

Oana ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ\*

**Book Review of *Noua era a vechilor media. O analiză experimentală a efectelor produse de cadrajale media* [The New Era of Old Media. An Experimental Analysis of Media Framing Effects] by Raluca Buturoiu, București: Comunicare.ro, 2016, 272 p.**

Media studies focus increasingly on new media, while traditional media effects start to be overlooked although these effects are by no means minimal. *The new era of old media. An Experimental Analysis of media framing effects* draws attention to the effects of old media that continue to influence the opinions and attitudes of young people. Media framing determines how citizens make sense of the information they are provided with, the framing effects theory being the starting point for the classical experiment developed by the author to test the magnitude and significance of traditional Romanian media effects nowadays. The study comprised in the book is of a high significance, as it aims to analyze framing effects in a reality-based scenario, arguing that people can be exposed to multiple media frames, repetitive or competitive frames, to messages from both reliable and unreliable sources. To be able to test for all these variable, the author conducted an experimental based research, representing an important advantage of the research design, allowing for a more adequate and realistic approach towards media framing analysis. By adapting a research design used in a broader analysis of framing effects conducted by Sophie Lecheler and Claes de Vreese (2013), the author succeeds in developing a realistic approach towards framing studies. Therefore, the book brings significant elements of novelty in the field of Romanian framing research, both theoretically, by providing an insightful perspective based on the most recent media framing studies, and empirically by choosing an experimental design in order to test the effects in a context as close to real life conditions as possible, in order to get a better grip of the phenomena.

The book is structured in three main parts. In the first theoretical chapter, the author addresses media effects with a focus on framing theory, as framing effects are considered to be of a more complex nature, influencing the way people understand or evaluate the issues at stake, and affecting the public opinion on a variety of topics, as previous media studies prove (e.g. Iyengar, 1991; Berinsky & Kinder, 2006; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Druckman, 2001). In this section of the book, the concept of framing is thoroughly addressed, the author emphasizing the specifics of framing from a constructivist approach, its delineation from agenda setting and priming, as well as the variations of framing effects in time. Buturoiu also distinguishes among different types of frames, highlighting the effects

\* National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;  
oana.stefanita@comunicare.ro.

of repetitive and competitive frames and the influences at the level of opinions, attitudes and behaviors, clearly differentiating each level.

The second chapter is dedicated to the examination of individual and contextual moderators that can enhance or limit framing effects, arguing that the source credibility and the individual issue importance are significant predictors. The third part comprises the methodology and the results of applying an experimental design to test if traditional media still influence young people's attitudes, and especially to determine the "magnitude", the "direction" and also the "duration" of framing effects on audiences (Buturoiu, 2016, p. 120). More specifically, by the means of a survey experiment, the author aims to determine the immediate framing effects on political and social involvement, on the feeling of powerlessness and political trust using the valence of the frame and source credibility as moderators. The complexity of the study is determined by the careful analysis of the impact of each moderator, and by the repetitive exposure to the experimental material after one week, and then one month past the initial exposure, to analyze the duration of effects, combined with the moderating influence of source credibility. Building on the distinction between repetitive and competing frames, the author refines the level of detail by analyzing the effects of re-exposure by type of repeated message, exposing the participants to various mixes of valence framing.

The experimental research proves media frames can influence people's attitudes, both on short-term and medium-term in regard to political and social involvement, powerlessness and political trust. Traditional media still exert a high influence especially when it comes to valence framing and source credibility, aspects that increase media effects. Some interesting results of the study show that repetitive framing does not lead to stronger effects, and when exposed to competitive framing, people tend to be more influenced by the most recent frame they encountered. Moreover, the analysis shows a tendency towards stronger framing effects as time passes, a results that deserves further investigation, as it can represent a significant aspect in proving that media influence is far from limited. Through framing, especially in the context of long term effects, people could have their social representations reshaped according to the media frames they are exposed to. This finding is in line with studies arguing that framing effects can be persistent over time (e.g. Tewksbury et al., 2000; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011).

The study confirms previous media theories (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006) in a new context, proving that negative framing attracts more attention from individuals, and especially combined with the credibility of the source, it has the potential to mobilize the citizens and influence the way they become involved in social or political matters. Furthermore, the results show consistency with the initial research design (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2013) based on which the author developed the experimental analysis, the results showing that repetitive frames do not increase the framing influence, but that other moderators have a significant impact. Regarding the effects of competitive framing, the study confirms the previous theoretical and empirical data supporting the influence of the most recent frame exposure. Furthermore, the study is in line with the theory stating that media framing has an increased influence when the interest for the subject is reduced or when the issue at stake does not prove to be important for individuals (Lecheler et al. 2009). Among the limitations of the study, a meaningful one is the assumption regarding the importance of the economic topic the subjects were exposed to. By not measuring the attributed topic importance within the study, and by not varying the theme of the articles included in the experiment to test for effects on different contexts, the interpretations in terms of issue importance and level of knowledge as moderators are restricted. The author also presents a series of limitations of the study, including

the “low response rate” when testing for the duration of effects in time or for re-exposure effects (Buturoiu, 2016, p. 217). The study shows that traditional media effects still apply, but it should also take into consideration that when it comes to younger audiences like the ones included in this study, the behavioral patterns in terms of media consumptions and media habits change considerably in a real life context, especially when considering the influence of social media, of interpersonal conversations or even the selective exposure phenomenon (Festinger, 1957).

The book provides empirical evidence to confirm that media frames can influence people’s perceptions and attitudes towards the issues they are exposed to. A significant contribution stems from the book’s advancements in framing effects studies through a realistic approach of media effects among Romanian youths. The experimental research supports the proximity to real media contexts as it exposes the subjects to positive and negative valance frames, to repetitive and competitive re-exposures, to reliable and unreliable news sources, and it analyzes the role of time in terms of effects, all of these elements being part of the type of media exposure we face in a real life context. Buturoiu distinguishes her approach from other models by placing the study under the umbrella of realistic media effects studies, thus encouraging the analysis of media framing effects through a consistent approach, carefully considering the variables that could influence media exposure outcomes in situations more akin to daily life. Therefore, the book contributes to ongoing efforts of finding the variables that can enhance or limit framing effects in contexts that try to simulate real life media exposure.

## References

1. Berinsky, A. J., & Kinder, D. R. (2006). Making sense of issues through media frames: Understanding the Kosovo crisis. *Journal of Politics*, 86, 640-656.
2. Druckman, J. N. (2001). On the limits of framing effects: who can frame? *Journal of Politics*, 63, 1041-1066. DOI: 10.1111/0022-3816.00100
3. Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Illinois: Row, Peterson & Company.
4. Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
5. Lecheler, S. & de Vreese, C. H. (2011). Getting Real: The Duration of Framing Effects. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 959-983. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01580.x.
6. Lecheler, S., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). What a Difference a Day Makes? The Effects of Repetitive and Competitive News Framing Over Time. *Communication Research*, 40(2), 147–175. DOI: 10.1177/0093650212470688
7. Lecheler, S., de Vreese, C. H., & Slothuus, R. (2009). Issue Importance as a Moderator of Framing Effects. *Communication Research*, 36(3), 400–425. DOI: 10.1177/0093650209333028
8. Schuck, A. R. T., & de Vreese, C. H. (2006). Between Risk and Opportunity – News Framing and its Effects on Public Support for EU Enlargement. *European Journal of Communication*, 21(5), 5-32. DOI: 10.1177/0267323106060987
9. Schuck, A. R. T., & de Vreese, C. H. (2006). Framing the EU enlargement: News media content and effects. *European Journal of Communication*, 21, 5-32.
10. Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50, 93-109. DOI: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x
11. Tewksbury, D., Jones, J. Peske, M. W., Raymond, A., & Vig, W. (2000). The interaction of news and advocate frames: Manipulating audience perceptions of a local public policy issue. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77, 804-829.