on the evolution and adoption of the expression *drumuri bune!* vs. the traditional *drum bun!*

The study elucidates the outcomes of an extensive investigation into the origins of this expression, which appear to be rooted within the domain of drivers. The research employs a multifaceted approach encompassing a scrutiny of the *RoTenTen* corpus, data from the popular *Kiss FM* radio channel, the exploration of publicly available content from *Twitter* and *Facebook*, and the execution of a meticulously structured questionnaire utilizing the *Lime* tool.

Initial findings unearth the genesis of *drumuri bune!* within the driver community and its subsequent dissemination across various social strata, but not its penetration into standard Romanian yet.[1]

Keywords nonstandard Romanian language, *drumuri bune!,* corpus linguistics, linguistic adoption

1. Introduction[2]

In recent years, computers and computer sciences have exerted a significant influence on the advancement of linguistic studies. Furthermore, the landscape of Natural Language Processing (NLP) has undergone significant and rapid transformations (Mitkov 2022), leading to the emergence of voice assistants and machine translation programs that have improved substantially, particularly with the adoption of neural networks as algorithms.

These developments have facilitated access to data that was previously out of reach and offer techniques for its analysis (Rojo 2023) and has contributed to the increase of corpus linguistics. In Romania, this particular branch of linguistics is still in its early stages, primarily due to the limited availability of online published corpora (Patraș *et al.* 2019, Bleorțu and Seiciuc 2024a and 2024b). One very notable and important corpus is *CoRoLa* (https://corola.

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racai.ro/, cf. Tufiș *et al.* 2019, Cristea *et al.* 2017), which is a large collection of language data and is essential for the Romanian *Sketchengine* corpus (*RoTenTen*). Unfortunately, this corpus often does not allow us to thoroughly study certain language phenomena, such as the historical evolution of the phenomenon that we are discussing in this paper, and the number of tokens can be few and far between. The former difficulty is either due to the necessity of having to manually extract or classify a significant part of the data, or due to it being impossible to get a historical view of the language changes such as that provided by the Google *Ngram* corpus.

To avoid some of these limitations (primarily the second one), our approach will use triangulation as a method to test the results obtained from the (*RoTenTen*) corpora, as this provides a good solution to address complex phenomena where the data are scarce (see Baker and Egbert 2016). Triangulation consists of an integration, not a mere combination, of different sources of information to "cross-checking the results of one set of data provided with results from another set of data" (Saldanha and O'Brien 2013: 39) and establishing whether there is either a convergence or a divergence of the data coming from different but complementary sources. As Malamatidou (2018: 26) pointed out "[t]riangulation can be understood in the same way: different approaches are combined in such a way that, while they do not lose their individual characteristics, through their combination researchers address a single research question". This methodology leads to more complete and valid answers to the research questions and to a more reliable explanation of the subject to study (Egbert and Baker 2016); likewise, it has also been used recently in experimental studies (see Gilquin and Gries 2009).

Then, in order to obtain significative evidence of the recent incorporation and expansion of the expression *drumuri bune* vs. the traditional one *drum bun*, our study focuses on analyzing as many examples as possible of the expression *drumuri bune* using data from the *RoTenTen* Corpus and data obtained from other complementary sources: *Twitter* (now X), *Facebook*, radio programs, and a meticulous questionnaire.

As speakers, we are innovating (Coseriu 1978, Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968) and sometimes these innovations appear to modify the robustness of the discursive traditions well-established by the history of a

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language. One of these situations is the Romanian plural expression *drumuri bune!*, an innovation that coexists with the traditional one *drum bun!* This phenomenon, in our opinion, presents a lot of interest for an investigation in light of the limited depth of research on this particular topic; it is important to note that the only study[3] available to date is that conducted by Bleorțu (2022), which addresses primarily this expression from the point of view of the discursive traditions (Kabatek 2015, 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to remark that she concludes that it seems to be an expression that has arisen and is common among the drivers' social groups.

It is well-established that language is in a constant state of evolution (Labov 1972), and various linguistic expressions emerge or change; these are normally socially embedded and are constituted of multiple directional changes and, as has been shown, these dynamics become bonded strongly to friendship, social or professional groups and are important signs of personal and group identity (Coseriu 1978; Zafiu 2023: 36; Eckert 2000; Bybee 2010). As language users, we employ our creative faculties, often referred to as *energeia* in Coserian terminology, to generate novel linguistic constructs. Such neologisms may suffer different fates, including assimilation by other linguistic communities, fading into obscurity, evolving into discursive traditions within specific groups, as pointed out by Kabatek (2015, 2018), or even becoming integrated into standard language. For example, *șmecher* 'street-smart', *fraier* 'sucker', *pilă* 'connection', *șpagă* 'bribe' subsequently suffered a transition into general colloquial language usage and *banc* 'joke'[4] became integrated into the standard language. Because of this, it is imperative to acknowledge the dynamic nature of language and the role of linguistic innovation in its evolution.

At present, many of the linguistic innovations, including the one we are analyzing in this paper, are generated and disseminated in informal communication and in written form through virtual social communities;

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3   There are many studies on Romanian nonstandard language, but not on this expression. One scholar who has worked a lot on Romanian nonstandard language is Zafiu (2001, 2003, 2005, 2016, 2023). There are some others, such as Hasdeu 1881, Vasiliu 1937, etc. For more information see Zafiu (2023: 31–33). There are also urban dictionaries online such as: https://dictionar-urban.ro/.

4   See Zafiu 2023: 21, for more information.

some of them could serve us to identify communities and analyze the spreading dynamics into the group itself and through society in general, if the population generalizes the use of the innovation. Furthermore, as indicated by Eisenstein *et al.* (2014), written language "has been forced to adapt to meet the demands of synchronous conversation, resulting in a creative burst of new forms, such as emoticons, abbreviations, phonetic spellings, and other neologisms". In our case, we are attesting to a brand-new innovation, and whether it stands the test of time or not and becomes established in everyday Romanian language is as yet unknown.

The goal of this study is to describe and analyze the behavior of the novel use of *drumuri bune!* as a good wish expression in Romanian and as an innovation from the traditional and most common one *drum bun!* We will attempt to demonstrate how this expression has evolved over time as far as the data allows, and we will explore whether this novelty originated in a specific social group or not. To do this, we will first talk about good wishes in general, following with an exploration of the hypothesis surrounding the origins of *drumuri bune*!, and we go on to provide an overview of the corpus and the data we have used, focusing our attention on the social groups in which it is used. Then, we will present our findings and provide an interpretation. Finally, we will offer a brief summary of our conclusions.

2. Romanian greetings and several hypotheses on the origins of *Drumuri bune!*

As speakers, we possess a repertoire of expressive formulas (Iordan 1975: 266), which we employ in various social interactions for greeting, well-wishing etc. These are usually collocations with a particular status; since they reflect not only the social relations between the interlocutors, but also the influence of established discursive traditions (Kabatek 2015, 2018) and normally they are characterized by repeated discourse (Coșeriu 1996: 36; Munteanu 2013: 16–17), that belongs to a particular ethno-linguistic community. The established formulas belong to a convention between the members of a social group and they acquire the status of a ritual, as within a community they tend to follow a fairly stereotypical pattern (Collett 2004: 103), that is, as interactional rituals — formulaic nature, ritual practice that

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embodies social beliefs and emotion, etc. —, they introduce ritual frames (Hausmann, Jonason and Summers-Effler 2011; Kádár and House 2020; Kádár and Szalai 2020). The majority of these formulas are established in society by the expression of the cultural values in the discourse.

It is important to acknowledge that the dynamic nature of language implies that these formulas are not immutable. They can undergo modifications or alterations over time since they reflect the evolving nature of language itself. Such modifications or alterations usually appear in closed groups of individuals, so their linguistic expression belongs, originally, to a sociolect; sometimes, the ritual formulas transcend the frontiers of the group and are adopted by outsiders. This is what has happened to the good luck wishes in several European cultures: some of them originated in the world of stage performers (actors, singers, dancers), then spread into common language and became a standard idiom in day-to-day communication (Engl. *Break a leg!*, Germ. *Hals- und Beinbruch!*, It. *In bocca al lupo!*, Sp. *¡Mucha mierda!*, Port. *Muita merda!*, Fr. *Merde!*, etc.).

The expression discussed in this paper serves as an illustrative example of a modified formula within the Romanian language. In standard Romanian, the common expression for wishing someone a safe journey is *Drum bun!* However, in nonstandard language, an alternative form has emerged: *Drumuri bune!* ('Safe travels!'). This linguistic variation is intriguing, and its emergence prompts questions about its origins and usage. Bleorțu (2022: 57) emphasizes that Romanian wishes tend to be expressed more in the singular form (*Vacanță plăcută!* 'Happy holidays!', *Călătorie plăcută!* 'Have a nice trip!', *Noapte bună!* 'Good night!', *Bună ziua!* 'Good day!', *Crăciun fericit!* 'Merry Christmas!') than in plural[5] if we compared them with English, German and other Romance languages, so the presence of a plural form in *Drumuri bune!* is even more intriguing and it deserves to be investigated.

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5   The author compares expressions like *Sărbători fericite, Bună ziua, Noapte bună, Bună seara*, etc. in Asturian, English, French, Galician, German, Italian, Portuguese, Rhaeto-Romance, Spanish and she sees that the Romanian language presents more singular cases than the other languages. This does not mean that plural expressions do not exist in Romanian.

Several hypotheses can be considered to explain the emergence of the plural form *Drumuri bune!*:

1. **Superstitious component:** It's plausible that there is a superstitious[6] element associated with the plural form. This might stem from a belief that using the plural form offers additional protection or well-wishing, potentially invoking the idea of multiple safe journeys for added security.

2. **State of the roads:** The condition of Romania's road infrastructure has been a significant topic of discussion and even protest in recent years, as exemplified by campaigns like *România vrea autostrăzi. Și eu* ('Romania wants highways. Me too') the result of the protest generated by the construction of a meter of highway, in 2019, in the north of Romania (Moldova), by businessman Ștefan Mandachi to draw the attention of politicians, who also made a film on this topic (*30 de ani și 15 minute* in 2020). We suppose that the plural form appeared as an inside joke, in reference to the improper state of the Romanian road infrastructure.

3. **Semantic considerations:** There could be a semantic rationale for the plural form that reflects the notion of a series of journeys rather than a single trip if this expression originated in the drivers' group which realizes many travels each day, week, month, year, etc.

4. **Influence of English:** The influence of English on Romanian, as mentioned by Ivan (2013), is noteworthy. English expressions, including *Safe travels!*, often use the plural form, possibly leading to the adoption of a similar structure in Romanian as a result of language contact and globalization.

5. **A mark of identity**: The adoption and promotion of plural in place of the more conventional singular may be a conscious choice made

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[6]   Certain social groups have particular superstitions about good luck wishes, regarding their profession or common interests. Such is the case to the amateur fishermen, who are known to have turned back home after someone had wished them good luck. In their case, the proper well-wish is *Fir întins!* ('straight line'), with reference to the tension in the fishing line when the fish take the bait.

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by a particular group or subculture within Romania. This group may use the plural form as a symbol of their distinct identity, aligning themselves with a shared belief or ideology.

6. **The influence of the Republic of Moldova**, where a national project titled *Drumuri bine pentru toți!* ('Good Roads for Everyone!') was launched, may also play an important role. Russian, widely spoken by a significant percentage of the Moldovan population, includes well-wishing expressions related to roads and travel that use the plural form. One such expression is *Счастливых путей!* ('Happy travels!', 'Good roads!'), mirroring the Romanian usage. Another popular Russian expression, *Всем счастливых путей и добрых дорог!* ('Happy travels and good roads to everyone!'), further emphasizes this pluralized conceptualization of journeys.

3. Methodology

As explained in the introduction, due to the novel use of *Drumuri bune!* instead of *Drum bun!,* that entails a scarce number of tokens in the corpus, we will triangulate the data obtained using an array of diverse data sources in order to scrutinize the phenomenon: 1) the *RoTenTen* 2016 corpus; 2) data extracted from the *Twitter* and *Facebook* platforms; 3) comprehensive documentation of the phenomenon via radio broadcasts; and 4) the execution of an online questionnaire, in which active participation was collected from a sample of 62 individuals.

3.1. RoTenTen 2016

RoTenTen 2016 is one of the many sub-corpora available within the Sketchengine platform, which is a highly advanced tool designed for in-depth analysis of large text collections containing billions of words. Sketchengine offers over 700 precompiled corpora in more than 100 languages, making it a versatile resource for text analysis and text mining applications. Additionally, it includes a feature that can identify trends in word frequency, tracking words that either gain or lose popularity over time. For Romanian, there are two significant corpora known as *RoTenTen* 2016 (2,640,496,763) and *RoTenTen* 2021 (2,763,173,824 words). However, it is imperative to acknowledge

that these corpora exhibit some limitations when analyzing some relevant aspects, like the historical evolution and expansion/reduction of the uses of the forms. Unfortunately, this trend analysis feature is not currently available for the Romanian language.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the singular expression *drum bun!* and the plural expression *drumuri bune!*, we conducted an extraction of pertinent examples from the RoTenTen 2016 corpus. The data obtained were analyzed manually, in order to select only the cases in which *drumuri bune!* is functioning as a formulaic good wish expression.

3.2. *Twitter*[7] and *Facebook*

To collect data from *Facebook* and *Twitter*, we employed the *Tweepy* Library, a Python library for accessing to Twitter API, and *RapidMiner*, an open-source tool designed for PLN and data mining. Initially, we obtained the API credentials for both social platforms. It is important to point out that, in the case of *Facebook*, this procedure involved the creation of a developer application and the subsequent acquisition of an access token. We then employed the *Web Mining* operator to establish a connection with the *Facebook* API. Following the configuration of this operator with our acquired access token, we meticulously defined the specific data parameters we wished to extract, this is, posts containing the keyword *Drumuri bune!*.

Similarly, for *Twitter*, we initiated the process by creating a *Twitter* application and acquired the necessary API keys and access tokens. Within the *RapidMiner* environment, we utilized the *Twitter* operator[8] to connect to the *Twitter* API, defined our search criteria for tweets, that is, the expression that we study, and retrieved the desired data. After obtaining the data, we used *RapidMiner* to clean it up and analyze it for our needs. We were always careful to follow *Facebook* and *Twitter's* rules when using their data.

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7   The name is accurate because we gathered the data during 2022, when *Twitter* was still known as *Twitter*, not as *X*.

8   Currently, due to the changes brought by *X*, there is no operator by that name available.

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As in the case of the data obtained from the *RoTenTen* corpus, we revised the data reported from *Twitter* and *Facebook* and the cases in which the expression was not a formulaic expression were rejected.

3.3. *Kiss FM Ro*

Launched in 2003, *Radio Kiss FM Ro* (formerly called *Radio Contact*) is the number 1 channel in Romania among listeners. In order to see the spread of the expression of interest, we will present a few examples from a radio show called *Casual Friday cu Nico și Olix* ('Casual Friday with Nico and Olix'), a music program.

3.4. The online questionnaire

To achieve a triangulation of data from corpora and social networks, we elaborated an online questionnaire in order to move beyond a sole reliance on corpus data and embracing the inclusion of a structured questionnaire designed to capture judgements regarding the utilization of the innovative form *drumuri bune!*. By juxtaposing textual data from corpora with the experiential insights from the survey participants, we intended to forge a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

For this online survey, we employed *LimeSurvey*, an anonymous data collection tool developed by the University of Zurich. A total of 62 participants, recruited using social networks, were involved and provided basic demographic information, including their name, age, profession, and gender, and also respond to a series of questions:

1. *Care dintre următoarele forme le-ai auzit?* ('Which of the following forms have you heard?')
    a) *Vacanță plăcută!* (lit.: 'Nice holiday!')
    b) *Vacanțe plăcute!* (lit.: 'Nice holidays!')
    c) *Drum bun!* (lit.: 'Good travel!')
    d) *Drumuri bune!* (lit.: 'Good travels/ roads!')
    e) *Călătorie plăcută!* (lit.: 'Nice journey!')
    f) *Călătorii plăcute!* (lit.: 'Nice journeys!')

2. *Formele pe care le-ai ales la întrebarea anterioară, în ce context le-ai auzit? Dacă ar fi să le evaluezi, ți se par toate la fel de corecte? Argumentează-ți răspunsul, te rog frumos.* ('The forms you selected in the previous question, in what context have you heard them? If you were to evaluate them, do they all seem equally correct to you? Please provide your reasoning.')

3. *Ai lucrat vreodată într-o firmă de transporturi sau cineva din familia ta? Dacă da, cât timp și unde?* ('Have you ever worked in a transportation company or has anyone in your family? If you have, for how long and where?')

4. *Ești de acord cu utilizarea acestor date pentru realizarea unui studiu științific?* ('Do you agree with the use of this data for the purpose of conducting a scientific study?')

It is crucial to note that respondents were unable to revisit the previous question, and we made an effort to incorporate distractors related to the expression of our interest (*drumuri bune!).*

4. The results

4.1. *RoTenTen 2016*

To determine whether the expression *drumuri bune!* had permeated the Romanian language on the internet, we found the Sketch Engine interface to be a suitable starting point. As we aimed to observe the differences between the singular and plural forms, we exported the data for both *Drum bun!* and *Drumuri bune!* obtained from the *RoTenTen*16 Corpus in both Excel and TXT formats[9].

We obtained 6,131 occurrences for the singular form (with a relative frequency per million tokens of 1.95%) and 3,205 occurrences for the plural form (with a relative frequency per million tokens of 1.02%) in a corpus of 3,142,636,172 words. We had to exclude certain cases because they did not

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9   The first results were presented in Bleorțu 2022.

pertain to the subject under investigation but rather focused on the quality of the road(s), as in the following examples:

1. [...] e o comuna frumoasa. Dar de ce nu mentionati, ca aceasta frumusete nu poate fi vazuta decat vara? pentru ca in celelalte anotimpuri drumurile desfundate fac aproape imposibila comunicarea cu cea mai apropiata localitate, cum ar fi Draganesti Vlasca? Stiti cat de mult conteaza un **drum bun**? Se vede ca nu... Ganditi-va cat de mult ar creste pretul terenurilor numai!!! Incer-cati sa realizati proiecte mai utile decat acest site, lucruri de care sa va puteti mandri!!! Pana acum mie mi-ar fi rusine sa arat ceva pe site-ul asta. ['it is a beautiful commune. But why do you not mention that this beauty can only be seen in the summer? This is because in the other seasons, the impassable roads make communication with the nearest locality, such as Draganesti Vlasca, nearly impossible. Do you know how important a good road is? It seems you do not. Think about how much property prices would increase just because of that! Try to undertake more useful projects than this website, things you can be proud of. Until now, I would be ashamed to display anything on this website.']

2. [...] foarte fiabila, consuma putin (mixt ~6.5-7), nu e stricacioasa, costuri de intretinere decente. C4 am eu si pot sa iti spun ca este o masina extraordinara pentru **drumuri bune**, altfel apar probleme (bine, banuiesc ca nu vrei sa faci off-road, dar este bine sa stii). Altfel, confort, dotari, tinuta buna de drum dar si piese un pic mai scumpe. Insa este mai buna decat crede lumea... ['Very reliable, low fuel consumption (around 6.5-7 liters per 100 kilometers on average), not prone to breakdowns, and has reasonable maintenance costs. I have a C4, and I can tell you that it's an excellent car for smooth roads; otherwise, issues can arise (well, I assume you don't want to go off-road, but it's good to know). Otherwise, it offers comfort, features, good road handling, albeit with slightly pricier parts. However, it's better than people think...']

After the meticulous tidying of our dataset, we obtained 5,982 occurrences for singular and 2,856 for plural (Figure 1).
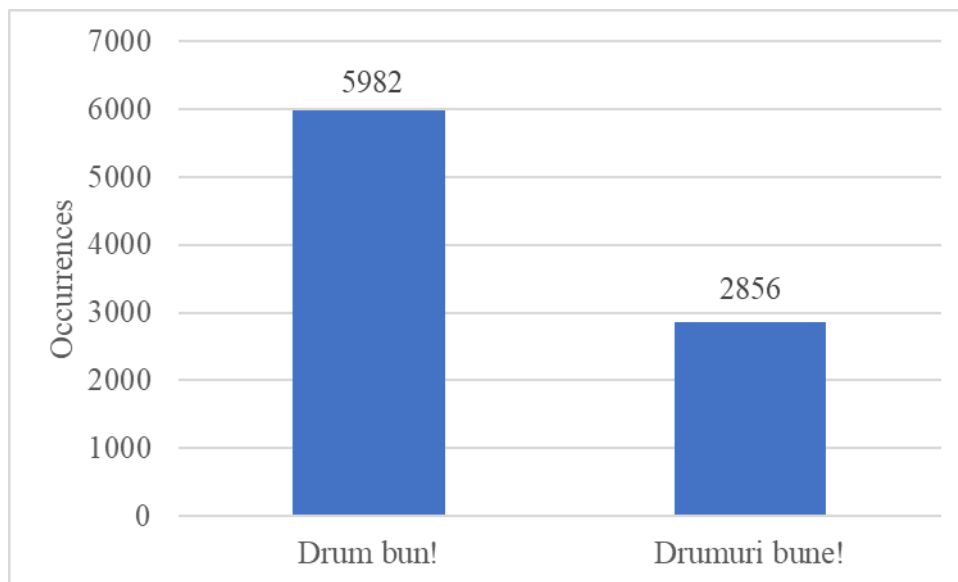

Figure 1. The number of occurrences for singular and plural

As the trends tool proved to be ineffective for conducting a diachronic analysis, we proceeded to conduct an exhaustive examination of every instance of the plural expression in the *RoTenTen* dataset. This revealed that the earliest recorded appearance of this expression can be traced back to the year 2006 (not the crawl date), and it is noteworthy that instances of its usage persist within the dataset up to the present day (Figure 2).
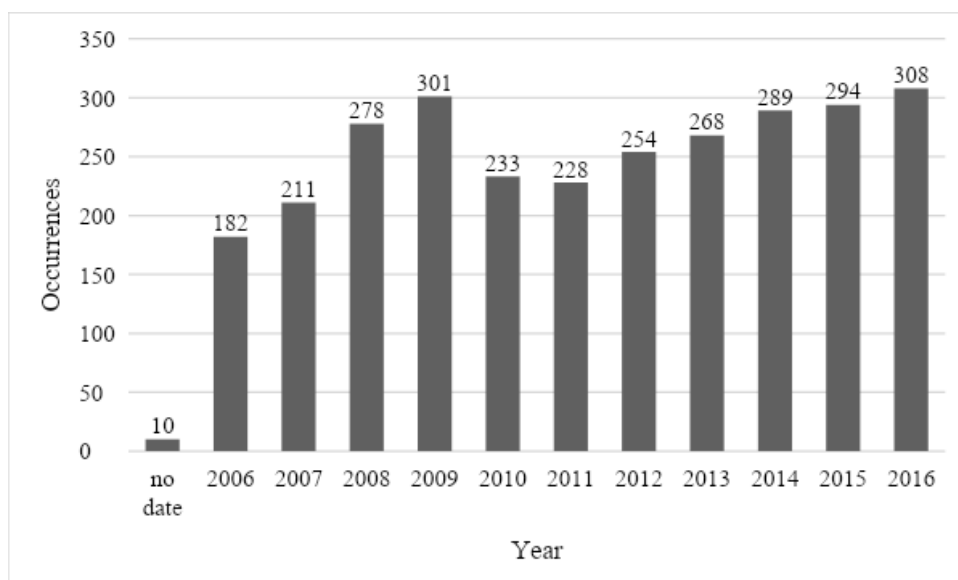

Figure 2. Occurrences per year of "drumuri bune"

As can be seen, there are more occurrences in 2009 than in 2010. However, we do not have an explanation for this. It is possible that the number of words in the corpus in 2009 is higher than in 2010, but the corpus does not allow us to examinate this aspect. In the future, when the corpus facilitates the observation of the diachronic development of these forms and permits the examination of annual word counts to ascertain relative frequencies, we will be equipped to thoroughly investigate the evolution of this construction with a high degree of certainty. At present, the analysis of absolute frequencies enables us to discern a consistent utilization of these forms over time.

The *RoTenTen* corpus contains a significant volume of textual data from various websites, including sources such as hotnews.ro, bzi.ro, dsclex.ro, monitorulcj.ro, romlit.ro, wall-street.ro, infodosar.ro. Nevertheless, both in the case of the singular and the plural forms, the expression is predominantly found on web pages related to automobiles (autovit.ro, clubmercedes.ro, skodafriends, clubrv.ro, soferii.ro, alfaclub.ro) or motorcycling (motociclism. ro):

automobiles

1. Bafta si **drumuri bune**! Multumesc! Am primit avizul de la posta. Leo ce se mai aude de placuta si de autocolant? ['Good luck and safe travels! I received the notification from the post office. What's the latest on the plate and the sticker?'] (from soferii.ro)

2. Sal, vineri sunt 10 grade asa ca putem sta si in piatza incingem o miuta... sper sa reusesc sa ajung! La multi ani, sanatate si **drum bun**! Vinerea viitoare sper sa va zic "live" ca p'asta o sar. ['Hi, Friday is 10 degrees, so we can also hang out in the square and warm up with a beer... I hope I can make it! Happy birthday, good health, and safe travels! Next Friday, I hope to tell you 'live' that I'll make it.'] (from clubchevrolet.ro)

3. Eu personal lucrez pe Tir de 1 an jumatate si am 23 ani. De aseme-nea ca Daniela am plecat imediat ce am terminat facultatea si lucrez cu prietenul meu pe camion si e ok. Imi place meseria asta foarte mult si o fac cu placere. Asa ca drumuri bune colegi! ['I personally have been working on truck for 1 year and a half and I am 23 years

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old. Also like Daniela I left as soon as I finished the faculty and I work with my boyfriend on truck and it's ok. I like this job very much and I do it with pleasure. So have a good journey colleagues!']
(from club.opel.ro).

4. Bãuturã și **drum bun** ! Pot oricînd să susțină teze despre cutia de viteze ['Drink and safe travel! They can always do a thesis on the gearbox'] (from alfa.club)

5. mã așteptam la un sprint poate ceva mai rapid. @kiro… acu ca tot ai pornit, zi si cit au costat modificarile de care ai vb mai devreme ca ma facusi fff curiosss !!! sa poate ? multam fain si anticipat ! **drumuri bune** sa ai! ['I was expecting maybe a slightly faster sprint. @ kiro… now that you've started, tell me how much the modifications you mentioned earlier cost, as I'm very curious !!! can I ask ? thanks in advance ! safe travels!'] (from automarket.ro)

6. **Drum bun** ! Oaspeții muzicanți au sosit de joi seară în Oradea ['Have a safe travel! Musical guests have arrived in Oradea since Thursday evening'] (from clubkia.ro)

motorcycling

1. Super tura si pozele, **drumuri bune** in continuare iti doresc. Probleme ceva cu "batranica"? ['Great trip and photos, I wish you safe journeys ahead. Any issues with the 'old one'?] (from motociclism.ro)

2. Tot e bine ca in Grecia nu e riscul sa te intalnesti cu leul pe drum. Ar fi misto daca ai avea o camera cu tine. Felicitari pentru initiativa si **drum bun**! ['It's a good thing that in Greece, there's no risk of running into a lion on the road. It would be cool if you had a camera with you. Congratulations on the initiative and safe travels!']

The plural form is also commonly encountered on tourism websites, whereas the singular form is prevalent on various other pages that are not directly related to travel, such as astazi.ro, smart.news, cotidianul.ro, curier.ro, politiaromana.ro, gazistul.ro, and more. A preliminary conclusion would

be, then, that the area of plural extension is more limited than the more conventional form of the singular.

tourism

1. Frumoase locuri ai vizitat! Vad ca ai si talent de narator- mult spor in continuare! Pofta am, timp nu prea este. Dar las' ca vine caldura si mai ies si eu la plimbare. **Drumuri bune!** Am fost si eu acum un an in Biertan. ['Beautiful places you've visited! I see you also have a talent for storytelling - keep it up! I have the appetite, but not much time. But let the warmth come, and I'll go for a walk too. Safe travels! I visited Biertan a year ago myself.'] (from turismcultural.ro)

2. mi-a placut cel mai mult. Mi-as dori sa ajung la Yosemite National Park, este spectaculos, ca de pe alta lume! **Drum bun si drumuri bune**, oriunde v-ar purta pasii! Va felicit pentru initiativa cu acei copaci plantati. La cat mai multi! ['I liked it the most. I would like to visit Yosemite National Park; it is spectacular, like from another world! **Safe travel** and **safe travels**, wherever your steps may take you! Congratulations on the initiative with those planted trees. Here's to many more!'] (from travelngirls.ro)

What is strange in the last example is that the informant uses both the singular and plural forms, which makes us think that he is familiar with both formulas. It is possible that for him, the singular and plural have different meaning.

4.2. *Twitter* and *Facebook*

In order to observe the use of these forms in everyday life, we will next explore the use of *drumuri bune!* in social media — *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

4.2.1. *Twitter* (now *X*)

Although *Twitter* did not catch on with the public in Romania as much as *Facebook* did, we decided also to collect data from this network, but only in plural form. The decision is because normally companies and politicians use this network, and the audience is different from that on *Facebook*, where you

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can find a wider variety of users rather than being limited to politicians and companies. Using the libraries mentioned in the methodology, we gathered data from the month of April from each of the following years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020. As we can see in Figure 3, there is a progressive increase in the use of this construction, particularly in the year 2020.
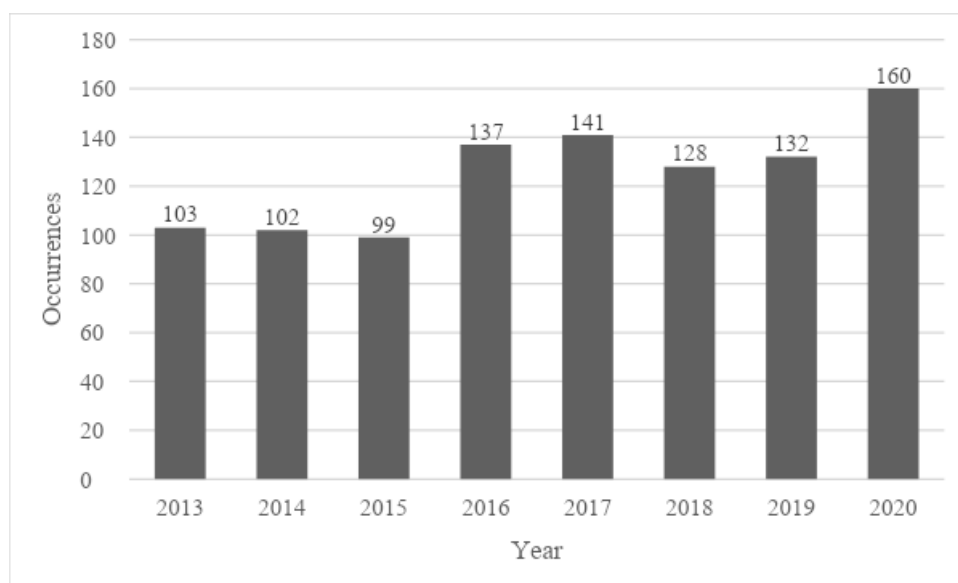

Figure 3. Occurrences per year of "drumuri bune" on Twitter

Of all the examples, the most interesting is from April 12, 2018, by the Romanian railroad company *CFR Călători*. This example is notable because this is the first time we see the expression used in a context other than car travel, which shows the broader application of the expression.

Drumuri bune, oriunde v-ar duce trenul! ['Safe travels, wherever the train may take you!', Tweet from CFR Călători] (https://x.com/CFR_Calatori/status/984419594428436481?s=20[10])

4.2.2. *Facebook*

On *Facebook*, we also considered the month of May in each of 8 years (2017–2024). We obtained, using the methodology mentioned before, 5879 cases, of

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10   This expression can be found on different posts from CFR Călători during different yeas on different social media (*Facebook*, *YouTube*). See, for example, https://www.facebook.com/RBTransport/posts/10155619446788658.

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which only 4901 were valid for our research (Figure 4). Once again, we note a usage that has sustained its stability across the years. Of the 4901 instances, 1300 are used by drivers in general, 873 by taxi drivers only, and the rest by other types of informants:
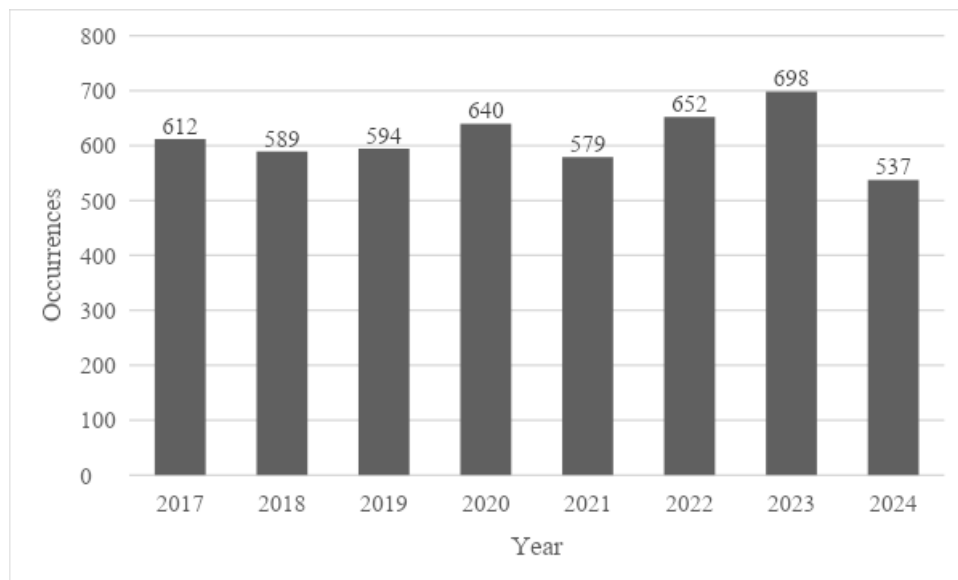

Figure 4. Occurrences per year of "drumuri bune" on Facebook

Something we have noticed is that, in a significant number of examples (759), the diminutive *coleguțul* ('mate'), in singular or plural, appears in co-occurrence with the construction *drumuri bune!*, as we can observe in the next example:

> Bagă șpițu' în pedală, că-i autostrada goală! **Drumuri bune,** **coleguții**! ['Step on it, the highway is empty! Safe travels, mates!'] (12.05.2024, https://www.facebook.com/UnguruBulanRo)

4.3. *Kiss FM Ro*

We also found another specific use of the expression *drumuri bune!* on the *Kiss FM* radio station. Since the radio broadcasts are not transcribed, it's not easy to guess how many examples there are. Having listened to all the programs on the station over a period of 4 months (January-April 2023), 29 occurrences were noted. There, the host, Nico Baby (in the program *Casual*

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Friday with Nico and Olix), frequently uses it. Moreover, even the listeners of the station often wish her *Drumuri bune!*. We are uncertain if the recurrent use of this phrase is attributed to the radio show's popularity among drivers, potentially serving as a form of identity shared with car users. However, what we can confirm is its frequent usage, as evidenced in the following example:

> Bună dimineața, kisomani! Marian de la Ploiești! Weekend plăcut tuturor! **Drumuri bune!** ['Good morning, people from Kiss! Marian from Ploiești! A nice weekend to all of you. Safe travels!'] (April 2023, a listener)
> Spor și **drumuri bune!** ['Good luck and safe travels!'] (April 2023, Nico)

4.4. The online questionnaire

After finding the expression in plural and seeing examples from *Sketchengine, Twitter,* and *Facebook,* and hearing it on *Kiss FM* Ro, we decided to run an online survey during April 2023. We wanted to see what people thought about this phrase. Out of 131 participants, only 61 completed the survey fully. As we mentioned in our methods, we attempted to use distractors in the survey. The results can be seen in Figure 5.
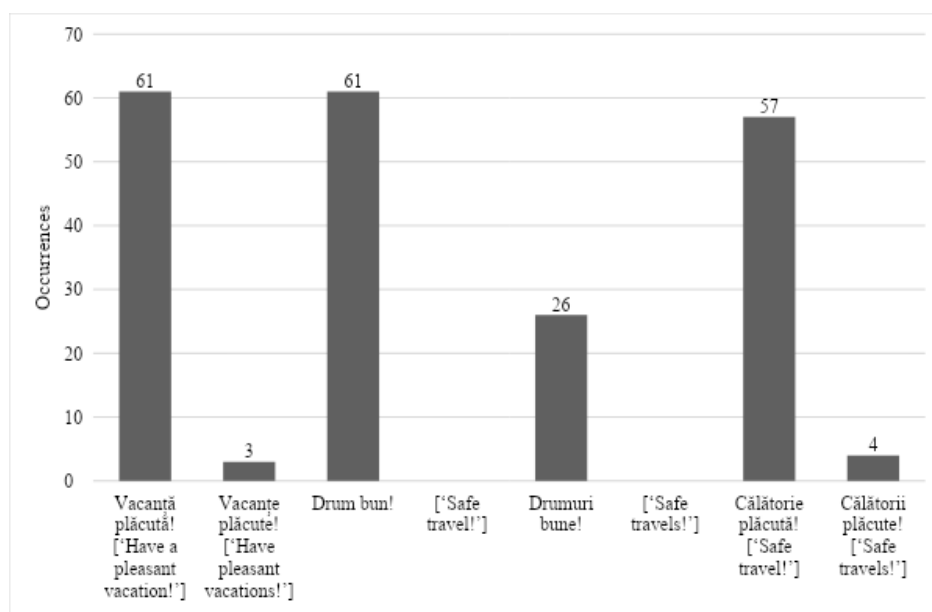

Figure 5. The expressions used for the questionnaire.

The average age of the 61 individuals we considered for this study is 37,66, ranging from the ages of 19 and the oldest to 61 inclusive, a range of 42 years. Out of these, 50 are women and 12 are men. The participants hail from a diverse range of professions, which include: professor, teacher, student, IT engineer, freelance digital marketer, translator, researcher, secretary, economist, company administrator, IT technical advisor (Spanish language customer service), artistic agent, mother on maternal leave, psychologist, optician, self-employed, nurse, network and computer technician, digital designer, manicurist, retiree, consultant, sales agent, accountant, fitness trainer, cashier, pilot, military personnel, salesperson.

This wide range of professions gives a holistic view of the diverse background of the participants in our study. The explanations that subjects give about the plural are extremely varied: 9 informants, with different ages and professions, associate it with the well-wishing; one thinks it is a joke (a woman, 23 years, IT teacher); one with literature (a woman, 19 years, student); and 13 with drivers and radio (6 with truck drivers and 7 with drivers in general). Of the 26 informants, only two work as drivers and one has a relative that works as a driver. Some of the answers:

> –Vorbind despre a avea o călătorie plăcută, de un concediu și nu se referă la calitatea drumurilor în sine, de exemplu. ['Talking about having a pleasant journey, a holiday and not referring to the quality of the roads themselves, for example.']

> –Cea la plural a fost folosită pe post de glumă. ['The plural was used as a joke'].

> –**Drumuri bune** este singura expresie auzită la radio și în conversațiile șoferilor de autocare. ['*Drumuri bune* is the only expression heard on the radio and in the conversations of coach drivers'].

> –iar forma la plural **drumuri bune** o folosesc adesea șoferii când pleacă într-o cursă. ['and the plural form of *drumuri bune* is often used by drivers when they leave on a trip.']

–La șoferii de tir în general! ['At truck drivers in general!']

–**Drumuri bune** în condiții de conducere, vacanță plăcută în urmarea unei călătorii. ['*Drumuri bune* in driving conditions, vacanță plăcută following a trip'].

–În afară de cele trei convenționale, forma: **Drumuri bune!** am auzit-o și chiar văzut-o scrisă în contexte relaționate cu transportul de marfă. Șoferii o folosesc frecvent. Uneori, însă mai puțin frecvent, colegii mei dispeceri le urează **drumuri bune** șoferilor pe care îi coordonează. ['In addition to the three conventional ones, form: *Drumuri bune!* I have heard and even seen it written in contexts related to freight transport. Drivers use it frequently. Sometimes, but less frequently, my fellow dispatchers wish the drivers they manage a safe journey.']

–Da, le-am auzit în viața cotidiană, dar și în literatură, de exemplu: **Drumuri bune**! ['Yes, I have heard them in everyday life, but also in literature, for example: *Drumuri bune!*']

5. Conclusions

This research aimed to investigate the linguistic dynamics of nonstandard Romanian language, specifically focusing on the evolution and adoption of the expression *drumuri bune!*. The study employs a multifaceted research approach, including the analysis of linguistic corpora (*RoTenTen*), data from social media platforms (*Twitter* and *Facebook*), radio broadcasts (*Kiss FM* Ro), and an online questionnaire administered to participants with diverse backgrounds.

Based on the analyzed data, we can conclude that although the singular form *drum bun!* is more frequently used to wish someone a good journey, the plural form *drumuri bune!* is gradually gaining ground over time for this purpose. This is evidenced by the data obtained from the *RoTenTen* corpus and the social media platforms *Twitter* (X) and *Facebook*. This trend also

appears to be confirmed by the presence of the plural form on the *Kiss FM* Ro radio station and in the conducted survey.

Specifically, the data from *RoTenTen* indicate that while *drum bun!* remains more common overall, *drumuri bune!* has established a noticeable presence, with 3,205 occurrences, compared to 6,131 for the singular form. After refining the dataset to exclude irrelevant examples, the plural form demonstrated a robust usage pattern with 2,856 valid occurrences.

The analysis identified that *drumuri bune!* is particularly prevalent in contexts related to automobiles, motorcycling, and tourism websites, where its use may reflect the professional and personal environments of individuals connected to travel or transportation industries. The earliest traceable use of *drumuri bune!* in the corpus dates back to 2006, suggesting a relatively recent innovation. Its consistent appearance across subsequent years highlights its gradual integration into certain linguistic domains. While absolute frequency analysis shows variability, this may reflect limitations in corpus construction rather than actual usage patterns. In some instances, both singular and plural forms appear together in the same context, as seen in tourism-related examples. This coexistence may point to nuanced differences in meaning or social function between the two expressions. The singular form may be perceived as more conventional or formal, while the plural might carry a more casual or inclusive tone.

While the corpus provides valuable insights into the expression's spread and usage, the lack of diachronic tools to track word trends over time limits the ability to fully analyze its historical trajectory. Future corpus enhancements could facilitate a more precise understanding of the temporal development of expressions like *drumuri bune!*.

The analysis of social media platforms, specifically *Twitter* and *Facebook*, reveals important insights into the spread and contextual use of the expression *drumuri bune!* in Romanian. This exploration highlights how digital environments facilitate the dissemination and normalization of linguistic innovations.

On *Twitter,* the expression *drumuri bune!* shows a gradual increase in usage over the analyzed years (2013–2020), with a notable spike in 2020. This indicates a growing familiarity and acceptance of the phrase in contexts

beyond its traditional use, particularly on a platform more frequently utilized by politicians, companies, and formal entities.

On *Facebook*, where user demographics are more varied, the expression has a broader reach and has maintained consistent usage from 2017 to 2024. The larger volume of data on Facebook reflects its role as a space for informal, personal interactions, where expressions like *drumuri bune!* naturally thrive.

On *Twitter*, the data suggests that the expression is transitioning from informal, driver-specific contexts to more generalized travel-related wishes. A particularly noteworthy example is its use by the Romanian train company CFR Călători in 2018, indicating the phrase's applicability to broader transportation contexts, such as rail travel. This demonstrates its versatility and potential for wider adoption in formal communication.

On *Facebook*, the phrase remains closely associated with drivers and travel-related contexts. A significant number of examples include diminutives like *coleguțul* ('mate'), reflecting camaraderie and a sense of belonging within specific communities, such as drivers, taxi operators, and logistics professionals.
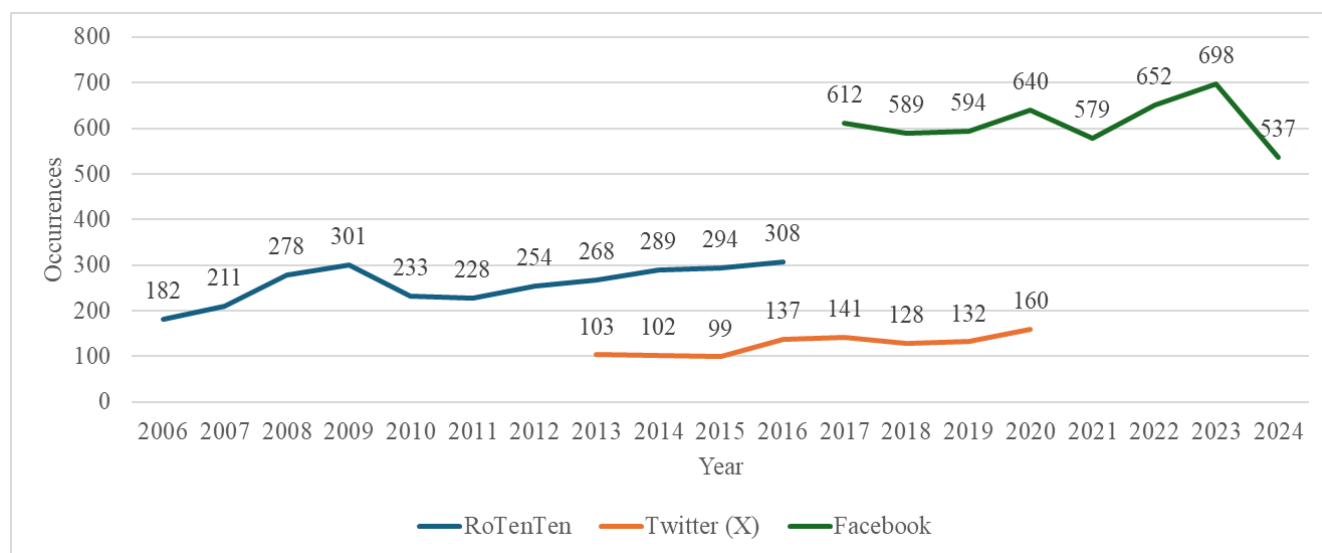

Figure 6. Summary of occurrences by year and source (The *RoTenTen* corpus shows all the occurrences by year, while the data from *Twitter* (*X*) and *Facebook* were extracted from samples taken in April and May, respectively)

In Figure 6, we present a summary of cases by year and source. We can observe how the trend in the use of the plural construction is consistent and even

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upward over the years, which seems to indicate a process of consolidation of this plural form for expressing good wishes for a journey.

The data gathered from *Kiss FM* highlights the role of the media in popularizing the expression *drumuri bune!*. The 29 occurrences documented over four months (January–April 2023) indicate the frequent use of this phrase both by the hosts and listeners, suggesting a unique interaction between radio content and linguistic innovation. The phrase appears to resonate strongly with drivers, aligning with the station's listener demographic. Its recurrent use by both the radio host and the audience indicates its role as a shared identity marker, particularly among car users. The informal and engaging nature of radio programs, such as *Casual Friday with Nico and Olix*, may reinforce the association of *drumuri bune!* with positivity and camaraderie. Listeners contributing the phrase back to the host suggest a bidirectional reinforcement of its usage in popular culture.

The survey provided further qualitative insights into the perception and interpretation of *drumuri bune!* among diverse participants:

- The 61 respondents, spanning professions from teachers to IT engineers, offered a broad cross-section of Romanian society.
- The average age of participants (37.66 years) and the range of professions ensure varied perspectives on the expression's significance and context.
- The majority (9 respondents) associate the plural phrase with well-wishing, aligning with its traditional use as a travel-related expression.
- Some respondents see it as a humorous adaptation or a phrase linked to specific communities, such as drivers (13 respondents).
- The expression is recognized not only in daily communication, but also in literature and radio contexts.
- The frequent association with drivers and transportation emphasizes its specialized yet expanding role in Romanian linguistic practice.

From our data, the expression appears to have originated within the driver community and later spread to other groups. Even though we had different hypotheses related to its origin, it cannot be determined which factors gave

rise to this expression, something that it is not so unusual, because it is very difficult to know the origin of an expression in general.

In conclusion, the research provides valuable insights into the adoption and evolution of the nonstandard Romanian expression *drumuri bune!*. It sheds light on its origins within the driver community and its dissemination across various social groups. N

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