

Brands in Post-Communist Romanian Political Arena

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Abstract

Brands have gone beyond their commercial origin and entered into all spheres of human activity – from business to art, from sports to charity, from tourism to politics – becoming a pervasive social and cultural phenomenon. In this paper, we put forward an analysis of a new communicative practice in post-communist Romania: constructing brands in the political arena. We discuss how political brands have been constructed around two politicians: Traian Băsescu, the Romanian president, and Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Romanian senator until 2009, now a member of the European Parliament.

Keywords: *brand, post-communism, interdiscursive hybridity*

Introduction

Brand history may be traced back in time, in the thirteenth century Italy, once watermark paper began to be widely used. It is estimated¹ that one can go even further, to the first century, in Pompeii, where “protobrands” were found – wine decanters marked with the inscription *Vesuvinum*. Since the nineteenth century, industrialization and marketing of consumer goods have paved the way for the development of products and specific association between positive images: superior quality, originality, durability, reliability, consistency. Gradually, the functional qualities of a product moved to the background, and today’s brand “is mainly associated with involvement and association, with external and visible demonstration of personal affiliation”².

Nowadays, brands are created by the marketing departments of large corporations trying to attract new customers or persuade existing customers to bring new ones. Creating a brand is not readily available, but customers may be seduced by the repetition of clear and simple ideas. Brands have gone beyond their commercial origin and entered into all spheres of human activity – from business to art, from sports to charity, from tourism to politics – becoming a pervasive social and cultural phenomenon.

In this paper, we put forward an analysis of brands in the field of politics, where we suggest they may constitute a new communicative practice for post-communist Romania. In 2004, for the first time in the Romanian political arena, two out of the three leading candidates (Adrian Năstase, Traian Băsescu, Corneliu Vadim Tudor)³ for the

¹ Willem Jongman, *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1988).

² Wally Olins, *Despre brand*, 2nd edition (Bucharest: Comunicare.ro, 2010), 16.

³ “Alegeri prezidențiale 2004 (turul I),” accessed May 8, 2012, <http://www.alegeri.tv/alegeri-2004-tur-1>.

presidential elections chose to work with professional advertising agencies: Traian Băsescu worked with a Romanian agency, while Corneliu Vadim Tudor worked with a foreign agency. This marked a new direction towards adopting Western neo-liberal practices by Romanian politicians.

In what follows, we will discuss the Băsescu brand and the Tudor brand. The two candidates started with professional agencies, but in July 2005, Tudor ended his contract with the foreign advertising agency and continued constructing his brand in a personal manner, especially in parliamentary speeches.

The Băsescu brand was *professionally* constructed in 2004, during the presidential campaign, and it was continued in 2007, before the Romanian Parliament held a joint session to decide whether the President should be dismissed from office. The Tudor brand was *personally* constructed in a series of speeches during plenary sessions of the Senate of Romania (2004-2008 legislature) and the European Parliament (legislature 2009-2014). Throughout the paper, we will identify and discuss key strategies that are used in order to construct the two political brands.

Neo-Liberal Discourse and Political Branding

Neo-liberal politics has Anglo-American origins⁴ and is mainly associated with the Reagan administration (1980-1988) in the U.S. and the Thatcher government (1979-1990) in Britain. This type of politics aimed at minimizing the influence of the state over economic events and aimed at building a modern society. According to the proponents of transitology, postcommunist Romania is said to be journeying slowly westwards, imitating Western institutions, beliefs, methods and economic mechanisms. However, opponents of this theory argue that “the notion that one is still in transition toward a fundamentally different economic system can be dangerous because it inspires a short-term perspective [...] the more people in postcommunist countries are persuaded that ‘that is it’, the better”⁵. Whether on the way or at the destination already, Romania has borrowed and acculturated various Western practices. In this paper, we discuss “political branding” as an illustration of the emulation of neo-liberal practices in the context of globalization.

As our analysis draws on several concepts, e.g. “political discourse”, “neo-liberal discourse”, “parliamentary discourse”, “debate”, we will first focus on our understanding and use of these terms.

According to Fairclough⁶, a distinction should be made between *discourses*, *genres* and *styles*. He describes the relationship between the three as follows: a *discourse* is operationalized through (a) enactment (via genres, i.e. ways of interacting communicatively), (b) inculcation (via styles, i.e. ways of being in their discursive aspect) and (c) materialization (in infrastructures, technologies, architecture).

⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2006), 23.

⁵ John Mueller, “Democracy, Capitalism, and the End of Transition,” in *Postcommunism: four perspectives*, ed. Mandelbaum Michael (New York: A Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), accessed April 7, 2012, <http://books.google.com/books?id=oYk37r7SPZgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=mandelbaum+postcommunism+four+perspectives&hl=ro>, 139.

⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2006).

A *discourse* is a way of representing some part or aspect of the world, characterized by specific vocabulary and grammatical features, e.g. “the neo-liberal economic” discourse⁷, political discourse, parliamentary discourse.

Genres are “particular forms of communication which are specialized for trans-national and interregional interaction”⁸, a way of communicating and interacting, for example a format of the websites of international organizations and corporations, “ways of working, governing or conducting politics”⁹.

A *style* is “the discourse moment”¹⁰, i.e. how things are said by a social or personal identity of various social actors: managers, politicians, teachers. For this paper, the discourse moments we selected were constructed by two post-communist politicians: Traian Băsescu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor.

The three categories of *discourse*, *genre* and *style* combine in what Fairclough calls “order of discourse”¹¹. Therefore, drawing on these distinctions, *political discourse* can be said to be enacted, among other discourses, by parliamentary discourse, that “displays particular institutionalized discursive features and ritualized interaction strategies”¹². Parliamentary discourse is therefore a particular genre of political discourse, which in its turn displays several subgenres¹³, the debate being one of them.

A *debate* is “a formal discussion on a particular topic and which is strictly controlled by an institutional set of rules and a moderator, who in Parliament is the Speaker or the President”¹⁴, therefore a mediated discourse, whose major strength is “the necessity of confrontation” and “the existence of opposite sides”¹⁵.

Van Dijk¹⁶ points to the complexity involved in defining the debate:

A parliamentary debate is a discourse genre defined by a specific style, specific forms of verbal interaction (talk) under special contextual constraints of time and controlled speaker change, in the domain of politics, in the institution of parliament, as part of the overall act of legislation, engaged in by speakers who are MPs, representative of their constituencies as well as members of political parties, with the aim (for instance) to defend or oppose bills, with formal styles of address and argumentative structures supporting a political point of view... And this is merely a short summary of such a definition of a genre, which usually needs both textual and contextual specification.

The fact that parliamentary debates are public and official and now open to a very large public due to their transcripts on the internet, the expected style used by politicians

⁷ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 3.

⁸ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 3.

⁹ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 28.

¹⁰ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 31.

¹¹ also Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981), 48.

¹² Cornelia Ilie, ed. *European Parliaments under Scrutiny*, (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010), 62.

¹³ Ilie, 8-9.

¹⁴ Ilie, 10.

¹⁵ Ilie, 10.

¹⁶ van Dijk, Teun. “Discourse and Racism,” in *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, ed. Goldber, David T. and John Solomos, (Blackwell Reference Online, 2002. Accessed January 24, 2012. <http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Discourse%20and%20racism.pdf>), 150.

is formal and polite, without interruptions, heckling, and backchanneling. The examination of deviations in (verbal) behavior during parliamentary debates can shed light on what is going on in this type of interaction.

Political branding is an extension to politics of a commercial strategy which seeks to put a positive spin on political messages. While “branding” has become an industry in its own right and has gone global, political branding is the result of blurring the boundaries between politics and the media. Fairclough¹⁷ enumerates the principles of this technique:

your brand should reflect your strengths, commitments and values – your ‘brand values’; your brand is your promise to the customer; you should consistently communicate your brand values in what you do and how you behave.

Political brands have been created in Western Europe, but especially in the USA. When Philip Gould – from Philip Gould Associates Agency – created the brand for Tony Blair (Britain’s prime minister between 1997-2007), he based his choice on building “an identity as a politician that is of a piece with the political positions he adopts”¹⁸. Similarly, Felix Tătaru – from General Media Promotion Agency (GMP) – created the brand for Traian Băsescu¹⁹ within the framework of corruption and clientelism that characterized the social-democratic government so far.

Brands may be constructed and therefore analyzed as products characterized by “interdiscursive hybridity”²⁰, a case when discourses, genres or styles mix, either from different orders of discourse, or from different and conventionally incompatible discourses, genres or styles from the same order of discourse. In our understanding, “hybridity” refers to the mixing of *discourse* (i.e. the discourse of neo-liberal commercial branding), *genre* (i.e. electoral posters, one-minute speeches, parliamentary debates) and *style* (i.e. professional vs. personal branding).

We now move to analyze the construction of two political brands as instances of the concept discussed above. Our focus will be on Băsescu’s professional campaigns in 2004 and 2007 and on Tudor’s personal branding as illustrated in his speeches in both the Senate of Romania and the European Parliament.

Professional Political Branding

For the presidential campaign, the autumn of the year 2004 was the moment when a surprise candidate, Traian Băsescu (who had replaced Theodor Stolojan), was turned into a political brand. The transfer from *candidate Băsescu* to *brand Băsescu* involved identification of some essential features, which were extracted from the real behavior of Băsescu, the person. The professional agency Băsescu worked with focused on the candidate’s use of communicative resources from colloquial language, popular

¹⁷ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 102.

¹⁸ Gould in Norman Fairclough. *New Labour, New Language?* (London: Routledge, 2000), 96.

¹⁹ “Traian Băsescu – Alegeri prezidențiale 2004,” accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.gmp.ro/ro/>.

²⁰ Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, 32.

entertainment and commercial advertising, constructing thus his brand as “The Player”²¹.

The Agenda of “The Player”

Traian Băsescu became the candidate supported by Alianța Dreptate și Adevăr (*Justice and Truth Alliance*) in a country dominated for more than 10 years by the model promoted by Ion Iliescu: the president of the masses, the popular president who is involved in the lives and problems of the community.

Construction of the Băsescu brand was achieved by all available media: print, video, and online. In all visuals²², Băsescu promoted an open, frank style, urging Romanians to realize the disastrous effects of corruption on society and to act by voting: *Nu pot ei fura cât puteți voi vota! Să fie dreptate! Băsescu Președinte* (*They cannot steal as much as you can vote! Let there be justice! Băsescu for President*).

In one visual for the presidential campaign 2004, the candidate is presented as a charismatic person, smiling and arms wide open. He is wearing a blue shirt and a dark-colored tie, suggestions of his being an ordinary man who does not observe formal rules of protocol. This is appealing to the electorate, “as ordinary Romanians recognize their own impulsive reactions in those of the President”²³. Băsescu uses a sincere, straightforward message to vote for a change in the country, and such a change can only be brought by the candidate.

In another visual from the same campaign, Băsescu is presented as a determined man, who commits himself to “play everything on one book”²⁴: the Constitution of Romania. The print also includes a specific quotation from the Constitution, *Nimeni nu este mai presus de lege* (*No one is above the law*), suggesting that he will obey the laws of the country and make others obey the laws as well. Băsescu is thus branded as the President-Player, a modern Robin Hood, asking to be given the power by the people and giving the power back to the people. The strategy used in 2004 was a successful one, as Băsescu became the President of Romania and ever since he has dedicated his time to “humiliating and punishing the greedy and dishonest rich”²⁵.

“The Player” was used again in 2007, when 322 deputies and senators discussed the dismissal of the President. As mentioned on the website of the advertising agency, “the President who had been elected by the majority was about to be dismissed by a Parliament which houses the most unnatural coalition: social democrats, liberals, conservatives, nationalists”²⁶. This was the context and the President needed to be

²¹ The actual name of the brand was never used as such by the advertising agency, but it was used by journalists writing articles about the candidate and later about the President-Player.

²² “Traian Băsescu – Alegeri prezidențiale 2004”.

²³ Teodorescu and Sultănoiu in Isabela Iețcu-Fairclough, “Populism and the Romanian ‘Orange Revolution’: a discourse-analytical perspective on the presidential election of December 2004,” *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 2 (2007): 34.

²⁴ *Pun totul pe o singură carte*. In Romanian, the noun *carte* refers both to ‘a book, a piece of written work’ and to ‘a playing card’.

²⁵ Isabela Iețcu-Fairclough, “Populism and the Romanian ‘Orange Revolution’: a discourse-analytical perspective on the presidential election of December 2004,” *Studies in Language & Capitalism* 2 (2007): 34.

²⁶ “Traian Băsescu – Referendum se suspendare a președintelui,” accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.gmp.ro/ro/>.

presented as fighting alone against such a coalition. The way the voters could be touched and persuaded to raise against a corrupt Parliament was to present the President as helpless – blind (*Să nu văd?* *Shall I not see?*), deaf (*Să nu aud?* *Shall I not hear?*), dumb (*Să nu vorbesc?* *Shall I not talk?*).

The three chosen disabilities act as reinforcers of the already established brand of the President. For three years, between 2004 and 2007, Băsescu continued to construct himself an image of the man who fights for justice, speaks out and monitors the activity of the state institutions. In the three visuals²⁷ used during this campaign, there are no indications on who the person in the image is, since it is a well-known authority in the Romanian political arena. Băsescu is no longer smiling, he is no longer welcoming voters, but he is presented as a worried man who can be disabled by a corrupt system and is asking the ordinary citizens to help him continue the fight for justice.

What Băsescu is trying to achieve by this episode of branding is a new form of populism: “Băsescu’s populism drew very clearly on the dichotomy between the ‘people’ and the ex-communist political and economic oligarchy in order to put forward a radical political message”²⁸. Thus, Băsescu wants to become the voice of the nation by consulting the citizens who supported him to become President in 2004.

Strategies

In the visuals from 2004, “The Player” presents himself as an objective person, who takes a stand and distinguishes between “they” and “you” (2nd person plural): *Nu pot ei fura cât puteți voi vota! Să fie dreptate! Băsescu Președinte* (*They cannot steal as much as you can vote! Let there be justice! Băsescu for President*). Băsescu cannot be identified as a “discursive person”, but his image is constructed by the 2nd person plural pronoun referring to the people who will come and vote for him.

Another strategy used in order to construct the brand of “The Player” is presenting the candidate as having high affinity²⁹ to the statement. For example, when uttering *Nimeni nu este mai presus de lege* (*No one is above the law*), the candidate shows commitment to the proposition selected from the Constitution of Romania and presents himself as a self-confident person.

Băsescu’s confidence helped him become President of Romania in 2004. He did not stop constructing this brand, but continued to display availability to dialogue³⁰. In the spring of 2007, Băsescu had to pass the test of dismissal from office. He worked with the same agency as in 2004 and this time the strategy focused on the President building solidarity with the voters. The questions used in the visuals (*Să nu văd?* *Shall I not see?*, *Să nu aud?* *Shall I not hear?*, *Să nu vorbesc?* *Shall I not talk?*) are only the first parts of an adjacency pair with the answer missing. Yet, they prompt a negative answer (*no, you should see/hear/talk*) that should be interpreted as a strategy to make the President continue his activity, because he has the support of the people.

²⁷ “Traian Băsescu – Referendum de suspendare a președintelui”.

²⁸ Iețcu-Fairclough, “Populism and the Romanian ‘Orange Revolution’: a discourse-analytical perspective on the presidential election of December 2004,” 38.

²⁹ Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 123.

³⁰ After winning the elections, for a short period of time, Băsescu would come to University Square in Bucharest and meet with the citizens to talk to them and feel the pulse of the community.

Personal Political Branding

Senator Corneliu Vadim Tudor, a far-right veteran of Romania's political scene, leader of România Mare (Greater Romania Party), writer and journalist³¹, is often referred to in the media as "The Tribune". In Latin, "tribunus" designates a magistrate that had both military and civilian functions. In Romanian history the term has a more combative meaning, i.e. an activist in the self-defense of Romanian communities in Transylvania against the Revolutionary government in Hungary (1848) in the Habsburg areas. We will use this name to refer to the Senator's brand.

In what follows, we will discuss some of the thematic resources we could identify in speeches by Corneliu Vadim Tudor during plenary sessions of the Romanian Senate (2004-2008) and the European Parliament (2009-present). We will then move to analyze the main discursive strategies employed by Tudor to construct his brand, "The Tribune".

In order to conduct this analysis, we selected transcriptions of some parliamentary sittings from the website of the Senate³², which provides a database that can be accessed both in video format and in transcribed form. The consultation of this database can be done by selecting the day of the meeting in the annual calendars (since 2002 for the Senate) or queries may be made on the database by keywords or speakers for those meetings that took place in the last three legislatures. We have also selected transcriptions of Tudor's one-minute speeches from the dedicated website of the European Parliament³³. Although in Romania Tudor is affiliated with Greater Romania Party, this is not the case within the European Parliament, where he is not affiliated with any political group.

The Agenda of "The Tribune"

The most widely discussed topics on Tudor's agenda in both the Romanian Senate and the European Parliament are by far *mafia* and *corruption* in his home country. In his speeches from the Romanian Senate, Tudor focuses on particular issues, such as the case of the refinery in Onești (RAFO), which has been under scrutiny since it began the process of privatization in 2000. At the time of the speech in example 1, more than five years had passed since the privatization of the refinery.

Example 1

Fără a-mi atribui vreun merit deosebit, pot să spun că sunt "doctor în RAFO", în sensul că am sesizat primul, în politica și în presa română, jaful inimaginabil care s-a comis acolo, încă din anul 2001, când, din banii negri ai mafiei de la Bacău, în

Without taking too much credit, I can say I hold "a PhD in RAFO", meaning that I was the first to inform the authorities and the press about the unimaginable robbery that was committed there, ever since 2001 when, using the laundered money

³¹ "Corneliu Vadim Tudor," accessed April 12, 2012, <http://electionsmeter.com/detail/Corneliu-Vadim-Tudor-id3469>.

³² "Luări de cuvânt în plen," accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.senat.ro/Fisa Senator.aspx?ParlamentarID=b863cbae-ec2e-4e3a-b1fa-0c9765e9a014>.

³³ "Dezbateri," accessed March 17, 2012, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sidesSearch/search.do?type=CRE&language=RO&term=7&author=96845>.

special mafia RAFO, s-a plătit o primă șpagă, de 1 milion de dolari, unei foarte cunoscute personalități europene, pentru a răsuci cu 180 de grade un raport de țară. Nu dau nume, nu intru în amănunte, informațiile sunt 100 % sigure.

of the mafia in Bacău, especially the mafia in RAFO, 1 million dollars was paid as bribe to a very well-known person from Europe in order to twist by 180 degrees the country's report. I do not give out names, I do not give any more details, my information is 100% accurate.

27 January 2005, Bucharest

Tudor does not speak anymore for the country, but for himself, apparently minimizing his contribution to the unmasking of corruption. Yet, his action is counterbalanced by his holding *a PhD in RAFO*, an activity which requires a lot of time, dedication and research, and denotes expertise.

The idea that Romania is no man's land is a recurrent resource in Tudor's speeches in the Romanian Senate, as shown in example 2 below.

Example 2

Din păcate România a devenit frontiera sălbatică a Europei. A fost rău cu dictatura comunistă, dar e infinit mai rău cu dictatura mafiotă. Principalele brațe ale caracării mafioare sunt justiția și poliția care sunt roase de cancerul corupției. Din ianuarie 1990 și până acum, în România au fost comise peste 5 000 de crime rămase cu autori necunoscuți. România este raiul clanurilor de interlopi autohtoni protejați de justiție și de poliție, dar este și placă turantă a pedofililor, șarlatanilor și a celor mai primitivi agenți străini.

Unfortunately Romania has become the wild border of Europe. It was bad with the communist dictatorship, but it is infinitely worse with the mafia dictatorship. The main arms of such an octopus are justice and police, which are devoured by the cancer of corruption. Since January 1990 to the present day, more than 5,000 crimes have been committed and they do not have an identified author. Romania is the heaven of shady gangs who are protected by the police and by justice, but it is also the turntable of pedophiles, charlatans and the most primitive foreign agents.

22 November 2010, Strasbourg

In his speech, Tudor takes a stand and blames the communist regime, although he was one of the praisers of the Ceaușescu family; he blames the institutions for not taking action against criminal gangs, but does not suggest solutions to the issues he raises. Thus, he only acts as a 'speaking trumpet'. The two discursive resources – mafia and corruption – are interchangeable as they presuppose each other. When choosing such a topic, Tudor presents himself as the defender of a complex political category – homeland, and a fierce fighter against the opposing category – mafia. Even the slogan of Greater Romania Party (*Jos Mafia! Sus Patria! Down with the Mafia! Up with the Homeland!*) is constructed on the dichotomy mafia – homeland and their attributes: corruption on the one hand, and honesty, on the other.

In his one-minute speeches from the European Parliament, Tudor brings to front general issues from Romania (*the mafia of opinion polls [...] has reached monstrous proportions, shady gangs are protected by the police and by justice*) and presents himself as speaking for the country (*I can testify that, in my country, Romania; Unfortunately Romania has become the wild border of Europe*).

In the speeches selected for this study, covering almost 12 years in Tudor's Parliamentary activity, we identified another topic that is foregrounded both at national (example 3) and European (example 4) level – *elections*, covering both general aspects about the organization of the process and, more often, particular attention is given to fraud.

Example 3

[...] la asemenea excese se ajunge când anumiți brokeri de putere, din străinătate, împiedică venirea la putere, în România, a unor forțe naționale sănătoase, pragmatice. Suntem împiedicați, prin toate mijloacele, să venim noi, de la Partidul România Mare, inclusiv prin fraude electorale repetate. Și vă anunț că, peste vreo zece zile, va izbuini bomba fraudelor electorale, vom ști exact cine și cum a furat, o să veДЕti, poate vă vom prezenta și o videocasetă, cu acest prilej, pentru că nu îmi place să las nimic nerezolvat.

[...] this is an excess when some powerful brokers abroad do not allow a pragmatic, healthy Romanian political force get the power. We, Greater Romania Party, are hindered from getting the power by all means, repeated electoral fraud included. And I want to announce you that in about ten days the bomb of all electoral fraud will be defused and we will all know who and how they stole, you'll see, maybe we'll show you something on video on that occasion, because I don't like to leave things unfinished.

28 February 2005, Bucharest

Fraud is defined as “wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain” (Oxford Dictionaries). Tudor is a skilled public speaker who succeeds in getting the attention of the audience by orienting all his verbal actions to the future, thus becoming “illocutionary acts that commit the speaker to some future course of action”³⁴. This means that Tudor’s speech acts should be in the best interest of his audience, his unmasking of the fraud should be carried out. Sometimes, in his statements, Tudor presents events in a threatening manner: *we will all know who and how they stole, you'll see*. What is more, neither in his national nor in his European speeches Tudor gives further evidence to his statements. The same strategy was used in a European speech he delivered before the Presidential elections in 2009, in Brussels.

Example 4

Așa după cum știți, România cunoaște în această perioadă o criză politică fără precedent, care se adaugă la criza economică și socială. În aceste zile se pregătește o mare fraudă electorală. E vorba de alegerile pentru funcția de președinte al României, care urmează să se desfășoare la 22 noiembrie. Toate alegerile din România au fost fraudate, dar jaful care se pune la cale acum e inimaginabil.

As you may well know, Romania is in a deep political crisis which is doubled by an economic and social crisis. A big electoral fraud is being prepared these days. It's about the elections for the Romanian President, that will take place on 22 November. All elections in Romania have been won by fraudulent means, but the plunder which is about to be carried out is unimaginable.

7 October 2009, Brussels

³⁴ John R. Searle, “A Classification of Illocutionary Acts,” *Language in Society* 5(1) (1976): 11.

In the beginning of his speech, Tudor takes the information he is about to deliver for granted (*As you may well know*) and presents himself as knowing all the answers (*A big electoral fraud is being prepared these days*). This creates the premise of the politician making a declaration³⁵ and, at the same time, committing himself to unmask the fraud. Once again, he does not give further evidence. It becomes clear that he may be called a ‘discursive fraudster’, his only aim being to present his own image and his party’s image in a favorable way, as ‘unmaskers’. This leads us to the final discussion point in this paper: recurrent *strategies* used in speeches delivered by Tudor in the Romanian and the European Parliament.

Strategies

In his speeches, “The Tribune” succeeds in drawing the attention of the audience by directly expressing his point of view, as in examples 5 and 6 below.

Example 5

Eu nu acuz pe nimeni, dar au fost create și perfecționate mecanisme ale fraudei absolut scandalioase: sondaje de opinie mincinoase, turism electoral, liste suplimentare, voturi anulate ale oamenilor vii și voturi valabile ale morților, imense sume de bani și produse pentru mituirea cetățenilor săraci, convingerea părinților prin mituirea copiilor din școli, frauda pe calculator și multe alte ilegalități. Salvați România! SOS poporul român!

I am not accusing anyone, but absolutely scandalous mechanisms have been created and improved to carry out fraud: lying opinion polls, electoral tourism, additional voting lists, annulled votes of living people and valid votes of the dead, huge amounts of money and products to bribe the poor, persuasion of parents by bribing children in schools, computer fraud and many other unlawful acts. Save Romania! SOS to the Romanian people!

7 October 2009, Brussels

Example 6

Astăzi, 16 decembrie, sărbătorim jubileul a 240 de ani de la nașterea lui Ludwig van Beethoven, compozitorul imnului Europei unite.

În virtutea acestui excelent raport al Comisiei pentru cultură și educație, ca istoric și scriitor român, eu propun ca marcă a patrimoniului european un loc excepțional, unic în lume – Peștera Sf. Andrei, situată aproape de vărsarea Dunării în Marea Neagră.

Today, 16 December, we celebrate the jubilee of 240 years since the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, the composer of the anthem of United Europe.

In virtue of this excellent report of the Committee for culture and education, as a Romanian writer and historian, I suggest as mark of the European heritage a unique place in the world – the Cave of St. Andrew, situated in the vicinity of the Danube mouth to the Black Sea.

16 December 2010, Brussels

In Romanian, a pro-drop language, the syntactic position of subject may be occupied by a full pronoun (*eu, tu* etc. – *I, you* etc.), but most often the pronoun is

³⁵ for a full discussion on declarations, see Searle , 13-15.

omitted since the category of subject is rendered by the verb form (*vorbesc*, *vorbești* etc. – *I speak, you speak* etc.). If a full pronoun is used in the syntactic position of subject, it may have pragmatic meanings: the speaker either wants to emphasize his/ her position while uttering the words or the speaker wants to differentiate him/ herself from the interlocutor.

Tudor's use of first person singular pronoun is a discursive characteristic as "The Tribune" differentiates between himself and other categories of people, implicit in agentless passive constructions: *Eu nu acuz pe nimeni, dar au fost create și perfeccionate mecanisme ale fraudei absolut scandalioasei – I am not accusing anyone, but absolutely scandalous mechanisms have been created and improved to carry out fraud*. At the same time, Tudor presents himself as an authority, displaying expertise in a specific area: *ca istoric și scriitor român, eu propun ca marcă [...] – as a Romanian writer and historian, I suggest [...]*. Membership categories³⁶ are classifications that may be used to describe persons and their associated activities: worker, brother, mother, friend etc. Sacks considered that people use membership categories because they apply two rules: (1) *the economy rule* – using a single membership category in order to describe a member of some population, and (2) *the consistency rule* – once a first member of a given population has been categorized, that category may be further used to categorize other members of the population. Tudor's explicit use of a specific category (*historian, writer, nationalist, Christian*) is relevant for understanding how the speaker relies on his displaying legitimate power.

"The Tribune" uses the same discursive strategy in order to perform exculpation and rehabilitation since he has been presented by the Romanian mass-media as the court poet of the Ceaușescu family, and later, as an active anti-Semite.

Example 7

Eu nu sunt comunist, domnilor, sunt naționalist și creștin, și știți asta prea bine. Fac parte din generația care a avut o copilărie și o adolescență plină de privațiuni, tocmai datorită vânzării barbare de la Yalta.

I am not a communist, gentlemen, I am a nationalist and a Christian, and you know this very well. I am part of the generation who lived a hard childhood and adolescence, exactly because of the perfidious act from Yalta.

10 April 2006, Bucharest

Example 8

Și atunci am făcut acest proiect de lege, pentru că nu mi-ar plăcea și n-aș dormi liniștit dacă aş ști că părinții mei pot fi îngropăți acolo, că peste trupurile lor trec animalele și pasc. Indiferent de religie, avem același Dumnezeu. Și mă simt dator să-i apăr pe evrei, despre care Liviu Rebreanu scria în jurnalul său: "Evreii sunt sarea pământului". Nu vreau, iarăși, să fim arătați cu degetul, nu vreau, iarăși, un bezmetic sau un provocator să deseneze o zvastică pe zidul unui templu coral sau a unei

And then I decided to put forward this bill, because I would not like and I would not sleep well at night knowing my parents are buried there, that animals pass and graze over their bodies. No matter the religion, we all have one God. And I feel it is my duty to defend the Jews, about whom Liviu Rebreanu used to write in his diary: "Jews are the salt of the earth". I do not want to be pointed at us again, I do not want a madman or a provoker scribble a swastika on the walls of a Jewish temple

³⁶ Discussed by Sacks 1974, Psathas 1999, Pomerantz, Mandelbaum 2005.

sinagoge și să se spună: "Ia uite, români sunt antisemiti". Nu, doamnelor și domnilor, români nu pot să fie antisemiti, chiar și numai pentru faptul că Ștefan cel Mare a avut un medic evreu, chiar și numai pentru faptul că, la 1877, au murit pentru independența României și militari, și ofițeri evrei, chiar și numai pentru faptul că, în ambele războaie mondiale din veacul XX au murit evrei.

Da, trebuie să-i protejăm și am cerut să fie părtași în această operațiune de protecție și de conservare și evreii care dau banii, evreii din America, din Europa, din Israel.

or synagogue and people say: "Look, Romanians are anti-Semitic." No, ladies and gentlemen, Romanians cannot be anti-Semitic, because of the fact that Ștefan the Great had a Jewish doctor, because of the fact that, in 1877, Jewish privates and officers died for the independence of Romania, because of the fact that, during both world wars in the 20th century, Jewish people died.

Yes, we must protect them and I have asked that they should be part of this operation to protect and preserve the Jews who have money, the Jews from America, from Europe, from Israel.

14 May 2007, Bucharest

In example 8, Tudor foregrounds his being the initiator of a bill whose broad aim is "to defend the Jews". "The Tribune" highlights the activities of the Jewish population in Romania and gives rhetorical force to his speech by repeating the word "Jewish". He also legitimates his discursive choices by using quotations, as examples 9 and 10 below further show.

Example 9

Acestea fiind spuse, vreau să vă rog să luăți act de dorința noastră, a senatorilor Partidului România Mare, ca acest vânt al schimbării, sintagma pronunțată pentru prima oară în 1960 de premierul Marii Britanii, McMillan, în privința eliberării Africii – The wind of change. Acest vânt al schimbării care suflă și peste Ucraina, anchilozată încă în mentalități medievale, acest vânt al schimbării să însemne ceva pozitiv și pentru frații noștri [...]

Having said that, I would like you to note our desire, the senators representing Greater Romania Party, that this wind of change, a phrase used for the first time in 1960 by the British prime-minister McMillan referring to a free Africa. This wind of change that blows over Ukraine, that is still bound to a medieval mentality, this wind of change should mean something good for our brothers [...]

27 December 2004, Bucharest

Example 10

Doamnelor și domnilor, eu cred că cel mai important dar pe care Dumnezeu l-a făcut omului este câinele. Știți ce spunea Madame Roland, cea care avea să fie ghilotinată în timpul Revoluției franceze: „De când îi cunosc mai bine pe oameni, am început să iubesc câinii”, iar Lordul Byron a scris: „Câinii au toate virtuțile oamenilor, mai puțin defectele lor.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I think the most important gift God made to man is dog. You know what Madame Roland said about this, the one who was guillotined during the French Revolution: "Since I started to know people better, I've started to love dogs", and Lord Byron wrote: "Dogs have all the virtues of people, less their defects."

24 February 2010, Brussels

Quoting is a rhetorical device that allows the current speaker to play a role, to be an actor who recites and can easily shift modes. “The Tribune” is a skilled and well-read speaker who uses quotations in at least two different ways:

he (apparently) includes ad-hoc reference to other speakers as if such an use was on the spur of the moment, creating thus the impression of authenticity (in example 9) or

he deliberately includes series of quotations (in example 10, there are references to Madame Roland and to Lord Byron) in order to legitimize his choice of topic, underlying that other important persons have talked about the respective issues before him.

The discursive play is sometimes achieved by means of shifting focus from inclusive (examples 11 and 12) to exclusive pronominal forms (example 13).

Example 11

Instituțiile Consiliului Europei și în primul rând Parlamentul European au datoria morală să ajute o țară membră să nu iasă de pe orbita civilizației. Nu lăsați mafia din Balcani să dinamiteze proiectul generos al Uniunii Europene. Trag acest semnal de alarmă fiindcă instituțiile Uniunii Europene reprezintă ultima speranță a poporului român.

The institutions within the Council of Europe and, firstly, the European Parliament have the moral duty to help a country which is about to leave the orbit of civilization. Do not let the Balkans mafia dynamite the generous project of the European Union. I am calling your attention because the institutions within the European Union are the last hope of the Romanian people.

7 October 2009, Brussels

Example 12

Starea de spirit a populației e din ce în ce mai proastă și dacă nu vom reuși să oprim jaful din țările noastre, atunci proiectul generos al Uniunii Europene se va prăbuși ca un castel de nisip. Există totuși o salvare: la o asemenea răscrucă istorică e nevoie de soluții radicale. Mafia nu trebuie să fie sub control, mafia trebuie să fie sub pământ.

The population's morale is lower and lower every day and unless we stop the robbery from our countries, the generous project of the European Union will collapse just like a sand castle. There is hope: such a historical turning point asks for radical solutions. Mafia must not be under control, mafia must be under ground.

25 March 2010, Brussels

Example 13

Noi, cei de la PRM, ne-am făcut datoria. Acum să-i vedem la treabă pe cei care dețin pârghiile puterii și sunt obligați, prin lege, să vegheze la respectarea Constituției.

We, those from GRP, have done our duty. Now we want to see them work, those who are in control and are obliged, by law, to watch over the observance of the Constitution.

13 March 2006, Bucharest

The speaker plays with words and shifts focus from “I/ we” to “them” in order to create dichotomies. Tudor presents himself as a defender of the “generous project of the European Union” and a right doer, together with other (unnamed) members of the party (*Noi, cei de la PRM – We, those from GRP*), becoming the spokesman of those who urge for action. This strategy is repeated throughout Tudor’s speeches, thus becoming an important rhetorical device whose main purpose is to persuade his audience³⁷.

Conclusions

Analyzing the professional Băsescu brand, we called it “The Player”, because the President of Romania has been an active player in the political arena for the past eight years. The main topic that characterizes his agenda both in 2004 and in 2007 is corruption of the old system. The advertising agency Băsescu worked with for his campaigns also built on the idea that elections may be won fraudulently and the result may be disastrous unless people take a stand and act by voting. Băsescu uses discursive strategies that are appealing to the public: dialogic structures, display of solidarity with his interlocutors. Thus, Băsescu “The Player” may be characterized by the following attributes: unconventional, direct, disruptive, controversial, dynamic, flexible, and simple.

In Tudor’s speeches from the Senate of Romania and the European Parliament, we could identify a man who successfully constructs his personal brand, “The Tribune”. Corruption is one of the main topics on his agenda and it is intended towards any of the parties that governed Romania at a certain moment³⁸. Another recurrent topic that is characteristic of his agenda is electoral fraud: “The Tribune” brings this topic to front both in the Romanian and in the European Parliament, committing himself to unmask fraud and do justice. Tudor presents himself as a vigilant guardian of national values, but also as a cultured and relaxed man of the world who can speak politely and joke about anything, including delicate topics and the ideology of Greater Romania Party. His recurrent use of pronouns in the first person singular is indicative of his membership to prestigious categories: member of the Parliament, writer, sociologist, Christian. Tudor presents himself as fighting for human rights and tries to save his face by supporting the sensitive cause of the Jewish population.

Brands in general and political brands in particular seem to have a deep impact in society, successfully combining names, discourses, colours and slogans. It is admitted that the most important element of a brand is the name “as its use in language provides a universal reference point”³⁹ and the name should never change. It is for the future generations to decide if the names that we discussed in this paper will survive as brands.

³⁷ Anabella-Gloria Niculescu-Gorpin, “Modalități de persuadare și efectul perlocutionar în discursul politic,” in *Aspecte ale dinamicii limbii române actuale*, ed. Gabriela Pană-Dindelegan, (București: Editura Universității din București, 2003), accessed April 7, 2012, <http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/filologie/dindelegan/cuprins.html>.

³⁸ Greater Romania Party was part of the Parliament until 2008, but it never succeeded in being a major force in any of the chambers and it was “doomed” to be an opposing party.

³⁹ Tom Blackett, “What is a brand?” in *Brands and Branding*, edited by Rita Clifton and John Simmons, (London: The Economist in association with Profile Books), accessed 10 May 2012, http://issuu.com/38902/docs/the-economist---brands-and-branding_16.

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Construcția mărcilor politice în România post-comunistă

Mărcile au depășit originea comercială și au intrat în toate sferele activității umane – de la afaceri la artă, de la sport la caritate, de la turism la politică – devenind un adevărat fenomen social și cultural. În această lucrare, propunem analiza unei noi practici comunicative din România post-comunistă: construcția mărcilor pe scena politică. Aducem în prim-plan „marca Băsescu”, pe care o analizăm pe baza posterelor difuzate înainte de discutarea suspendării președintelui. De asemenea, ne concentrăm atenția asupra „mărcii Tudor”, pe care o analizăm pe baza discursurilor din ședințele care s-au desfășurat în Senatul României și în Parlamentul European.