

Seniors, risks and mobile communication

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Premises

- ❑ “Grand parents boom”; 30% of the population over 60 years in 2060, in Europe ([Eurostat, 2011](#)).
- ❑ An eastward shift of the ageing process ([Romania and Latvia highest median age in 2040](#))
- ❑ In mobile phone communication, age plays an important role; still the research is focus on teenagers ([Ling, 2008](#))
- ❑ Current literature on elderly and mobile communication - rather local; cross-cultural research is needed

What we did....

- ❑ To look to the media discourse on risks and MP
- ❑ To analyze how these concerns shape seniors' trust on mobile telephony
- ❑ To compare media discourse and seniors perception in two cultural contexts ([Romania](#), [Catalonia-Spain](#))

Group relevance- why studying elderly?

- Seniors - instrumental value of the new technologies
 - Seniors -MP importance in safety and security issues
(Kurniawan, 2008)
- (1) people feel safer and less vulnerable when they are alone, at home or outside
 - (2) it allows a better organization of everyday life
 - (3) a tool for information and micro-coordination

What types of risks are discussed in the literature relatively to seniors?

(Abascal & Civit, 2001; Oksman, 2006)

Risks perceptions

- Mobile phone overuse – health risks
- Lost of personal authonomy
- En-danger the social norms, traditional communication patterns
- Lost of control- allows scamming

Positive views

- Self-independence
- Self-esteem

From perceived risk to behavior

(Brewer et al., 2007)

- ❑ Risk likelihood
- ❑ Risk susceptibility
- ❑ Risk severity
- ❑ Age is an important factor (Siegrist et al., 2005)

Media discourse on mobile telephony: trust and uncertainty

- Public discussions about potential adverse effects from the radio frequency electromagnetic fields of MP (Dolan & Rowley, 2009)
- Media - key actors in informing the public about scientific developments concerning potential health risks (Eldridge & Reilly, 2003; Slovic, 2000)
- Shift from highlights on health negative effects (i.e. cancer risk) to a more nuanced approach -
-debate about the scientific uncertainty in the academic world = un-conclusive results (Elvers, 2009).

Media discourse on mobile telephony:

Precautionary principle

- ❑ Discourse on precautions actions in using mobile phones determine people to worry more ([Barnett et al., 2008](#))
- ❑ Public controversy would induce a “moral panic” – misconceptions about technology use, risks management, and control ([Stilgoe, 2007](#))
- ❑ Trusting the authority that describes precautionary actions mediated the relation between the information and perceived risks ([Timotijevic & Barnett, 2006](#))

Common recommendations in the media and potential reactions on elderly ([Collins, 2010](#))

- ❑ That not sufficient time has elapsed in order to have conclusive data ([Public Health England, 2011](#)).
- ❑ Length of mobile phone use and the addictions it may cause – reduce the exposure for instrumental purposes
- ❑ Keep the device away from the body and use hands-free
- ❑ alternate the side of the head when using the mobile phone
- ❑ Position the mobile phone against the body and avoid using the phone when the signal is weak
- ❑ Choose the device according to the level of absorption of the radiations (SAR)

Research conducted on developing countries...

- ❑ Hardly any public debate about base stations' (antennas) potential risks in the developing countries ([van Kleef et al., 2010](#)).
- ❑ Focused on benefits of mobile phone technology
- ❑ Base stations are regarded as symbol of economical and technological development

Method: 1. **Content analysis**: time frame
January 2006 to December 2012

Romania (N= 224)

- one newspaper:
Adevarul
- one news portal
www.hotnews.ro

Catalonia (N= 144)

- one newspaper: *La Vanguardia*
- One news portal:
www.324.cat

Main categories used to cluster the data

1. Everyday life risks
2. Privacy and surveillance
3. Health (both positive and negative aspects)
4. Other risks: public exclusion
5. Fraud (fraud, spam and scam)

Method: 2. **Semi-structured interviews**

Table 1. Sample structure, Romania case study (N = 40)

		60-65 cohort	66+ cohort
Gender	Women	10	13
	Men	10	7
Residence	Bucharest	10	10
	Small town (< 20.000 inhabitants)	5	5
	Rural	5	5
Education	Secondary level (> 8 years of school)	6	12
	Higher level (college graduated)	14	8
TOTAL	Erasmus+ 2015, Barcelona	20	20 13

Method: 2. **Semi-structured interviews**

Table 2. Sample structure of mobile phone users, **Barcelona case study**
(N=47)

		60-74 cohort	75+ cohort
Gender	Women	20	10
	Men	12	5
Housing	Own home	29	8
	Retirement home	3	7
Education	Up to secondary	10	13
	Secondary studies or more	22	2
TOTAL		32	15

Table 3. Frequency of articles in the four media sources (Romania and Catalonia) using the determined risk categories

	Romania (N =224)		Catalonia (N=144)	
	www.hotnews.ro (N= 206)	Adevarul (N = 18)	www.324.cat (N=49)	La Vanguardia (N=95)
Daily Life Activities: Protection and Risk Management	67 (29.9%)	2 (0.9 %)	10 (6.9%)	11(7.6%)
Privacy, Surveillance, Neutrality: Privacy	39 (17.4%)	1 (0.4%)	2(1.4%)	5(3.5%)
Privacy, Surveillance, Neutrality: Surveillance	31 (13.8%)	1(0.4%)	2(1.4%)	4(2.8%)
Health Issues: Positive direct impact	19 (8.5%)	0 (0%)	2(1.4%)	2 (0.7%)
Health Issues: Negative direct impact	25 (11.2%)	7 (3.1%)	9 (6.3%)	25 (17.4%)
Health Issues: Neutral / Non demonstrated or contradictory direct impact	2 (0.9 %)	2 (0.9 %)	4 (2.8%)	3 (2.1%)
Health Issues: Environment and ecology	9(4.0 %)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.7%)	3(2.1%)
Other Risks: Road Safety	2 (0.9 %)	0 (0%)	1(0.7%)	12(8.3%)
Scam and Fraud: Decreases	12(5.4%)	2 (0.9 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Scam and Fraud: Increases	35(15.6%)	3(1.3%)	1(0.7%)	5(3.5%)
Scam (financial and emotional): Spam on the phone	30(13.4%)	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

In sum... prevalence of each risk category

Romanian media

- ❑ Daily Life Activities: Protection and Risk Management (30%)
- ❑ Articles on health & risks – on the news portal
- ❑ Health & risk domains: “Useful things”, “Cool staff”
- ❑ Privacy, Surveillance, Neutrality (35%)

Catalan media

- ❑ Health Issues: Negative direct impact (34%)
- ❑ Articles on health & risk – in *La Vanguardia*
- ❑ Health & risk domains: “Economics”, “International” or “Living in BCN”.
- ❑ “Other Risks: Road Safety” (9%)

Seniors' perceptions on mobile phone and risks

- More nuanced discourse of MP & health risks in Catalonia, higher level of concern
- In Romanian the discourse was based on others' risks

Seniors' perceptions on MP and risks

In Romania

- ❑ Concerns about potential risks for children and grandchildren
- ❑ Particularly about fraud, scamming, and social exclusion
- ❑ A clear view on the education and social status
- ❑ No references to surveillance and privacy issues

Conclusions

- ❑ Some categories of risk shape only media agenda but they are not prominent in people's concerns
- ❑ Others are more prominent in people's lives than in the media discourse
- ❑ The importance to consider national particularities

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