

AN ANALYSIS ON HOW THE ROMANIAN MEDIA PERCEIVES FOOD WASTE**DOI: 10.26758/12.1.6**

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Abstract

Objectives. Food waste is a process that takes place along the food supply chain and is the result of the following actors: institutions, members of the supply chain, and consumers. However, in developed countries, the main contributor to food waste appears to be the consumer (Buzby & Hyman, 2012).

Material and methods. The analysis was conducted on two samples of articles published in the Romanian press, out of which, the first included 23 electronic editions of the “Scinteia” newspaper during 1980-1986, and the second consisted of 30 articles published in the Romanian national online press, during 2010-2020. Out of the total amount of electronic editions of the newspaper, 16 articles have been selected for analysis. The process of collecting both samples took place between February and March 2021.

Results. The articles published between 1980 and 1989 placed a particular emphasis on the “collective effort” to eliminate waste. However, in articles published between 2010 and 2020, journalists used a triple approach, by emphasizing the particular role of each reader in the fight against food waste, using data gathered from the European and/or global statistics, in order to raise awareness regarding the food waste. Before 1989, the topic was understood and covered as a sequence of “daily acts”, describing real characters and situations, while after 1989, the information is delivered as an imperative.

Conclusions. The analysis of the Romanian press coverage of food waste during the two mentioned periods of time reveals an important difference regarding the actors involved in this process.

Keywords: food waste, media, Romania, persuasion.

Introduction

Waste and food waste are often defined in the scientific literature as referring to materials intended for human consumption which are subsequently disposed of, lost, degraded or contaminated. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has defined food loss as any change in the availability, edibility, healthiness or quality of edible materials that prevents human consumption. This definition refers to the post-harvest period that ends when the

product is acquired by the final consumer (Giroto, Alibardi & Cossu, 2015, p. 3). According to other researchers, such as Östergren (2014), who focused mainly on the resource flows of the agri-food system, food waste was: “any edible product and non-edible part of the food that was removed (lost or diverted) from the food supply chain for recovery or disposal (including composted, cultivated/not harvested crops), anaerobic, bioenergy production, co-generation, incineration, and products that were disposed of in the sewers or junkyards or discharged at sea” (p. 18). Food waste takes place along the food supply chain and is the result of several factors such as: institutions, actors in the supply chain and consumers (Stuart, 2009, p. 11). However, in developed countries, the main contributor to the food waste generation appears to be the consumer (according to studies conducted by Buzby & Hyman, 2012, p. 566; Beretta, Stoessel, Baier & Hellweg, 2013, p. 769). A considerable amount of food that is wasted along the food chain takes place at the end of the meal, both in the household and in restaurants or other types of catering companies (Okumus, Koseoglu & Ma, 2018, p. 65).

The issue of food waste has been addressed differently during time. The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) was created in 1984 and more than 30 years later, 247 food banks were active in 21 European countries. According to reports published on their website, in 2017, a total of 401.000 tons of food was collected and distributed to 44.700 organizations, helping 8,1 million people in need (p. 14).

Nowadays, the problem of food waste involves all waste management sectors, from collection to disposal. The identification of sustainable solutions concerns all contributors to the food supply chains, the agricultural and industrial sectors, as well as the retail and the final consumers. Although 870 million people around the world are chronically undernourished, around 1,3 billion tons, or one third of food produced for human consumption are wasted each year (Kojima & Ishikawa, 2013, p. 10). That is the main reason why in 2015 the United Nations Organization included reducing food waste among the 17 objectives for sustainable development around the world, including Sustainable Development Goals: “By 2030, the overall amount of food waste per capita must be reduced to a half, both on a distribution and consumption level and reduce food losses throughout the production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses” (Assembly, 2015, 12.3).

Warde and Yates claim that “food or what we should or should not eat is one of the most problematic topics in the contemporary world” (2016, p 15). For some consumers, food is abundant and pleasant; for others, procuring the necessary food is an exhausting daily challenge (Hall & Holmes, 2017). The result of food waste by the final consumer is a direct result of excessive or inappropriate purchasing, poor storage conditions, excessive preparation, portioning and cooking (Papargyropoulou, Lozano, Steinberger, Wright & bin Ujang, 2014, p. 11) that are classified in three main types: preventable, potentially preventable and unavoidable.

Current studies (Scherhauer & Schneider, 2011; Whitehair, Shanklin & Brannon, 2013) underline that, in order to reduce food waste, additional measures are needed to inform the public and raise awareness on matters such as reducing the food waste to 15% in university canteens, through messages such as: “Eat what you buy. Do not waste food” or “All tastes, no waste”. In other words, campaigns are needed to induce behavioural changes, educating consumers about the amplitude and impact of food waste. According to Richetin and collab. (2012, p. 113), sensibilization is important in reducing the residual food, but not necessarily decisive in generating a behavioural change. Watson and Meah (2013, p. 116) also claimed that interventions to raise awareness are insufficient, since food waste is caused by complex processes and awareness itself does not turn these processes into practice.

Pudel and Westenhofer (1988 apud. Gjerris, & Gaiani, 2013) have identified four areas of change that constitute at least a part of the explanation for food waste: (1) devaluation - food is seen as something obvious and has no value; (2) lack of knowledge about the identity of food - consumers are no longer aware of the cultural context of food they consume and no longer know the correct ingredients used to cook it; (3) lack of knowledge about the origin of food - globalization and loss of local food culture; and (4) loss of the social and emotional connection with food - eating together is no longer a daily family tradition, and the traditional family recipes disappear (Gjerris & Gaiani, 2013, pp. 8-9).

After having analysed the food waste produced by the rural tourism industry in Romania Cantaragiu, Hadad and Condrea (2019, p. 153) highlighted the fact that local food could be used both to attract tourists and to create a distinctive image of a particular touristic destination. This is especially applicable in the case of rural tourism, which usually involves locally produced foods (e.g. the famous sausages of Buzău or the wide variety of local products offered by various inns in Maramureş). As far as the underdeveloped areas are concerned, Gössling, Garrod, Aall, Hille and Peeters (2011) consider that attention should nevertheless be paid to the amount of food waste generated by the rural tourism and its impact on the local communities and the environment (p. 535). Food waste generated by the hospitality sector is therefore rapidly becoming a major concern, as its contribution to food waste accounted for almost 12% of the total waste in the past years (Tostivint et al., 2016, p. 23). In addition, along with the increasing trend in food consumption, driven by the rising income and tourism, the wastage of hospitality has become a major problem for both developed and currently developing countries (Wang et al. 2017, p. 5).

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced everyone's lives and brought new challenges to contemporary societies. The multiple restrictions, the confinement, the work from home, together with the income diminution, and the overtime hours have led to extensive changes in consumers' behaviour. The study conducted by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology, EIT Food, in September 2020 on a sample of 5.000 consumers from ten European countries shows an interesting change in consumers' behaviour in terms of purchasing and food consumption during the pandemic (Nuijten, 2020, p. 5). According to the study, significant changes are witnessed across Europe in areas such as: purchases, the consumption of food and other products, cooking and eating. There are several reasons for these changes. The results of the interviews conducted for the purpose of this study showed that 56% of the Romanian consumers were affected by financial difficulties during the pandemic, while 73% claimed that they had extra time to cook. There was also noticed a significant increase in product consumption, especially vegetables, dairy products, meat and poultry meat, while 33% have decreased alcohol consumption. There has been noticed a significant increase in the online purchases, whether they were pre-ordered or wholesale, and the biggest increase in impulse purchases. In Europe, the Romanian consumers were the second most likely to always check prices, but Romania was the only place to show a clear drop in purchases from unknown brands (while buying more product brands). Regarding the online purchases, 49% of Romanians no longer chose packed products due to hygienic reasons. Consumers taking part in this survey claim that many of the changes will be sustainable. The significant upward trends for the future include the following eating habits: enjoying the food and having a wide variety of products, developing cooking skills, using a proper equipment and having time to cook, prioritizing the access to nearby food shops and accessible products, acquiring the necessary knowledge on nutrition, healthy food and using food for weight control, buying more local food, and reducing unsustainable packaging and food waste (Nuijten, 2020, p. 12).

In order to facilitate the implementation of an intention to reduce food waste, different types of intervention can be applied (Stöckli et al. 2018 apud Närvänen, Mesiranta, Mattila & Heikkinen, 2020). These measures aim less at increasing motivation and more at reinforcing the intention to reduce levels of food waste and facilitate the necessary actions. These interventions differ in their tactics. While some invite at remembering the intention to reduce food waste, some are examples of this intention. Other interventions are more procedural and are used to teach people how to effectively reduce food waste (by giving them instructions) or help them by facilitating particular behaviours (by simplifying things) or by monitoring the effect of their behaviour. Therefore, in order to be successful in directing people toward reducing food waste, specialists show that interventions should not only initiate campaigns to raise awareness and inform consumers, because they are already concerned about this problem. On the contrary, consumers better respond to interventions aimed at increasing the importance of food waste prevention (compared to the other valuable objectives), for example by using their commitment. In addition, interventions should focus on facilitating the pursuit of objectives, improving people's skills and opportunities to handle food efficiently. As part of the set of activities conducted to combat the loss, exceedance and waste of food for alternative final users, food donation is also a solution, as food is collected for its original purpose, such as the human food consumption (Schneider, 2013, p. 762).

Food waste and the media

As far as the relationship between communication and food waste is concerned, food advertising has been one of the fastest growing industries in the last century. In 1877, food advertising accounted for only 1% of the revenues of the N. W. Ayer advertising agency, because at that time, food was considered to be a necessity rather than a luxury. After only 24 years, food advertisements accounted for 15% of the revenues of the largest advertising agency in America, and by 1920, the food industry spent over \$14 million on advertising (Parkin, 2006, p. 9). According to a report published by A. Guttmann on Statista (2017), in the United States, advertising expenses in the food industry alone generate more than \$190 billion a year, while in 2016, the advertising expenses for fruit, vegetables and the canned food industry, as well as for frozen and preserved food specialties reached about \$1,36 billion.

During the period that preceded 1989, Romania was affected by the economic crisis of the early 80's, the effects of which were felt until the revolution of December 1989 (Anton, 2015, p. 352). In 1980, "Law No. 13 of December 19, 1980 on the constitution, distribution and use of resources by county for supplying the general public with meat, milk, vegetables and fruit" was adopted and immediately entered into action (Marea Adunare Națională [Grand National Assembly], 1980). Annual food plans were made public and implemented in the following years (Scinteia, 2 July 1981a; Scinteia, 2 July 1981b). Established for the first time in the Plenary of the Executive Political Committee on July 2, 1982 and then stipulated in the law on December 18, 1982 the flour, oil, sugar and bread rations have been part of Romanians' life until 1989 (Marea Adunare Națională [Grand National Assembly], 1982). Although the official speech was talking about improving the health of the population, the real reason why these measures were adopted were the external debts and the pressure on Romania to revise its industrialization goals (Anton, 2015, p. 355). Food rations have undergone major changes over the course of the nine years, with urban inhabitants having access to higher amounts of food, as opposed to the ones in rural areas who received much smaller rations. The amount of food within the rations was based on the number of inhabitants per dwelling, age and weight. Calories consumption was established starting

from the premise that the population consumed large quantities of food, which led to weight and health problems in general (Anton, 2015, p. 351). Thus, it was decided that the initial maximum consumption rate of 3.300 calories should be reduced to a maximum of 2.800, this limit being considered scientifically appropriate: "In support of the decision, medical advice was given on the height-to-weight ratio. Thus, for a 1,65 m tall man, aged between 30 and 39 years old, the optimum weight was 67,5 kg; for a 1,80 m tall one, aged between 40 and 49 years old, the weight was 80,5 kg. For women, the standards were as follows: height 1,57 m / 30 – 39 years old / weight 56,6 kg; height 1,68 m / age of 40 – 49 years old / weight of 66,9 kg" (Mihai, 2018, p. 7). The decision regarding the food ratio was established not only based on the height and weight ratio, but also on a food plan requiring a very low rate of meat and dairy products consumption: "60 – 70 kg; fish and fish products: 8 – 10 kg; milk and milk products (exclusively butter): 210 to 230 liters; eggs: 260 to 280 pieces; fat (butter, margarine, oil, lard): 16 to 18 kg; vegetables and vegetable products: 170 to 180 kg; grain legumes: 3 to 4 kg; fruit and fruit products: 65 to 95 kg; sugar and sugar products: 22 to 26 kg; potatoes: 70 to 90 kg; cereal products (flour, cornmeal, rice): 120 to 140 kg" (Mihai, 2018, p. 8). The contemporary documents frequently express concern about the "high" consumption of oil and bread among Romanians, which is compared, by invoking their statistics, to the one registered at a European level. The plan was to reduce animal and cereal consumption by 1985. The rural inhabitants were obliged to sell food such as eggs or milk in common with other concitizens. Each village was obliged to provide a supply of food to pay the quota requested by the state (Consiliul de Stat al Republicii Socialiste România [The State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania] 1983), all of which in an attempt to prevent farmers (and all residents) from buying from other towns or cities (Anton, 2015, p. 348).

However, food is not the only one whose waste was limited through official regulations and programs. In an attempt to save as many resources as possible, cleaning products, such as: soap, light bulbs, batteries, matches or other household items were also a focus. Faced with increasingly severe restrictions, the authorities have decided to punish by law those who make food supplies. Article 1 of Decree 306/1981 laid down as follows (Consiliul de Stat al Republicii Socialiste România [The State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania], 1981): "Buying from state and cooperative trading units for storage, in quantities exceeding the needs of family consumption over a period of one month, of oil, sugar, flour, cornmeal, rice, coffee and other food products whose storage affects the interests of other purchasers and the good supply of the population constitutes a crime of speculation and is punishable under the Penal Code by 6 months to 5 years in prison".

During 1980 and 1989, consumer goods not only considerably reduced their quantity and became extremely hard to reach, but also drastically lost their quality. Food was also subject to changes in composition. In search of less expensive measures, Ceaușescu decided to set up new rabbit farms in order to cover the meat shortages, thus trying to balance the exported products with the ones from the domestic market (Anton, 2015, p. 349): "In search of new cheap solutions, during the CPEX (Comitetul Politic Executiv al Comitetului Central, The Executive Committee of the Central Committee) meeting on March 18, 1982, Ceaușescu ordered the development of some kinds of sausage that would include less meat and more substitutes. Inspired by the Spanish ham, but also by the Moldavian pârjoale or the American hamburgers, the secretary-general was more than optimistic that successful substitutes could also be made available in the Socialist trade". It should not be forgotten that another important resource where "waste" was reduced was the fuel and electricity consumption (Tismăneanu, Dobrinu, & Vasile, 2006).

From a historical perspective, the period that began in the ninth decade of the past century granted to Romanians the access to a variety of food products, along with the transition to a way of organization and production oriented toward the market of the agri-food sector. However, as shown by an analysis carried out during 1990 and 1999 (Petrovici & Ritson, 2000, p. 295), Romanians started to have an unhealthy diet and consume more and more food that generated the emergence of diseases (heart diseases, cancer, etc.). After Romania's accession to the European Union, the quality and quantity of the consumed food became extremely important, along with the economic development and the increase in the population's purchase power. According to the analysis conducted by Antoneac, Petre, Nica and Iana (2019), between 2010 and 2016 there was an average increase of 11% per household of food wasted in Romania ranging from 120.000 tons in 2010 to 164.000 tons six years later (p. 236).

In an attempt to harmonize the Romanian legislation with the European one in this field as well, some limits needed to be imposed on food waste at a national level. Therefore, in 2016 a law on food waste, namely the "Law 217/2016" (Parlamentul Român [the Romanian Parliament], 2016) was adopted for the first time in more than three decades. In contrast to the legislation before 1989, the emphasis of this new law was placed on the activity of economic operators who were encouraged to take measures in order to prevent the food waste. The law also introduced a number of measures designed to encourage people and other economic operators to adopt a proactive behaviour in the prevention of food waste through: information and education measures, low-cost sale of food goods with a shelf-life close to the expiration date, food donation, transformation of obsolete food into compost, biogas or their neutralization (Romanian Parliament, 2016). The 2019 "Methodological norms", which supplemented the "Law 217/2016", also emphasized the responsibility of economic units (rather than consumers) in reducing food waste.

Material and methods

There are some important differences between the way in which food waste prevention was regulated in Romania before and after 1989. The logical question arising from this situation is: "To what extent have these historical periods been different from the point of view of media coverage of food waste?"

This article attempts to answer to the following research question: "What is the situation in Romania regarding the food waste as covered by the media in the past as well as in the present society?"

In order to find an answer, the focus was placed on identifying the differences and similarities between the ways in which the food waste was covered by the Romanian press in two distinct periods of time: the 80's (1980-1989) and the present (2010-2020), by using the qualitative analysis of the Romanian press (Chelcea, 2001).

The analysis was carried out on two separate samples of articles published in the Romanian press, out of which, the first included 23 electronic editions of the newspaper "Scinteia" from 1980 to 1986. The publications have been consulted online on the "Bucharest Digital Library" website. Of the total amount of electronic editions of the newspaper, 16 articles have been selected for analysis.

The second sample consisted of 30 articles published in the Romanian national online press ranging from 2010 to 2020. The articles were selected using the search engine "Google", where in the section "News", keywords such as "waste" and "food" were used to access the articles available on this topic. The data collection for both samples took place between February and March 2021. The analysis was qualitative and descriptive. No research assumptions were made, let alone causal assumptions.

The results will be presented in a narrative manner, without claiming that they are of a representative nature and without generalizing.

Results

The analysis begins with the articles published between 2010 and 2020 where the journalists used a triple approach consisting of the following elements: an emphasis on the individual role of each reader in the fight against food waste, the usage of European and/or global statistics on the subject in order to draw attention to food waste or to raise requirements for compliance with the European Union regulations.

Thus, in the article titled “This is how you reduce food waste!” Published by the “Click” newspaper on November 4, 2017, journalists are directly encouraging the individual reader to adopt a balanced and rational behaviour toward purchasing, preparing, consuming and preserving the food. To this end, the journalist adopts an individualized strategy of persuading readers by repeating imperative verbs – “you [the one who are now reading] freeze / use / let your imagination run free / divide / combine (the food)”. The text therefore becomes a long “list” of desirable behaviours, which the reader is (almost) obliged to adopt: “Freeze the extra vegetables, fruit or meat remaining from the meal preparation and use it for future dishes. Use all the edible parts of the vegetables. For example, if you cook carrots, use the leaves in a salad. Do you have some extra eggs; the butter is approaching its expiration date? Use them! Let your imagination wander free and combine the ingredients you have in your kitchen in order to prepare new recipes. There are many online platforms that offer you suggestions for delicious recipes based on the food you already have, without even having to go shopping. Properly divide the ingredients before you make a recipe, in order to avoid leaving something behind after preparing your meal. If you still have ingredients left, eat them during the next meal or combine them with other dishes.”

This article sends a persuasive message centred on the individual, who is perceived as a consumer needing to be persuaded by rational arguments to change his behaviour. Unlike this example, the articles published between 1980 and 1989 placed a particular emphasis on what could now be called the “collective effort” to eliminate waste. The article published on October 20, 1981 on the front page of “Scinteia” demonstrates this attitude. In the article titled “The household spirit must replace food improvisations and waste even in the collective consumption thus shows a raid-survey conducted by our newspaper through the canteens of some enterprises of the capital” the journalist takes a brief look at the shortcomings of the requirement for a scientific food for the existent canteens in several state-owned enterprises of Bucharest during that period. In this context, the waste of bread was mentioned in order to highlight the waste it produces by being sold “by quarter” and not by slice: “The raid conducted through the workers' canteens in Bucharest highlighted the need for intervention by the General commercial Directorate to find solutions and other topical solutions for the work of these establishments of general public interest: adopt a rational bread management (bread is still distributed in “quarters”, with many unused waste left); use the benefits of canteens' accounts to improve canteens' menus; take more determined steps to diversify menus to all canteens by ensuring a scientific balance of the components of a rational diet.”

This example proves that before 1989, the media put the emphasis on an impersonal, collective and collectivistic “us”, along with the transformation of food waste (in this case, the bread) into an “emblem” for the behaviour that contributes to it. On the other hand, during the period between 2010 and 2020, the media focused on the “debt” and “obligation” to adopt a behaviour that would prevent the food waste. The motivation for this behavioural change is now

collective, as it is seen as necessary in the context of the European Union's requirements. For example, in the article titled "We are poor, but we throw away the food. Why did we arrive to this situation?" published by the "Click" newspaper on February 21, 2018, the opening phrase particularly emphasizes the lack of economic rationality of food waste: "We are Europe's poor, but we still afford to throw more food than others." The economic argument continues to be brought up in the article, through the use of the collective and impersonal actor – the "Romanians": "We could say that this is typically Romanian, since the figures show that, although we are poor, 40% of the income we make is spent on food."

After this impersonal appeal, the author of the article discusses the issue of food waste, while, on one side invoking the official statistical data: "EU statistics show that Romania ranks ninth among the most wasteful countries in Europe, with 2,55%, or 2,2 million tons of food lost each year, which means more than 6.000 tons per day", and on the other side imposing the requirements of the European Union for the Member States: "By the end of 2018, Member States must accurately measure and report food waste. This is why at the beginning of the year, the Agriculture Ministry asked the Department of Food and Bio resources to carry out a study on the food that reaches the Romanian dumpsters. According to Elena Dinu, the head of the working group against food waste, the above-mentioned data have already been collected and will be published by the end of the year. Institutions have already been set up in the West to redistribute food to the poor at low prices."

However, in this case, what distinguishes the appeal to the community regarding the food waste, as opposed to the one in the communist press is its extremely abstract character. If the 1980-1989 press used a sequence of clearly localized "everyday facts", which contained descriptions of real people and specific situations (canteen X, factory Y, seller U, buyer X, etc.), three decades later, these elements are completely absent from the press. Instead, they are replaced by collective entities (such as the EU Member States), norms and general regulations or laws.

Discussions

First of all, the results show that the articles published between 1980 and 1989 placed a particular emphasis on the "collective effort" to eliminate waste. However, in articles published between 2010 and 2020, journalists used a triple approach, which involved: emphasizing the particular role of each reader in the fight against food waste, using data gathered from the European and/or global statistics, in order to raise awareness regarding the food waste, and invoking the compliance requirements of the European Union standards. Secondly, after 1989, the approach of the Romanian press on the subject of food waste was extremely abstract, as opposed to the previously analysed period, where the topic was understood and covered as a sequence of "daily acts", describing real characters and situations. Thirdly, after 1989, the official and formal quality of the information prevails, as opposed to the one before 1980.

Approaching the reader through specific examples was in fact the distinctive feature of the articles published in the Romanian press before 1989. While still paying tribute to a journalistic tradition rooted in the 19th century, the Communist press was placing the emphasis (in a specific way) on the "mundane fact" which was subsequently presented according to the ideological requirements. Although, canonically, the "mundane fact" was perceived by the specialized literature as "the usual information about unusual, unforeseen and even bizarre situations, presented in a sensational and dramatic manner" (Negrea, 2013, p. 154), the Communist press only maintained some of these characteristics (such as the unusual). This is the case in the Article "To the taste of people, not to the taste of 'waste'", published on October 29, 1981 on the first and third

pages of the newspaper “Scinteia”. After a walk through the bread factories of Bucharest, the journalists reveal to the public small dialogs and fragments of the 80’s daily conversations. Examples of avoiding food waste are therefore collected from the inhabitants of this city, and subsequently inserted by the journalist in the main narration as part of the reader’s daily conversations, such as in the following example: “While we write all this, Dumitru Moga, a worker on one of the nearby I.T.B sites entered the unit to buy a half of bread. He also suggested making smaller loaves of bread, for those who want to take a simple snack at the workplace, and not a lunch.”

The insertion of an “everyday life” anecdote in the articles on the subject of food waste was a particularity of that period of time, and was not found in the articles published between 2010 and 2020 that were collected for the present analysis. The “voices” quoted in the articles published in the Romanian media over the last decade are no longer those of ordinary people but of “experts”. The arguments that favour a certain behaviour oriented towards the food preservation is thus delivered from a position of authority (the science) as opposed to the reader (or the “average man”). For example, the article titled “Why do Romanians throw tons of food after the holidays” published in the national daily “Adevărul” on January 4, 2017 quotes a doctor (Corina Zugravu, specialist in nutrition and public nutrition), several sociologists (Mircea Kivu, Mihai Cucerzan), an anthropologist (Vintila Mihăilescu), representatives of non-governmental organizations (Sorin Mierlea, president of InfoCons, Andreea Höfer, director of programs at “More Green”). The only missing point of view is that of a “worker on the site”, revealed in the article published before 1989.

A last significant difference that could be noticed in the way the media covered the subject of food waste during the two analysed periods was, therefore, the extremely formal nature of the information delivered to the public during the period 2010-2020, as opposed to the one before 1980. If the “Scinteia” newspaper engaged the reader through humoristic drawings regarding the food waste, three decades away, the articles covering the same subject were written in a serious tone, with no reference to entertainment, completely lacking emotional involvement, and were based on a strictly rational appeal to the reader.

Conclusions

The present analysis highlights the fact that the qualitative approach provided the opportunity to identify some main features of the press messages during two distinct periods of time (1980-1989 and 2010-2020). The 80’s press was using persuasive messages in order to emphasize the “mundane fact” and the “voices” of ordinary people who, by personal example, could provide solutions to the problem of food waste. These elements were completely gone thirty years later. On the contrary, the articles published between 2010 and 2020 are the exact opposite, as they use abstract and rational imperatives, in order to develop a prevention behaviour that could combat food waste, along with the citation of distinct “voices” of experts and scientists. Moreover, the ludic, humorous elements from the 1980-1989 press on food waste were no longer found in the newspapers published between 2010 and 2020.

Although the study does not aim to offer a representative picture of the way in which the food waste issue was covered by the Romanian media during two distinct periods of time (1980-1989 and 2010-2020), apart from an inherent ideological side, which constitutes the defined essence of the main axis distinguishing between the media coverage of food waste during the two analysed periods of time, the analysis reveals some specific elements of a specific mentality.

Acknowledgements

This study represents the result of an analysis that was conducted without any financial aid. A summary of this paper was presented at online international conference: Individual, family, society - contemporary challenges, fourth edition, 6 to 7 October 2021, Bucharest, Romania and published in the journal *Studii și Cercetări de Antropologie*, No. 7/2021.

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