

Exploring Communication through Qualitative Research

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Edited by

Corina Daba-Buzoianu, Monica Bîră,
Alina Duduciuc and George Tudorie

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and George Tudorie

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON INQUIRING COMMUNICATION THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

CORINA DABA-BUZOIANU, MONICA BÎRĂ,
GEORGE TUDORIE, ALINA DUDUCIUC

Of all the social sciences, communication seems to be the field where qualitative research is becoming the dominant methodology (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). Thus, as Lindlof and Taylor argue, qualitative research has the role of generating knowledge about communication. Although we do not aim to put aside the relevance that quantitative research has in communication, we argue that the epistemology of communication is deeply linked with qualitative inquiries. Let us remember that research in communication – both quantitative and qualitative – is first of all an epistemological statement (Willig 2008). A specific research method is determined by the researcher's epistemological grounds, and thus is not chosen according to the subject matter.

Scholars argue that qualitative methodologies could be considered features of the epistemology of communication. But what makes qualitative research in communication, alongside its methods and its results, so different? Firstly, the variety of research methods and designs that one encounters when opening any book related to this field. This variety is in fact echoing the data collection process. As presented by Thomas Lindlof's and Bryan Taylor's book on *Qualitative Research Methods in Communication* (2011), data is to be collected in at least three ways – each of them involving a wide range of specific instruments: interviewing (I); participating in, observing, and recording social action (II); analyzing material culture and documents (III). Secondly, different themes are explored under the label of qualitative research in communication. For example, between 2011 and 2015 the articles published by The Qualitative Research Reports in Communication (Eastern Communication Association) deal with a variety of topics, ranging from multiethnic identity development to relationship and speed dating, symbolic shaping of information

communication, and strategic ambiguity in the mission statement of a family business – to name but a few of them. Thirdly, the results: since there are so many different topics investigated by so many different research methods, results in qualitative research seem to be ranging from sociology to ethnic studies, oral history, text analysis and any other social science discipline one may think of.

The changes in the social sciences' epistemologies that dominated the 20th century shed a new light on research and reinforced the importance of doing qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Punch 2013; Taylor and Lindlof 2013). It was at that time that qualitative research began to be acknowledged as scientifically relevant. The comprehensive character of qualitative research was a reaction to positivism and post-positivism (Denzin and Lincoln 1994), and, unlike quantitative research, proposed a phenomenological approach to reality (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Willig 2008; Lindlof and Taylor 2011).

Although for several years the scientific character of qualitative research has been contested, we see that today a significant amount of research is based on qualitative methods and that qualitative research is widespread and flourishing. After 1990, the development of academic programmes using qualitative methods, the spread of scientific journals presenting qualitative data, and the efforts that the academic community has made in supporting qualitative research have led to a change in the way qualitative research methods have been looked at (Lindlof and Taylor 2011).

The current volume reflects the many applications of qualitative research in communication, as its chapters cover a variety of subfields in communication, from applied communication and media and technology studies to strategic communication. The chapters have been grouped not according to the subfields they belong to but according to the topics they address, in order to give a broader perspective on the insights that qualitative research in communication provides. The nineteen chapters represent a selection of the papers presented at the *Qualitative Research in Communication* international conference held in 2015 in Bucharest, organized by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Romania) along with ACT Project, Concordia University (Canada) and the University of Colorado, Boulder (USA). The book is organized in six sections emerging from the conference and reflecting a broad variety of topics investigated through qualitative methods. The apparent heterogeneity of topics that are explored with the aid of qualitative methods might be a result of the way in which qualitative

research, as a legitimate method of scientific research, has emerged and developed in communication.

*

The current book is organized in six sections, each of them federating similar themes. In their turn, the topics approached within each section, although focused on related subjects, are investigated by different research designs specific to that piece of qualitative research in communication. The sections are preceded by a theoretical discussion on qualitative research in communication by Corina Daba-Buzoianu and Monica Bîră. Their text - *A Theoretical Approach to Qualitative Research in Communication* - seeks to explore the theoretical assumptions of qualitative research in communication from an epistemological perspective.

The chapters in the **first section** are, in different ways, exploring a fundamental field of research in communication: media and technology studies. **Chapter One** is grounded on text analysis; meanwhile the other two explore current practices within new media and social media. In Chapter One, Bianca Cheregi's study "*Let's Change the Story!*" – *Nation branding and interactive media campaigns on Romanian migration* is contributing to the on-going debates about national identity discourse, discussing the role journalists may play on this scene. Nation branding or the country's image has become an important issue in Romania, especially in the context of Europeanization and integration in the EU. The chapter uses a mixed method (critical discourse analysis and *dispositif* analysis) to look at the media campaigns in two major Romanian newspapers which tried to counter the image of the Romanian labour migrant.

The **second chapter**, *Online media in Romania: the case study of Hotnews.ro*, authored by Monica Puntî-Brun and Jordi Bes Lozano, analyses the situation of online media in Romania, focusing on one of the main such outlets in the country, *hotnews.ro*. The authors start with a comparative discussion of the characteristics of online media, and follow with the impact of the transition to the digital format. Not only do reading practices change online, but also the business model of journalism. This also holds for the Romanian case, as illustrated by the in-depth interview conducted with the director of *hotnews.ro*. The **third chapter**, the last in this section, investigates how the expansion of social media at the cost of more traditional channels impacts the field of Public Relations, both in practice and in its more academic setting. Sirma Tekvar in *How do Turkish Communication Agencies Engage in Social Media?* suggests that this entails risks such as loss of control, but also substantial opportunities.

Dialogue can be used to curb the stigma of public relations as propaganda, and to encourage a reflexive practice and theorizing. The chapter looks specifically at the situation in Turkey, building on two in-depth interviews with Turkish public relations executives from two important agencies.

The **second section** explores Europe and Europeanism mainly by comparative studies. Thus, attitudes towards the European Union and different European perspectives conveyed by the media are approached by a series of studies using qualitative approaches.

In **Chapter Four**, *Who's Afraid of the "Big Bad Wolf"? - A Qualitative Assessment of Poles' and Romanians' Attitudes Towards the European Union*, Joanna Fomina and Loredana Radu assess attitudes towards the European Union, as expressed by young people (i.e. students) in Poland and Romania, two Eastern EU member-states that are commonly known for their quite different attitudes regarding the European Union. Narratives of Europeanization as employed by young Eastern Europeans are scrutinized against recent developments within the European Union, based on recent emerging theories of Europeanization. The chapter aims to inquire whether, under the pressure of the multi-layered crisis of the European Union, Eastern Europeans are in the process of withdrawing their unconditional support for or *blind faith* in Europe.

Chapter Five, entitled *Perspectives on European identity: a cross-cultural approach* is the result of qualitative research undertaken jointly in Romania and in France in December 2013 and consisting of twenty in-depth interviews with masters students. Grounded in recent studies showing that young and educated people, travelling and interacting with fellows across borders, are more inclined than others to perceive themselves as Europeans, the paper investigates to what extent and in what manner this is relevant in the case of the selected sample. Nicoleta Corbu and Denisa Oprea also explore different ways of instrumentalizing European identity, ranging from nationality (i.e. belonging to a member state of the European Union) to geographical inclusion in the European continent as indicators of a sense of belonging to a common European space.

The European dimension of Greek legislative elections from 2015 and their coverage by international online journals are the main topics approached in **Chapter Six**. Using frame analysis, Costinel Șerban investigates a corpus consisting of editorials retrieved from the English online versions of several renowned international periodicals: *Der Spiegel International* (Germany), *The Moscow Times* (Russia), *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English version, France), and *The New Yorker* (United States).

The **third section** is organized around a series of themes regarding qualitative approaches in education. In **Chapter Seven**, Maria Diana Cismaru and Livia Popa analyze the implementation of an equity policy within Romanian universities (the specially reserved places for Roma people). The paper identifies the managerial perspectives in Romanian universities with regard to equity and social cohesion. The data for this research was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews during study visits paid to eight universities in Romania belonging to the public sector of higher education. On the whole, a number of approximately 25 interviews with rectors, vice-rectors or general administrative directors have been subjected to review, and the data concerned has been further processed by phenomenological analysis.

In **Chapter Eight** George Tudorie explores the institutional roots of both paediatrics and developmental psychology that can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Modernity, with its scientific and statist mind-set, placed an increased importance on understanding and managing childhood, which became an issue not only of scientific but also of national interest. Starting from the classical work of Philippe Ariès, this chapter discusses the nature of the renewed interest in children in the two disciplines *via* two characters: the paediatrician Abraham Jacobi and the naturalist Charles Darwin.

Chapter Nine is organised around the largely debated topic of the integration and use of social media tools. With a theme that is also rooted in their current teaching activities, Georgiana Udrea, Raluca Buturoiu and Oana Ștefăniță (*Facebook as a learning tool: perspectives of Romanian students in higher education*) examine students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of Facebook in enriching their educational experience.

Chapter Ten explores the field of strategic communication. Andreea Răceanu investigates the way in which higher education institutions may profit from a thorough analysis of organisation-public relations. *University – industry professional relationships as an important dimension of a university's strategic public relations* presents the result in a comparative qualitative study conducted on university representatives with decision making legitimacy within three Romanian public higher education institutions.

In **Chapter Eleven**, Carmen Zaharia proposes a paper on the role of emotions in students' interactions and in the process of learning foreign languages. As a teaching tool, the use of emotions is explored not only regarding vocabulary, but also as a way of enabling students to become familiarized with notions belonging to foreign cultural spaces. Thus, *Emotion Work in Foreign Language Classes* presents the results of a study

conducted on students in a multicultural environment focusing on their interactions and reactions to text conveying a high level of emotional content.

Section Four is organized around themes related to cultural triggers of reception. It comprises three chapters in which authors have explored different themes that are controversial within Romanian society. Thus, **Chapter Twelve** (*Education & Emotion: A Cultural Approach to the Controversial Exhibitions of Plastinated Bodies*), authored by Viorica Păuș and Romina Surugiu, analyses an exhibition in Bucharest which was widely covered in the media, and public reactions to a new type of museum exhibits and museum involvement within society. In **Chapter Thirteen** (*Mechanisms of censorship and the censorship of Dostoyevsky's works under Communism: an interpretative analysis*), Mihai Vacariu proposes a return to the almost forgotten practice of political, official, ideology-led censorship in non-political texts. **Chapter Fourteen** revolves also around the field of communication reception, museums and communism. In *Passing on our heritage: intergenerational issues related to the Museum of Communism Project in Romania*, Monica Bîră and Ion Chiciudean try to unfold the many layers of professionals' discourse on what is a cure from all the "diseases" related to social memory and communism: a museum dedicated to this period.

Section Five focuses on the issue of ageing, especially how new technologies could better respond to elderly people's needs and how seniors have been depicted in media cultural products (i.e. printed and media advertising).

In **Chapter Fifteen** Emma Domínguez-Rué and Linda Nierling, Karlsruhe, have constructed their argument around the idea that scientific and technological research has to broaden its interdisciplinary dimension in order to better address the needs and concerns of the senior population. *AgeTech: Technologies in the course of life – an ongoing need for qualitative research* provides valuable insights for both researchers into social sciences and also for professionals who engage in the scientific and industrial development of age-related technologies, to shift their focus: that is, to favor the human dimension before technology and to take aged users and their environment into account; but first and foremost to incorporate social and ethical values when developing innovative solutions addressed to the ageing population.

The **sixteenth chapter** reviews the quantitative as well as qualitative studies regarding ageing and advertising, particularly the portrayal of later life in advertising, considering that both approaches could contribute to the renewal of advertising as an 'age-friendly' and inclusive industry. Alina

Duduciuc's chapter – *The Depiction of Seniors in Advertising* – discusses the concepts of 'chronological age' versus 'cognitive age' so as to explore the under-representation of elderly people in advertising, considering that the controversy of seniors' presence in advertising derives mainly from empirical evidence. Regardless of the way in which the seniors are portrayed in advertising – whether younger or of real age – the trend in field research as well as in advertising productions is to pay more attention to and to give more concern to the senior consumers' segment.

In **Chapter Seventeen** Mădălina Moraru offers a different perspective on the image of the elderly in advertising and the way in which this has been conveyed to the Romanian public during the last 25 years. Her findings – based on a content analysis of a significant number of advertisements running on television for global and local brands – construct a specific "profile" of elderly people in advertising.

The last section of this book, **Section Six**, is organized around two qualitative studies that address topics related to young people and their preoccupations.

Chapter Eighteen – *Using grounded theory to explore online identity* – authored by Demetra Garbașevschi explores social actors as fervent inhabitants of online platforms (such as Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter). Garbașevschi's chapter provides a framework for developing research on online identity using grounded theory. By means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, the author makes inquiries into the respondents' connected lifestyle, the digital tools and platforms used in the process of online communication, and the management of self-identity information online. Furthermore, based on the research findings, Garbașevschi proposes a three-layer model of online identity communication practices – a model that reveals the likelihood of the social actors to protect the known self as opposed to an agentic outlook towards strategic online identity communication for social or material outcomes.

Chapter Nineteen, *Why volunteer? A perspective from young adult Romanians*, aims to understand how Romanian volunteers perceive the outcomes of their volunteering activities and their role as volunteers. Analyzing the volunteering experience of 22 respondents, the two authors based their research design on functional theory and the benefits of volunteering.

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This book has its origins in a renewed interest in *qualitative research in social sciences* – globally, and in the region we have focused on: South-Eastern Europe. The work collected in this volume aims at the same

time at consolidating research in communication as an autonomous field of study in this part of the world.

We (the editors) would like to express our gratitude to our colleagues, the organizers of the international conference *Qualitative Research in Communication*, which was hosted in Bucharest by our home institution, the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (NUPSPA) in 2013 and 2015. We have been inspired by the first edition, we were happy to work with some of the participants in the second edition for this volume, and we look forward to the next edition of the conference, which, at the moment we are writing this text – is only a few months away.

Our work as editors was based on the collective effort of the authors. We want to thank them for their contributions and for their patience while this volume has been in preparation. We would also like to express our appreciation for the advice and assistance the Publisher has offered us while completing this book.

Finally, perhaps our most important debt is to our academic home. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the College of Communication and Public Relations at NUPSPA, and we hope this book will contribute to its larger mission of education and research.

Bucharest
August 2017

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION

CORINA DABA-BUZOIANU, MONICA BÎRĂ

Doing qualitative research in social sciences and in communication implies adhering to a specific research methodology and epistemology, as there is no research without theory (Silverman 2006). Before even considering the most appropriate research method, one must first be aware of the theoretical perspective and clearly acknowledge one's epistemological position. There is no doubt that a specific epistemological perspective will determine the researcher to choose a certain research method, as there is a significant conceptual difference between method and methodology. As a general approach to research, a methodology is a critical inquiry of the research activity (Chelcea 2007), while a method is a specific way of doing research and refers to specific techniques and to certain rules for investigating reality (Silverman 2005; Chelcea 2007).

Quantitative and qualitative methods should be considered two different ways of understanding reality, strongly linked to the 20th-century's epistemological twist (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Morse 1994; Punch 2013). Inspired by Dilthey's hermeneutics and Weber's antipositivist methodology, the focus of research tends to be on understanding the meanings individuals give to their life. Instead of looking for the facts, researchers start looking for meanings. Thus, hermeneutics acknowledges the fact that humans act according to the mental representations they have about their own lives. Researchers considered it important how individuals constructed meaning (Dilthey 2000; Paille 2002). Habermas noted in the 1980s that the way data is collected has a significant impact on research itself (Habermas 1979). In his view, the research design and the way questions are formulated influence the answers. Through this critique, Habermas (1979) questions whether quantitative research can reveal the way individuals are thinking and the way they give meaning to life. This is, then, a critique of positivism and neopositivism and their influence on investigating social reality.

Qualitative research began by arguing against considering social facts as things and against standardized and inflexible instruments and methods (Ilut 1997). It is the comprehensive and interpretative features of qualitative research that go against positivism and postpositivism (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). As Lindlof and Taylor (2011) note, the main difference between quantitative and qualitative research is based on the way a researcher gives meaning to reality. If quantitative research considers reality as *a priori* and objective, in the case of qualitative research reality is created and transformed according to the personal experiences of individuals (Guba and Lincoln 2005). From this point of view, qualitative research is a pointer to the limits that the positivist perspective has.

Qualitative research has been linked to phenomenology, anthropology, ethnography, symbolic interactionism, grounded theory and discourse analysis (Morse 1994; Janesick 1999). From their early beginnings, qualitative studies have been considered for many years subjective and of no scientific value. Because the research tools are not very standardized and because research data has multiple interpretations, it used to be considered that qualitative research produces soft science (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). And although, today, qualitative research has an important role in social sciences (Silverman, 2013; Punch, 2013; Lindlof and Taylor 2011; Taylor and Lindlof 2013), some of these perceptions are still visible (Lindlof and Taylor 2011, Flyvbjerg 2006). Still, scholars acknowledge an increasing influence that qualitative research has in the academic world (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). The large development after 1990 of study programmes in social sciences using qualitative methods and the emergence of academic journals publishing the results of qualitative research, alongside the significant efforts of academic researchers to promote qualitative research methods through international conferences and international academic associations, have all contributed to a change in the overall perception of the role that qualitative research has in producing scientific knowledge (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). Thus, today, qualitative research has an increasing role in the field of communication, scholars considering it the “dominant methodology in communication” (Lindlof and Taylor 2011, 12).

Qualitative research has an important role in revealing the relationship between researcher and research, as it pictures the way research is perceived in specific societies and the way people’s experiences are represented. As many scholars mention, the researcher becomes a subject when analysing qualitative data (Hamberg et al. 1994), as the research describes, on the one hand, ordinary and extraordinary moments from individuals’ lives, and, on the other hand, the meanings that people give to

those specific moments and events (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research focuses on the personal experiences of individuals and seeks to understand the way individuals look at specific situations and construct meaning. In Willig's (2008) terms, qualitative research's main goal is to look for meaning, as the researcher is mainly interested in understanding individuals' personal experiences and less likely to look for causality. Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research the meaning that individuals attribute to specific moments, persons or objects is revealed by the participants themselves and is not previously defined by the researcher (Flick 1998). Thus, qualitative research does not first define and then try to confirm the definitions with that data; instead it looks for the way things have been represented and defined by the participants.

Generalizability of qualitative research results

There is no doubt that one of the main critiques of qualitative research is the impossibility of generalizing the results and implicitly of getting to what has been called external validation (Chelcea 2007; Silverman 2006). Generalizability is linked to statistical sampling (Silverman 2006) and it mainly refers to the way qualitative research results can be used for other groups and samples (Ryan and Bernard 2000). The absence of a representative sample makes qualitative research's results questionable and sometimes irrelevant for scientific knowledge. Still, researchers consider that generalizability should not be considered a goal in social sciences, as they ought to study individuals in their natural environment to understand the way people give meanings to specific events in their lives. As Lincoln and Guba (1985, 110) write, the way meaning is constructed depends on so many factors that it cannot be generalized and therefore "the only possible generalizability is that there is no generalizability". Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research looks for meanings not known yet rather than for predefined social elements. When addressing generalizability in qualitative research, some scholars (Mason 1996) shift the discussion towards explanations and not results. In other words, results, by themselves, could not be used for generalization (as in a quantitative research based on a carefully assembled sample), but explanations and findings are to be regarded as transferable to another setting. Other scholars discuss the validity of research, considering that validity can be descriptive, interpretative and theoretical (Maxwell 1992).

Silverman (2006) gives three solutions to the problem of generalizability in qualitative research: qualitative research results could be linked with quantitative surveys; researchers should choose an appropriate sample, considering the time and the resources available; and thirdly the use of theoretical sampling. By combining the results of qualitative research with those obtained through quantitative surveys, the researcher can have a broader view of the qualitative results and thus consider them for a larger group of people. Moreover, it is possible to compare qualitative research results with the results from a survey and thus obtain a certain type of representativity for a case (Hammersley 1992).

To overcome the difficulty of generalizing in qualitative research, scholars have argued that external validity should be replaced by a new way of sampling, called theoretical sampling, which implies selecting the participants according to their level of representativity for research (Schofield 1993; Paille 2002). In Paille's terms, theoretical sampling implies a significant methodological effort, as the researcher should observe several aspects of the same phenomenon in one participant, unlike traditional sampling where the researcher observes the same phenomenon with several participants (Paille 2002, 145). Contrary to representative sampling, theoretical sampling implies selecting the participants throughout the research according to some criteria, the selection being done taking into consideration the theoretical assumptions (Silverman 2006). Still, sometimes, it is impossible to use any type of sampling: as Silverman mentions, a case can be selected just because it was the only one available to the researcher.

The influence of western epistemologies in qualitative research

A significant body of research argues that due to imports from the Western Europe and North America epistemologies, qualitative research has been transmitted to other cultures and societies (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Taylor and Lindlof 2013). Most important is that this “involves the normalization of Western epistemologies which universalize culturally-specific qualities of human subjectivity and agency” (Taylor and Lindlof 2013, 13). This idea has its roots in the link between qualitative research and the post-colonial world (Denzin and Lincoln 2005); more precisely, the link is to the representation of post-colonialism, post-colonial and post-communist policies. As Taylor and Lindlof (2013) point out, scholars have published extensively on qualitative research in post-colonial societies and not so much on qualitative research in post-communist societies. Generally,

qualitative research has been exported from Western Europe and North America to other societies which have adopted Western methodologies and epistemology (Taylor and Lindlof 2013; Gobo 2011; Sullivan and Brockington 2004; Alasuutari 2004). Thus, not only methods and research tools were transmitted, but also a general way of thinking about research and the interpretation of data. This import of methodology and of research models has been labelled as the globalization of research methods (Taylor and Lindlof 2013; Gobo 2011) and a methodological movement (Koro-Ljunberg 2012). This triggers significant ethical considerations, especially regarding the way the image of “the other”, different from Western European and North American cultures, has been constructed (Taylor and Lindlof 2013; Sullivan and Brockington 2004). A closer examination of the way these methodologies have been borrowed generates serious concerns (Taylor and Lindlof 2013), especially about what would it mean for those methods to be successfully used.

Qualitative research in communication

As in the case of other domains, research in communication started in the North American academic world. Lazarsfeld, Lasswell, and Hovland (Katz 1977) - well-known for their work in sociology, political sciences and psychology - could be considered pioneers of research in communication. This strong connection between communication and other fields is highly visible even today, as communication is significantly interdisciplinary. Situated at the boundaries of sociology, psychology, anthropology and the philosophy of language, communication is an interdisciplinary field that developed through several borrowings. As the scholars point out, “communication is a field whose complexity encourages diverse claims about its identity” (Lindlof and Taylor 2011, 17).

In the 1980s, qualitative research in communication was considered as opposed to positivism and was looking for the psychological explanations of the communication process (Carey 1975). The downfall of positivism and the increasing need for understanding “the other” and the other’s world contributed to the development and spread of qualitative methods. Although research methods have been developed to investigate local issues, they have been exported to other cultures and countries as well (Gobo 2011).

Qualitative inquires of the media effects, together with studies on public opinion, have been linked to the field of communication although they were conducted using methods from sociology and psychology. As

Lindlof and Taylor (2011, 17-29) clearly point out, the division of communication into several subfields is a visible consequence of fighting against positivism. Each of these subfields has its own theoretical approach and thus its own assumptions. Unlike other typologies existent in the literature on the field (Craig 1999), Lindlof and Taylor's eleven subfields in communication are presented as different manifestations of qualitative research in communication: applied communication, group communication, health communication, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, language and social interaction, media and technology studies, organisational communication, performance studies, rhetoric, and strategic communication.

To some extent, in the communication field the difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies not in the research method itself, but in the way the researcher gets to know and to understand what is being analysed (Lindlof and Taylor 2011). This is because the methodological assumptions and the epistemological grounds prevail.

Conclusion

The issue of doing qualitative or quantitative is still an important dimension of the research done in social sciences. Unlike what was happening more than 40 years ago, when qualitative research was marginalized, today qualitative research tends to be less criticized and is constantly spreading (Pauch 2013). Today, existing literature on qualitative research points out that qualitative and quantitative research should be considered complementary and not in opposition to each other (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Silverman 2006, 2013; Chelcea 2007).

An important element in the future development of qualitative research is online communication, as the advance of the new communication technologies and the internet have a significant impact on the way qualitative research is being conducted, especially in communication (Mann and Stewart 2000; Daymon and Holloway 2001). In their recent studies, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) discuss the new communication technologies with regard to almost all research methods and techniques. Today, data gathered through qualitative research can be analysed with the help of specialized software, a fact that can overcome some of the limitations of qualitative research, quite often considered to be subjective and non-standard.

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SECTION I

APPROACHING MEDIA AS TEXTS AND PRACTICES

CHAPTER ONE

“LET’S CHANGE THE STORY!”: NATION BRANDING AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA CAMPAIGNS ON ROMANIAN MIGRATION

BIANCA-FLORENTINA CHEREGI

One of the most controversial topics in the Romanian media over the past few years is the country’s image. Soon after the fall of communism in 1989, this issue became part of the public debate about the international perception of Romanian people, about the ways in which Romania is depicted in the international press, and about the country’s position in the process of Europeanization. The theme of Romanians migrating to other countries is also connected to the debate on nation branding, in relation to the ways in which the migrants’ actions influence the country’s image – a key element of the “symbolic capital” of the nation (Beciu 2012).

In fact, the topic of labor migration to the EU (“the new diaspora”) is constantly addressed by the media, sometimes involving intense *mediatisation*, depending on social and political contexts such as the freedom of movement to work in the EU. A special case is that of Romanian people migrating to the UK, a theme which generated debates in both the British and the Romanian media.

On the 1st of January 2014 the restrictions designed to limit the access of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens to the job market in the EU, including the UK, were lifted. A year before, the British government launched the *Don’t Come to Britain!* campaign, spurring a debate about migration. The Romanian media responded with the *Why don’t you come over?* campaign (*Gândul*, January 2013), humorously dismissing the British negative portrayal of Romanians. Other campaigns responding to media discourses from Great Britain on the migration issue are *Let’s Change the Story!* (*Gândul*, January 2014), *The Truth About Romanian People in Great Britain* (*Adevărul*, March 2014) and, more recently, *Romanians in the UK* (ProTV, April 2015). Therefore journalists have their role as professionals,

to assume a civic role (Couldry 2007; Roselle 2003; Silverstone 2007) by engaging citizens in the public debate.

In this context, this chapter focuses on analyzing the role of Romanian journalists in the problematization of Romania’s image as a country and its migration issues. Why did the journalists start to initiate media campaigns as a response to the ‘anti-immigration’ discourses from the British tabloid press? Do they fight against the stereotypes about Romanians employed in the British newspapers? How do the journalists refer to Romania’s national image? How do they transform the audience into an *active viewer* (Livingstone 2005; Fenton 2010; Gurevitch et al. 2009; Redden and Witschge 2010; Van Dijk and Poell 2014)? Analyzing these aspects is essential for understanding how the journalists define Romania as a country and for analyzing the universe of national symbols. Moreover, the chapter investigates how the national ‘we-group’ (Romanian citizens) is constructed in relation to the ‘other-group’ (Britons).

The data comprises three mass-media campaigns on Romanian migration (*Why Don’t You Come Over? – Gândul, Let’s Change the Story? – Gândul*, and *The Truth about Romanians living in the UK – Adevărul*), along with press discourses around the campaigns (27 news articles about *Why Don’t You Come Over?*, 17 news articles about *Let’s Change the Story!*, and 6 news articles about *The Truth about Romanians living in the UK*). Therefore, the data collected between January 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014 was divided into two parts: (1) mass-media campaigns as *dispositifs*, and (2) media discourses on the campaigns (for instance, the journalists’ evaluation regarding the campaigns).

In order to analyze mass-media campaigns on Romanian migration initiated by national newspapers such as *Adevărul* and *Gândul*, a *multimodal* approach is employed, highlighting the importance of image, sound and text as semiotic resources. In this particular case, *multimodality* provides the means to describe a practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity (Iedema 2003). Methodologically, I used qualitative research methods, combining critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1988, 1993; Wodak 1999; 2001) with *dispositif* analysis (Charaudeau 2005, Lochard 2005, 2006; Soulages 2007).

One of the main questions addressed in this chapter is how Romanian journalists define Romania’s country image both in mass-media campaigns on migration and in media discourses about the campaigns. In order to answer this question, the chapter’s structure follows a *dichotomous* approach, concentrating first on campaigns on Romanian migration as journalistic products, and then on media discourses about the campaigns. The analysis covers the ways in which the campaigns represent counter-

discourses, relying on forms of engagement and audience mobilization (discourses of identity); but it also covers the way in which journalists have built their relationship with the “other”, constructing discourses of alterity.

Mass-media as a *civic actor*: initiating interactive media campaigns on Romanian migration

In today’s *network society* (Castells 2005), the public sphere is a *dynamic* process (Benkler 2006; Castells 2008; Dahlgren 2005; Downey and Fenton 2003), while the internet brings new ways of collecting and reporting information into the newsroom. Journalism is becoming more interpretative, while the journalists are actively involving the citizens in the public debate, by initiating media campaigns.

The *tabloidization* (Langer 1998; Turner 1999) approach is embraced by the media, “usually considered to sacrifice information for entertainment, accuracy for sensation, and to employ tactics of representation which entrap and exploit its subjects” (Turner 1999, 60).

As Deuze (2004) argues, we experience a *multi-media journalism*, because the presentation of the news story package uses two or more media formats, such as the spoken and written word, music, moving and still images, graphic animations, interactive and hypertextual elements.

Moreover, a new genre of reporting is emerging, *polymedia events*, understood as events that start in the media and unfold in other media platforms. Such events are transnational in nature, and are large in scale and audience reach (Madianou and Miller 2013; Madianou 2013).

In Romania, the topic of labor migration to the EU (“the new diaspora”) is constantly approached by the media, sometimes involving intense *mediatisation*, depending on social and political contexts such as the freedom of movement to work in the EU.

The country’s image is also a *public problem* (Boltanski, Cefai, Gusfield 2001), because Romanian journalists provide their own definitions and interpretations of the country’s image in different contexts, some of them explicit (such as nation branding), and some implicit (such as migration as an intensively debated theme in the public sphere). On the other hand, the audiences turn into *active viewers* (Livingstone 2005; Fenton 2010; Gurevitch et al. 2009; Redden and Witschge 2010; Van Dijck and Poell 2014), participating in the public debate and interpreting media based on their knowledge and experience.

In order to analyze mass-media campaigns on Romanian migration initiated by national newspapers such as *Adevărul* and *Gândul*, a