

News Discourses on Nation Branding in Post-Communist Romania: Frames and Function Frames

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Abstract

Romania's country image is one of the most controversial topics in the media over the past few years. Soon after the fall of communism in 1989, this issue became part of the public debate about the international perception of Romanian people, about the ways in which Romania is depicted in the international press, or about the country's position in the process of Europeanization. In this context, the paper focuses on 53 news articles on Romania's nation brand and on the national image building problem in four newspapers (*Adevărul*, *Gândul*, *Jurnalul Național*, *Dilema Veche*), published during January 2011 – March 2014. In so doing, a social-constructivist approach is employed, by combining qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) with media frames analysis (Entman, 1993). The results show that four dominant frames emerge: nationalism (discourses on national identity used by the journalists), neoliberal commercialism (the marketability of nation branding initiatives), cultural values (culture as a practice involved in promoting a country), and country image (the public image of Romania internationally) frames. The Romanian journalistic discourse is built on evaluation strategies, insisting on political responsibility.

Keywords: nation branding, news discourses, framing, Romania's country image, function

"Why has Romania got such a bad public image?" is the headline of an article published on the BBC news website on February 2013. The article is focused on the "long line of public relations problems to have hit Romania"¹ (BBC News Magazine, February 2013), such as the horse meat scandal, the UK media frenzy over Romanian immigrants, the ex-Communist dictatorship, images of children abandoned in Soviet-era orphanages, corruption, and the prejudicial treatment of the Roma community. All these problems were intensely debated in the Romanian and the international media as well. In fact, one of the most controversial topics in the Romanian media over the past few years is the country image. Soon after the fall of communism in 1989, this issue became part of the public debate about the international perception of Romanian people, about the ways in which Romania is depicted in the international press, or about the country's position in the process of Europeanization.

After 1989, Romania started to promote its image in order to attract foreign investors and tourists. Because of the violent anti-communist Revolution, Romania was in a process of national redefinition. The 'emptied' flag was quickly followed up with a new country name, the Republic of Romania and also a new political landscape. This led to a changing of perspective, from dictatorship to democracy and the country started to privatize the enterprises, to build an open market economy and a liberated media. According to Pleșu (2012: 37), after the Revolution, the former communist countries started to achieve two important goals: building a plural political system (democracy) and creating a market economy (capitalism). Thus, in post-communist Romania, social and financial inequalities have taken on disturbing proportions. The number of poor people has increased, and they have become poorer. Romania remains the prisoner of an oriental model (or its own traditional model), in which social discrepancies are very great. In these circumstances, 'national unity' is more a matter of discourse than of real life (Boia, 2001: 222).

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21550768>

Furthermore, in transition countries we assist to a "process of national identity global reconstruction" (Georgiu, 1997: 45), because the identities were suppressed, censored, or deformed in the communist period. The refounding of national identity was simultaneously a cause and an effect of the fall of Communism. The dichotomy East-West had clearly defined spatial dimensions, juxtaposing societies that coexisted but were opposed for political, religious, or cultural reasons. In fact, "East came to be identified, more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West" (Todorova, 2009: 11).

The context in which nation branding is invoked in Romania is linked with the country's democratization process, which started after the anti-communist revolution. The debate over the national image was built in terms of the uneven relations between the centre and the periphery, focusing on economic, political or cultural dimensions. The core was Western Europe, while the development of the periphery (underdeveloped countries from Eastern Europe) was strongly dependent on the former. Considering the 'world system theory' as developed by Wallerstein (1974), Romania is definitely a periphery, absorbing effects radiated by a distance centre. This also affects the national image, because of "all social representations that can be considered "maladies of growth", the image of Romania as a dependent periphery seems to be the most difficult to shake off" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007: 144).

In the particular case of Romania, the debate regarding the national image is connected to the journalists, intellectuals and brand consultants' contribution in shaping the public discourse. An interesting fact here is that the intense debate about Romania's nation brand started as a criticism to the campaigns initiated by the Government and soon became a public issue. Actually, nation branding is understood as a step in the process of constructing the national image as a public issue. The debate about the country image was built upon other intellectual debates regarding the Romanian national identity and the modernization process.

Media is a powerful actor in this context, giving visibility to some voices and sources. Thus, the actors construct different discourses and the journalists usually appeal to sources in order to frame an event. In fact, media discourses are characterized by *polyphony* (Bakhtin, 1981), quoting a lot of voices and sources. Journalists play an important role in constructing the news: choices about language, quotations, and relevant information lead to emphasis upon certain features of a news story and, in turn, significantly structure citizen's responses to public events and issues by encouraging certain "trains of thought" (Price, Tewksbury, and Powers, 1997; Shah, Domke, and Wackman, 1996). Framing is also important, especially in the process of constructing an event as a public problem.

This article discusses about the media frames used by the Romanian journalists in talking about the country image and the nation brand as public problems. In doing so, it focuses on the discursive construction of nation branding and on the roles of the journalists in shaping the public discourse. In Romania, nation branding is a public issue discussed in the media, raising the question of why a country brand is needed. Hence, as a type of public problem, "nation branding passes from the area of institutional and expertise discourses into the area of the public sphere, and generally, in the public discourses, including the quotidian life" (Beciu, 2013: 43).

In order to see how the Romanian journalists frame public problems such as country image or nation branding, the data comprises 53 articles about the national image building problem, published in Romanian newspapers such as *Gândul*, *Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Dilema Veche*, collected during the period January 1, 2011 – March 31, 2014. The research draws on Entman's (1993) perspective on framing, considering that frame in the news can be examined and identified by the "presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements" (p. 52). Furthermore, frames have at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture. In this analysis, we will only concentrate on the communicator, the text, and the culture, while the receiver is taken into account for future research. In so doing, four function frames are essential for performing the analysis: "*define*

problems – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgements* – evaluate causal agents and their effect; and *suggest remedies* – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects” (Entman, 2004: 52).

According to Entman’s model, a single sentence may perform more than one of the four framing functions and a frame in any particular text may not necessarily include all four functions. Following a constructivist approach on framing, this research component uses inductive and deductive reasoning to content analyze frames and function frames in the coverage of the nation branding issue in the Romanian media.

The article starts with a short overview of the country image problem in the Romanian media, and continues further with presenting the results of the media frames analysis employed to see what frames are mostly used by the journalists in defining and interpreting the theme of Romania’s nation brand.

1. Romania’s country image as a public issue in the media

Considering the sociology of public problems (Boltanski, Cefaï, Gusfield, 2001), the country image is a public issue in Romania which has generated a lot of interpretations and definitions in the public arena. Furthermore, the Romanian journalists have defined roles by constructing dramatic characters (*dramatis personae*), and using the strategy of *dramatizing* (Cefaï, 2001) to legitimate the public problem (for example Udrea’s leaf scandal regarding the resemblance between the Romanian campaign logo and a British transport company logo). Thus, in Gusfield’s (2001) opinion, not any social problem becomes automatically a public one. A public issue is related to competitive interpretations, collective actions and events, decisions or policies. Moreover, the formation of public issues depends on the socio-historical context, social events, and the political culture. That is why societies do not rely on the same public issues. There are several stages in the formation of a public problem: the audience interest on a certain event, followed by the social actors’ interpretations and definitions; the event is imposed on the media agenda by initiating public actions such as governmental decisions, boycotts, or debates (Beciu, 2011: 107). All these stages are present in the Romanian society, when debating about the national image theme.

However, the country image is not a public issue in other countries, especially in countries from Western Europe. This is due to the fact that the social and political context of post-communist Romania has transformed this event into a public problem. Starting with 2005, the “theme of Romania’s country image is the object of an institutionalization process” (Beciu, 2011: 110, my translation), because of the “Branding Romania” project launched by the Romanian Government.

In order to see how Romanian journalists construct a public interest issue such as nation branding, the corpus was built around two dimensions: (1) news articles about nation branding *per se*, some of them criticizing the Government initiatives to promote the country, and (2) news articles about the country image problem. Based on 53 articles collected from Romanian newspapers such as *Gândul* (N=6), *Adevărul* (N=24), *Jurnalul Național* (N=19) and *Dilema Veche* (N=4), the research is qualitative, combining a qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) and a media frames analysis, considering Entman’s (1993) four function frames.

2. Frames and function frames employed by the Romanian journalists in the coverage of the country image issue

The results show that there are four dominant frames employed by the Romanian journalists in the coverage of the nation branding issue: the national identity, the neoliberal commercialism, the cultural values, and the public image frames. First of all, the national identity frame refers to the use of national heritage and national symbols when discussing about the nation brand. In this regard, the main indicators are the national patrimony, national values, symbols, or folk costumes. The second frame is the neoliberal commercialism, related to Romania’s nation brand in terms of the capitalist logic of the market. The main indicators here were destination branding, economic development, and touristic objectives.

Thirdly, the cultural values frame is focused on the use of artistic and intellectual pursuits in relation to the country promotion, so the main indicators were national writers, music festivals, historical relics, and cultural elite. Finally, the public image frame focuses on the representation of Romania and Romanians on the international stage, taking into account indicators such as the national image, perception, politics, stigmatization, and the “new diaspora”).

As one can see in the pie (Figure 1), the neoliberal commercialism was the most frequent frame, insisting on the nation brand in terms of the capitalist logic of the market. In this case, nation branding is seen in relation to the “marketization of public discourse” (Fairclough, 1993), so the main focus is on marketing techniques used to promote Romania as a touristic destination.

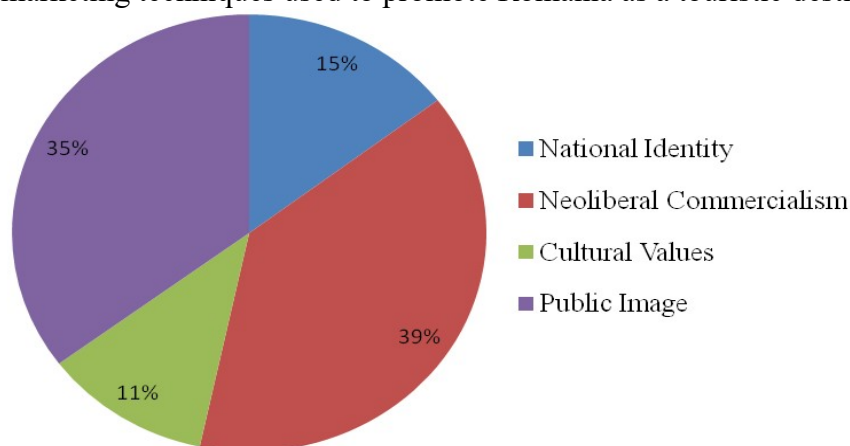


Figure 1. Frames employed by the Romanian journalists in the coverage of the country image issue

Each frame comprises the four framing functions defined by Entman (1993): *define problems*, *diagnose causes*, *make moral judgments*, and *suggest remedies*. Therefore, *define problems* is characterized by a disturbance in the public space, signaled by the Romanian journalists. In Entman’s opinion, define problems “determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values” (2004: 52). In this particular case, the problem is related to the public issue of Romania’s national image. The function frame entitled “diagnose causes” refers to the forces creating the problem, defining the reasons and causes influencing an outcome, while the function frame entitled “make moral judgments” is related to the evaluation of causal agents and their effects. Lastly, “suggest remedies” is connected to offering and justifying “treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects” (Entman, 2004: 52).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the framing functions in the main frames. Considering the national identity frame, the Romanian journalists insisted on defining problems, and then on making moral judgments. In the neoliberal commercialism frame, the emphasis was on defining problems too, followed closely by moral judgments.

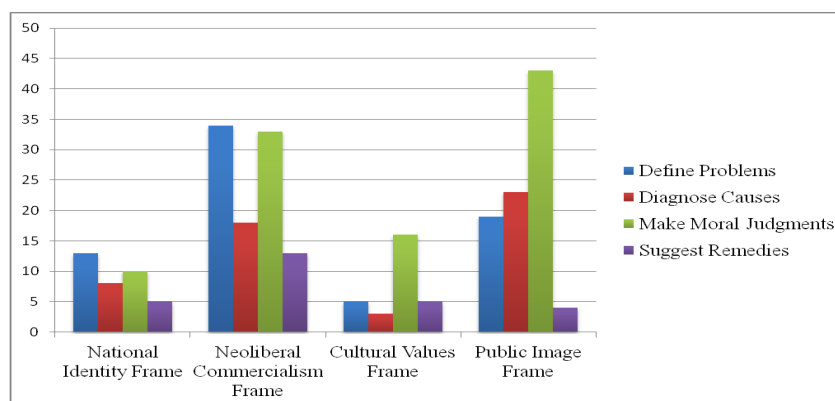


Figure 2. The distribution of the framing functions in the coverage of Romania’s country image public issue

Next, the cultural values frame was built on the moral judgments function frame, along with the public image frame. An interesting fact is that the public image frame also insisted on diagnosing causes, identifying the forces creating the problem.

The following sections try to answer the question of how each of the function frames proposed by the Romanian journalists (define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies) are discursively constructed. The focus will be on the discursive strategies used by the journalists to frame a public issue, along with keywords, stock phrases, and stereotyped images.

3. The *national identity* frame

The Romanian journalists use the national identity frame in order to emphasize the importance of national heritage and national symbols in relation to Romania's nation brand. Mainly, they use the personal pronoun "we" to construct the national group of Romanians, being citizen-oriented. The most important symbols mentioned are the Romanian traditional blouse *ia*, the Orthodox traditions, Tonitza's paintings, Stavropoleos Church, or slavonic manuscripts. Headlines such as "Country brand and national patrimony" (Adevărul, June 24, 2013), "Romania, the Garden of Mary" (Adevărul, August 2013) or "Jurnalul campaign: IA – A country brand for Romania" (Jurnalul Național, March 2014), are just a few examples to frame the country brand in terms of national identity.

3.1. *Define problems*

In defining problems (the dominant function frame), the Romanian journalists take into account the lack of expertise in the country brand issue:

"The nation brand is not an expert problem, as in many Western countries. In our country, the experts are very little listened, and they have to work with issues they are not prepared to deal with. The nation brand is a national obsession, a problem on which everyone has an opinion"

"The public debates usually vary from *Dracula* to *Nadia Comăneci*, or, more recently, from ecology (villages from Transylvania) to House of the People. Two or three values are discussed, trying to comprise maps and history. The result is, evidently, pathetic. Next day, it starts again all over". (Alexandru Muraru, Adevărul, June 24, 2013)

The comparison between Eastern and Western countries is used to emphasize the cleavage between nation branding in the East (where nation branding has become a national obsession) and the West (where the nation brand is an important issue discussed by experts). Therefore, nation branding in post-communist Romania is a distinctive phenomenon, compared to other countries from Western Europe. For instance, the lack of expertise is an importance difference, leading further to a national obsession. At this point, the Romanian journalist makes a moral evaluation: "The national brand is a national obsession, a problem on which everyone has an opinion".

In the second example, the journalist considers that associating two or three values to the nation brand is not enough in order to promote a country. *Dracula* and *Nadia Comăneci*, ecology and House of the People are examples of values used in promoting Romania overseas. Thus, the journalist uses evaluation strategies by making a moral judgment about the result, which is "evidently, pathetic". He does not provide a solution to this problem, but he mentions it and criticizes some of the most frequent values present in the nation branding initiatives.

3.2. *Diagnose causes*

The journalists consider that the country's economic underdevelopment is responsible for the ways in which Romania is portrayed internationally:

"We are still a poor country. There are other problems that Romania has not resolved. It is hard to start from an unfavorable social-economic situation in order to build a country brand. Our image in the world should not be a bandage on a wound, hiding an unpleasant truth". (Alexandru Muraru, Adevărul, June 24, 2013)

Put simply, economic issues are connected to the problems surrounding Romania's country image. The journalist uses the personal pronoun "we" and the objective pronoun "our" to express his affiliation to the national group. Moreover, he employs personification as a rhetorical device: "There are other problems that Romania has not resolved". In doing so, the citizenry are reminded of their national place in a world of nations. In the end, the journalist employs a moral evaluation: "Our image in the world should not be a bandage on a wound, hiding an unpleasant truth". Therefore, one of the causes for the country image problem in Romania is pauperization, as stated in the article published in *Adevărul*.

3.3. Make moral judgments

Romania's national heritage is not sufficiently explored in the nation branding initiatives, according to the national press:

"The country brand: not a technical term, but a common mania. It is no wonder that a leaf is everything produced until now for promoting Romania. When you talk much, you do less"

"I don't want to propose a miraculous, definitive solution to the nation brand. Personally, I do not believe such a solution exists. Romania's nation brand is not an unsolved mathematical problem. It depends on a series of strategic choices made from a huge number of values. They constitute the national patrimony" (Alexandru Muraru, *Adevărul*, June 24, 2013)

In the first example, the Romanian journalist denounces the leaf logo used in *Explore the Carpathian Garden* campaign, initiated in 2010 by the Government. The logo was a subject for an intense debate in the public sphere, because of its resemblance with the logo of the British company Change Transport. The Romanian media has rapidly disseminated the information, discussing about the Ministry of Tourism's incompetence to promote Romania as a destination country. The journalist from *Adevărul* newspaper criticizes the ones responsible for the leaf, because of their inability to do something meaningful for Romania's country brand.

Further, the comparison between Romania's nation brand and mathematics is connected to the strategic choices from the values constituting the national patrimony. The journalist uses the personal pronoun "I" in order to express his opinions: "Personally, I do not believe such a solution exists". In this regard, he confesses to the audience, being in a position of power.

3.4. Suggest remedies

The solutions offered for the problems defined consider promoting the national patrimony and investing in the national self-understanding

"Romania would be totally different, and the country brand would not be an obsession, if Romanians would believe more in the value of Tonitza's paintings, Stavropoleos Church, Slavonic manuscripts or Mateiu Caragiale's writing. Only when Romania values will be truly appreciated it will be possible to promote the heritage or invest in (self-) awareness and values presentation." (Alexandru Muraru, *Adevărul*, June 24, 2013)

"Why wouldn't we promote Romania as a spiritual destination, especially because we share with the West the same veneration for Saint Mary? Tourism should not be just an easy consumerist preoccupation. Relaxing can also mean meditation and self-reflection, along with communicating with other Christians" (Bogdan Diaconu, *Adevărul*, August 15, 2013).

In this case, the Romanian journalists insist on two important themes: the national patrimony and the Orthodox Christianity. Hence, the Romanians should start appreciating national values coming from arts, culture, literature, or architecture. In the second example, the solution suggested is to promote Romania as a spiritual destination. Religion is, in fact, strongly connected to the national identity dimension, because of the "cosmic Christianity" (Eliade, 1997: 259) specific to the

Romanian popular spirituality. That is why the philosopher Nae Ionescu (1990: 205) argues that being Romanian is equivalent to being Orthodox: “We are Orthodox because we are Romanians, and we are Romanians because we are Orthodox”. Considering the idea of a spiritual destination, the journalist changes the focus from tourism to religion. The West is mentioned here by using *assimilation strategies*, insisting on the similarities between an Eastern European Orthodox country and the Western Europe: “Why wouldn’t we promote Romania as a spiritual destination, especially because we share with the West the same veneration for Saint Mary?”. Consequently, the West is seen as a model, that is why the similarities should be intensely explored in the country promotion campaigns.

A special case inside the national identity frame is the media campaign *Ia – a country brand for Romania*, initiated by the Romanian newspaper *Jurnalul Național* and the online community *La Blouse Roumaine* in March 2014. A year before, *La Blouse Roumaine* proposed June 24 as the Universal Day of the Romanian blouse, in order to celebrate *Sânzienele* (midsummer fairies in Romania) and to reposition the identity of the “ia” worldwide. Aiming to promote the Romanian tradition, the traditional blouse was also considered a “country brand for Romania”. This initiative was also supported by *Jurnalul Național*:

”Any Romanian woman wearing an *ia* can transform herself into a fairy. Any Romanian woman is born a fairy, because here the story of the world was sewed on a blouse. Any Romanian woman wearing an *ia* tells the story of her country. Any Romanian woman loving her country, can say, with artistry, the story of the *ia*. Jurnalul Național invites you all to sustain, in this way, the Romanian values.

Every year, on June 24, starting with 2013, we will celebrate the IA Universal Day (The traditional Romanian blouse day). *Ia* is not just a costume any more. It is a state of happiness, a connection and a promise amongst the worldwide fairies, from all the continents in the world. It is the Romanian woman symbol, the symbol of Romanians everywhere. It is the second national flag. Last year, on June 24, Romanians have recognized themselves by wearing the *ia*.

Jurnalul Național sustains *IA* as a national symbol of all Romanians, as a country brand born out of the early creativity of people on these lands. On 24 June 2014 we will dress again in the *ia* and we will say proudly: “We are Romanians!” (Carmen Anghel, *Jurnalul Național*, March 24, 2014)

The national myth of the midsummer fairies is explored by the journalists from *Jurnalul Național* in order to create a connection between the traditional Romanian blouse and June 24, the *IA* Universal Day. Furthermore, the journalists employ national identity discourses by appealing to Romanians all over the world (“It is the Romanian woman symbol, the symbol of Romanians everywhere”), by using the flag metaphor (“It is the second national flag”), or by constructing the national group through the personal pronoun “we” (“On 24 June 2014 we will dress the *ia* and we will say proudly: “We are Romanians!”). Besides this, the newspaper assumes the responsibility for the campaign: “*Jurnalul Național* sustains *IA* as a national symbol of all Romanians”. A logo was also created (Figure 3), representing a traditional sew. Furthermore, the journalists make moral judgments when describing the campaign: “*Ia* is not just a costume any more. It is a state of happiness, a connection and a promise amongst the worldwide fairies, from all the continents in the world.” The myth is perpetuated by metaphors, while the main focus is on connecting Romanians all over the world. The newspaper *Jurnalul Național* also challenges the reader to get involved: “*Jurnalul Național* invites you all to sustain, in this way, the Romanian values”. By using *interpellation* as discursive strategies, the journalists transform the readers into an *active* public. In this way, they become civic journalists, overcoming their role as professionals.



Figure 3. The IA – a country brand for Romania campaign logo

4. The neoliberal commercialism frame

The neoliberal commercialism frame is used when the Romanian journalists refer to the nation brand in terms of the capitalist logic of the market. The main focus is on the European funds spent to promote Romania, on the Ministry of Tourism's competence, and on destination branding campaigns. Headlines such as "The country brand needs a bath" (Adevărul, June 20, 2013), "The Romanian Black Sea coast will be promoted through European funds in the country and in the world. Will we attract more tourists this way?" (Adevărul, April 10, 2013), "Romania will be promoted overseas through famous persons and legends – Prince Charles, Patzaichin, Dracula" (Adevărul, May 21, 2013), "Udrea goes further with the nation brand: "We will not change it until 2015. It is a big success!" The advertising people, about "the Carpathian garden": "It does not have power, it is like a salad" (Gândul, December 17, 2011), or "Elena Udrea's leaf has not convinced Romanians or foreigners" (Jurnalul Național, September 5, 2011) are just a few examples to suggest the neoliberal commercialism frame.

4.1. Define problems

One problem related to Romania's country brand is the failure to promote the country as a destination brand after 1990:

"After the last year failure in convincing the tourists to visit Romania and the nation brand scandal, the Ministry of Tourism has changed the strategy for this year, orienting to the internal market by investing 2 million Euros in order to convince Romanians to spend their holidays in the Carpathian Garden"

"The fact that Romania's external promotion is a failure is proved by the statistics on the number of foreign visitors, lower than in 2009. Therefore, the number of foreign tourists in Romania, registered in the first ten months of 2010 at the border checkpoints, was lower than in the same period of 2009, reaching almost 6.500.000 tourists (less than 0.7% than in 2009)". (Aniela Nine, Elena Stan, *Jurnalul Național* January 3, 2011)

"The official statistics are unbearable: money pumped into the touristic promotion campaigns and into the Elena Udrea's leaf have not convinced too many tourists to explore the "Carpathian Garden". (Vali Blănar, *Jurnalul Național*, September 6, 2011)

Overall, positivist arguments are used to emphasize the information truth value. In so doing, the Romanian journalists use a lot of numbers to prove the Government's failure to promote the country as a touristic destination: "the number of foreign tourists in Romania, registered in the first ten months of 2010 at the border checkpoints, was lower than in the same period of 2009, reaching almost 6.500.000 tourists (less than 0.7% than in 2009)". The word "failure" is used several times in the news articles, along with the verb "pump" (money pumped into the campaigns). By repeating some expressions, the journalists frame the issue of Romania's country image in a specific way, underlying the political actors' contribution to this public problem. Moreover, define problems is the dominant function frame used by the Romanian journalists in the coverage of Romania's country image from a neoliberal commercialism perspective.

4.2. Diagnose causes

The Ministry of Tourism has badly administered the European funds to promote Romania overseas (for instance, it has produced the most expensive “leaf” as a logo)

“The money for realizing and promoting Romania’s touristic brand did not lead to expected results. The high controversial “green leaf” on which Jurnalul Național has revealed that it can be bought with 250 euros from Internet stock images is used by a lot of companies in the world and it cost 900.000 euros (Elena Stan, Jurnalul Național, February 27, 2013)

“Even if in the communist period, Romania was one of the countries with tradition in the mountain tourism, in the last years, with some exceptions (NGOs and specialized websites), we cannot see a bigger implication in this domain from the state” (Florin Cristescu, *Adevărul*, February 25, 2013)

4.3. Make moral judgments

The media scandal about the green “leaf” logo has contributed to the failure of Romania’s destination branding campaigns

“The nation brand does not only mean advertising, a logo, a spot broadcasted on Eurosport or organizing some promotion reunions overseas. The brand lives in the consumers’ mind, being a sum of traits, values, and relations that are born in the human minds and die there if the brand is not correctly marketed. A brand is built in time and, if it is good raised, it lives longer than a politician’s mandate. Otherwise, it is not a brand. Three years after the “leaf” launch, we could say that the “brand” is successful only if Romania would be known in the foreign and Western press as the “Carpathian Garden”. But this is not the case”. (Petre Barbu, *Adevărul*, June 20, 2013)

A special situation when the journalists make moral judgments implicitly is quoting brand consultants’ opinions about the “Explore the Carpathian Garden” campaign, launched by the Romanian Government in 2010:

“It is an invisible spot, without personality and without a concrete or relevant message for us, which cannot transmit something real or characteristic to Romania. If all you can say about Romania is the “Carpathian Garden”, it means that you either don’t know your country or you didn’t bother to understand it” (Tudor Cuciuc, Creative Director, Leo Burnett)

“It is like a salad. It does not have a point of differentiation. It is a vanity spot, as we call it in advertising. Put simply, it is made for the client to see himself on television”, believes Adrian Boțan, Creative Director at McCann Erickson.

“This advertising spot is exactly what foreigners believe about us: Romania is not a country, it is a bigger village. How is that possible for the ruralism (semănătorism) to be the only school of thought successful in Romania? When we have to say something about us, we only say that we ride the horses all day, from church to church. This happens when we do not create clay pots or sew colored clothes”, concludes Alin Mărghidanu, Creative Director at TBWA. (Mihai Schiau, *Gândul*, December 17, 2011)

4.4. Suggest remedies

Promoting Romania with the help of Prince Charles and reforming the capital market:

“First of all, what should we say to foreigners to come and visit Romania? What is our offer? Hospitality and good cuisine? I went in an old city, Sighișoara, where it is said that count Dracula was born. Until now, I haven’t heard about this city. Look what you could do: take this city, one of the oldest in Europe. The part with Dracula is entertaining and everyone has heard of Dracula. I would take into consideration these two things, Sighișoara and Dracula, and find a way to attract people. The country where the legends are born! Come and see where the legends came to life! Come and experience new things in the country where the legends were born! Yes! This is it! Other countries cannot do that. Germany cannot do that, Italy the same, but you can!”, said Sealey”. (Peter

Sealey, A renowned American marketing and branding specialist) (Florina Pop, *Jurnalul Național*, October 19, 2014)

“He (Mark Gitenstein, the ex-USA ambassador to Bucharest) considers that reforming the capital market is a way through which Romania could attract foreign investment and this could be realized by implementing the measures identified by the business, bank, and capital specialists group in the first part of February”. (Adina Vlad, *Adevărul*, March 9, 2014)

“I found a blocked project and I unlocked it, I signed a partnership with Travel Channel and there will be two episodes about Romania, with characters such as Prince Charles or Ivan Patzaichin. The films will be broadcasted in seven target countries. We have to do these kind of actions in order to promote Romania”, said Grapini (Maria Grapini, the Minister of Tourism, IMM, and Business) to Mediafax (Alina Vlad, *Adevărul*, May 21, 2013)

“What can we learn from this? First of all, we should keep ourselves clean. We should clean our conscience and our spirit. Then, we should learn the individual hygiene norms. To clean around our houses and around others. To gather the trash out and the PETs from forests. To be clean. Poor, but clean. I believe than only then we could start to take care of the “Garden” and promote it internationally. Clean, memorable, and credible. Because a brand always keeps its promises. Otherwise, it is not a brand, it is a lie.” (Petre Barbu, *Adevărul*, June 20, 2013)

5. The cultural values frame

The Romanian journalists employ the cultural values frame when mentioning artistic and intellectual pursuits in relation to the country promotion. In this case, the main focus is on revealing the importance of national writers (such as Mircea Cărtărescu), of music festivals and pre-historical relics. Half of the news articles using this frame were published in *Dilema Veche*, a Romanian weekly cultural magazine, currently part of Adevărul Holding. This confirms the magazine profile, framing public events from a cultural perspective. Furthermore, headlines such as “Gabriel Liiceanu: I propose Mircea Cărtărescu to take the place of the green leaf, as a country brand for Romania” (*Dilema Veche*, March 31, 2013), “Again and again about Romania’s national image (*Adevărul*, March 25, 2013), “VIDEO A nation branding campaign initiated in Piatra Neamț. Cucuteni Culture vs. Explore the Carpathian Garden (*Adevărul*, March 1, 2014), “Country brand: “The Thinker” more staggering than Dracula (*Adevărul*, February 20, 2011), “Enescu Festival: the image of Romania in the world. CNN, Euronews, Mezzo – the main event partners” (*Dilema Veche*, March 12, 2013) reinforce the cultural values frame, concentrating on cultural symbols.

5.1. Define problems

One of the most striking problems defined by the journalists was that Romania’s nation brand is not sufficiently promoted through cultural values:

“A SWOT analysis of the country brand was the object of an analysis made by B2B Strategy agency. Daniel Roșca, the agency’s marketing director concludes that Romania loses annually 37 million dollars a year with the brand launched by Elena Udrea, and appreciates the campaigns initiated by Neokoolt in Piatra Neamț” (Florin Jbanca, *Jurnalul Național*, March 1, 2014)

“If we want to be known in the world in other ways than through pickpocketing and prostitution networks, or through the artistry to break credit cards, the best investment would be in Mircea Cărtărescu, in spreading his writings worldwide” (Gabriel Liiceanu) (Cezar Paul-Bădescu, *Adevărul*, March 31, 2013)

In this case, sources used by the journalists as chiefly expert or elite are quoting a marketing director and an intellectual in order to frame the debate. The first example insists on reported speech, while the second on direct speech. One can also notice the presence of moral judgments when defining the problem: “If we want to be known in the world in other ways than through pickpocketing and prostitutions networks, or through the artistry to break credit cards”. Even if these are problems signaled by the intellectual elite, he also uses evaluation strategies to introduce

them. Moreover, a solution to the problem is provided: “the best investment would be in Mircea Cărtărescu, in spreading his writings worldwide”.

5.2. Diagnose causes

When diagnosing causes, the journalists highlight the fact that cultural symbols such as “Cucuteni culture”, “Enescu Festival” and the writer Mircea Cărtărescu are neglected when promoting the country. Furthermore, the nation branding campaigns initiated by the Government are responsible for the external image of Romania, mixing distinct elements that should not be mixed together:

”The country brand’: the external image associating Romania with a strange mix, bringing Nadia Comăneci, Hagi, Ilie Năstase together with Dracula, and polenta and cabbage rolls with Ceaușescu”. (Vasile Surcel, *Jurnalul Național*, February 20, 2011)

5.3. Make moral judgments

This is the dominant function frame employed by the journalists to discuss in terms of cultural values. In this regard, the journalists mention that the prehistorical relics of the “Cucuteni culture” are very efficient image vectors of the nation brand and the most beautiful image of Romania in the world is due to Enescu festival (a cultural brand):

”The ‘brand’ making us famous in the world comes from the mist of time, icon of ancient history. And its image vectors are “The Hamanga Thinker”, “the Vidra Goddess”, “the Moigrad idol”, the unknown Pața altar of gods, the Cucuteni ceramics or the strange Gumelnița idols” (Vasile Surcel, *Jurnalul Național*, February 20, 2011)

“When the Romania’s nation brand problem came up, Mrs. Elena Udrea, the one who had to solve it, chose a green leaf. When Mr. Lucian Boia found out that Romania’s country brand is a green leaf, he had a good laugh. You do not offer too much to the world by showing a green leaf. But when you read a book like this celebrated now (“Nostalgia”), you ask yourself how bad are we if we have such a value amongst us and we are not able to propose it to the world as a country brand” (Gabriel Liiceanu) (*Jurnalul Național*, March 30, 2013).

“The most beautiful image of Romania in the world is due to a cultural event: the International “George Enescu” festival, whose prestige grew considerably after important musicians and orchestras came to Bucharest” (Maria Sârbu, *Jurnalul Național*, March 12, 2013)

“For foreign amateur tourists, Romania can mean, foremost, things such as the Old City Centre and the House of the People, and not eco-psihsanalizable and triumphal fantasies, such as the Carpathian Garden, or the hysterical regression of the folk music chores” (Iulian Comănescu, *Dilema Veche*, February 13, 2013)

In the first example, the metaphor (“mist of time”) is employed to introduce the historical dimension of the country brand. Important elements from the Cucuteni culture are mentioned, being framed as “image vectors”. Next, intellectual elites are quoted to reinforce the argument of using Mircea Cărtărescu as a country brand for Romania. Gabriel Liiceanu criticizes Udrea’s green leaf, by using enunciation strategies: “You do not offer too much to the world by showing a green leaf”. Hence, the Romanian citizens are interpellated, becoming part of the discussion on the nation brand problem. The national group is constructed by using the personal pronoun “we”: “But when you read a book like this celebrated now (“Nostalgia”), you ask yourself how bad are we if we have such a value amongst us and we are not able to propose it to the world as a country brand”. Conversely, the last example focuses on entertainment and architecture, talking about elements such as the Old City Centre or the House of the People. The journalist also criticizes the “Explore the Carpathian Garden” campaign, considering it an “eco-psihsanalizable and triumphal” fantasy.

5.4. Suggest remedies

The solutions provided for the problems defined are that Mircea Cărtărescu should take the place of the “green leaf” as a country brand for Romania and the prehistoric past should be promoted through the “Cucuteni culture”:

”Liiceanu declared, at the end of his discourse, that if other writers are nation brand ambassadors, Mircea Cărtărescu can also be a successful brand for Romania: ”Peru is known in the world through Mario Vargas Llosa, and Columbia through Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I propose Mircea Cărtărescu to take the place of the green leaf, as a country brand for Romania. As a genius writer, he is one of the most remarkable thing this place has produced in the last 30 years and the only thing that can be proposed to the world. If you don’t believe me, read “Nostalgia”. (Cezar Paul-Bădescu, *Adevărul*, March 31, 2013).

”Ovidiu Slătineanu, the president of Neokoolt Association, sustains that Romania could be better represented by the Cucuteni Culture, the ”origin of Europe”, than the brand launched by the Ministry of Tourism four years ago” (Florin Jbanca, *Adevărul*, March 1, 2014).

“What should we do? Maybe something our neighbors already do. The Bulgarians have promoted their Neolithic past and they attract a lot of tourists in specialized museums, but also in areas where pre-historical relics were discovered. Not to talk about the countless curious people that want to see “The Thracian kings’ thesaurus”, another history chapter very well promoted”. (Vasile Surcel, *Jurnalul Național*, February 20, 2011)

In the first example, the journalist uses reported and direct speech to quote Gabriel Liiceanu, while the second example is built on reported speech, quoting the president of Neokoolt Association. In the last example, the solution is provided by the journalist himself, encouraging the promotion of the Neolithic past through the Cucuteni culture.

6. The public image frame

The public image frame refers to the representation of Romania and Romanians on the international stage, including the international media portrayal of the country or the migrants’ actions. In this regard, the Romanian journalists put an emphasis on the horsemeat scandal, on the fights between the president Traian Băsescu and the prime-minister Victor Ponta, on the 1990 mineriad or on Roșia Montană’s situation. Headlines such as ”Six beautiful horses have eaten the leaf covering Romania’s country brand” (*Adevărul*, February 13, 2013), ”Klaus Iohannis: The fights between the president and the prime minister affect Romania’s image” (*Adevărul*, July 18, 2013), “Romania 2013 – at Europe’s laugh” (*Adevărul*, August 5, 2013), “The international press: the fight between Basescu and Ponta ruin Romania’s image, already considered one of the most corrupted countries” (*Adevărul*, April 17, 2014), “Why do the doctors leave and a new country brand” (*Adevărul*, June 25, 2013), “Another country brand?” (*Dilema Veche*, June 6-12, 2013), “Big plans for 2014: “We want to improve Romania’s image in Austria” (*Adevărul*, December 22, 2013) emphasize the dominance of the political voices in the country image debate. As one can notice, a lot of headlines use the word ”image” as a framing device, referring to the international perception of the country.

6.1. Define problems

One of the most important problems defined is that Romania has a bad public image internationally:

“The hidden truth of horsemeat scandal: the Roma clans dirtied Romania’s country image in Europe” (Petre Florin Manole, *Adevărul*, March 13, 2013)

“The vice president of the National Liberal Party, Klaus Iohannis, has declared on Thursday that the fights between the president Traian Băsescu and the prime-minister Victor Ponta affect the ways in which our country is perceived overseas” (Iulia Marin, *Adevărul*, July 18, 2013)

“The 1918 Transylvania Government headquarters will transform shortly in a fast-food, so I should not be surprised by the European people’s reaction or wonder why Romania does not have ”the destiny of France and the population of China” (Mihai Copăceanu, *Adevărul*, August 5, 2013)

“The country image should interest you, no matter how many years you have spent abroad or what passport do you keep in your pockets. The ways in which Romania is seen today upsets the souls of millions of Romanians living abroad” (George Rădulescu, *Adevărul*, March 4, 2013).

”The president Băsescu and the prime minister Ponta have made a habit of accusing each other of corruption and their very public dislike for each other could well inflict further damage on the reputation of country already regarded as one of Europe’s most corrupt”, notes the newspaper “The Telegraph” (Elena Dumitru, *Adevărul*, April 17, 2014)

In the first example, Roma people are framed as responsible for the negative public image of Romania in Europe. This reinforces anti-Roma discourses found in the Romanian media. The fights between the president Traian Băsescu and the prime-minister Victor Ponta are used as an argument, together with the impact of the country image on the Romanian migrants. Moreover, the journalists interpellate the reader to involve in this problem: “The country image should interest you, no matter how many years you have spent abroad”. The use of the second personal pronoun “you” constructs the “Other” group of Romanian migrants, creating a polarization between “Us” (Romanians living in Romania) and “You” (the diaspora).

6.2. Diagnose causes

The cause creating the problem is that the negative image of Romania affects the way the country is perceived by foreigners and by the international media:

”Professor Coman says there are two types of explanations for the stigmatizing phenomenon. A first approach comes from the conspiracy theory perspective, revealing that geo-political interests are the ones denigrating the country image. ”Certainly there are geo-political objectives, this things do not happen by chance, big amounts of money are invested for denigrating certain countries, including Romania”, considers Mihai Coman.

On the other hand, stigmatizing is part of the inevitable media logic, explains the professor: ”There is an exaggeration logic inherent to the press functioning, becoming tabloid in the attempt to chase the public. Negative stereotypes have the biggest chance to impose” (Anamaria Kozma, *Adevărul*, November 29, 2013)

”Conclusion 1: the horsemeat is not coming from Romania, it is coming from Romani people. Any fool knows that in Romania only Roma people have horses. So, we have the response to the question: Who makes us look like fools in Europe? (Petre Florin Manole, *Adevărul*, March 13, 2013)

In the first example, an elite source is quoted to reveal the explanations for the stigmatizing of Romanians. Professor Mihai Coman suggests that there are two possible explanations: (1) the conspiracy theory and (2) the *tabloidization* process. The journalist uses both direct and reported speech to introduce professor’s opinions.

On the other hand, another cause mentioned in relation to Romania’s public image internationally is Roma people, suggesting an anti-Roma discourse: “Any fool knows that in Romania only Roma people have horses. So, we have the response to the question: Who makes us look like fools in Europe?”

6.3. Make moral judgments

As the most frequent function frame, the moral judgments made by the journalists are that Roma people are staining Romania's image in the world and the tabloid Western press is stigmatizing Romania for corruption and hilarious politicians. Furthermore, Romania is described as an EU country, compared to Ukraine, and presented in relation to Bram Stoker's novel:

"The last days in Romania have impressed me through the news articles that do not reveal unique and isolated events, saying something about our image, the image of an EU country in 2013" (Mihai Copăceanu, *Adevărul*, August 5, 2013)

"Put shortly: the image of Romania is free falling! And if Romanians would have been Ukrainians, something else would be free falling...And Romania would exist again in the world "in which never existed" (Traian Danciu, *Adevărul*, December 16, 2013)

"Romania should ask herself whether Bram Stoker did something for the country" (Andrei Gorgan, *Dilema Veche*, June 6-12, 2013)

6.4. Suggest remedies

The treatment offered by the journalists is that the politicians should build a transnational politics and work together on promoting Romania's country image overseas. Besides this, Roșia Montană is proposed as a country brand for Romania, taking into account the reactions encountered in the civil society:

"Roșia Montană is an old business, cautioned by all Governments. A simple question: why so many governances have conserved this problem and no one had the courage to give it a positive response? Looking at the civil society's reaction in Roșia Montană's situation, I thought it might become a country brand. At least for a while. The country brand – Roșia Montană (Sorin Bocancea, September 17, 2013)

One solutions mention that the president and the prime-minister should work together in order to promote Romania overseas, while another one puts an emphasis on the already existing perceptions and contexts:

"For Romania, the ideal solution would be that the president, prime minister and everyone else to promote Romania. In fact, that is why we chose them. And for making common front for Romania's projects. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't, but the "no" affects the "yes", the liberal affirmed (Iulia Marin, *Adevărul*, July 18, 2013)

"It is not the first time I say it and not the first time it proves to be true: the country brand can be build from already existing perceptions and contexts, that can be improved, and not from *wishful thinking*" (Iulian Comănescu, *Dilema Veche*, February 13, 2013)

In a nutshell, the ways in which the Romanian journalists define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies on the country image public issue are to be seen in Table 1.

7. Conclusion

Considering the media framing of Romania's country image and nation branding after 1989, this article shows that there are four dominant frames emerging from the analysis: (1) national identity (the use of national heritage and symbols in relation to the nation brand), (2) neoliberal commercialism (the marketability of nation branding initiatives), (3) cultural values (culture as a practice involved in promoting a country), and (4) public image (the representation of Romania and Romanians internationally) frames. The most dominant frame was neoliberal commercialism, insisting on the nation brand in terms of the capitalist logic of the market.

The Romanian journalists also have a civic role, encouraging citizens to participate in the public debate about the country's brand. In this regard, the journalists focus on empowering

"communities to find solutions to problems rather than simply reporting on what are the problems" (Roselle, 2003: 602).

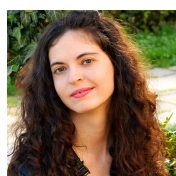
Table 1. News frames in the coverage of Romania's public image

Frame	Define Problems	Diagnose Causes	Make Moral Judgments	Suggest Remedies	Expressions
National Identity	The nation brand has become a national obsession	The economic underdevelopment is responsible for the ways in which Romania is portrayed internationally	Romania's national heritage is not sufficiently explored in the nation branding initiatives	Promoting the national patrimony; Investing in the national self-understanding	"the Romanian traditional blouse, IA, proposed as a nation brand"; "Romania would be different if the country brand would not be an obsession"; "Why is Romania not being promoted as a religious destination as well?" "The folk costumes should be treated as an irreplaceable treasure that could save our nation" "IA is not just a folk costume, is the second national flag" "A nation's trust in its patrimony is a nation's trust in herself"
Neoliberal Commercialism	The failure to promote Romania as a destination brand after 1990	The Ministry of Tourism has badly administered the European funds to promote Romania overseas (for instance, Elena Udrea has produced the most expensive "leaf" as a logo)	The media scandal about the green "leaf" logo has contributed to the failure of Romania's destination branding campaigns	Promoting Romania in Great Britain with the help of Prince Charles; Reforming the capital market;	"But the nation brand does not mean advertising, a logo, an ad broadcasted on Eurosport or organizing promoting reunions abroad" "Prince Charles promoted Romania abroad" "All the efforts to promote Romania's nation brand resulted in a leaf" "The country brand needs a soap" "Udrea has pumped European money in the leaf" "The number of Romanians that prefer foreign destinations is much bigger than the number of Romanians preferring internal destinations" "Romania will be promoted internationally through famous people and legends - Prince Charles, Patzaichin, Dracula"
Cultural Values	Romania's nation brand is not sufficiently promoted through cultural values	Cultural elements ("Cucuteni Culture", "Enescu Festival", and the writer Mircea Cărtărescu) are neglected when promoting the country	The prehistorical relics of the "Cucuteni culture" are very efficient image vectors of the nation brand; The most beautiful image of Romania in the world is due to the Enescu Festival	Mircea Cărtărescu should take the place of the "green leaf" as a country brand for Romania; Promoting the prehistoric past through the "Cucuteni culture"	"Mircea Cărtărescu - a successful brand for Romania" "Romania should be represented by the Cucuteni culture, instead of the brand launched by the Ministry of Tourism." "The most beautiful image of Romania now is due to a cultural event: the international "George Enescu" Festival" "Enescu Festival is the cultural brand of Romania"
Public image	Romania has a bad public image internationally.	The negative image of Romania affects the way the country is perceived by the foreigners and by the international media.	Roma people are staining Romania's image in the world; The tabloid Western press is stigmatizing Romania for corruption and hilarious politicians;	The politicians should build a transnational politics; The politicians should work together on promoting Romania's country image overseas	"The image of Romania affects millions of Romanian migrants" "The fights between the President and the Prime Minister affect Romania's country image" "It is embarrassing to see the Occidental press laughing at the name of your country" "A country brand is built on existing perceptions ready to be improved, and not on wishful thinking" "Romania is considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in Europe" "The horse meat scandal from 2013 reinforced the denigration of the country image" "Romania should ask whether Bram Stoker did something for her"

Thus, a limit of this research is to be found in the number of articles, because the analysis concentrates on only 53 articles published in the Romanian press. The advantage was that a systematic and thorough analysis of each news texts was made, but the disadvantage is that this makes it difficult for larger text samples to be analyzed. The framing method drawing on Entman's (1993) perspective was very helpful in answering the research questions, but for bigger samples this type of approach might not be appropriate. Therefore, a mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses might be the solution to systematic research of media frames employed by the journalists in the coverage of public issues.

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