

---

## HOW DO WE VALUE WHAT WE SEE ON TV? TELEVISION'S CONSUMPTION AND THE CULTIVATION OF MATERIALISM IN ROMANIA

---

ADRIANA ZAIT, Prof. Dr., Professor at Department Management and Marketing, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania

CARMEN-MONICA MIHALACHE, Ph.D, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania

---

### ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that the more people watch television, the higher are their estimates of certain portrayed beliefs and values, one of which is materialism. The present article aims to show if and how television and other media channels might shape materialistic values, having in mind the theories of cultivation and social cognition, testing a possible connection between television consumption and materialism. Also, we were interested in finding out if there are different characterizations of materialistic value, specific to Romanians, considering socio-demographical variables. The research methodology included an exploratory research and a quantitative one – survey on a sample of 407 persons. We used Richins' scales of materialism, for the first time in Romania, testing them in this cultural specific context in order to have a mutual, common base in comparing values.

**KEY-WORDS:** Materialism cultivation; Television consumption; Materialism scales; Cultivation theory; Social cognition.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Messages offered by television cultivate values, attitudes, beliefs, judgments which take place through an instant cognitive process. This theory of cultivation is based on a long term influence on the audience. Investigating whether motivation and ability to process information during viewing moderates the effect of television viewing frequency on material values, researchers concluded that the need for cognition and attention while viewing interacted significantly with the relation between television viewing and materialism (Shrum, 2005).

On the other hand, materialism is an important personal value, “a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort more important than spiritual values” as the Oxford Dictionary defines it. Materialism is viewed as “a mind-set,... an interest in getting and spending”, “a non-utilitarian desire to consume” (Richins, 1992). Materialism is also “a value orientation that has implications for people's desires, decisions, psychological well-being and social behavior” (Chang & Arkin, 2002). At the same time, there are various conditions, “antecedents”, which have a high impact on people's materialism level, such as perceptions of normlessness, feelings of self-doubt, need for control, susceptibility to normative influence, and socioeconomic status.

Materialism, this consumption-based orientation to happiness-seeking (Belk, 1996), was commonly seen as a Western trait that has achieved an elevated place in post-industrial life. Influenced by economical circumstances, mass media, international tourism, multinational marketing, studies showed that consumers of the world want to own and consume, similar to those of the West. On different grounds, materialistic and post-materialistic views are present all around the globe. One distinction is important – we consider – and consequently measure - materialism as personal value and value orientation, different from consumerism, as excessive buying behavior leading to waste. In studying the materialistic value in other countries, researchers used the Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992) scales which have been mainly used in Western cultures; their applicability in non-Western cultures appears more problematic.

In our study, we focused on Romania, a country with particular historical, geo-economical and cultural context in the East-European region - the largest ex-communist country in Eastern Europe and the only Latin and Christian-orthodox one. In a study from 1996, Ger and Belk showed that Romanians view materialism as “an empowering and self-enhancing expression”, and that Romania is the most materialistic country in a comparison made between twelve countries around the globe. This conclusion raised the question on whether the used scales are suitable in order to compare different countries, with different cultural backgrounds and consumption patterns. Having a reliable instrument for measuring materialism in this context, as well as testing the relationship between TV consumption and materialism become extremely

important, with implications on several grounds – doing business on such a market, explaining and predicting social behavior, developing marketing strategies or social programs.

## **2. MATERIALISM – CONCEPT, MEASUREMENT, AND THEORETICAL APPROACH**

### **2.1. MATERIALISM AS PERSONAL VALUE – DEFINITION AND APPROACH**

The notion of materialism, the “attitude that stresses reality” as Jung (2004) considered it, shows the psychological attitude in which the preference is focused on practical, external, material values, underlining pragmatic realities. This personal value reflects the importance attributed by an individual to possessions as a way of achieving life purposes. The intensity of materialism in people’s system of values depends on the interpretation of possession as a personal value, and, at the same time, as an evaluative value. People see in products a projection of their personality, and, sometimes, reach to the point where they identify themselves with various car brands or with TV characters (Belk, 1988). Therefore, brands, products, services, consumption habits succeed to facilitate not only social bonds or affiliations, but they also serve as symbols for social status, establishing social boundaries. In this way, the consumer expresses himself through material possessions, generating a certain social perception. Usually, the level of materialism is explained by elements such as importance given to owning products, pleasure in buying and owning, priority of the individual versus importance of the group, satisfaction of having or owning versus happiness and spirituality, etc. This personal value is determined by the system of values either inherited from the family, or copied or judged by analyzing the personal development environment, or/and by the influence exerted by the personal reflection of society’s values. From an operational perspective, values are defined as what people describe as personally important over a long period of their lives, and not what they may wish for others to consider important. According to Schwartz and Bardi (2001), values are “desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives”.

### **2.2. PRIOR RESEARCH**

Dickins and Ferguson (1957) evaluated materialism through the types of wishes expressed by children, and through categories of jobs they wished to obtain when they would grow mature. Burdsal (1975), Blair and Birkman (1972), or Belk (1984) used personality tests and measurements specific to certain personalities in order to detect the presence of materialism.

Kelly’s theory regarding the “personal construct” shows the materialist as focusing on appearance, or on what people own in order to evaluate (Kelly, 1963). Belk (1988) defined

materialism as “a reflection of the importance given by the consumer to possessions”. At the highest level of materialism, possessions become the central role in one person’s life, the main source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Belk links the level of materialism with three characteristics of personality: possessiveness, stinginess, and envy. The accent on possessing things is determined by the scrupulousness of protecting, not losing, or controlling possessions. The stinginess is characterized by the preference of not sharing possessions, and envy appears as a continuous trigger of willing for what others own. However, a materialistic person with a high level of materialism is not necessary to be described by all three characteristics at the same time or with the same intensity.

Richins and Dawson (1990, 1992) argued that materialism is an organizing concept in the personal value system. They took into analysis three central elements: acquisition becomes a behavior model which establishes objectives for day to day life as a form of behavior for materialists; acquisition represents a vehicle of achieving happiness; and the materialist is displaying his possessions willing to show a certain status or success. Richins (1992) reflects previously used measures of materialism in a synthetic presentation of the research methods which used the same scale in more than one study, either through direct study of the materialism value, or through indirect evaluation.

Materialists also tend to value financial success significantly more than other life goals such as community, social affiliation, and self-acceptance (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Materialism seems to have been associated with only one positive consequence: a possibly higher standard of living (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). Materialism has also been shown to be negatively correlated with happiness (Belk, 1988) and psychological well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1993), and positively correlated with public self-consciousness and social anxiety (Schroeder & Dugal, 1995). The socioeconomic uncertainty was studied in teenagers groups who grew up in less advantageous economic circumstances and who were more likely to value financial success above other life goals (Kasser, Ryan, Zax, & Sameroff, 1995) or in India where college students from the lower castes tended to express more concern for materialistic goals than students from other castes (Singhal & Misra, 1992). The socio-economic uncertainty is considered to be one of the main causes that increased materialistic preferences among people. This type of uncertainty is described by Seeman (1991) as anomie, individual perception of normlessness, of a society that lacks clear guidelines for behavior and unreliable sanctions for illegitimate acts. At the same time, materialism has increased dramatically in countries with sudden urbanization or commercialization, where drastic social changes increased social mobility and confusion in social norms (Ger & Belk, 1996). Materialism might be one response when individuals encounter a loss of faith in social or traditional norms, but still need to make sense of human existence (Baumeister, 1991).

Other researchers adopted the concept that materialistic values have a strong connection with the cultural level. Inglehart (2012) argues that the general tendency of Western publics had been shifting from giving priority to physical sustenance and safety (materialist emphasis) toward heavier emphasis on belonging, self-expression and the quality of life (post-materialist emphasis).

Having all these definitions and interpretations of materialism, we moved forward and looked for studies that relate materialism and television consumption.

### **3. THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTS FOR THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION CONSUMPTION**

Two theoretical perspectives contribute to the understanding of television consumer's behavior: the theory of cultivation and the theory of social cognition.

Television programs describe realities, but quite often televised representations go beyond the simple reflection and influence the perception of social reality, which is frequently distorted and biased. Therefore, many social groups are poorly represented, while sometimes too many problems and negative events are reflected. Television, with its strong role of establishing norms and social values, determines also a learning process through examples of our fellows' behaviors, which are valued (Golstein, 2009).

Due to the state's power and control over citizens, coupled with information overload on the mass media, people experience loss of control in their lives, and material consumption offers a form of compensatory freedom and control (Chang and Arkin, 2002). Ger and Belk showed that Romanians view materialism as an empowering and self-enhancing expression of control and freedom (Ger & Belk, 1996).

#### **3.1. THE THEORY OF CULTIVATION**

The concept of cultivation was developed for the first time under the cupola of Sociology in George Gerbner's studies. The process of cultivation is defined as "the long term influence of television over audience's perception on social realities." (Gerbner, 1986). Even though the fact that television influences attitudes and social perception might be intuitively accepted, it is sometimes hard to be demonstrated.

The theory of cultivation implies that television programs offer a distorted reality to the audience and, at the same time, a frequent watching of television programs will have as effect the "internalization" of the distorted image of reality. In time, these perceived representations of reality will modify a large variety of judgments from the perception of what others do, to what the

others should do, building, in this way, attitudes and values which restructure the personal values system. The “long term influence” characteristic used in the theory of cultivation is very important for understanding the research because the cultivation effect is *a priori* considered to occur over a long period of time in individuals’ existence. Often times, this condition determines the criticism of ambiguity regarding the directional relation between television watching and materialism.

Researchers focused on studying those materialistic consumption characteristics that can be associated with heavy TV viewers. O’Guinn and Shrum (1997) followed the prevalence of luxury products and services. The television impact over various social elements was analyzed by Hirschman and McGriff (1995), while Varey (1999) was convinced that studying media effects will help finding a new approach for the “marketing of society”. In time, television began to be considered subject of the consumption process. In 2001, Malamuth and Impett published the first book focused on the impact of media over thinking, feelings, perception and audience behavior. The influence of different types of television programs – especially advertising ones – on adolescents’ values, including materialism, was also a subject of recent studies (Chank and Cai, 2009).

### 3.2. SOCIAL COGNITION

Social cognition reflects cognitive processes that take place in social contexts. In this field, researchers study the relation between stimulus-information and response–judgment, focusing on the cognitive process which mediates the relation between social information and judgment.

There are two main interdependent principles in researching the social cognition:

- Heuristics principle, which explains how people don’t look for all the relevant information in the judgmental process, but rather call on the available information in memory. This principle is also called “sufficiency principle” which is connected to concepts such as motivation or ability to process information;
- Accessibility principle, which aims at the role of accessibility in raising judgments. Usually, the fastest information accessible to subjects is the one that contains a small set of available information and it is, also, the most probable to be used in building judgments.

We find these two principles in Shrum’s (2009) explanations of media’s effect on society. He takes into consideration factors that influence the way in which information is used in judgment and, later on, reminded: the frequency and recency of construct activation, the vivacity of the construct and the relations with certain accessible cases. In this analysis of the influence of television over the audience, considering the relation between watching TV programs and the perception of the social reality, he splits the audience in two groups: heavy TV watchers and

occasional TV watchers. The first category is more willing to take information received from TV as reliable and accurate. Therefore, it is considered that the frequency of watching TV programs is directly proportional to the willingness of the audience to accept, search, ask for information from media, proving to be, in this way, the type of person willing to be influenced.

These theoretical perspectives justify our general hypothesis that television consumption could be connected with materialism. Our purpose was to investigate if this relationship exists in the case of Romanian consumers, previously found as being highly materialistic in the Ger and Belk study from 1996.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

In our study, we used two material values scales –Richins' Material Values Scale (MVS) (2004), that treats materialism as a value that influences the way people interpret their environment and structure their lives, and its form tested in order to obtain an alternative measure using similar constructs, keeping the survey at a reasonable length. The second short scale, indicated also in Richins' studies (2004, p. 209), was used as a verification scale. Both scales are presented in Table 2. The short form scale was named Scale A, and the MVS was named Scale B.

Richins' scales were first developed in 1992, and then refined into a shorter form, in 2004. They are, in the present, the most used scales in studies dealing with materialism (Roberts and Clement, 2007; Chan and Cai, 2009; Killbourne and LaForge, 2010; Talpade and Talpade, 2011). An alternative would have been the scale developed by Kasser and Ryan in 1996, which was used in different research methodologies, based on longitudinal studies and experiments (Kasser, Rosenblum, Sameroff, Deci et al., 2014).

In order to use Richins' scale, we have translated the original scale's items and, at the same time, tested the understanding and views about materialism using an exploratory research, which lead us to use 15 of the 21 items and add 5 more items considered specific to the Romanian acceptance and understanding of the materialism value. These items were synthesized from a series of previously used items in sociological studies conducted between 1993 and 2006 in order to underline the post-communist cultural changed atmosphere of Romania (Voicu, B. and Voicu, M., 2007), combined with the results of two focus groups discussions.

The survey contained three sections: the part of materialism evaluation with two scales of evaluation, the media consumption habits section and the socio-demographic section. We have also tested on whether there is a significant relationship between television consumption and the level of materialism from our material scale results.

#### 4.1. EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

Our study required both a qualitative and a quantitative approach. The qualitative research had the objective to gain more insight about the materialism scales' specificity in Romania, about the TV influence thought to have place in participants' level of materialism, the right enunciation in Romanian language of the translated scale items priorly used in international researches. We organized two focus group sessions, each group containing 6 participants, some younger and others older than 45 years old; the "age border" was set for the different life experiences and views, since Romanians over 45 years old have much of their life experience under the communist regime, while the younger group lived most of their adult life after the communist period. Participants were randomly selected from a larger list of invited people (convenience population).

In order to analyze each individual's preference towards materialism, we began each focus group session by asking the participants to write on a pre-printed form the amount of money that they would like to have, and then to write the destination of that amount of money by assigning percentages for each category of spending. These categories were: "I would buy things I want or I feel I need", "I would give money to charities or to church", "I would give or lend money to friends and relatives", "I will travel", and "I will pay my debts and I will invest or save money." The model is following Richins' method to determine self-centered and unconcerned views about others (Richins, 1992). The answers showed each one's priorities and how materialistic respondents are. We considered that if the first and last categories, summarized, were greater than 60%, then the materialistic profile was present.

We continued the discussion by asking the participants to characterize a materialistic person. We categorized answers based on key words (repeated words or similar meanings). The group of over 45 years old declared that they are not materialists and that this tendency is obvious nowadays. In their opinions, the most distinct materialistic characteristics are: money, selfishness, material focus on things, focus on exterior or on first impressions, negotiator, intelligence, pragmatism, "show off". There was also a discussion about "good" and "bad" materialists, the good ones being especially those who succeeded through their hard work, while the others were represented by those who preferred "easy" or "illegal" methods to gain wealth.

In their consumer behavior, Romanians older than 45 years old expressed their repulsion towards products inaccessibility, the frustration which comes from the lack of free access to high quality products, the wish to test imported products which they hardly had access to before. They also have the need to a certainty of owning, often being expressed in owning a house or land. However, these materialistic components of their behavior are strongly symbolist careers for their lives. The 45 years and older group of Romanians feel that they deserve to enjoy buying or owning products. They also feel that the buying behavior expresses a joy for being

able to choose between many brands of the same product, possibility which did not exist before 1990.

We also asked them to tell us what makes them happy. The majority of participants told us that the family and friends make them happy, then a good health, and, also a certain level of material security. This answer was more often found among the younger participants than among the older ones. Therefore, we planned to use this idea of “certainty of tomorrow” in adapting the translated scales used in prior research for the materialism variable.

#### 4.2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The quantitative study focused on the population that lives in the urban areas of the North-Eastern Region of Romania. This geographical area covers 36.850 square km, which represents 15% of the entire country. The total population of this region is around 3.700.000 people, from which 43% live in the urban area. In this region, 6,4% of the population is unemployed. In our study, we followed the socio-demographic structure of the population, dividing the respondents to our questionnaire in six age groups (Table 1). We implemented the survey using two parallel methods: person-administered (face to face), and on-line administered surveys, choosing this second method especially for reaching the young segment. From the total of 407 completed surveys, 201 were administered on-line using Google Docs forms. Both focus group and survey methods had focused on three topics: materialism, media usage and socio-demographic information.

**Table 1 - Age groups of the survey participants**

Age groups	Population structure in the North-Eastern Romania (%)	Survey participants structure (%)
Under 15 years old	19	12
15-24	16	16
25-34	16	21
35-49	19	25
50-64	15	18
Over 65 years old	15	9

#### Materialism section

This section of the survey used the two scales of evaluation mentioned in the methodology chapter – scale A and B (Table 2). We tested scales for reliability, obtaining the following

values: Materialism (Cronbach's Alpha 0.844), Non-materialism (Cronbach's Alpha 0.666), Aspiration for a better life (Cronbach's Alpha 0.660) and Certainty of tomorrow (Cronbach's Alpha 0.482). Eliminating the fourth factor we obtained a cumulative result which explains 50,43% from the total variance, with the three remaining factors: Materialism, Non-materialism and Aspiration for a better life (Cronbach's Alpha's 0.810, 0.666, and 0.660, respectively).

**Media consumption section**

In our study, the media consumption was evaluated in two ways: as an auto-evaluated number of hours spent for each media channel, and as a comparison between levels of trust for four media channels. We also used the focus group method as a pre-test for the survey method. We asked participants to tell us how many hours they spend watching television, then which TV shows they prefer, and, finally, what media channel is the most trustworthy for them, offering them to choose between Internet, newspapers, radio, and television. After the second question, we realized that there were differences between their perception of how much time they spent, on average per day, watching TV shows, and how many types of TV shows they seemed to have watched recently. Therefore, we re-asked the first question. The medium number of hours was 2.5 hours per day. The survey analysis showed that almost 60% of the investigated population watches television 1 or 2 hours per day and that 11.6% of the respondents are heavy TV watchers (they watch television more than 5 hours per day). The classification of the most watched type of TV shows that subjects prefer to watch news the most, than entertainment and documentaries. TV consumption preferences show that talk-shows are heavily preferred by the 50-64 years old segment, while documentaries by the 35-49 years old.

**Table 2 - Materialism scales**

Scale A	
Consider that you have at your disposal 1 million euro. How would you prefer to divide this amount of money? (for each statement, choose the option that best expresses your opinions)	
	I will buy things I want or I need
	I will give or lend money to friends, relatives or I will donate
	I will travel
	I will pay my debts
	I will invest or save

Scale B	
<b>Happiness</b>	
	I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.
	Money buys everything, including friends or family.
	Money doesn't bring happiness.
	I don't need too much wealth to be happy.
<b>Centrality</b>	
	I usually buy only the things I need.
	The things I own aren't all that important to me.
	I like a lot of luxury in my life.
	Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.
	I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.
<b>Success</b>	
	Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.
	I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.
	The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.
	I like to own things that impress people.
	I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
<b>Certainty of tomorrow</b>	
	I look for a luxurious life than for a decent life.
	I am dreaming of a secure future for me and my family.
	I try to save money for bad days.
	I wish I have more money so that I would have a better life.
	If I would have a fortune, I wouldn't care for anything else.

We also analyzed the comparative level of trust between the television, radio, newspapers and Internet media channels. On average, the Internet is the second most trusted source of information after television, with a small difference (6%), whereas newspapers and radio present low levels of trust (newspapers – 13%, radio – 8.8%). However, the level of trust is

highly different for people with different levels of education, and the difference of trust among media channels is higher for the high school level of education. For example, the university educated respondents have a maximum of 15% difference of trust between media channels, whereas for high school educated people the difference of trust is almost 30%. Also, the television media channel is the most trusted media channel only for poorly educated people, while the high school educated trust newspapers, and the university educated people trust Internet the most.

We also tested whether there are significant differences between the five TV consumption groups delimited by the number of hours spent watching television, regarding the level of materialism. We obtained a direct connection between these two variables. The statistic test underlines that there are significant differences regarding the materialism level between the TV consumption groups, but not necessarily between all groups ( $F = 3,621, p = 0.003$ ). Further, the television consumption is significantly different for different age groups and for different regions. At the same time, we compared the materialism level between the five groups of TV consumption (time spent watching TV less than 1 hour per day, between 1-2 hours per day, 3-4 hours per day, 5-6 hours per day, and more than 6 hours per day), and noticed that there are significant differences of materialism levels between the different hours spent watching TV. Therefore, the averages of the materialism levels are significantly different between those who watch TV maximum 2 hours per day, 3-4 hours per day and the group of more than 5 hours per day (Table 3). We also conclude that there are no significant differences between the two sex groups regarding their time allocated to watching television ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 3 - Significant differences between average levels of materialism for the audience groups by the time spent watching television**

Materialism level for different audience groups (considering the time spent watching television)		Significant values of <i>t</i> test
<i>H0: there is no significant difference for the average level of materialism between the two groups</i>		
less than 1 hour per day	1-2 hours per day	H0 not rejected
	3-4 hours per day	Sig. 0,002, t -3,17, 206 df
	5-6 hours per day	Sig 0,006, t -2,81, 122 df
	>6 hours per day	Sig 0,006, t-2,82, 100 df
1-2 hours per day	3-4 hours per day	Sig 0,048, t-1,99, 267 df
	5-6 hours per day	Sig 0,048, t-1,99, 187 df
	>6 hours per day	Sig 0,006, t-2,2, 161 df
3-4 and 5-6 hours per day	5-6 and > 6 hours per day	H0 not rejected

### Testing for relationships

We tested if there is a statistically significant relationship between the materialism level and the television consumption, and found a significant and positive relationship between these two variables. However, using only these variables *Time spent watching TV* and the *level of materialism*, the relationship appeared to be significant, but weak ( $r = 0.264$ ,  $df = 405$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, we continued to analyze our survey data, and we obtained a valid linear regression model in which variables Genres of TV shows, such as *Entertainment*, *Culture*, *Sport* and *Talk-Show* partially explain a part of the variance of Materialism. This model which includes all four genres brings improvements to Adjusted R Square from 0.07 to 0.19,  $p < 0.001$ . As expected, *Entertainment* variable is positively related to Materialism (Beta = 0.242,  $p < 0.001$ ), *Culture* is negatively related to Materialism (Beta = -0.296,  $p < 0.001$ ), *Sport* is positively related to Materialism (Beta = 0.193,  $p < 0.001$ ), and *Talk-shows* are positively related to Materialism (Beta = 0.116,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, we prefer to clarify our initial research question, from the conclusion that the time of TV consumption is directly correlated with the materialism level into a clearer conclusion that the type of TV show influences positively, negatively or not at all the level of materialism. Therefore, TV genres such as entertainment are having a direct relationship with the materialism level, whereas *Culture* shows are negatively related to the level of materialism.

We also tested the relationship between the media channels (Internet, TV, radio and newspapers), and the three factors obtained from the factor analysis (*Materialism*, *Non-materialism*, and *Aspiration for a better life*). Firstly, we concluded that the four media consumption predictors can partially explain the variation of the level of materialism. The regression equation in the first step (with only three of the four media channels: Time spent for reading newspapers, Time spent for Internet browsing, Time spent listening to the radio) explains the variation of the Materialism variable with a probability of 95%, percentage which grows once the variable *Time spent watching TV* is introduced, to 99%. This variable is a positive predictor ( $B = 0.251$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), next to the *Time spent listening to radio* ( $B = 0.097$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The *Time spent browsing Internet* is a negative predictor ( $B = -0.082$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) while the *Time spent reading newspapers* was not statistically significant.

When we changed the variable *Time spent watching TV* with the variables which represent each category of TV genres, the variable *Entertainment* is a negative predictor for the Non-materialism variance ( $B = -0.088$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while *Religion* and *Culture* are positive predictors ( $B = 0.088$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , respectively  $B = 0.079$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). We tested to see if the Nonmaterialism variable is correlated with the *Time spent watching TV*, and there is not a statistical significance. Therefore, the type of TV show being watched is more important than the time spent watching TV.

Entertainment, Talk-shows, Music, and Sport were found as positive predictors for the Aspiration for a better life, with  $p < 0.05$ , while Culture was a negative predictor ( $B = -0.171$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the four media consumption predictors partially explaining the variation of the level of materialism.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As more people watch television, the learning context becomes less original, and the representations of the social and material reality become part of the consumer perception. As expected, certain views - such as the need to simply have the assurance of owning, or the joy of buying products or choosing between different brands - go beyond the classical materialistic characteristics of a person. For people older than 45 years old from our sample, these points of view have a more complex source which resided in the frustration from the lack of free access to products, or from the repulsion towards forbidden access to information.

The auto-evaluated time spent watching television rises the problem of perception towards auto-evaluation of average time spent by people in using media channels. However, in comparison, 60% of Romanians from our sample are moderate television consumers, while almost 12% watch television more than 5 hours per day. Internet and television are the most trusted media channels, while almost a third of the investigated population never read newspapers. This level of trust is significantly different between groups with different education status. As for the consumption of television, we divided the audience in three groups: low television consumption – less than 3 hours per day, medium TV consumption – 3-4 hours per day, and high television consumption – over 5 hours per day. Between these groups, the level of materialism is significantly different. Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the level of materialism between the audience group that watches TV less than 2 hours per day, and those who watch television more than 3 hours per day. Therefore, the level of materialism is associated with a high consumption of television, and especially of entertainment, and sports shows. In contrast, the TV cultural genre is negatively related to the materialism level.

We have faced a differentiation problem in the evaluation of television consumption regarding the television shows broadcasted on television and those broadcasted on Internet. A similar problem appears also for newspapers and radio consumption. Therefore, the generic stated propositions might determine errors.

From the socio-demographic profile of the materialist respondents, we conclude that there is a significant relation between the level of materialism and the fact of having children; people who have children presented a low level of materialism compared with those who don't have children. We also associated certain job profiles with certain levels of materialism.

In respect of the materialism scales, the ordinal regression test for the first used scale – type A – showed no statistically significant relation between the media consumption and the level of materialism. Therefore, we propose to retest this scale. For the type B scale, we obtained a confirmation of the direct relation, statistically significant, between the two tested variables. We also obtained a correlation coefficient rise when we included the control variables.

The results of our study could be of interest for both TV networks and social organizations or educational institutions, although from different, sometimes opposite points of view. The study offers just a starting point for a new, broader research on the level of materialism in Romania or in other ex-communist and emerging countries and its connection to the TV consumption and content. As future research directions, we would expand the research to the rural part of the population, and, also, we would test the entire geographical region of Romania. Increasing the sample might also change reliability values for the specific factor “Certainty for tomorrow”, which we eliminated from our research due to a low Cronbach Alpha value.

As we saw in section 3 of our study, the theory of cultivation and the principles of social cognition suggest that television has an influence on people’s perception of reality and explain media’s effects on society. Our study showed that there is a relationship between both the time spent watching television and the type of TV shows watched and the level of materialism for the investigated population. This could be a first step in explaining previous findings (Ger and Belk) that suggest Romanians are highly materialistic.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- [2] Belk, R.W. (1984). Three Scales to Measure Construct Related to Materialism: Reliability, Validity, and Relationship to Measures of Happiness, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11, 291-297.
- [3] Belk, R.W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 139-168.
- [4] Blair, J., Birkman, R. (1972). An Effort to Distinguish the Violent from the Nonviolent, *Southern Medical Journal*, 65, 703-306.
- [5] Burdsal, Ch. Jr. (1975). An Examination of Second Order Motivational Factors as Found in Adults, *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 127, 83-89.
- [6] Chan, K., Cai, X. (2009). Influence of television advertising on adolescents in China: an urban-rural comparison, *Young Consumers*, 10(2), 133-145.
- [7] Chang, L., Arkin, R. M. (2002). Materialism as an attempt to cope with uncertainty, *Psychology & Marketing*, 19, 389–406.
- [8] Dickins, D., Ferguson, V. (1957). Practices and Attitudes of Rural White Children and Parents concerning Money, *Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station Technical Bulletin* nr. 43.
- [9] Ger, G., Belk, R. (1996). Cross-cultural differences in materialism, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 17, 55-77.
- [10] Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., and Signorelli, N. (1986). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process, in: J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Perspectives on media effects*, 17–40. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [11] Golstein, N.J., Cialdini, R.B. (2009). Normative Influences on Consumption and Conservation Behaviors, in: Wanke, M.: *Social Psychology of Consumer Behavior*, Taylor and Francis Group.
- [12] Hirschman, E. C., McGriff, J. A. (1995). Recovering addicts' responses to the cinematic portrayal of drug and alcohol addiction, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 14 (1), 95–107.
- [13] Inglehart, R., Norris, P. (2012). The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Understanding Human Security, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 35, 71-96.
- [14] Jung, C. G. (2004). *Tipuri psihologice*. Bucuresti, Editura Trei.

- [15] Kasser, T., Ryan, R. M. (1993). A dark side of the American dream: correlates of financial success as a central life aspiration, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 410-422.
- [16] Kasser, T., Ryan, R. M., Zax, M. and Sameroff, A. J. (1995). The relations of maternal and social environments to late adolescents' materialistic and pro-social values, *Developmental Psychology*, 31, 907-914.
- [17] Kasser, T., Rosenblum, K.L., Sameroff, A.J., Deci, E.J., Niemic, C. et al. (2014). Changes in materialism, changes in psychological well-being: evidence from three longitudinal studies and an intervention experiment, *Motivation and Emotion*, 38(1), 1-22.
- [18] Kelly, G. (1963). *A theory of personality. The psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Norton.
- [19] Killbourne, W.E., LaForge, M.C. (2010). Materialism and its relationship to individual values, *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(8), 780.
- [20] Malamuth, N.H., Impett, E.A. (2001). Research on sex in the media: What do we know about effects on children and adolescents? in Singer, D.G.: *Handbook of children in the media*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- [21] O'Guinn, T.C., Shrum, L.J. (1997). The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(4).
- [22] Richins, M.L., Rudmin, F. W. (1994). Materialism and economic psychology, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 15, 217-232.
- [23] Richins, M.L. (2004). The material values scale: Measurement properties and development of a short form, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 209-219.
- [24] Richins, M.L., Dawson, S. (1992). A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement: Scale development and validation, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19, 303-316.
- [25] Richins, M.L., Dawson, S. (1990). Measuring material values. A preliminary report of scale development, in: M. Goldberg/ G. Gorn/ R. Pollay: *Advances in consumer research*, Vol 17, 169-175 Provo, UT Association for Consumer Research.
- [26] Roberts, J.A., Clement, A. (2007). Materialism and satisfaction with overall quality of life and eight life domains, *Social Indicators Research*, 82, 79-92.
- [27] Schroeder, J. E., Dugal, S. S. (1995). Psychological correlates of the materialism construct, *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 10, 243-253.

- [28] Schwartz, S.H., Bardi, A. (2001). Value hierarchies across cultures: Taking a similarities perspective, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32(3), 268-290.
- [29] Seeman, M. (1991). Alienation and anomie, in: *Measures of personality and Social Psychological Attitudes*, Frank M. Andrews (ed.), Gulf Professional Publishing.
- [30] Shrum, L. J., Burroughs, J. E. and Rindfleisch, A. (2005). Television's cultivation of material values, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 473-479.
- [31] Shrum, L. J. (2009). Media Consumption and Perceptions of Social Reality: Effects and Underlying Processes, in: *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 3rd edition, Jennings Bryant & Mary Beth Oliver (eds.), New York: Psychology Press, 50-73.
- [32] Singhal, R., Misra, G. (1992). Meaning of achievement: The role of socio-cultural background and social class, *Psychologia: An International Journal of Psychology in the Orient*, 35, 42-49.
- [33] Talpade, M., Talpade, S. (2011). Materialism and life satisfaction among Hispanic immigrant males, *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies*, 5, 1-8.
- [34] Varey, R. J. (1999). Marketing, media, and McLuhan: Rereading the prophet at century's end, *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 148–159.
- [35] Voicu, B., Voicu, M. (2007). *Valori ale românilor: 1993 - 2006. O perspectivă sociologică. Iași: Institutul European.*

## APPENDIX

## TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4 - Materialism regression model for TV genres

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.265 <sup>a</sup>	.070	.068	.93970	.070	30.668	1	405	.000
2	.370 <sup>b</sup>	.137	.132	.90674	.066	30.977	1	404	.000
3	.421 <sup>c</sup>	.177	.171	.88640	.040	19.761	1	403	.000
4	.435 <sup>d</sup>	.190	.182	.88063	.013	6.299	1	402	.012
a. Predictors: (Constant), TV genre – Entertainment									
b. Predictors: (Constant), TV genre – Entertainment, Culture									
c. Predictors: (Constant), TV genre – Entertainment, Culture, Sports									
d. Predictors: (Constant), TV genre – Entertainment, Culture, Sports, Talk-show									

Table 5 - Regression data for the model controlling the media consumption variables

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.154 <sup>a</sup>	.024	.017	.96532	.024	3.284	3	403	.021
2	.302 <sup>b</sup>	.091	.082	.93249	.068	29.882	1	402	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent for reading newspapers, Time spent for Internet browsing, Time spent listening the radio									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent for reading newspapers, Time spent for Internet browsing, Time spent listening the radio, Time spent watching television									

**Table 6 - Regression data for the model controlling the media consumption variables and the type of TV shows**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.107 <sup>a</sup>	.012	.004	.67411	.012	1.570	3	403	.196
2	.250 <sup>b</sup>	.062	.034	.66400	.051	2.374	9	394	<b>.013</b>
a. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent for reading newspapers, Time spent for Internet browsing, Time spent listening the radio									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent for reading newspapers, Time spent for Internet browsing, Time spent listening the radio, Sport, Documentaries, Entertainment, Religion, Talk-show, Music, News, Culture, Economical									