A STUDY OF PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:This section sets out to highlight existing research on media and online discourse and provides the background to my thesis entitled: A DISCURSIVE-SEMANTIC MODEL OF SEXUALITY APPRAISAL IN ROMANIAN ONLINE PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS. It has been pointed out that the first advertisements appeared in Romania in a local paper, Curierul românesc. The Personal Ads in the interwar period shared the general features of advertising, considered to be by far the best period in the whole Romanian history.
In Romania, there are quite a few online dating sites, but compared to other Western European countries, the Romanian online dating market is rather small.

Keywords: advertising; dating-sites; ; personal ads; advertisements

1. Personal Advertisements in Romania

Any examination of PAs in Romania must be embedded in the functionalities of advertising which is used to fulfill particular marketing communication goals. As mentioned in the previous subchapters, the main function of advertising is to convey the benefits of a product, create leads for sales follow-up, contrast a company's brands against its competitors, or establish the increasing reputation of a company. This applies for PAs as well. Throughout time, advertising has developed towards promoting not only a consumerist society and its embedded practices, but also towards using products to facilitate, and hence control, the exchange of meaning in a globalized world. In the following sections, I shall focus on the particular features characterizing Romanian personal ads placed in an historical context.

It has been pointed out that the first advertisements appeared in Romania in a local paper, *Curierul românesc* [The Romanian Courier] in 1829. The newspaper advertised a book entitled *The Philosophy of Words and Vices* that was published in Pest and was written in the Romanian language. After 1840, text advertisements became widespread in the Romanian periodicals of the time and, starting 1886, ads included images as well. It was not until 1906 that more attractive company-specific advertisements began to appear. The PAs of this time are strikingly different from what we see nowadays in what regards the style, language used, requirements and desires in contemporary partner searching. The following personal ad was published in the Tribune newspaper in the year 1909, whereby a young military spread the rumour in the country looking for the perfect wife. She was not just supposed to be intelligent and beautiful, untouched by other men, and striving for perfection but she also had to be a cultured woman, cooth, endowed with artistic talent, dowry and a sound knowledge of good cooking[1].

[1] Source of the PA is: http://a1.ro/news/inedit/anuntul-matrimonial-publicat-de-un-tanar-ofiter-roman-in-anul-1909-romanca-frumoasa-culta-vieata-nepatata-id436370.html

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Căsătorie.

Un tinèr inteligent, oficer în reservă, etate 29 ani, cu un venit fix anual de 3000 cor., avere privată 6000 cor. şi va moşteni 10—15 mii coroane, în lipsa cunoştinţei pe această cale îşi caută **soţia vieţii.** Caută o Românca frumoasă, cultă, vieaţă nepătată, gospodară, fără capriţuri şi pretensiuni, căreia-'i place vieaţa la ţeară şi posede în numĕrar 6000 coroane, precum şi mobile pentru 4 odăi. 163 2—2

Recerinţă principală: cât de puţin sĕ ştie căsni pianul, dar' cu atât mai bine învêrti lingura la foc. Numai ofertele la cari sûnt alăturate şi posa vor fi luate în considerare. Cel mai profund secret se asigură.

Ofertele sûnt a se adresa la administraţia acestei foi sub devisa **„Ce agoniseşte bărbatul femeia sĕ ştie cruţa".**

The PA appeared 108 years ago and was included in the exhibition marking the history of advertising reflected in the pages of *Tribuna* [Tribune] that was exhibited in 2009 in celebration of 125 years since the appearance of the newspaper.

The PAs in the interwar period shared the general features of advertising, considered to be by far the best period in the whole Romanian history. Typical for the interwar period was *Universul* [The Universe], a newspaper that had the largest circulation of all newspapers. It came out on the 20th of August 1884 as the first major daily that was founded by the Italian journalist, Luigi Cazzavillan. Up until 1953 when it was closed, the newspaper beat all circulation records and reached, in the late 1930s, five daily editions and a circulation of well over 100,000 copies, being the most widely read low-priced newspaper in Romania. Each issue abounded in advertisements whether small size or large spaced with a range of advertised products that included drugs, devices, cosmetics, cars, cigarettes, famous stores etc. (Mihăilă 2015:8). An important space in the newspaper was reserved for personal advertisements as well[2]. Manolache (2014:39) holds that *Universul* [The Universe] and *Adevărul* [The Truth] are to be considered landmarks in the history of the Romanian press though their orientation, circulation and importance in press development. She examines the PAs of the time and concludes that marriages during this period were made in full compliance with the status and social position of the spouse-to-be and within the same social group. A WSM ad of the time would typically look as follows: *„Damă tînără frumoasă, inteligentă, etate 17 ani, doresc intimitatea unui domn frumos şi bogat. Melita administraţia Adevărul"* [Young woman, intelligent, good looking, age 17, seek intimacy of a rich, handsome man] (Adevărul, An 12, nr.3542, 3 iunie 1899, p.4)*;„D-şoară tînără, onestă, draguţă, doreşte căsătorie sau alte condiţiuni, domn mai în vîrstă, serios, bine situat. Aurora, post-restant".* [Young woman, honest, pretty, wishes marriage to an older gentleman, serious and of good condition] (Adevărul, An 13, nr.3999, 13 septembrie 1899, p.4); *„Văduvă tîn. nost., dor. cunoş. Intimă şi discr. a unui domn serios, cult şi de bună condiţie. Adr. Iphugènie 828, post-r"* [Young widow, funny, looks for intimate and discreet aquaintance of a serious, and cultured man of good condition] (Adevărul, An 12, nr.3409, 17 ianuarie 1899, p.4); *„Tînără*

http://www.gds.ro/Local/2002-10-17/Iata+ce+aberatii+publicitare+nascoceau+romanii+prin+presa+interbelica/

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22 ani, frum., f. Intel., dor. intim. Tînăr cult, serios, bine situat, adr. Post-restant, Maricel de la Piou"[Young woman, 22, beautiful, very intelligent, seeks intimate aquaintance of a young, cultured, serious man of good condition] (Adevărul, An 12, nr.3542, 3 iunie 1899, p.4); *„Tînără (25 ani), frum., cult, f.intelig., orf., dor. cunoşt. un domn bine situat, care-i propune întreţ. Adr. Hortense 100, post-r*"[Young woman, 25, beautiful, cultured, very intelligent, orphan, seeks aquaintance of a wealthy man who offers to keep her] (Adevărul, An 12, nr.3535, 27 mai 1899, p.4);*„D-şoară Evreică, foarte frumoasă, bine educată, profesionistă, doreşte a se căsători cu un domn evreu, tînăr, cu o posiţie frumoasă"*[Young Jewish girl, very beautiful, well educated and skilled wishes to marry a young Jewish gentleman with a good position] (Adevărul, An 13, nr.3807, 3 martie 1900, p.4); or*„Domnişoară tînără, drăguţă, bună condiţie, caracter nobil blînd. Doreşte cunoştinţă unui domn serios, mai în vîrstă bine situat"* [Young pretty woman, with a good material condition, of noble and gentle nature, seeks aquaintance of an older, wealthy, serious gentleman] (Adevărul, An 13, nr.4067, 20 noiembrie 1900, p.4).

In what regards MSW personal ads, the requirements were slighly different; beauty was not necessarily a quality, as men were in search for something else: *„Văduv 32 inginer, doresc căsăt. fate de ţară 15-18 foarte urîtă, dar ochi mari negri, blîndă, devot., bani 15.000. b. Post restant Bacău*"[Widower, 32, engineer, seeks marriage to a country girl 15-18, very ugly but with big hazel eyes, gentle, dedicated and with an income of 15.000] (Adevărul, An 12, nr.3549, 10 iunie 1899, p.4); *„Un domn prea ocupat, doreşte cunoştinţa unei văduve, cam de 35 ani, albă cu ochi negri, mică de stat, slabă, piciorul şi mîna mică, dantura curată şi naturală"*[A too busy gentleman seeks aquaintance of a widow, about 35 years old, white complexion with dark eyes, short, thin, both foot and hand small, clean and with natural teeth] (Universul, An 17, nr. 86, 29 martie 1899, p.4); *„Tiner inteligent, bună familie, funcţionar inamovabil, doreşte a se căsători cu o domnişoară sau doamnă, nici prea frumoasă, nici tocmai-tocmai bogată; de preferinţă maestră de lucru sau învăţătoare*" [Intelligent young man, of a good family, stable, clerk, wishes to marry a woman or young lady who is neither beautiful nor quite rich, preferably a teacher or a professional worker] (Universul, An 20, nr.7, 9 ianuarie 1902, p.4). To some men, lack of dowry was hardly any impediment, however moral and physical qualities were mandatory for an ideal match: „*Un tînăr bogat, cult, înalta societate, funcţiune frumoasă şi sigură, fizic plăcut, doresc intimitatea sau căsătoria unei gingaşe tinere şi instruite domnişoare, fără zestre*" [A rich young man, high society, with a nice, stable job, pleasant looks, seeks intimacy or marriage to an educated, fragile young woman, with no dowry] (Adevărul, An 13, nr.3999, 13 septembrie 1900, p.4) or *„Un domn poziţie materială bună, titlu academic, doresc căsătorie domnişoară, chiar fără zestre, însă serioasă, frumoasă, bună menageră, bună familie; să scie bine piano, să voească a sta şi la ţară*" [A well-off gentleman, university studies, seeks marriage to a young woman, even one without dowry, but serious, beautiful, good house keeper and from a good family; she should play piano well and should consider living in the countryside as well][3](Adevărul, An 13, nr.3831, 27 martie 1900, p.4).

A couple of decades later, a MSW personal ad in a 1937 newspaper issue will be written in a similar vein: "*Tînăr, 25 ani, comerciant, drăguţ, suflet blînd, doresc căsătorie fiica comerciant, blîndă – dotă.*" [Young man, 25, trader, nice, kind-hearted, is looking for marriage to a trader's daughter, sweet-hearted, dowry]. Clearly, at that time, kind heartedness and dowry were harmoniously to be blended and considered for an ideal match. A WSM personal ad in the *Universe* newspaper had a somewhat different aspiration:"*Doamna tînără, de condiţie bună, serioasă, de încredere, caut loc la copil mare, pentru munte în timpul vacanţei*"[Young woman, of good condition, trustworthy, looks for a teenager's company in

[3] All ads were taken from Mihalache (2014:51).

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the mountains during vacation]. The implicit meaning in this personal ad is that although the woman is seeking a vacation partner for a limited duration of time, there is an implied openness for a longer affair, beyond vacation time.

The Transylvanian personal ads of the early 20th century are surprising in what regards the principles and the seriousness with which marriage, as an institution in itself, was dealt with. Far from being feelings-based (presumed to come with time), what represented top priorities in partner searching were the future wife's dowry and saving skills, followed by cooking and piano playing skills. Other PAs of the time were more or less variants of *"Tînăr inteligent [...] caut soţia vieţii [...] căreia-i place viaţa la ţară"* [Intelligent young man, looks for his life's wife, one who likes living in the countryside]4. In the pages of *Românul* [The Romanian], a newspaper from Arad, one can find personal ads that either look openly for a financing girl: *"Un tînăr universitar, anul III, caută spre finanţare o fată, ca*re deja de acuma l-ar ajuta pînă absolvă. Discreţie, onoare", (*Românul*, 10 octombrie 1912) [A III-rd year young man is looking for a financing girl to help him through graduation. Discretion and Honour desired], or are more or less subtle about certain financial restrictive conditions[5], as in: *"Un învăţător de stat de 38 de ani cu avere 20.000 cor. dintr'un orăşel montanistic aproape de centrul comitatului Caraş-Severin, doreşte să se căsătorească amăsurat vîrstei sale cu o fată sau văduvă onestă, cultă şi din familie bună." (Românul, 10* octombrie 1912)[A teacher, 38 years old, with a fortune of 20,000 crowns from a small town in the center of the mountain county of Caraş-Severin, wants to marry a girl his age or an honest widow from a good family] or *"Momentan m'aş căsători şi fără zestre cu o domnişoară ori doamnă văduvă pînă la 30 de ani, prin care aş ajunge la un post de notar într'o comună românească. Sunt apt, calificat şi român.". (Românul, 15/18 noiembrie 1912)* [For the moment, I would even marry a dowryless young woman or a widow under 30 to help me attain the position of a notary public in a Romanian village. I am skilled, qualified and Romanian].

"Matrimonial Advertising in our country is almost minimal, while in the other European countries, even overseas countries, it has significantly developed, making many men happy in ideal matches", J. J. Mario, the director of publication, wrote in the foreword of *Journal de Mariage* [Journal of Marriage], Tîrgu-Mureş, Sunday, April 2, 1933.

[4] http://romanialibera.ro/aldine/history/cum-aratau-reclamele-din-presa-pe-vremea-bunicilor-313634
[5] https://deieri-deazi.blogspot.ro/2014/08/publicitate-la-inceput-de-secol-xx.html

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Journal de Mariage

ORGAN MATRIMONIAL — APARE JOI DIMINEAŢA — DIRECTOR: J. J. MARIO

ABONAMENTE: Lei 200 pe un an, 110 pe 6 luni, 60 pe 3 luni. PUBLICITATEA: 1, 2 şi 3 lei cuvântul.

Heirats Zeitung. Erscheint wöchentlich. Publiziert Heirats, bekanntschaft und korespondenten Annonzen.

HAZASSÁGI UJSÁG. Megjelenik hetenként. Tartalmaz házassági, ismeretségi és levelezési hirdetéseket.

Journal de Mariage. Organ Hebdomadaire. Public annonces de Mariage, connaissance et correspondence.

ELŐFIZETÉSEK: 200 lei egy évre, 110 „ 6 hónapra, 60 „ 3 hónapra. HIRDETÉSI ÁRAINK: 1, 2 és 3 lei szavankint.

Redacţia şi Administraţia: Târgu-Mureş, Strada Călăraşilor No. 1.

Cuvânt înainte!

Publicitatea matrimonială în ţara noastră este aproape minimă, pe când în ţările din Europa şi chiar din ţările de peste Ocean, a luat o desvoltare foarte mare, care pe mulţi i-a făcut fericiţi printr'o partidă ideală.

Pentru a da posibilitate publicului din Ardeal, Crişana, Bănat, Maramureş etc., de a se Căsători sau de a face cunoştinţe în vederea căsătoriei după dorinţă, am luat frumoasa iniţiativă de a redacta prezentul ziar, care a lipsit foarte mult acelora, cari aveau nevoie de el.

Acest ziar de publicaţiune matrimonială corespunde adevăratelor necesităţi publice, care asigură într'un mod foarte discret viitorul printr'o partidă bogată sau convenabilă, pub-

Előszó!

Országunkban nagyon kevés házassági hirdetés van, mig Európa más országaiban, sőt az Oceánon tuli országokban is nagyon el van terjedve, mivel ez sokakat tett boldoggá egy ideális házasság által.

Azért, hogy lehetőséget nyujtsak Erdély, Bánát, Máramaros, Körösvidék stb. közönségének, hogy összeházasodjanak vagy ismeretséget kössenek — házasság céljából — kivánság szerint hozzáfogtam megszerkeszteni ezen lapot, amely hiányzott azoknak, akiknek szükségük volt rá.

Ez a házassági hirdetéseket közlő lap megfelel az igazi közszükségletnek, amely nagyon discret módon biztosit jó jövőt egy gazdag vagy megfelelő parti által, hirdetve kiván-

Picture 1. Journal de Mariage *Source*[6]*:*

Holding that the newspaper of matrimonial ads corresponds to the real needs of the public, Mario states that his newspaper assists people, with necessary discretion, in finding a rich and most convenient match by publishing their ads in his cheap newspaper. Indeed, a matrimonial ad cost 6 lei whereas a letter that could be received on the editorial office's address was only 3 lei, compared to the cost of 2 lei for a newspaper issue of the time (Precup 2015), Subscribers enjoyed free newspaper ads and the management of the newspaper was made through its subsidiaries in Cluj and Odorheiu Secuiesc. The *Journal of Marriage* was 4-page long and would publish even persuasive articles such as those trying to lead subscribers into getting married or, alternatively, into getting rid of the celibate tax by turning to the Journal: "Unmarried people, in the 30-35 age group, shall pay a general 5% tax to the State and therefore we shall score a considerable marriage rate in our country. Our newspaper will provide both the rich and the poor with the opportunity to contract convenient marriages. Our strong advice is that you should post an ad with our newspaper so that you can quickly rid yourself of this new tax burden and contract a happy marriage at the same time" (Precup 2015:64). This policy line worked for the advertisers and the following ad is illustrative of the type that could be found in this newspaper: *"Tînăr de 25 de ani de profesiune Contabil de bancă, moral ales fără vicii, serios, întreprinzetor de lucrări fără obligaţiuni, cu rudeni bine cunoscute în lumea politică, avînd caracter frumos cu avere imobilă cca. 500.000 lei, ortodox, român, statura 1.72, doreşte cunoştinţă în vederea căsătoriei cu Dşoară etatea 18-21 ani, indiferent naţionalitatea, creştină, avînd ca dotă de preferinţă 150 iugăre pămînt, muzicantă pian, fizic plăcut, din familie nobilă, înstruită, blîndă, sentimentală, sinceră şi devotată. Anonimelor nu răspund. Oferte amănunţite la ziar sub „Contabil 25"*[Young man, 25, bank accountant, without addictions, serious, having an entrepreneur's nature, no strings attached, with good political connections, a man of character, with a fortune that amounts to about 500,000 lei, Romanian Orthodox, 1.72 tall, wants to meet, in view of marriage, a young woman between 18-21, regardless of nationality, Christian, with a dowry of preferably 150 acres of land, with piano playing skills, she should

[6] http://adevarul.ro/locale/targu-mures/cum-isi-cautau-oamenii-perechea-perioada-interbelica-journal-mariage-ziar-patru-limbi-erau-publicate-anunturile-matrimoniale-1_54caa15c448e03c0fd162430/index.html

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be physically gratifying, of noble descent, educated, gentle, sentimental, sincere and devoted. Anonymous responses will remain unanswered. Detailed newspaper descriptions to be provided under Accountant 25].

Such a newspaper started out as a local newspaper in four languages and reached a wide regional distribution. It had what would be otherwise called today a very good "score rate card", with special contests featured for well-profiled readers. It was not a long lasting publication, being closed in 1933, however, it remains a unique initiative in the inter-war atmosphere of the city of Tîrgu-Mureş.

Throughout the first decade of post-communist Romanian advertising, personal ads took a more modern turn, as professional advertising resorted to deliberate socio-cultural associations nurturing nostalgia, patriotism and pride in their attempt to stimulate buyers' loyalty. On the newly emerging market, intertwining local and global influences led to a more pragmatic, oriented type of personal ads, featuring more sophisticated BA holders, engaged this time in "more serious" intellectual partner searching[7]. Marriage was invoked in most ads, some requests being dry and clear, others more courteous and less blunt (Pictures 2).


matrimoniale

1.FRANCEZI 23-40 ani dorim doamne în vederea căsătoriei 18-40 ani; 89.32.98, orele 8-12'''.

2.TÎNĂRĂ prezentabilă, mioniță, 134/24 ani, doresc cunoștință în vederea căsătoriei ofițer minion; 26.37.54.

3.TEHNICIAN pensionat 63/168/67, manierat, văduv, nefumător, cu proprietate, doresc cunoștință cu doamnă serioasă, prezentabilă, vîrsta apropiată; 79.95.75.

4.DOMNIȘOARE între 18-35 ani, dorîți să vă căsătoriți cu cetățeni italieni din Italia? Dacă da, sunați la 65.05.46, între orele 10-12''', 18-20'''.

[7]Source of pictures: https://www.paginademedia.ro/2017/06/proiect-special-romania-in-anunturi-acum-27-de-ani-televizoare-pe-lampi-video-masline-trabanturi-si-savuroase-matrimoniale-ce-se-vindea-si-ce-se-cumpara

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Picture 2. Post Communist Personal Ads. *Source:* https://www.paginademedia.ro/2017

A courteous, somewhat more restrained PA such as: *"EU, 40/178, atractiv, charmant, curajos, cu mult succes în meseria mea de inginer şi iubitor de muzică, pictură, sport, te caută pe tine, simpatică, frumoasă şi înţelegătoare de franceză şi engleză".*[I am, 40/178, attractive, charming, brave and successful engineer, a lover of painting, music and sports and look for you, a nice, good-looking girl, knowledgeable of French and English] differs in style and register from *"Manager bancar, 33/160/55, doresc economistă (studentă) inteligentă, fascinantă, realistă, uluitoare, weekend munte"* [Managing banker, 33/160/55,

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seeks an Economics student, who is intelligent, fascinating, realistic and amazing, for a weekend in the mountains.]

A more detailed examination of the PAs of this period will be made in the 3.2.3 Section of this study with regard to the language, style, register and stock phrases used in these personal ads.

2. Dating Websites and Agencies

In Romania, there are quite a few online dating sites however, compared to other Western European countries, the Romanian online dating market is rather small. Foreigners tend to prefer the local dating websites over others such as Badoo, Meetic or Aso which welcome worldwide members. Until more recently, the Romanians were reluctant to pay on dating websites, which explains the upsurge between 2000 and 2015 of free matrimonial websites that were actually made for ads.

With time, single people have started looking for more qualitative services and have turned to particularly those dating websites displaying better content, additional phone, email and chat support, stripped of ads, scam and fake profiles, Such online dating websites have increasingly adapted to meet customers needs in an attempt to cater for more and better tastes, offering new personal services in return for varying amounts of fees. Less effort and time consuming has become the Internet dating which allows single men and women to surf online anonymously every day. As Romania is known to enjoy the fastest (and cheapest) internet in Europe and the sixth-fastest in the whole world, it is not surprising that Internet dating took a quick and most convenient turn around 2005. As most main cities and country regions enjoy at least a 4G internet signal band, online dating websites have started getting hundreds of new users every day. With an additional channel at their disposal, the mobile phone, a device enabling single Romanians to enjoy a more comfortable and more personal(lized) internet surfing, the dating market has already reached well over 5 million registered members. However, as the possibility of fraud and scam has been alarmingly on an ascending trend in the last period, singles looking for fun, friendship or marriage are often advised against trusting and sending money to anyone they find on an online dating website. This explains why, gradually, dating agencies have become more popular operating alternatives to online dating sites, as they provide more privacy, specialized support and fast finding matchmaking services on the basis of much better profiled and personalized searches.

3. Communication, Discourse and Evaluation in PAs: The Nexus

Some of the main questions regarding an appropriate theoretical background for research on personal advertisements as computer-mediated communication in online media arise over the nexus of various identity and communication theories, functional linguistic perspectives, intercultural and social communication studies, and internet based research in the 21st century. Which of the major identity and evaluation theories of the past century can be successfully extended or adapted to serve as a frame for e-text-based analysis of asynchronous non-face-to-face personal advertisements? Which analytical approaches would answer a humanist researcher's need for work efficiency in the given environment?

Upon a first encounter with the task of grounding research on a relevant set of theoretical assumptions on identity construction, and the various means of discursive identification and representation in PAs, it appears that adopting a discourse analytical approach would rightfully place this work within the premises of critical discourse studies, mostly if one conceives of PAs as interrelated forms of 'text'-productive social practices. However, the medium in which personal ads as social practices are hosted, as well as the complexity of the 'text' produced, as already clarified in the previous subsections, inflict some difficulties on a discourse analyst's work, and make it a prerequisite that they think flexibly about the two layers on which the same 'text' is made into a visible 'object' of

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analysis: the online and offline identities of the 'text' *produsers*[8].

A continuous effort to discriminate between the shifting 'voices' engaged in computer -mediated 'conversation' is therefore necessary, as much tempting as it may be for a discourse analyst not trained in cyberstudies, for ignoring the distancing between the Real Life 'speakers' and their online identities and voices, and for approaching the e-text in the Pas as a form of direct/immediate textual 'conversation' on grounds that it is textual interpretation one reaches at eventually.

However, I find it necessary not to ignore the perceptible changes that asynchronous computer-mediated communication operates into these participants' voices, given the centrality of discursive identity in online communication. In other words, I think that a useful approach to evaluation, discursive identities and discourses of identification/presentation at the interface of online/offline communication ought to consider accounting for the way advertisers perceive themselves as participants in this particular online environment through self-reflexive discourses, as well as how their unseen interlocutors' responses are apt to reflect such perceived identities. Further on, I think it is necessary to see how identification strategies and role-assuming affect responses, and reflect the participants' awareness of their 'voices' being reconstructed via their own discourses in their interlocutors' imaginary, and to what extent being manipulative of one's own identity discursively can undermine or support successful conversational communication.

The more or less discrete changes effected by the environment as a 'virtual space' in the very construction of the *producers*' voices and their perceived identities will also affect how one conceives of and uses a discourse analytical approach, (insofar as analysts need to position themselves successively on such angles as may allow them to gain the least distortion possible).

My thesis research aims to chart our way from the theoretical grounds of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) towards a flexible yet reliable analytical frame for sexuality appraisal, embedding discursive identities in online communication as in the particular use of English as communication language in PAs. Before setting on such a frame, we have to consider at least one caveat with respect to the validity aspects of an identity centered analysis. A discourse analytical approach to the construction of identities and discursive identification in personal advertisements may, at first sight, seem to rightfully belong within the premises of Critical Discourse Analysis, if we conceive of advertising as embedding forms of social practice in which 'e-texts' are produced. Yet, to adopt the critical spirit of CDA would mean to identify spots of power abuse in the discourses of the advertisers as if their discourses were representative of the dating site's political agenda, an unwarranted statement to make, in my opinion. At this point, I find it compelling not to ignore the perceptible changes that computer-mediated communication operates into the evaluation of participants' discursive identities, as long as identity is central in communication processes. In asynchronous comment threads, meaningful communication and successful conversational progress highly depend on how participants identify reflexively as belonging to a particular computer mediated environment. At the online-offline interface, in a personal advertisement, the extent to which one is being manipulative of one's own identity

[8] For successive analyses of the evolution of the notion of 'active audiences' in the media from 'produsers (a term coined from producer and user), based on Alvin Toffler's concoct 'prosumer', to the concept of convergence and its meaning for the new media, see: Henry Jenkins's *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press, 2006; David Domingo et al. Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond: An International Comparative Study of Initiatives in Online Newspapers. In *Journalism practice* 2.3 (2008): 326-342; Elizabeth S. Bird. Are We All Produsers Now? Convergence and Media Audience Practices. In *Cultural Studies* Nr 25, 4-5 (2011): 502-516 as well as Henry Jenkins's more recent Rethinking Convergence/Culture. In *Cultural Studies* Nr 28, 4-5 (2014): 267-297.

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discursively can undermine or support successful communication and hence dating degree of success.

It is also worth asking, just by way of context, why should evaluation be of any interest and hence studied, and if in being so, why should it be studied with regard to personal advertisements? Several explanations can be suggested in what follows:

On the one hand, there is so much research to be done concerning the phenomenon, theory and practice of evaluation. Albeit a considerable segment of research on evaluation has been published more recently, this however covers but few areas of inquiry, in particular with regards to stance markers and English for academic purposes. None has so far been conducted as an application of a model-based approach of evaluation to the text of PAs and, given the limited range of research, we can safely maintain that evaluation remains an insufficiently explored territory within linguistics.

Secondly, for all the abundance of research on the media and advertising, a good part of it is either non-linguistic (stricto sensu) or of a limited purpose (with a focus on only a few issues of advertising language, media discourse, etc.). Moreover, so far studies on personal advertisements have been used as data providers for studies conducted on gender language and sex roles (Phua 2002), language (Groom and Pennebaker 2005), health issues (Phua et al. 2002), discursive construction of identity (Lester and Goggin 1999), age (Jagger 2005) and race preference (Phua and Kaufman 2003).

Thirdly, except for a few studies conducted in Romania on the controversial aspects related to alternative sexualities (Bădescu et al. 2007) or general attitudes towards advertising (Petrovici and Marinov 2005), there is no linguistic research on sexuality evaluation on personal advertisements nor hardly any on personal advertisements in general (except Zafiu 2013, Radu-Golea 2013).

And finally, the issue of evaluation remains an important aspect of our lives as it helps us interact with the surrounding world by means of perception, categorization and evaluation, being an instrument for both assessing the world and offering this assessment to others. In this key, our short-term evaluations may prove long-term values. Moreover, the importance of appraisal may equally stem from its multi-functionality, being used to build relationships between the reader and writer and to organize a text around various forms of expressions that may range from (somewhat) objective to completely subjective.

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