

Communicative Aspects of Public Health Campaigns: A Content Analysis of the Pro-vaccination Campaign in Romania during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to observe the pro-vaccination campaign in Romania from an informative and communicative perspective. A qualitative content analysis was carried out on the videos broadcast both on the Government's YouTube channel and on the Facebook page, describing the video messages' structure, framing, and linguistic and extralinguistic elements. The results highlighted the fact that the messages, in terms of content and significance, were not fully adapted to the target audience's needs, that communication efforts failed to influence vaccine acceptance behaviors and that the campaign message could be improved to comply with the existing recommendations/standards.

Keywords: content analysis; communication; rhetoric; pro-vaccination campaign; COVID-19 pandemic; video message

1. Introduction

The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic was counteracted by the development and distribution of vaccines, after the initial response that confined people to their homes and urged them to adopt preventive measures only related to personal hygiene, mask-wearing, and compliance to lockdown regulations. The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Association believes that, besides the obvious

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health effects, vaccines are also important from a sustainable point of view as “a vaccinated world is a more productive world” (*Vaccines Sustainability*, n.d.). Despite this, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy was encountered in many countries of the world. Whilst there are European countries with vaccination rates reaching 90%, in Romania, the vaccine skepticism persisted, counting only one in three adults vaccinated by November 2021.

The vaccination-related issues in Romania caused by difficulties in obtaining the vaccine and glitches in logistics (distribution, transport, and organization) were solved relatively easily. However, the start of the vaccination campaign revealed an unexpected challenge: a low public confidence in the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines, resulting in a massive refusal of vaccination.

At the end of 2020, the Romanian Government launched several public information campaigns on vaccination, as part of the communication strategy set out in the COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy in Romania (Guvernul României a, 2020). Even with the pro-vaccination campaign in full swing, Romania faced new waves of the pandemic. (*Coronavirus România, INFORMAȚII OFICIALE*, n.d.). While in the European Union, a world leader in the administration of vaccines, almost three quarters of the adults were fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the vaccination rate in Romania at that time was 31.3% (0.3% daily vaccine doses administered per 100 people), indicating that the promotion of the vaccination campaign was not very successful.

Health communication experts recommend planning the message communication process in order to better understand the target audience’s characteristics, preferences, needs and behavior, and to engage the audience and the stakeholders into building and implementing the health communication campaign as well as to develop culturally-appropriate tools and activities (Schiavo, 2014). The general consensus is that a “one size fits all” approach to communicating vaccination messages cannot work (Chou et al., 2020). Studies analyzing the public communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania or similar topics (Pența & Băban, 2014; Dascalu, 2020; Pistol & Streinu-Cercel, 2013; Dascălu et al., 2020; Bălan et al., 2021), stressed the importance of clear, timely and targeted-oriented messages in vaccine communication.

This paper presents the case of Romanian Government-supported pro-vaccination campaigns carried out through video messages in 2021, a rather expensive campaign that triggered a feeble response in the public. A qualitative content analysis was carried out on the videos broadcast both on the Government's YouTube channel and on its Facebook page, describing the video messages’ structure, framing, and linguistic and extralinguistic elements.

2. Pro-vaccination campaign in Romania

In Romania, since the beginning of the pandemic, doctors, health policy experts, journalists, politicians, and other opinion formers have expressed various opinions in the public sphere regarding the vaccine and the vaccination process, sparking intense

controversies. Fake news and conspiracy theories about the vaccine have emerged, a communication strategy being necessary to combat them and gain the population's trust. Before the vaccine was available, the communication on measures to prevent and limit the spreading of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was made by the country's President, Prime Minister and Minister of Health, and occasionally by other ministers to comment on topics within their remit (public policy, education, foreign policy, labor, economy, etc.) or by health experts to clarify issues related to the evolution of the disease and the management of public life (Cernicova-Buca & Palea, 2021). Once the vaccination campaign was approved, colonel Valeriu Gheorghiuță, a military doctor, was appointed to head the National Coordination Committee on Vaccination Activities against COVID-19. At the beginning of December 2020, the COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy was launched in Romania, setting out "the vision, principles and mode of action for the administration of the vaccines authorized by the European Medicines Agency in Romania". It specified the types of interventions and stated that "the information and communication campaigns will be carried out by involving representatives of professional associations and of patients' associations, important figures in the cultural and educational field, and civil society representatives, and by respecting the principles of transparency and of the correct, factual and comprehensive provision of information to the public". Other information regarding the process of communication and public information on this topic has not been disclosed.

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout in Romania was to be conducted in accordance with the specifications made in the COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy in Romania, in three phases, by population groups, as follows (Guvernul României a, 2020):

- Phase 1 – health and social care workers in public and private facilities; until 14 January 2021
- Phase 2 – at-risk population and the personnel in key areas of activity; from 15 January 2021
- Phase 3 – general population; from March 2021.

At the end of 2020, the first person in Romania, a nurse, was vaccinated against COVID-19. That was also the moment when the Romanian authorities launched the national information platform on COVID-19 vaccination (Guvernul României b, 2020), to provide information and to raise awareness regarding the vaccination campaign.

3. Materials and Methods

The qualitative content analysis is considered to be one of the most widely used current methods of data analysis and interpretation (Schreier, 2012; Kuckartz, 2021; Mayring, 2015), but, unfortunately, there is no standardized procedure for it (Elo et al., 2014). This type of analysis is reliable, transparent, recommended for interviews, comments on YouTube, transcripts, videos with interactions, etc. (Kuckartz, 2019).

Based on the workflow devised by Kuckartz (Figure 1), the research team started the analysis from the research questions, building the corpus of texts and creating a coding framework for the categories subjected to scrutiny from a linguistic perspective. Such an analysis was helpful in identifying similarities and differences and in finding a common framework specific to the vaccine-related communication messages.

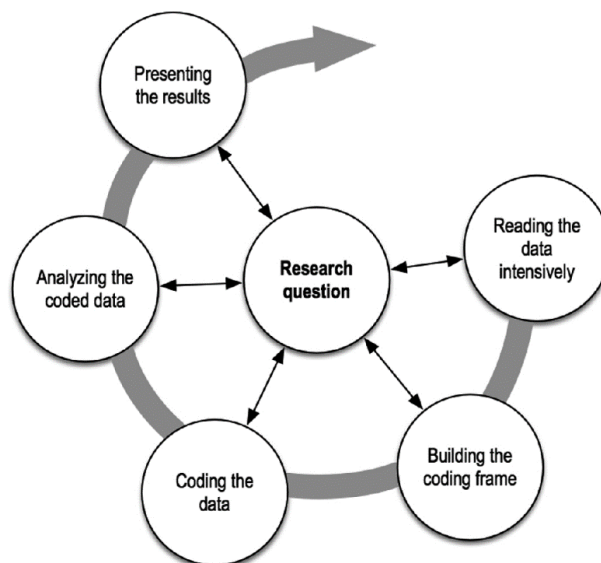


Figure 1. The five phases of qualitative content analysis

The analysis included nine videos broadcast at the beginning of the communication campaign (December 2020-January 2021) and found on the Government's YouTube channel, as well as six videos that were broadcast on both the YouTube channel and the Facebook page of the above-mentioned institution (released in May and June 2021). Public and private television stations in Romania also broadcast these videos as public service announcements. There is only one report issued by the National Audiovisual Council of Romania (CNA) (CNA, 2020) regarding the broadcasts of the campaigns recommended as public service campaigns on TV stations/campaign/no. of airings. It shows that, out of the total airings of the campaigns recommended by the CNA as public service campaigns, the *Together we defeat the pandemic campaign* scored 1,637 airings (86.29%) out of a total of 1,897 airings (CNA, 2020). The results for the other campaign were not publicly presented. In 2020-2022 the pro-vaccination campaigns supported by ministries or other public administration institutions were more numerous, but the present analysis focuses only on the 15 videos extracted from the governmental YouTube and Facebook pages. By 2020 the Romanian government had already a good social media presence (Gherheș & Cismariu, 2017) and the pandemic enhanced the importance of digital communication for information and persuasion purposes.

The steps of the analysis were as follows:

- Identification and selection of the videos posted on the Romanian Government's YouTube channel in the first stage of the pro-vaccination communication campaign (December 2020 – January 2021; broadcast at that time only on YouTube and not on Facebook) (Appendix A);
- Identification and selection of the videos in the second stage of the campaign, posted on the Romanian Government's YouTube channel and Facebook page (May – June 2021) (Appendix B);
- a qualitative content analysis was carried out on all the messages presented above, describing their common structure (expressed ideas) and the way in which the message was framed to achieve the desired level of persuasion; at the same time, a detailed linguistic analysis was conducted in order to better understand the meaning behind the message (verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.).

The analysis has also focused on a series of general aspects regarding the slogans of the two campaigns, the target audience, the video actors' identity, the duration of the videos, the number of words, etc. Other aspects related to the actors starring in the videos were also added to the analysis. Extratextual elements (the visual and auditory elements) as well as those related to the message (message structure, textual characteristics, message style and purpose) were also included in the analysis.

The research questions were the following:

- What is the structure of the conveyed message?
- What are the linguistic and extratextual (visual, auditory) elements that were used to make the message stronger?

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of the videos broadcast in the first communication campaign

The videos were entitled *COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign* followed by the name of the doctor/nurse in the recording. The slogan of the campaign was *I'm also getting the shot*. The nine videos of the first communication campaign, launched in December 2020, employ health specialists (doctors and nurses), with managerial positions, as promoters. In each video, a promoter presents the reasons for vaccination in a 30-second monologue. The videos are identical, filmed in the studio, and created for the specialized targeted audience, i.e., health and social care workers in public and private facilities. The promoters present the facts in a clear, articulated, and hopeful voice. Their gestures and posture exhibit seriousness. In the same way, their formal attire assures the public of the same serious demeanor and encourages trust. Two of the promoters opted for work clothes – a military uniform (Colonel Dr. Gheorghiu) and a white medical gown with stethoscope (Dr. Dumitra).

From a rhetoric point of view, all messages are presented using the *ethos* mode of rhetoric, i.e., by providing arguments related to expertise (*so many specialists have joined their efforts, the expert analysis stage, today's cutting-edge*

technology), in a formal tone. The structure of the campaign messages follows a common pattern, opting for a negative frame at the beginning of the message to explain the disastrous situation, then offering the vaccination solution and its benefits, and ending with a positive frame with the actor's personal urge to get vaccinated. Video no. 8 has a slightly different structure since the actor is the coordinator of the vaccination campaign, who focuses on the vaccine, from a logistical and organizational point of view, to show its availability to the public.

Most of the messages comprise six ideas and start by presenting the situation in a negative manner referring to the effects produced by the pandemic and to the way it affected people's personal or professional lives:

- “The COVID-19 disease has taken more than 14,000 Romanians from us.”
- “This year meant a life of restrictions. It meant suffering, it meant lost lives.”
- “During the 11 months of the pandemic...”
- “More than 15,000 Romanians and almost 2 million people around the world have lost the battle with the COVID-19 disease.”
- “First of all, 2020 meant a lot of pain, a lot of pressure and a lot of information. This drama, which was called a pandemic, has united us all. Borders have disappeared, continents have disappeared, and we have come together, united.”
- “Ever since the beginning of the pandemic, we have fought with all our resources against a silent and dangerous enemy, and we have sacrificed ourselves to help our patients.”
- “Together with our patients, we went through unimaginable experiences because of the virus that has turned our lives upside down. There were terrifying moments in intensive care and far too many lives were lost. An unacceptable price.”

From a linguistic point of view, the presentation of the disastrous situation is realized through dramatic nouns (*drama, suffering, pain, pressure*), through nouns accompanied by negative adjectives that create a cataclysmic image (*lost lives, silent and dangerous enemy, terrifying moments, unimaginable experiences, unacceptable price*), as well as through verbs or idioms in the present perfect tense that show the defeat and disaster caused by the pandemic (*has taken over ... from us, have lost the battle, has turned our lives upside down, I have experienced intense feelings*). The psychological and emotional impact is achieved using figures, which further underlines the disaster (*more than 14,000 Romanians, 11 months of the pandemic, 15,000 Romanians, 2 million people*).

Four of the seven messages then present a transition to the main topic of the campaign (presentation of the vaccine), made either by the introduction of the element of hope or wish for a better life or by a rhetorical question as the actor's personal urge for a particular choice in this regard:

- “We now have the hope to reclaim our normal lives.”
- “Can we change this? It's up to us what we choose to do.”

- “Never before have so many specialists joined their efforts and have so many resources been allocated to finding a life-saving solution.”
- “We want to go back to the life before the pandemic. We want to receive you in the practice without a mask, gloves, or visors.”

This transition to the positive frame is emphasized by nouns, such as *hope* or *future*, or by nouns accompanied by adjectives (*life-saving solution*, *normal lives*) or by adjectival phrases (*life before the pandemic*), which all show the transition toward normalcy. To show the effort made to reach normalcy, absolute terms are used (*never before*, *so many specialists*, *so many resources*).

The main part of the message is represented by the offer/presentation of the life-saving solution, in this case - the vaccine, by bringing back into discussion the specialists, their experience and efforts to build a framework for trust in the proposed solution:

- “A whole batch of vaccines has reached the expert analysis stage.”
- “... the whole world has put their mind to the test to get a vaccine in record time. They have managed this because they have started from a rich experience in recent years on the coronaviruses. This experience has helped us to obtain this vaccine in record time, through a completely new technique, the messenger RNA technique.”
- “Vaccination is the only option now to stop this pandemic. This is only possible if as many of us as possible get vaccinated.”
- “What does a vaccine bring?”
- “Today’s cutting-edge technology has provided us with the vaccine...”
- “The best solution is to get vaccinated. We, the doctors, and you, the patients.”
- “Romania is ready to ensure a favorable environment, a safe environment for every person who wants to get vaccinated against COVID-19. We have organized the logistical activities that are necessary for the reception, storage, and distribution of the vaccines in all the vaccination centers through synchronous, compatible actions with those carried out by the member countries of the European Union.”

Linguistically, this is realized through action verbs that show the result, in the 3rd person singular (*the world* meaning *the specialists*, *the experts*) and plural (*the specialists*): *has put their mind to the test*, *have managed*, as well as through nouns and adjectives showing how the vaccine was created: *record time*, *rich experience*, *completely new technique*, *cutting-edge technology*.

In six out of eight messages, the line of discourse is followed by presenting the benefits of the vaccine or the reasons for getting vaccinated:

- “Vaccines are safe and effective.”
- “...I will get vaccinated because vaccination means responsibility.”
- “A vaccine that is safe, efficient and has very few adverse effects.”
- “Vaccines are safe and effective.”

- “It brings the possibility first and foremost, to prevent the severe forms of the disease. It brings the opportunity to protect those who are vulnerable around us, to bring this virus to its knees and to regain our right to live and enjoy life.”
- “The vaccine helps me to stay safe... I want us to make Romania a safe place and get back to normal as soon as possible.”

Vaccines are characterized by quality adjectives (*safe, effective, efficient*) to present their benefits, by nouns (*responsibility*) or by verbs in the infinitive mood (*to prevent* the severe forms of disease, *to protect* those who are vulnerable, *to bring* the virus *to its knees*, *to regain* our right to live) to express the actors’ reasons to get vaccinated.

To make the message more persuasive, three of the eight videos also introduced the emotional factor by referring to the actor's humanity:

- “I believe, as a doctor and as a parent, that it is possible to get back to normal.”
- “I’m a mother, I’m a doctor and...”
- “... at work at the hospital, with family and friends.”

There are studies (Davies et al., 2002), (McKinnon & Orthia, 2017) (Ihlen et al., 2021) suggesting that, in order to address vaccine hesitancy, the vaccine discourse should also make use of *pathos* (i.e., emotions), in order to appeal to the public’s feelings and create a rapport between the authorities and the audience.

All the messages end on a positive note advising the public to get vaccinated. The slogan (*I’m also getting the shot/I’ve also got the shot*) emphasizes verbally and vocally the fact that vaccination is the solution chosen by the video actor and that it is the right one. The particle “also” shows unity, a collective action, symbolizing the fact that many people do the same thing.

4.2. Analysis of the videos broadcast in the second communication campaign

The videos were entitled *COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign - Together we defeat the pandemic*, followed by the name of the video that was presented (*Mother from the village Video, Grandmother from Muntenia Video*, etc.). The slogan of the campaign was *Choose to get vaccinated now!*. The six videos of the second communication campaign (May - June 2021) have ordinary, common people as actors. As in the videos in the first campaign, each video features a character, who shows in a 30-second presentation what the vaccine means to themselves, trying to persuade the viewer to get vaccinated to reap all the benefits, i.e., the return to a normal life. Each character is representative of a certain segment of the population.

Five of the six videos create a positive emotional state in various degrees (the mother from the village and the grandmother from Muntenia are pensive, a young man attending festivals is almost euphoric) while a single video (video no. 1) displays a state of sadness generated by the closed school and loneliness. All the videos are testimonials, presenting the actors’ opinions on the vaccination. The actors are

relaxed, casually dressed, filmed in their natural environment. Unlike the videos from the first campaign, filmed in the studio, the videos from this campaign present settings typical for the speaking character: three videos present the rural area, one video - the outdoor recreational setting, one video - the school, and one video - the urban area. The videos presenting the rural area employ visual elements specific to the Romanian village, such as the peasant's house, the yard, the laundry drying in the sun, the dogs in the yard, the table set out in the yard for the family, etc., as well as close-ups of the characters (e.g., the sad-eyed grandmother) to revive the familiar images to the viewer and convince him/her of the authenticity of the message. The voices are sad but expressing hope. At the opposite end, there are the videos with the young man attending festivals and with the traveler (video no. 3), who present young people from the urban area in recreational moments. Both characters are happy, even euphoric, the frames presenting important moments in a young person's life - festivals, music, dance, travel, camera - perceived as freedom. The video with the little girl alone in the schoolyard, in the classroom, and playing alone is the only one that expresses sadness, totally unnatural for a child.

At the same time, the visual and auditory images are real helpers in completing and strengthening the spoken words (e.g. the image of the young man raising his hands in the air or swinging in the swing symbolizes the euphoria of festivals and the state of freedom felt there; the mother who rides a bicycle in front of the empty school while saying that she wants to see happy children going to school; or the little girl who looks at an empty schoolyard while, in the background, children's laughter is heard, and she says that she misses them). The videos are different (addressing different ages - parents, grandparents, young people), but they have a common structure through the message that is being delivered.

From a structural/discoursal point of view, the messages appear in the question-answer form and contain three parts (question - answer to question - summary of the answer). Five of the six messages start with the rhetorical question, *What does the vaccine contain?*, repeated in each video by each actor to strengthen the idea of vaccination. The verb *to contain* is used metaphorically here since it does not refer to the medical ingredients of the vaccine (because, in this case, the target audience is the general public and not a specialized audience), but to its significance for the person speaking, to the effects the vaccine can have on one's life after getting vaccinated. The question is, therefore, the trigger for the expression of various wishes for a return to normalcy, a possibility achieved only through vaccination.

The messages are continued with the actors' answers to the above-mentioned question and with the presentation of the meaning/importance of the vaccine for each character in the video:

- "I think about this all the time... Happy children who get their heads off the phones and go to school as they should. Sundays at the parents' house in other villages, the table beautifully set after going to church and cousins gathered from all over the country."

- “The yard full of grandchildren running after the hens and dogs, people gathered around the table, people around.”
- “The euphoria of the Electric Castle and SummerWell, the movies at TIFFF ... The endless nights in Vama, when hundreds of people are your brothers and sisters with whom you share the music, the sand at NeverSea, the sea, the cocktails, and the love.”
- “Not to be sad anymore. Not to have online school. To be able to hug the teacher. To be able to sit in class with all my classmates, without a mask.”
- “Contains trips abroad, seas, beaches, sun, joy. Getting off the plane at the airport at 34° ... other flavors.”

From a linguistic point of view, the actors from the rural area use concrete positive nouns that sum up the countryside lifestyle and the Romanian family values: *children, parents, cousins, grandchildren, church, villages, yard, hens, dogs, table*. The nouns are modified by positive adjectives that depict the idea of togetherness, of socialization (*happy children, the yard full (of grandchildren)*), which contrasts strongly with the images presented by the video, i.e., the empty yard, the table without diners. The general idea that can be unraveled from the message is that of hope in returning to the traditional Romanian values, also felt in the actors’ voice (mother and grandmother). The actors from the urban area, on the other hand, use nouns that create different kinds of images, e.g., auditory (*music, sea*), visual (*movies, concerts*), tactile (*sand*), gustatory (*cocktails*), all culminating with the creation of strong sensations (*euphoria, love, joy*), specific to young people. The answer given by the girl going to school is realized in Romanian with verbs in the subjunctive mood, expressing wish and desire: *not to be sad anymore (să nu mai fiu tristă)* (the negative being used to obtain a stronger positive effect), *not to have online school (să nu mai fie școala online)*, *to be able to hug the teacher (să pot să o iau în brațe pe doamna)*, *to be able to sit in class (să pot să stau în clasă)*.

At the end, the messages summarize in a sentence or two the importance of the vaccine for the actor in the video, through abstract nouns, e.g., *buzz* and *joy*.

- “A lot of buzz, ‘cause we have plenty to talk about.”
- “There’s no greater joy in the world!”
- “The vaccine contains Saturday night concerts and dancing till dawn.”
- “I miss them so much. The vaccine means to be able to enjoy my childhood.”
- “The vaccine contains my joy to travel.”

One message (*Together we defeat the pandemic – Video no. 2 May*) (*Împreună Îvingem Pandemia - Spot 2 - YouTube, n.d.*) depicting the grandmother from the village, does not follow the structure of the other messages. It does not use the question-answer strategy or the significance of the vaccine for the character. Instead, she explained the reason for getting the shot: because she trusted her grandchildren from the city, who, in turn, trusted their doctors upon recommending the vaccine.

All the messages end with the slogan, *Choose to get vaccinated now!*, uttered by the narrator, a slogan also appearing on the screen, and by presenting the name of the campaign and the institutions that organized it (*Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF*). Linguistically, the slogan uses the informal tone in Romanian through the verb *to choose* in the 2nd person singular to create closeness with the viewer. The adverb of time *now*, instead, emphasizes the authority and the importance of vaccination, which are “softened” by the verb *to choose*, indicating that the power of decision belongs, nevertheless, to the viewer.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the two communication campaigns has highlighted the differences in the way they were conducted. The videos of the first campaign, targeted at a specialized audience (healthcare workers), are based more on the discourse (on the spoken text) and not on the visual presentation. Therefore, the actors are filmed in the studio, without other visual elements, the video frames focusing on the healthcare specialists’ faces and expressiveness, on their clear and pressed voices, on the articulate utterance of words as well as on their formal attire and very stiff and serious posture, all these elements trying to persuade the audience about the importance of vaccination. That is why, the slogan of the campaign, *I’m also getting the shot!*, is created in the 1st person singular, to probably stress this action through the actor’s prestige and medical competences, but it can also be seen as an invitation for his/her colleagues to take the same action. On the other hand, the videos of the second vaccination campaign, which are created for the general public, need to emphasize the emotional side more, speaking through images. The actors stand for different segments of the population and are filmed in their environment (e.g., the mother from the village is filmed in the village, the grandmother from Muntenia in the yard of her house, the young man attending festivals is filmed in nature and by the sea, and the little girl at school), in casual clothes and in a relaxed environment.

The videos are much more suggestive than the ones in the first campaign as, in this case, the audience is presented with auditory images (children's laughter, children's voices) as well as with other visual elements that reinforce the sensation produced by the words (e.g. table without diners, empty classroom, nature, cocktails and dancing), i.e. that of the desire to return to normalcy felt by each actor, which is extrapolated to the normalcy felt by other people. The slogan of the second campaign, *Choose to get vaccinated now!*, is also different from the one from the first campaign due to the fact that it is not the actor who says it, but the narrator, it is in the 2nd person singular, in an informal tone, offering the viewer the decision-making power of getting vaccinated or not.

The messages of the two communication campaigns are also structured differently (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the campaigns – message structure

	First communication campaign		Second communication campaign	
Message structure	Negative towards positive frame		Positive frame	
	6 ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the situation Transition to the possibility of changing the situation for the better Presentation of the rescuing solution (vaccine) Presentation of the vaccine benefits/reasons to get vaccinated Use of the emotional element to make the message more persuasive Urge to take over the rescuing solution – slogan 	3 ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of the trigger-question in order to find the speaker's emotional state/speaker's opinion regarding the vaccine, as a rhetorical question asked by the speaker Answer to the question/Presentation of the significance of vaccination for the speaker Summary of the significance of vaccination/vaccination effects

In the first campaign they are framed in a negative towards positive way and contain six main ideas, starting from the presentation of the disastrous situation to the development of the vaccine, to its qualities and importance for breaking the deadlock and culminating with the silent encouragement to follow the actor's example (to get vaccinated). The messages in the second campaign are constructed on a completely different frame, that of positivity and hope.

These messages contain three main ideas (question, answer to the question and summary of the answer) that are centered around the question that the actor asks himself/herself, *What does the vaccine contain?*, the answers being specific to each segment of the population that the actor represents.

At the linguistic level, the wish to persuade the viewer is expressed differently in the way these messages are transposed into words (Table 2). The messages in the first campaign use abstract nouns accompanied by negative and positive adjectives (*lost lives, terrifying moments, life-saving solutions, normal life*) to talk about the pandemic in rational, catastrophic terms and about the emergence of the vaccine as a panacea. The messages in the second campaign are based more on concrete nouns and positive adjectives (*parents, cousins, grandchildren, house, table, church, happy children*), managing to create various (auditory, visual, sensory, tactile) images to appeal to the viewer's emotional side.

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the campaigns – textual characteristics 1

	First communication campaign		Second communication campaign	
Textual characteristics	Nouns	Creating dramatism: <i>drama, suffering, pain, pressure</i>	Nouns	Concrete and positive summing up the countryside lifestyle and the Romanian family values: <i>children, parents, cousins, grandchildren, church, villages, yard, hens, dogs, table</i>
		Accompanied by negative adjectives that create a cataclysmic image: <i>lost lives, silent and dangerous enemy, terrifying moments, unimaginable experiences, unacceptable price</i>		Modified by positive adjectives that depict the idea of togetherness, of socialization: <i>happy children, the yard full (of grandchildren)</i>
		- Positive: <i>hope, future</i> - Accompanied by positive adjectives (<i>life-saving solution, normal lives</i>) or by adjectival phrases (<i>life before the pandemic</i>)		Creating auditory images: <i>music, sea</i>
		Accompanied by adjectives showing how the vaccine was created: <i>record time, rich experience, completely new technique, cutting-edge technology</i>		Creating visual images: <i>movies, concerts</i>
				Creating tactile images: <i>sand</i>
			Creating gustatory images: <i>cocktails</i>	
			Abstract, creating strong sensations: <i>euphoria, love, joy</i>	

While the first messages use numbers to present the situation statistically and rationally (*more than 14,000 Romanians, 11 months of the pandemic, 15,000 Romanians, 2 million people*), the question in the second campaign, around which the whole message is created, *What does the vaccine contain?*, announces from the very beginning the metaphorical and emotional style of this campaign (Table 2, Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative analysis of the campaigns – textual characteristics 2

	First communication campaign		Second communication campaign	
Textual characteristics	Adjectives	Quality: <i>safe, effective, efficient (vaccines)</i>		
	Verbs (idioms)	In the present perfect tense that show the defeat and disaster caused by the pandemic: <i>has taken over... from us, have lost the battle, has turned our lives upside down, I have experienced intense feelings</i>	Verbs	In Romanian, verbs in the subjunctive mood, expressing wish and desire: <i>not to be sad anymore (să nu mai fiu tristă), not to have online school (să nu mai fie școala online), to be able to hug the teacher (să pot să o iau în brațe pe doamna), to be able to sit in class (să pot să stau în clasă)</i>
		Action verbs showing result, in the 3 rd person singular and plural: <i>has put their mind to the test, have managed</i>		
	Figures	Psychological and emotional impact: <i>more than 14,000 Romanians, 11 months of the pandemic, 15,000 Romanians, 2 million people</i>		
	Absolute terms	<i>never before, so many specialists, so many resources</i>		
Message style		Formal/professional		Informal, relaxed
Message purpose		- To inform - To persuade		To persuade

According to the COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy in Romania, Phase I of the vaccination had to be directed towards the health and social care workers in public and private facilities. The analysis shows that these messages follow the recommendations of communication strategies on vaccination, i.e., the messages are created after having segmented the target audience (specialized public), the health workers. In terms of results, based on the figures provided by the National Coordination Committee on Vaccination Activities against COVID-19, out of the total of health and care workers, dose 1 was administered to 291,812 workers and dose 2 to 261,435. Practically, 89.8% were fully vaccinated up to that moment (*digi24.ro*, n.d.), indicating that the vaccination campaign among this category of beneficiaries was successful.

The second vaccination phase, launched on 15 January 2021, mainly targeted vulnerable categories represented by the elderly population (over 65 years old), by those diagnosed with chronic diseases and by the employees in key fields of activity.

The pro-vaccination campaign messages broadcast under the logo of the Romanian Government were the same as the ones broadcast in the first vaccination phase, i.e., they were the messages in which the actors were the doctors. Although heterogeneous categories of the population were being addressed, the messages were not adapted to target such audiences.

The third and final phase of vaccination was launched on March 2021, targeting all individuals aged above 16. From the point of view of the messages addressed to the general public, the Romanian Government broadcast the same messages created at the beginning of the communication campaign. As mentioned above, at the end of March, Romania had already faced the third wave of the pandemic, recording the peak of 3,665 Romanians infected with Coronavirus-19. From a communicative point of view, using at this stage the same pro-vaccination messages as for phase one was a mistake. A diversification in the content and meanings of the messages, adapted to the needs of the target audience, could have had beneficial impact on to vaccine acceptancy.

The communication campaign in which the messages were created for a non-specialized target audience was launched only in May and June 2021. For this campaign, the promoters chosen to transmit pro-vaccination messages were ordinary people, embodying the common values and beliefs of the Romanians, emphasizing the need to protect the loved ones (family) and to return to normal. However, this campaign came too late and, during the summer, as the number of illnesses decreased, the vaccination rate dropped dramatically.

6. Conclusions

In what follows, a few conclusions and improvement areas resulting from the study will be highlighted. To increase the confidence in the vaccine, the messages need to be well thought out, developed, and tested both in the pre-launch phase and throughout the whole vaccination process, backed up by thorough studies on the message receivers and their feedback. It is important to note that the future pro-vaccination campaigns should be based on strategies of communication aimed at raising the level of information and awareness of the population regarding vaccination. At the same time, they must be adapted to the different categories of target audiences as well as to each of these categories' mood and needs. As mentioned above, if we were to follow the vaccination strategy, in which the target audiences and the timelines for vaccination were clearly set up, then the communication campaign should have adapted its messages to the target audiences in a better way.

The results show that the conveyed messages were only partly adapted to the target audiences, specified in the Government's Vaccination Strategy. Moreover, the results also bring forth the fact that it was necessary to "translate" the messages from a technical and specialized language into a simple and coherent language that would present the advantages and risks of vaccination as well as those of non-vaccination, the effects of vaccines on health, etc. In addition to doctors, whose message was

directed at certain categories of the population, other “ambassadors” (people these categories of population have confidence in) should have been involved to provide pro-vaccination information, adapted to the targeted audiences. The study has also emphasized the fact that messages in vaccine communication must also be conveyed in a timely manner.

The sources of information that the public uses and trusts must also be identified and then used to disseminate the pro-vaccination messages. Recruiting only healthcare professionals to broadcast the messages is not a guarantee of the pro-vaccination messages success, especially when the population’s level of trust in the medical system is low. Decision-making bodies must take into account the society’s cultural specificity, as it is known that there are correspondences between them and the way in which people respond to such requests (Lu et al., 2021; Erman & Medeiros, 2021; Maaravi et al., 2021; Joshi et al., 2021; Sallam, 2021), and also to develop more appropriate and effective responses and to prepare solutions for future crises.

In times when governments are looking for solutions for a more efficient use of healthcare resources, an improvement in the implementation of vaccination programs is essential as vaccination is one of the most cost-effective interventions in the field of public health. The sustainability of the healthcare system is closely linked to the widespread promotion of a healthy lifestyle and disease prevention. While the authors of this study acknowledge that the findings regarding Romanian governmental COVID-related communication cannot be extrapolated to wider contexts, it is important to point out that the present research results can be of considerable value to the research community and can help enrich the theory around health communication.

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Appendix A

Transcript of videos broadcast during the first campaign

<p>1. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Mihai Craiu Pediatrician</p>	<p>Maladia COVID-19 a luat peste 14.000 de români de lângă noi. Acum avem speranța să ne recăpătăm viața normală. O serie întreagă de vaccinuri au ajuns în etapa de analiză a experților. Vaccinurile sunt sigure și eficiente. Cred ca medic și părinte că este posibil să ajungem la normal. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[The COVID-19 disease has taken more than 14,000 Romanians from us. We now have the hope to reclaim our normal lives. A whole batch of vaccines has reached the expert analysis stage. Vaccines are safe and effective. I believe, as a doctor and as a parent, that it is possible to get back to normal. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka5JRyR8A7Y&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDyo&index=7</p>
<p>2. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Beatrice Mahler Manager of "Marius Nasta" Pneumophthiology Institute Bucharest</p>	<p>Anul acesta a însemnat o viață cu restricții. A însemnat suferință, a însemnat vieți pierdute. Putem schimba acest lucru? Depinde de noi, cum va fi viitorul nostru. Depinde de noi ce vom alege să facem. Sunt mamă, sunt medic și mă voi vaccina pentru că vaccinarea înseamnă responsabilitate Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[This year meant a life of restrictions. It meant suffering, it meant lost lives. Can we change this? It depends on us, what our future will look like. It's up to us what we choose to do. I'm a mother, I'm a doctor and I will get vaccinated because vaccination means responsibility. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v1vp-cxS_s&list=PLVvoFIJvWUt</p>

<p>3. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Adrian Marinescu Medical Director of "Matei Balș" Institute</p>	<p>În cele 11 luni de pandemie, o lume întreagă și-a pus mintea la contribuție pentru a obține un vaccin într-un timp record. Au reușit acest lucru pentru că au plecat de la o experiență bogată din ultimii ani, cu ceea ce înseamnă virusurile din familia coronavirusurilor. Această experiență ne-a ajutat să obținem într-un timp record, printr-o tehnică complet nouă, tehnica ARN mesager, acest vaccin. Vaccin care este sigur, este eficient și are foarte puține reacții adverse. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[During the 11 months of the pandemic, the whole world has put their mind to the test to get a vaccine in record time. They have managed this because they have started from a rich experience in recent years on the coronaviruses. This experience has helped us to obtain this vaccine in record time, through a completely new technique, the messenger RNA technique. A vaccine that is safe, efficient and has very few adverse effects. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k1CX98aZwE&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=9</p>
<p>4. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Simona Ionescu Commander of "Ana Aslan" ROL 2 Military</p>	<p>Peste 15.000 de români și aproape 2 milioane de oameni de pe întreaga planetă au pierdut lupta cu boala COVID-19. Niciodată până acum nu și-au alăturat efortul atâția specialiști și nu s-au alocat atâtea resurse pentru găsirea unei soluții salvatoare. Vaccinarea reprezintă acum singura opțiune pentru stoparea acestei pandemii. Acest lucru este posibil doar dacă se vaccinează cât mai mulți dintre noi. Vaccinurile sunt sigure și eficiente. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[More than 15,000 Romanians and almost 2 million people around the world have lost the battle with the COVID-19 disease. Never before have so many specialists joined their efforts and have so many resources been allocated to finding a life-saving solution. Vaccination is the only option now to stop this pandemic. This is only possible if as many of us as possible get vaccinated. Vaccines are safe and effective. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8Za4im7ilg&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=4</p>
<p>5. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Valeria Herdea Family Physician specializing in Pediatrics, President of the Romanian Association for Pediatric Education in Family Medicine</p>	<p>2020 a însemnat în primul rând foarte multă durere, foarte multă presiune și a însemnat enorm de multe informații. Această dramă, care s-a numit pandemie, ne-a unit pe toți. Au dispărut granițe, au dispărut continente și ne-am unit. Ce aduce un vaccin? Aduce posibilitatea în primul și în primul rând, de a împiedeca formele severe de boală. Aduce posibilitatea de a-i apăra pe cei care sunt vulnerabili din jurul nostru, de a pune în genunchi acest virus și de a ne recâștiga dreptul de a trăi și de a ne bucura. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[First of all, 2020 meant a lot of pain, a lot of pressure and a lot of information. This drama, which was called a pandemic, has united us all. Borders have disappeared, continents have disappeared and we have come together, united. What does a vaccine bring? It brings the possibility first and foremost, to prevent the severe forms of the disease. It brings the opportunity to protect those who are vulnerable around us, to bring this virus to its knees and to regain our right to live and enjoy life. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM9uFCwjlM&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=3</p>
<p>6. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Liliana Constantin,</p>	<p>De la începutul pandemiei am luptat cu toate resursele împotriva unui inamic tăcut și periculos și ne-am sacrificat pentru a ajuta pacienții. Tehnologia avansată a momentului ne-a pus la dispoziție vaccinul, cea mai eficientă metodă de apărare împotriva răspândirii virusului ucigaș. Vaccinul mă ajută să rămân în siguranță la locul de muncă la spital, lângă familie și prieteni. Îmi doresc să facem România un loc sigur și să ne reîntoarcem</p>

<p>Nurse Coordinator of the Operating Theater at Floreasca Emergency Hospital</p>	<p>cât mai curând la normalitate. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[Ever since the beginning of the pandemic, we have fought with all our resources against a silent and dangerous enemy and we have sacrificed ourselves to help our patients. Today's cutting-edge technology has provided us with the vaccine, The vaccine helps me to stay safe at work at the hospital, with family and friends. I want us to make Romania a safe place and get back to normal as soon as possible. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h55WqdIbkiM&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDyo&index=2</p>
<p>7. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Gindrovel Dumitra President of the Immunization Working Group within the Romanian National Society of Family Medicine</p>	<p>Alături de pacienții noștri, am trecut prin experiențe de neimaginat din cauza virusului care ne-a bulversat viețile. Am trăit mari emoții la fiecare test și în timpul izolării. Au fost momente terifiante la terapie intensivă și mult prea multe vieți pierdute. Un preț de neacceptat. Ne dorim să ne întoarcem la viața de dinainte de pandemie. Vrem să vă primim în cabinet fără mască, mănuși sau viziere. Cea mai bună soluție este să ne vaccinăm. Și noi medicii și dumneavoastră pacienții. Și eu m-am vaccinat.</p> <p>[Together with our patients, we went through unimaginable experiences because of the virus that has turned our lives upside down. I have experienced intense feelings at each test that was performed and during lockdown. There were terrifying moments in intensive care and far too many lives were lost. An unacceptable price. We want to go back to the life before the pandemic. We want to receive you in the practice without a mask, gloves or visors. The best solution is to get vaccinated. We, the doctors, and you, the patients. I've also got the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-sHrEo1n0s&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDyo&index=1</p>
<p>8. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Valeriu Gheorghită Campaign Coordinator Primary care physician at the Military Hospital in Bucharest</p>	<p>România este pregătită să asigure un mediu favorabil, un mediu sigur pentru fiecare persoană care dorește să se vaccineze împotriva COVID-19. Am organizat activitățile logistice necesare pentru recepția, pentru stocarea și distribuirea vaccinurilor la nivelul centrelor de vaccinare prin acțiuni sincrone și compatibile cu cele derulate la nivelul țărilor membre ale Uniunii Europene. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[Romania is ready to ensure a favorable environment, a safe environment for every person who wants to get vaccinated against COVID-19. We have organized the logistical activities that are necessary for the reception, storage and distribution of the vaccines in all the vaccination centers through synchronous, compatible actions with those carried out by the member countries of the European Union. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_JMhiqNTzg&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDyo&index=6</p>
<p>9. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Dr. Valeriu Gheorghită Campaign Coordinator Primary care physician at the Military Hospital in Bucharest</p>	<p>România este pregătită să asigure un mediu favorabil, un mediu sigur pentru fiecare persoană care dorește să se vaccineze împotriva COVID-19. Am organizat activitățile logistice necesare pentru recepția, pentru stocarea și distribuirea vaccinurilor la nivelul centrelor de vaccinare din acțiuni sincrone și compatibile cu cele derulate la nivelul țărilor membre ale Uniunii Europene. Și eu mă vaccinez.</p> <p>[Romania is ready to ensure a favorable environment, a safe environment for every person who wants to get vaccinated against COVID-19. We have organized the logistical activities that are necessary for the reception, storage and distribution of the vaccines in all the vaccination centers through synchronous, compatible actions with those carried out by the member countries of the European Union. I'm also getting the shot.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3VdkTVkp90&list=PLVvoFIJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDyo&index=5</p>

Appendix B

Transcript of videos broadcast during the second campaign

<p>1. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Together we defeat the pandemic – <i>Mother from the village</i> Video Jun 28, 2021</p>	<p>Ce conține vaccinul? la asta mă gândesc mereu... Copiii fericiți să scoată capul din telefocane și să meargă normal la școală. Duminica la părinți în alte sate, masa pusă frumos după biserică și verișorii adunați de prin toată țara. Hărmălaie mare, că avem multe să ne povestim. Alege să te vaccinezi acum. Împreună învingem pandemia. O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF</p> <p>[What does the vaccine contain? I think about this all the time... Happy children who get their heads off the phones and go to school as they should. Sundays at the parents' house in other villages, the table beautifully set after going to church and cousins gathered from all over the country. A lot of buzz, 'cause we have plenty to talk about. Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ItdOGOjN1fA&list=PLVvoFLJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=35</p>
<p>2. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Together we defeat the pandemic – <i>Grandmother from Muntenia</i> Video Jun 28, 2021</p>	<p>Ce conține vaccinul? Curtea plină de nepoții care aleargă gămile și câinii, oamenii în casă la masă, suflete alături. Bucurie mai mare nu există în lume! Alege să te vaccinezi acum. Împreună învingem pandemia. O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF.</p> <p>[What does the vaccine contain? The yard full of grandchildren running after the hens and dogs, people gathered around the table, people around. There's no greater joy in the world! Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=4uQZiRTI4vc&list=PLVvoFLJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=33</p>
<p>3. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Together we defeat the pandemic – <i>Young man attending festivals</i> Video Jun 28, 2021</p>	<p>Ce conține vaccinul? Euforia de la Electric Castle și SummerWell, filmele de la TIFF... Noptile nesfârșite din Vamă, când sute de oameni sunt frații tăi cu care împarți muzica, nisipul de la NeverSea, marea, cocktailurile și iubirea. Vaccinul conține concertele de sâmbătă seară și dansatul până în zori. Alege să te vaccinezi acum. Împreună învingem pandemia. O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF.</p> <p>[What does the vaccine contain? The euphoria of the Electric Castle and SummerWell, the movies at TIFF ... The endless nights in Vama, when hundreds of people are your brothers and sisters with whom you share the music, the sand at NeverSea, the sea, the cocktails and the love. The vaccine contains Saturday night concerts and dancing till dawn. Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=UgE6TiPAf4k&list=PLVvoFLJvWUtY_SUMaj61GOSSEs4x4cDvo&index=34</p>
<p>4. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign – Together we defeat the pandemic – Video no. 1 May 27, 2021</p>	<p>Ce conține vaccinul? Să nu mai fiu tristă. Să nu mai fie școala online. Să pot să o iau în brațe pe doamna învățătoare. Să pot să stau în clasă cu toți colegii mei, fără mască. Mi-e foarte dor de ei. Vaccinul înseamnă să mă bucur de copilărie. Alege să te vaccinezi acum. Împreună învingem pandemia, O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF.</p> <p>[What does the vaccine contain? Not to be sad anymore. Not to have online school. To be able to hug the teacher. To be able to sit in class with all my classmates, without a mask. I miss them so much. The vaccine means to be able to enjoy my childhood. Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the</p>

	<p>Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=tNzhum3ooHo</p>
<p>5. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign - Together we defeat the pandemic – Video no. 2 May 27, 2021</p>	<p>Eu m-am vaccinat după ce m-au convins nepoții de la oraș. Prima dată n-am vrut că auzeam fel de fel de prostii de la vecini. Dar dacă nepoții mei s-au vaccinat și au încredere în doctori, i-am crezut. Așa măcar vin și ei la mie fără frică să nu-mi dea virusul. Alege să te vaccinezi acum. Împreună învingem pandemia. O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF.</p> <p>[I got vaccinated after my grandchildren from the city convinced me to do so. I didn't want to do it at first because I'd heard a lot of stupid things from my neighbors. But if my grandchildren got vaccinated and trust the doctors, I believed them. This way they can come to me without the fear that I might catch the virus from them. Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=NJdcwNrnZaU</p>
<p>6. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign - Together we defeat the pandemic – Video no. 3 May 27, 2021</p>	<p>Ce conține vaccinul? Conține călătorii în străinătate, mări plaje, soare, veselie. Coborât din avion în aeroport la 34 ° ...alte arome. Vaccinul conține toată bucuria mea de a călători. Alege să te vaccinezi acum! Împreună învingem pandemia! O campanie a Guvernului României și UNICEF.</p> <p>[What does the vaccine contain? Contains trips abroad, seas, beaches, sun, joy. Getting off the plane at the airport at 34 ° ... other flavors. The vaccine contains my joy to travel. Choose to get vaccinated now! Together we defeat the pandemic. A campaign of the Romanian Government and UNICEF.]</p> <p>Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=vuHgVjJli6s</p>