

# Perspective on Media Communication and Advertising Research

Prof. Delia Cristina Bălaș (born Balaban) Ph.D.

## Abstract

The present paper is a synthesis of the most important scientific activities, especially of the main activities carried out after obtaining the title of PhD at the European University *Viadrina* in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany. My professional development is based on an interdisciplinary trajectory starting from my BA in philosophy and continuing with the PhD thesis on a subject pertaining to the field of communication sciences. The paper highlights some of the guiding lines of my scientific endeavour in the past few years, elements with a strong impact on my academic and research activities as coordinator of PhD theses.

My professional evolution is characteristic for the period of development of the social sciences, in particular of the communication sciences that we have undergone. I am referring to the fact that most members of the academic community who teach in the field of communication sciences in Romania have BA studies in related fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology etc. A specialization in the field was obtained at MA or PhD level, often through the interaction with the respective academic environment abroad. This was my case as well, as the PhD followed by postdoctoral studies undertaken in Germany allowed me to delve deeper in the field of communication sciences.

My didactic and research activities follow two main directions in the communication sciences: media research and advertising research. As far as media research is concerned, I focused on researching professional communicators: journalists, PR and advertising experts. The empirical research of the role perception of these professional categories from different points of view, such as the regional versus the national specificity, the comparison between professionals in different European countries and Romanian ones are but a few examples in point. Media research was put into practice by analyzing media content, especially by carrying out a comparative analysis of the program grid of the main public and private television channels in Romania. The changes in the structure of the media system were also dealt with in other analyses. I carried out comparisons of the media system in Romania and other European media systems using the theoretical model proposed by Hallin and Mancini. Media consumption in Romania was another of my research interests. It was not carried out using the tools and from the perspective of market research, but from the viewpoint of the *Uses and Gratifications Theory*, of the *Media Usage Model* of Rosengren and of the one revised by Michael Meyen. I also analyzed empirically the usage of online social networks by young people in Romania, highlighting the motivational, the contagion and the gratification aspects. This qualitative approach was afterwards quoted in articles published in the main international scientific stream. In the same context of media consumption, I looked for structural explanations for the appetite for television of Romanians, similar to that of Spanish, Greeks or Portuguese. Most of the times, the results of the empirical studies were

disseminated through articles written in English or German and published in Romania or abroad.

A special place in media research is occupied by the research on media communication effects, which is an area of interest also due to the permanent transformation of media offer both in terms of content and especially in terms of technology. Besides media transformations, the receivers are the ones who alter their media competences, the young generation having other media expectations and skills. This dynamic requires new interpretations of already established theories, such as *Agenda Setting*, *Knowledge Gap*, *Information Dissemination* and *Framing Theory*.

My scientific interests for media analysis were put into practice not only through empirical research, which I believe brought extra methodological value in some particular cases, but also through the theoretical synthesis put forth in the volume *Comunicarea mediatică (Media Communication)*. The volume, published by Tritonic Publishing House in 2009, presents the main theories in the field of media at the time of the publishing, focusing on classic media. The volume, which was also translated into German, proved to be highly useful in my didactic activity both at the Babeş-Bolyai University and at the German universities where I also teach.

A synthetic theoretical approach regarding advertising was necessary, an approach that started from the structure of the main type of actor on the market, i.e. the advertising agency, continuing with the media implementation of advertising and with the theories concerning the effects of advertising. All these can be found in the volume *Publicitatea. De la planificarea strategică la implementarea media (Advertising. From Strategic Planning to Media Implementation)*, published by Polirom in 2009.

The second topic of my research is advertising means of persuasive communication, as part of communicational policies. Advertising is a relatively new field of research for this type of approach. Bearing this in mind, I felt it would be beneficial to look for answers to questions such as the one dealing with the evolution of advertising in Romania after 1989, from the point of view of the main actors on the Romanian market, referring both to agencies and to the main beneficiaries. New advertising tools closely connected to the Internet and to social media and the way in which these are implemented in Romania constituted the focus of published articles and book chapters.