

Public Services Announcement impact

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Abstract: *Public health is of major importance to the European Union, who wants to unite local as well as national initiatives in order to implement Pan-European mechanisms to define the best practices within the health department.*

This research analyses – the method Romania uses, via the National Audiovisual Council’s undertaking, in order to put the EU public health norms into practice; as well as – the impact it has on Romanians. This case study is based on the hypotheses that the NAC messages promoting a healthy lifestyle have had an impact on the subjects targeted, and managed to change their unhealthy behaviour.

Keywords: *public health, European Union, National Audiovisual Council, Romanian population.*

Introduction

Given the context of health representing a global priority, the European Union has suggested to all the member states the implementation of a new series of public policies for this area of interest. The European Union spends „over 50 millions Euros annually on activities designed to improve sanitary security, to promote a good condition of health, to reduce inequalities and to provide more information and awareness regarding health issues. (...) Furthermore, funds are allocated towards the promotion of healthy eating habits, of moderate alcohol consumption, of a healthy lifestyle and ageing process; towards the fight against tobacco and drugs consumption, and the prevention of major diseases and illnesses.”¹

1 http://europa.eu/pol/health/index_ro.htm, ultima accesare în data de 11.09. 2010, ora 23:31;

Public health is of major importance to the European Union, who wants to unite local as well as national initiatives in order to implement Pan-European mechanisms to define the best practices within the health department.

Thereby, Romania adopts public policies and social-marketing instruments to approach and resolve the issue of irrational eating habits, the excessive alcohol consumption, the sedentary lifestyle, and the associated health problems.

The concept of social-marketing is used in order to define the right branches of marketing to use in resolving social as well as health issues, or “the selling of social causes”.² The foremost aim of social marketing is “the well-being of a society”. Furthermore, it follows “a logically planned process that involves the analysis of the target group and the market section, the establishment of objectives and the identification of strategies and tactics”³, similar to commercial marketing. This complex process places the consumer in the centre of the strategy in the attempt of eliminating the barriers encountered with changes in behaviour. On the other hand, motivating people into changing their behaviour is not as simple as convincing them to change their preferred brands of soap or toothpaste.⁴ Therefore, a campaign dedicated to the promotion of health or a public regulation must be accompanied by a series of steps designed to change behaviours.

This research analyses – the method Romania uses, via the National Audiovisual Council’s undertaking, in order to put the EU public health norms into practice; as well as – the impact it has on Romanians.

This action takes place because the European Union points that “the audiovisual mass-media can have an important contribution in informing the consumers and in educating them regarding the area of healthy nutrition”.⁵

The National Audiovisual Council (NAC) – public interest guarantor and sole authority of the audiovisual regulation department – applies social-marketing concepts such as PSA (Public Services Announcement). Therefore, congruent with the no.854 - 29th September 2007 decree (*to modify the no.187 - 3rd April 2006 Decree concerning the Audiovisual-content Regulations, considering the no.19 - 1st February 2007 European Parliament Resolution*), in regard with “*The promotion of a healthy diet and active lifestyle: a European dimensioning for preventing extra-weight, obesity*

2 Philip Kotler, Gerald Zaltman, *Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change*, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 1971), p. 3-12

3 L. MacFadyen, M. Stead, G. Hastings, *A Synopsis of Social Marketing*, Institute for Social Marketing, 1999, disponibil online la http://www.ism.stir.ac.uk/pdf_docs/social_marketing.pdf, ultima accesare in data de 07.09. 2011.

4 Nedra Kline Weinreich. *Hands-On Social Marketing*, Londra, Sage Publications Inc, 1999, p.9.

5 Decizia CNA nr. 854 din 29 septembrie 2009 pentru modificarea Deciziei nr. 187 din 3 aprilie 2006 privind Codul de reglementare a conținutului audiovizual;

and chronic diseases"., the National Audiovisual Council (NAC) adopts the no.187 - 3rd April 2006 Decree concerning the Audiovisual-content Regulations, published in Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei (The Official Gazette of Romania), Part I, no.338/14.04.2006.

The following will be substituted for the article 138, paragraph (5): "(5) – In order to insure the education of the citizens regarding health and healthy nutrition, broadcasters shall communicate the following warning messages:

- a. "For a healthy lifestyle, eat fruits and vegetables every day."
- b. "For a healthy lifestyle, exercise for at least 30 minutes every day."
- c. "For a healthy lifestyle, drink at least 2 litres of liquids every day."
- d. "For a healthy lifestyle, have the main meals of the day."
- e. "For your own health, avoid the excess of salt, sugar and fats.", to which the following is added:
- f. "Excessive consumption of alcohol is extremely harmful to your health."

All of the previous, regulated by the NAC, are communicated as it follows: 1 – The warning messages in paragraph (5), letters a) – d) are to be announced alternately throughout the day, from 6AM to 10PM, one message per hour, inserted at the end of each commercials break. 2 – The warning message in paragraph (5), letter e) is to be announced at the end of every commercials break within children programmes."⁶

This case study is based on the hypotheses that the NAC messages promoting a healthy lifestyle have had an impact on the subjects targeted, and managed to change their unhealthy behaviour.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine and observe whether this method has had an impact on the Romanian population.

It is focused on two components: a qualitative one – the content analysis, and a quantitative one – the sociological inquiry. This study aims at evaluating the impact the public policies in the health department, dictated by the European Union and applied by the NAC via the Romanian Television Channels – has had.

The two components, the quantitative and qualitative, will be used hand in hand in order to provide more consistent results. At the same time, by using this technique, the principle of multiple sources within studies will be respected.

This study represents the evaluation of the impact the NAC campaign regarding a healthy lifestyle has. This campaign is one of the public polices Romania applies under the directions given by the European Union, and it uses social-marketing instruments in order to change the unhealthy behaviour of the population, and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

6 Anexa-Decizia CNA nr. 854 din 29 septembrie 2009 pentru modificarea Deciziei nr. 187 din 3 aprilie 2006 privind Codul de reglementare a conținutului audiovizual;

Literature review

The national specialised literature only provides a limited number of studies on health promotion and social-marketing.

In Romania, the first descriptive study on health has been carried out in 2005, but was limited to the Transylvanian region only.⁷ Its results showed that the infrastructure required to run such projects is not developed well enough which leads to limited opportunities for educational projects.

A study developed in 2006 aims at identifying a general profile for young smokers, analysing individual, social, cultural factors as well as legal contexts, and offers a series of recommendations for the development of programmes designed to reduce the number of smokers.⁸ Another study, 2006 as well, follows the preventive behaviour Romanians have when it comes to nutrition.⁹

None of them, though, explores the method by which such processes are being implemented locally or what the facilitative or dissonant factors would be when promoting health.

The data concerning the individuals and the institutions that initiate such programmes is limited, and so is the data concerning their development.

One of the institutions with an important role in carrying out the programmes dedicated to promoting health, regardless of the stream it uses – is mass-media.

International specialised literature offers multiple examples of campaigns and programmes within the public health sector that used mass-media, and had more or less satisfactory results. The campaign dedicated to lowering hypertension¹⁰, health amongst adolescents¹¹, feeding infants¹², lowering the number of smokers¹³, are such campaigns, and so are the campaigns dedicated to raising awareness on

7 Soya Grier, Carol A. Bryant. "Social Marketing in Public Health", *Annual Review of Public Health*, 2005, 26:319-39

8 Lucia M. Lotrean, Carmen Ionuț, Hein de Vries. "Tobacco Use Among Romanian Youth", *Salud Publica Mex*, 2006, vol. 48, Suplemento 1: 107-112;

9 Dan A. Petrovici, Christopher Ritson. "Factors Influencing Consumer Dietary Health Preventative Behaviors", *BMC Public Health* 2006, 6:222;

10 Robert J. Petrella et. all. „Impact of a Social Marketing Media Campaign on Public Awareness on Hypertension”, *American Journal of Hypertension*, 2005, 18:270-275.

11 Kelly Ladin L'Engle et. all. "The mass media are an important context for adolescents' sexual behavior", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2006, 38:186-192;

12 Katherine A. Foss, Brian G. Southwell. "Infant feeding and the media: the relationship between Parents' Magazine content and breastfeeding, 1972-2000", *International Breastfeeding Journal*, 2006, 1:10;

13 Niederdeppe J, Fiore MC, Baker TB, Smith SS. "Smoking-cessation media campaigns and their effectiveness among socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged populations", *American Journal of Public Health*, 2008, 98(5):916-24;

the implications of chicken pox during the 1700s, or healthy eating habits in the 1800s in the USA.¹⁴

In Romania, mass-media is an essential element in how Romanians perceive reality and it benefits of an impressive degree of trust from most of the population.

All the same, the relationship or the interaction method between the institutions involved in public health and the mass-media in Romania, remain unknown. The lack of the aforementioned information obstructs the acknowledgement and understanding of the phenomena and the evaluation of the programmes.

As a result, this is the area of interest chosen for this study, given the fact that the daily NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle are broadcast both on television as well as radio, but there are no statistics on their impact on Romanians.

Methodology

The objectives, the questions and the hypotheses of this research study follow two categories of respondents, one from the rural environment, one from the urban environment, as well as a special (third) category of respondents who filled in the online questionnaire.

The Objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Identifying the level of familiarity the subjects of the study have with the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle.
2. Identifying the environment these messages impact the most.
3. Identifying the level of success these messages had in changing the behaviour of the subjects.

The questions incorporated in this study are:

1. Are the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle known by the population targeted by this study?
2. Have the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle had a greater impact on the subjects in rural areas or on the subjects in urban areas?
3. Have the NAC messages modified the behaviour of the subjects?

This study is based on the hypotheses that the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle have had an impact on the targeted subjects, and have managed to change their unhealthy behavioural habits.

This research has two components, a) a qualitative one – content analysis of the commercials breaks within two of the national television channels: Realitatea TV

14 Seth M. Noar. "A 10-Year Retrospective of Research in Health Mass Media Campaigns: Where Do We Go From Here?", *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 2006, 11(1):21-42.

and Antena 3, examining their compliance with the dictated hourly intervals, and the adverts and commercials preceding the PSAs required by the NAC; b) a quantitative one – a sociological inquiry, via a sociological tool: the questionnaire. These two components will be used hand in hand in order to provide more consistent results. At the same time, by using this method, the principle of multiple sources within studies will be respected.

The statistics sector of this study aims at highlighting the relationship between the NAC messages and the impact they had on the population.

For the quantitative side of the study, 1000 questionnaires have been used across Cluj County, both in rural as well as urban areas. This way, a representative test specimen has been met. In addition to this, it has been decided to get national monitoring as well, by using the questionnaire online, in the social media, on blogs, and had 101 respondents.

The analysed time-frame was:

- 25th February - 25th May 2011: the social inquiry took place: the questionnaires being filled in by the market researchers.
- 12th – 21st May 2010 for the online questionnaires published on 3 blogs, Twitter and Facebook.
- The content analysis has been carried out by recording the programmes on Realitatea TV and Antena 3, over a period of two weeks, one week each as it follows:
 - 24th January - 30th January 2011;
 - 31st January - 7th February 2011, respectively.

As a consequence, the data collected via the social inquiry will be referred to a time-frame of 17 weeks, and the data collected via the content analysis will be referred to a time-frame of two weeks.

It has to be specified that the reason behind carrying out the content analysis (as the main research method) was to determine the frequency and the regularity of the messages, which has helped with the tool used in the social inquiry.

Furthermore, an important element of this study is the pilot study carried out between the 4th and 20th December 2010 using a test specimen of 30 subjects. Due to this it has been possible to develop the questionnaire and focus on the evaluation of the impact the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle broadcast on the small screen.

Method I: Content analysis

Throughout this research study, content analysis is used in order to analyse the NAC PSAs broadcast by the TV channels, examining the frequency, the regularity and the preceding adverts and commercials, within the context that the PSAs are to be broadcast at the end of each commercials break.

Content analysis, by definition, is “a research technique whose purpose is to objectively, systemically and quantitatively describe the manifested content of communication.”¹⁵

The content analysis’ **objectives** of this research study are:

1. Identifying the compliance with the regulations imposed by the NAC, no.853 decree respectively, according to which the messages regarding a healthy lifestyle must be broadcast at the end of each commercials break.
2. Identifying the amount of PSAs imposed by the NAC regarding a healthy lifestyle are broadcast within a day.
3. Identifying which of the six messages regarding a healthy lifestyle is broadcast more than the others.
4. Identifying the amount of PSAs broadcast per hour.
5. Identifying any possible connections between the last advert of the commercials break and the chosen PSA broadcast.

Therefore, 336 hours have been recorded, between 24th January - 7th February 2011, which consist of the programmes broadcast by two television channels: Realitatea TV and Antena 3. The aim was to examine the approach on the policies imposed by the EU for the health sector, applied in Romania by the NAC via television channels.

Specimen: The theoretical sampling of the sources

The television channels Realitatea TV and Antena 3 have been chosen due to their meeting the required criteria for the completion of the study:

- Had to be a national television channel;
- Had to be a channel that displays the time.

The sampling of the analysis units:

Considering the fact that this part of the study has been carried out in a timeframe of two weeks (14 days), from 24th January - 7th February 2011, the entire set of programmes broadcast have been recorded, from which the commercials breaks have later been extracted. Therefore, the analysis units are represented by the two television channels, the 336 recorded broadcast hours, 149 PSAs respectively.

Data collection protocol: Categories and encoding

The analysed variables have been divided in six sections:

- I. Television channel:** - the channel they have been recorded on.
- II. Day:** the day of the week in which the recorded television channel has broadcast or not the NAC’s PSAs.

15 Black, James A. and Champion, DeanJ., Methods and Issues in Social Research. New York, Jhon Eiley & Sons, Inc, 1979, p. 254;

III. Date: the date the programmes have been recorded, or the date the NAC message has been recorded, respectively. The date will be within the 24th January - 7th February 2011 time-frame.

IV. Hour: the exact time of the day that one of the NAC messages has been broadcast by one of the two television channels.

V. Preceding advert: the last advert in the commercial break. The advert directly preceding the PSA regarding a healthy lifestyle.

VI. PSA: Public Service Announcement: one of the six NAC messages.

Method II: Sociological inquiry

The questionnaire applied consisted of 35 questions: closed format, open format, leading format, likert format, most of them being dichotomous. The questionnaire has been structured on introductory questions, leading questions, buying propensity questions, concluding with identification questions.

Therefore, the questions provided in the questionnaire and the afferent answers will provide the base for analysing the subjects' behaviour in relation with the audiovisual mass-media, the eating habits and behaviour, the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle, and their impact on the public opinion.

It has to be highlighted that the structure of the questionnaire has been decided on after using the social inquiry as a research method on the pilot study. Therefore, this questionnaire is significantly different than the one applied in the starting point of this research study.

The questionnaire applied in this research study is broken down into three modules:

1. Defining the behaviour of the subjects and their lifestyle. (questions 1-9)
2. The impact the NAC messages had. (questions 20-34)
3. Information concerning the responding subjects.

The sociological inquiry tool has been applied by two market researchers and published on three blogs (www.mihaelaivan.com, www.adihadean.ro, www.deazi.ro) and on the social networks: Facebook and Twitter.

In addition, between the 25th February and 25th May 2011, 1000 questionnaires have been filled in by the market researchers across Cluj County both in the rural as well as urban areas. Between the 12th May and 21st of May, 101 people have filled in the online questionnaires published on the three blogs. The online questionnaire has been made possible by using eSurveys software¹⁶, which has offered it better mobility as well as better data collection via virtual environment. It has also facilitated the accessibility to analysing the results.

16 <http://www.esurveys.com/>, ultima accesare în data de 27.05. 2011, ora 12:34;

Objectives:

1. Identifying the subjects' behaviour in relation with watching TV programmes and in relation with the hour-range, the reasons for watching certain TV programmes, and other activities carried out within that time-frame.
2. Identifying the subjects' opinion on whether television influences them to adopt a healthier lifestyle.
3. Identifying the subjects' opinion on their own lifestyle.
4. Identifying the subjects' level of familiarity with the NAC messages.
5. Identifying the level to which this messages have accomplished their purpose of changing the interviewed population's unhealthy behaviour.
6. Identifying the population's opinion on NAC campaign approach by broadcasting these messages at the end of every commercials break.
7. Identifying the environment the NAC campaign had more impact on: rural or urban.

Specimen

The sampling method used in carrying out this study was the aleatory one. The procedure used was the randomised numbers table, realized by using the Research Randomizer software.¹⁷

The questionnaire has been filled in by the market researchers from the 25th February to 25th May, from Monday to Friday, between 4PM and 7PM. The subjects have been contacted over the telephone, being chosen from the Pagini Aurii (Yellow Pages) telephone directory, Romtelecom National land-line – since access to this database was granted. Due to the expectancy of having 1000 respondents, the total number of subscribers to the Romtelecom Network – on the 25th of February, has been introduced into the randomizing software: 107.589 subscribers in Cluj County of which 56893 from the urban areas and 50696 from the rural areas. Taking in account the experience other researchers had when carrying out inquiries over the telephone, on a local or national level, it has been decided to randomly generate 4000 telephone numbers, which have later been contacted. Therefore, the total number of people declining the participation in this study has not influenced the representative quality of the final specimen. A set of numbers has been generated that corresponded to every number in the Pagini Aurii – Romtelecom directory.

By the 25th of May 2011, 562 respondents from the urban areas and 438 respondents from the rural areas have been contacted. To reach the target number of 1000 respondents, 3648 people in Cluj County have been contacted. The data collected after running these interviews is analysed throughout this study.

¹⁷ <http://www.randomizer.org/>, ultima accesare în data de 28.05.2012

In addition to this, the online questionnaire applied from 12 to 21 May 2011, using eSurveys and promoted on three blogs:

1. www.mihaelaivan.com, a personal website focused on advertising, social marketing and public health (link: <http://ivanmihaela.wordpress.com/2011/05/14/am-nevoie-de-4-minute-din-timpul-taupentru-o-cauza-nobila/>);
2. www.adihadean.ro a blog belonging to Chef Mr. Adrian Hădean focused on culinary recipes as well as the promotion of a healthier lifestyle (link: <http://www.adihadean.ro/2011/05/am-cateva-ve%C8%99ti/>);
3. www.de-azi.ro a blog belonging to Personal Trainer Ms. Sanda Stănescu (link: <http://www.de-azi.ro/am-nevoie-de-4-minute-dintimpul-tau-pentru-o-cauza-nobila/>).

To conclude, the data analysis will be conducted on results obtained from 1000 respondents in Cluj County, from both urban as well as rural areas, and 101 respondents contacted by distributing the social inquiry instrument in virtual environment, accessed from different counties in Romania.

Results

Content analysis

Consequent to the data analysis, it can be observed that these warnings are broadcast one per hour, but are not communicated at the end of each commercials break as they should be, according to the law: no.854 Decree NAC. Within the 336 recorded hours, the PSAs should have been broadcast between the 6AM – 10PM time-frame, therefore, the analysis will be directed to a number of 224 recorded hours, 224 messages respectively. Only 149 NAC messages have been broadcast. 75 messages have not been broadcast, which means 66.51%. Furthermore, after analysing the data it can be observed that the messages have also been broadcast outside the time-frame specified by law: before 6AM as well as after 10PM.

Therefore, out of the 336 analysed hours, 224 hours should have had broadcast messages within the 6AM – 10PM time-frame, but only 139 have been broadcast, which means a 62.05%.

In addition, it has been observed that the messages have been broadcast mainly a minute after the first half of the hour (minute 31), at minute 59, or at o'clock, before the news programmes begun. Furthermore, it can be observed that during Tuesdays and Fridays the frequency of the messages is higher than in other days of the week.

It can also be observed that out of the six warning messages, the "For your own health, avoid the excess of salt, sugar and fats." PSA is the most frequently communicated: 28%.

Sociological inquiry

Consequent to the data analysis, it has been found that people in Cluj-Napoca perceive television as a means of getting information as well as relaxation means. The subjects tend to have a meal, do housekeeping or surf the Internet at the same time as having the TV on. The respondents (40.6%) in the urban areas consider that television has a massive influence on lifestyle whilst only 21.2% of the respondents in the rural areas agree; 20.8% of the online respondents answered the same. The subjects are familiar with the warning messages, the one they know the best being "For your own health, avoid the excess of salt, sugar and fats." (as a consequence of it being the most frequent: 28%, compared to the other messages).

78.6% (442) of the respondents in the urban areas, 77.6% (340) of the respondents in the rural areas and 88.1% (89) of the respondents in the online environment, do not consider that they have a healthier lifestyle due to these messages. Some of the open answers argue that "I need to find the motivation to change my lifestyle myself, these messages don't determine me to do it", "I adapt my lifestyle according to my needs and strength. These recurrent messages don't impress me in any way", "My lifestyle is the lifestyle I want, some messages won't influence me", "the advert doesn't influence me", "Having a healthy lifestyle is a personal decision".

Nonetheless, respondents say that due to this campaign, 25.5% have lowered their high salt and sugars intake and in the rural areas, 18.5% have upped their liquid intake. Furthermore, when they are involved into an activity marked as unhealthy and they hear these messages, 41.65% (234) respondents think of quitting it, 35.5% (205) acknowledge the activity is an unhealthy activity. 17.6% (99) continue their activity, whilst 3% (17) say they do no such activities, and 1.2% (7) completely quit that activity.

Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to identify the subjects' level of familiarity with the NAC messages regarding a healthy lifestyle. By analysing the data collected, it has been found that the targeted population acknowledged the NAC messages. They are broadcast between the 6AM – 10PM time-frame as well as outside the time-frame, once per hour, but it does happen that they are not communicated after every single commercials break.

The second objective of the study was to identify the environment these messages have the most impact on. It has been found that they do not have a significant impact on neither urban nor rural areas. An interesting aspect has been noticed as being the impact on the online respondents. They have expressed their opinion completely voluntarily and given the context of the questionnaires being pub-

lished on websites dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles, the respondents seem to show a higher level of concern and care towards their own health.

The results show that the NAC PSAs have managed to change the behaviour of the targeted subjects of this study, as they admit, to a “more or less” level. The issue of excess salt and sugars consumption, as well as the low liquid intake issue, seem to have been solved by this campaign.

The PSAs manage, whilst being broadcast, to determine the population to set goals for themselves, such as quitting the excess consumption of salt, sugars, fats, alcohol – or at least managed to make the population realise when they are involved into unhealthy activities.

Therefore, the results of this study show that the campaign has managed to raise awareness on what the healthy behaviours are, that the population should take in account and adopt. This way, the hypotheses has been confirmed.

Highlighting the fact that although this study had a pilot, and the specimen that the sociological inquiry has been applied to has been of 1000 respondents (and 101 online respondents), and mixed research methods have been used, it does represent a starting point towards a more ample research.

In conclusion, mass-media, by being omnipresent and always ascending, has the possibility of influencing, directing and orientating the public opinion, determining how people think and what they think. This study has highlighted these aspects and the effects mass-media has on people.

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Links

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