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Political Image: Between Discourse and Discursivity

Abstract: This paper claims that the study of *political* brands and today's public image of politicians is moving towards more interdisciplinary endeavors. In this respect, our purpose is to investigate the changing patterns of political communication, by briefly showing the main features of the Romanian post-communist political landscape. We propose a conceptual framework by unpacking notions from politics, communication, mythology and semiotics in order to explore the image building process of politicians. At the same time, during the analytical approach, we assume that discourses and messages represent social practices capable of generating impressions and facilitating desired relationships between politicians and voters. The second part of the paper draws attention upon the fact that the notion of public space is part of a linguistic system – covering a wide range of components: political speeches, political doctrines, symbols. Due to the overall direction of its ideological aims, political discourses actively engage in pursuing the total reconstruction of public space. Thus, discourse and politics are linked to a linguistic substratum. Aside from this in-between role, public space, also possesses a double nature. On the one hand, it guarantees favorable conditions for political confrontations, and on the other hand, this multi-faceted space generates a fertile soil to enhance communication and stimulate cooperation. In order to grasp the heterogeneous nature of political discourse, we insist upon Saussure's theory of signs combined with the logic of language designed by Wittgenstein. *In nuce*, both perspectives focus on a common concern in the political field: the necessity to invest politicians with legitimacy and authority. Lastly, we will exploit the political personalization phenomena which praises a *greater* candidate-centeredness with particular emphasis on three dimensions in the politician-voter relationship: whether politicians are in group members ('one of us'), whether they act in the interest of the electorate ('act for us' and whether they are effective in developing efficient political platforms ('deliver for us').

Keywords: political image, politician-voter relationship, theory of signs, logic of language, political personalization, myths.