

TYOLOGY OF ELECTORAL CANDIDATES. CASE STUDY: SORIN OPRESCU

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***Abstract:** By applying the content analysis technique of communication and by using analysis patterns such as the theory of rational choices, the dramaturgical model, the attraction model, the transactional analysis, this study identifies 4 typical categories of candidates to Romania's presidency (elitist, dominating, reactive, sociable). In the analysis of the electoral itinerary of candidate Sorin Oprescu there are considered aspects such as identity, symbolism, volunteering, propagandas and media exposure, in order to make a SWOT analysis, thus facilitating the understanding of the candidate failure within the election process.*

***Keywords:** electoral campaigns, candidates, content analysis.*

1. Argument

A persuasive message has the role of directing preexistent beliefs more than of creating new ones. By preserving the same idea we may conclude that the electoral candidate's image or his profile contains the electorate's elements of faith, communicated in a noticeably objective register, as an unjustified form of his daily activity. The key to a successful electoral communication is that of building and distributing an image of the candidate meant to reflect the majority of the electorate, as we tend to accept those attitudes and actions of the individuals that resemble ours and to reject the unknown or the peculiar.

This study aims at emphasizing the typology of the candidates to Romanian presidency by accentuating the particular case of Sorin Oprescu. Sorin Oprescu is, by far one of the most picturesque figures of the Romanian political scene outlined within the public space by the means of a particular behaviour, apart from the conventional pattern of politics, characterized by lack of constraints, a personality and an expression that lack censorship moments. His communication style brings him closer to Băsescu's typology, but also to the noisy yet tasty attitudes of Vadim Tudor or Gigi Becali.

To these, we add the credibility issue that favors Sorin Oprescu, outlined during a long period spent in previous electoral campaigns. Even if from the

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physiognomy's perspective the candidate may be easily recognized by the electorate, what draws attention when delimitating his public image are gestures, mimics and grimaces. In particular, the discourse of the candidate during the electoral campaign may be reduced to amending his communication style. In the mentality of voters and of the press, Sorin Oprescu remained strongly recorded as a political personality, especially due to his memorable declarations he made in the past.

2. Theoretical interpretation frames

Literature in the field established that the *voting* mechanism by the Romanian electorate depends on the following variables: charismatic preference versus rational – bureaucratic legitimacy (relevant qualities of the candidate in previous bureaucratic functions); the stability of voting intention; fidelity (the continuity of votes for a certain political party/candidate), great stability (unanimous vote candidate/party), indecision, the characteristics of the votes (positive, negative; affective, rational).

Generally, the Romanian typology of the presidential candidates outline a well set route paved with good intentions or of what we call in social psychology a pro social attitude. Answers to questions such as what are the factors which determine pro social behaviour are provided by the reciprocity rule or the cost-benefit theory. Theories of costs/benefits start from the postulate according to which individuals are guided by the aim to obtain the biggest benefits with the lowest expenses, several approaches being possible: decisions taken in order to act in one way or another is the result of an evaluation process undertaken by the social actor in order to assess the pros and cons of all possible alternatives; in addition to the costs/benefits ratio,

individuals take into account the probability of this ratio's accomplishment, which is an estimate of the benefits and of the costs expected by the individual. In the decision to adopt an alternative or another, individuals combine 2 factors: 1) the value resulting from a variable's cost/benefit ratio, 2) the expectancy that the particular result should be obtained by adopting a certain variant (*'expectancy-value theory'*) [1]. Cost involves material factors as well as financial ones moral, time, physical and psychic effort. The benefit includes external subsequent rewards, in this case consisting in electors' vote – for the president of Romania (power, money, respect being included).

Regarding the classification of the political candidature in Romania we chose as paradigmatic orientation the symbolic interaction through the dramaturgic perspective of Erwin Goffman (1959).

According to Goffman's theory, politicians are obliged to achieve a public representation during the electoral campaign, which is every time communicated on a daily basis and consists in the expectancy of the public.

To obtain the biggest chances of success, candidates' typology must fulfil the following criteria: realistic vision (close to real life); majority vision (based on the needs and wishes of the electorate); natural vision (that must match candidate's life style and not give the impression of a false, tricked image).

The key to success always derives from the identification of the candidate (actor) with the role he is playing. Thus we can divide the interaction between the actor (candidate) with the interpreted role (his candidacy) in terms of the duality of the relation: closeness to the role transforms him definitely into a credible candidate (sincere actor) with big chances to attract most of the voters on his side; distance from the role of a cynical actor (dishonest

candidate) with minimum chances to attract the electorate's votes. The stake of any candidate (performer) is to influence/manipulate the definitions which are attributed by the voters to social situations, achieved through simulated interactions in the form of pro social interactions. Controlling these new inoculated social definitions is achieved by means of using certain action styles that Goffman refers to under the generic term of routines (different modalities of acting depending on the context).

Another theory that may be applied to the analysis of candidates' behavioural patterns is the *transactional analysis*, according to which in every person there are three parts, 'different states of the self' and each of us make up our mind and react starting from one of these parts (the state of the self's parent characterized by: authority, criticism and protection; value judgments; the state of the adult self characterized by: rationality, comparison, assessment, information registration and communication). Any of these states may be useful and has its own role if used in an opportune moment: the rule-making parent is to be preferred in authority positions (manager, educator, judge), while the one who carries on a creative activity shall more often use the child status and an engineer or a doctor will get oriented towards the adult state. The action's fundamentals are to get permanently engaged in maintaining relationships at the level of 'I'm ok – You are ok', avoiding as much as possible the role of victim-persecutor or saver. Starting from this desiderate we may outline several types of transaction that might guarantee success. Directive transaction: Positive Normative Parent – Adult; affective transaction – Adult; authentic transaction: Child-Child.

The identification of candidates' hidden behaviour may be achieved starting from a causal model of the type $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$,

where A represents the *attraction model* (electoral programme in our case); B are the operators (candidate's behaviour and evolution); C is the observable happening (electoral attitudinal decoding from the social representations' perspective). The attraction model created by a series of attractors stands at the basis of the candidate's behaviour. There is a hidden coherence in all that seems to be incoherent, apparently unnecessary actions (that can be used with a precise objective during the electoral campaign).

Certain attraction models are very strong, but others are much weaker. There is a critical point that makes the difference between these distinct categories and the basic criteria in decrypting them consist in the social representation schemes used by each candidate. Power also gushes out from the significations transmitted by the act itself or by those conferred by public opinion, the electorate. At the same time, it is related to motivation and principles. Power is always associated with issues that support a comfortable life. It appeals to what is noble within human nature and the candidate uses nobility and pro social activities in order to attract as many electors as possible on his side. The candidate shall ultimately turn to activities/behaviours able to elevate, confer nobility and dignity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methods and techniques

The main technique used in drafting the presidential runners' typology and in studying electoral evolution was the candidates' communication content analysis. It consists of a set of research techniques from both a quantity and a quality perspective of verbal/nonverbal communication made up of the identification and objective and systemic

description of the communication's latent/manifest content in order to formulate scientific conclusions regarding the personality of the communicators, the society which is the object of communication, as well as communication itself, seen as social interaction.

3.2. Instruments

The analysis is based on the pattern suggested and followed by Ralph K. White regarding 'The category scheme for the analysis of discourses given by Hitler, Roosevelt, Kennedy and Hrusciov' but also on the emphasis of the repetitions and verbal tenses used by the candidates. The category scheme includes a set of 8 value categories: physiological (food, sex, rest, health, security, comfort, values that express fear (emotional safety), game and entertainment values (new experience, excitement, emotion, beauty, sense of humour, creative self expression), social values (sex love, family love, and friendship), pragmatic values (pragmatism, possession, work), human related values (independence, achievement, gratitude, self respect, domination, aggression), cognitive values (knowledge), other (happiness, value in general) [2].

The concept of candidate's electoral evolution became operational by the use of the following dimensions: candidate's identity, the symbolism used, issues pertaining to volunteering, electoral propaganda; candidates' media exposure.

3.3. Data gathering

We carried on a number of communicational content analysis for the following candidates: Sorin Oprescu (See table no. 1 of the annexes), Traian Băsescu (See table no. 2 of the annexes), Mircea Geoană (See table no. 3 of the annexes), Crin Antonescu (See table no. 4 of the

annexes), Vadim Tudor (See table no. 5 of the annexes), George Becali (See table no. 6 of the annexes). The analysis focused on the following primary items: statement/word, expressed value/ unit; as secondary items we used lexical analysis such as: repetitions, negations, adjectives, adverbs, verbal tenses. In order to identify the electoral itinerary of Sorin Oprescu's case we used the information that were made public by the means of used promotion strategies and various communication instruments and vehicles.

3.4. Preliminary data

The Public Policy Institute (IPP) made an analysis of the first four candidates in the first 3 weeks of electoral campaign (including those of the debates organized during this time), 23 October – 13 November 2009 and made public its results. Regarding sentence complexity, Geoană distinguished himself with the longest uttered compound sentences. The longest compound sentence used in a campaign speech belongs to Geoană (summing up 222 words), followed by Antonescu (163 words), Băsescu – 135 and Oprescu – 123 words. These speeches summed up about 350 pages of speech. More precisely, we speak about 43.764 words in Mircea Geoană's case, 67.780 – Traian Băsescu, 35.402 – Crin Antonescu and 31.258 words for candidate Sorin Oprescu. According to the same analysis, the word which was most used by candidates in the electoral speech is: 'former', candidates choosing to organize their speech starting from former facts in order to underline their own electoral programme. The words most used in the electoral campaign by Sorin Oprescu, according to the same study, were: 'former' – used 113 times, 'madam' (112 times), 'when' (101), 'must' (97), 'Romania' (89). Also, the most often used three word phrases (in Romanian) in the case of the 4 candidates were: Băsescu –

'in the rural area' (50 times); Geoană – 'in this moment' (60 times), Antonescu – 'to Traian Basescu' (36 times), Oprescu – 'for years' (39 times). As to the way sentences start, we find negations such as: 'no' in Bănescu's case, Antonescu and Oprescu (239 times, 148 and 162 times); prepositions: 'by' used by Geoană (119 times); adjectives or adverbs: 'my dears' Bănescu (63 times), Geoană with 'that is why' (92); verbs: 'I said' Antonescu (15 times); interrogations: 'why' Oprescu (21 times). The conclusions of the Public Policy Institute are pessimistic being the expression of disappointment with respect to the quality of electoral debates, considering that citizens are not treated with due respect and they do not have the possibility to hear points of view related to solutions regarding Romania's future. This fact established the premises for the present study which, in addition to a typology of the candidates, also aimed at

identifying possible reasons for the electoral failure of Sorin Oprescu.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The typology of the presidential candidates

Content analysis achieved regarding candidates' speeches within electoral TV spots or events allowed us to compose a diagram which illustrates the main typologies of the candidates to Romania's presidency. The elitist type is dominated by the individual's value as a basic unit of the electorate. It is concentrated on the verb 'to be' and may be encountered in the electoral message sent by Crin Antonescu – 'I am a human being'.

	ELITIST	DOMINATOR
E L E C T O R A L	<p>Verb: To be Dominant value: the electorate Psychological type: parent Mechanism: 'a common sense campaign' Motif (unconscious motivation): need for respect</p>	<p>Verb: To have Dominant value: success Psychological type: adult Mechanism: 'Pro Romania' Motif (unconscious motivation): need for control</p>
	REACTIVE	SOCIABLE
C A M P A I G N	<p>Verb: To do Dominant value: freedom Psychological type: rebel child Mechanism: 'the needed leader' Motif (unconscious motivation): need for gratitude</p>	<p>Verb: To feel Dominant value: group, collectivity Psychological type: adapted child Mechanism: 'Come on Romania'; 'I ask you to join me' Motif (unconscious motivation): need for affiliation</p>
	<i>Options of the electorate</i>	

Fig. 1. *Typologies of the candidates to Romania's presidency*

The psychological type illustrated by the transactional analysis is that of the parent. The dominating type has success as a central value. It is guided by the verb 'to have' and may be found in the electoral message sent by Traian Băsescu 'Băsescu for Romania'. The attributed psychological type was that of the adult who turns out to be contaminated both by a parent and a child (the individual behaves as a parent and a child simultaneously). The reactive type has as predominant value the issue of freedom (need to be free). It is guided by the verb 'to do' and may be found in the electoral message sent by George Becali and Vadim Tudor. The attributed psychological type is that of the rebel child. The sociable type is centered on the group as dominant value. It is guided by the verb 'to feel' and may be encountered in the electoral message sent by Mircea Geoană and Sorin Oprescu. The psychological attributed type is that of the adapted child.

4.2. The electoral evolution of the candidate Sorin Oprescu

The electoral itinerary followed by the candidate proved to be an extremely transparent one, on the candidate's webpage being found issues such as specific information regarding identity, symbolism, and electoral campaign or TV apparitions.

4.3. The candidate's identity

Beyond the typological aspect, each candidate has his own electoral identity, an image which is disseminated by the media together with other external factors on which an entire department of 'electoral propaganda' is working. Each electoral identity is thought by those responsible of the candidate's identity in order to preserve certain continuity with regards to the

candidate's individual identity. The starting issue on which candidate's image construction is based consists of the following question: 'who am I?' and the answer is connected to the two poles, the person and the candidate, whose finality must coincide, so that the attributes conferred by the two poles should offer a continuity of the described personality, i.e. these personalities must not be opposite.

The profile of the candidate Sorin Oprescu manifests a long preoccupation for the identity aspect. In the presentation of the person of Sorin Oprescu aspects such as the place of origin, studies or profession are being emphasized. This analysis lacks important personal issues regarding his marital status and family status. When presenting Sorin Oprescu as a candidate we point out issues concerning professional, public, political positions, as well as the diplomatic and international activity. The disseminated image is a dynamic one, always going up from that of the doctor, academician, to that of the surgeon – senator and then mayor who also runs for president of the country as an independent candidate. The independent term appears often when outlining the candidate's portrait omitting in his CV the previous political activity or his membership to a certain party during a certain moment in time (The social democrat party PSD).

4.4. Symbolism

The representative symbol is the Star of David, the choice being motivated as it follows: 'the chosen sign is the blue star with 7 corners because it represents the truth and world's harmony'. By adapting semiotics to the general context it is emphasized that there is a will of the candidate to change, together with the voters, Romania into 'the country where we shall all live united and happy' and

‘where the truth is the truth’. In addition to this symbol, the candidate launches invitations to volunteering and fund raising activities (by offering telephone numbers in several fixed and mobile phone networks).

4.5. Volunteering-related issues

In order to attract volunteers a logotype was used in order to impel. The slogan of this logotype encourages people to join the candidate in his battle. The symbol used is a sign of victory, defined in a subsidiary plan. Attentively analysed this image could be considered a subliminal message due to the presence of the victory symbol (often used in the country in the early 90’s to underline the fall of the communist regime) but also of the slogan ‘Join the fight’ (with clear reference to an aggressive, combatant situation). It seems that fund raisings for the electoral campaign had the expected effect and even overcame the expectations. According to the situation published by the AEP – Permanent Electoral Authority, the independent candidate Sorin Oprescu received most of the donations during the first tour of the elections for president, i.e. 5.418.242 lei, followed by Traian Băsescu - 4.411.071 lei and Mircea Geoană - 3.460.965 lei.

4.6. Candidate’s media exposure

The TV appearances of the candidate were based on the study ‘Electoral Campaign in Prime Time’ which performed an analysis of the electoral broadcasts disseminated by channels Antena 3, B1 TV, Realitatea TV and TVR 1, during 2 - 20 November, 2009.

The research shows that from among the candidates to presidential elections Crin Antonescu has the largest number of appearances in the electoral broadcasts

and debates (12) followed by Traian Băsescu (3, plus 6 of Sever Voinescu, counted in favor of the candidate), Sorin Oprescu (7) and Mircea Geoană and Kelemen Hunor (5/each). Candidates Remus Cernea, Ovidiu Iane and Constantin Rotaru were invited only to those broadcasts organized by the public television. Another analysis presented the 18 TV appearances of the candidate Sorin Oprescu, during October 23- 29.

The candidate’s appearance in the media was complemented also by the exposure of a big number of billboards and publicity posters of the largest dimensions with maximum visibility and by the online presence of a candidate.

4.7. Electoral propaganda

Taking into account the methods used by the candidate to present his doctrine we may even speak about a kind of propaganda (sometimes reminding older communist propagandas) but mixed with a note of modernism (official blog, presence on different sites, photos, short movies). Briefly, propaganda found its debut in the electoral slogan «Let’s go Romania» and continued by the use of posters and very large billboards, therefore by an excessive public exposure. Unfortunately, the boomerang effect was ignored, arising from the voters’ saturation with the poster and publicity bombardment. Modernism may be observed in the candidate’s electoral campaign in the case of certain aspects regarding the online presence of the candidate. Official web page: sorinoprescu.ro; electoral presence: blog, facebook, twitter, hi5; other online information: wikipedia; youtube (TV apparitions).

4.8. The SWOT analysis of the electoral itinerary of runner Sorin Oprescu

To create a clear outline of Sorin Oprescu's campaign, we carried on a SWOT analysis of the defining elements,

thus facilitating the understanding of the failures and of the candidate's success, as well as of the favourable and unfavourable data context.

<i>Internal factors</i>	<i>External factors</i>
Strengths	Opportunities
Career as a doctor/ member of the Parliament / mayor; Popularity	Independent candidacy, financial crisis, need to outline an authoritarian style
Weaknesses	Threats
Independence – leaving PSD and adopting an against the system speech (which in the mayoral campaign brought him victory, succeeding to gain the votes of the undecided and of disappointed of the political class); absence of a party structure to mobilize voters in its favour; inconsistency - a few month before entering the electoral fight he declared that he would not leave town hall to candidate; subject of blackmail: he was supposed to have been blackmailed in order to participate in the elections for president, the subject of the blackmail being his son, Mircea; free speech	Credibility (member of the PSD); Family (the blackmail issue – son Mircea; marital status - divorced); the scandal of plagiarism – client system in the management of the capital city's town hall; election campaign headquarters at Spiru Haret; support committee (connection with Aurelian Bondrea and Octav Cosmâncă).

Fig. 2. A SWOT analysis of the electoral itinerary of Sorin Oprescu

5. Conclusions

Options during elections of the candidate to Romania's presidency are based on voters' needs and the manner in which every candidate succeeds to answer these needs. Finally, charismatic option and an as realistic as possible vision suggested by the candidate have a significant influence on voters' decision. Let us not forget that the idea of success derives always from the identification of the candidate (actor) with the part he is playing. Thus, the more the

candidate succeeds to associate his part with his self the more he can obtain real success. Sorin Oprescu's failure was also based the difference/dissociation between him (other times outlined in an extremely direct and firm manner by the media) and the role played in this election campaign. Sorin Oprescu was surprisingly discrete during this election campaign by trying to get rid of the image of the tough, cold and hard to impress candidate. His electoral

campaign consisted of a strong arsenal of pro social behavior, by trying to outline the human, sensitive side of the candidate, much weaker than those foreseen by the candidate or the public poll.

In brief, the candidate's election campaign vulnerability may be related to the following aspects: previous belonging to/membership of the PSD; the suspicion which surrounded the blackmail; the weak presence in the media/ small number of TV appearances; the lack of sufficient knowledge/speculation of online media; the conflict/rupture between election campaign's modernism and the traditional strategy; the lack of humanity of the messages (extreme generality); the lack of interactivity between the candidate and the voters (the number of comments of comments posted on the blog is not larger than 4).

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Annexes

Sorin Opreşcu

Table 1

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
You want to live but you don't possess the place nor the means	physiological	security; comfort
You want to move on but you cannot stand up	physiological	health
You wait yet you receive nothing but humiliation and oblivion	human related	aggression
Your whole life is tearing apart	practical	possession
And nobody cares about it	social	membership; acceptance
You want to look forward but tears do not let you to	emotional security	fear
Yet there comes a day, a single day, when you can change everything	practical	respect, statute, possession
You can speak and be heard	practical	respect
You can hope, stand up and smile	self expression, game, joy	new experience; joy

The same interferences may be deduced by the means of certain lexical analysis consisting of the following items: repetitions 'you want to'; 'you can'; Verbal tenses: Present + negation: 'you do not have where to', 'you do not possess the means', 'you cannot', 'you do not receive',

'are tearing apart', 'are dispelled', 'does not care', 'you cannot'; subjunctive (in Romanian) of the verbs: 'to live', 'to walk', 'to raise', 'to look', 'to change', 'to speak', 'to be heard/listened to', 'to hope', 'to stand up', 'to smile'; imperative: 'let's'.

Traian Băşescu

Table 2

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
I would rather have no peace	physiological	rest
But remain with upright	human related values	independence
And I would have been praised on every TV channels	practical values	respect
I shall never betray my people	practical values	pragmatism
I am Traian Basescu and I am fighting for you	cognitive	self identity
You are the real majority	practical values	respect, recognition
Băşescu is fighting for you	practical values	work

Secondary items: Repetitions: 'Băşescu'; Negations: 'no', 'never'; Verbal tenses: present: 'I am', 'I fight', 'you are', 'fight'; past: 'I'd rather', 'I said', 'was';

subjunctive (in Romanian) of the verbs: 'to have no peace', 'to remain', 'shall not betray'

Mircea Geoană

Table 3

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
People do not have a good life	physiological	comfort
Let us get united	social	affiliation, unity
To build, support, invest	practical	pragmatism
In safe places, decent pensions	social	membership
I know must be done	cognitive	knowledge
I ask you to join me/come next to me	social	friendship
We win together	self achievement	happiness, value in general

Secondary items: repetitions: 'for'; 'I know', 'We have', 'I ask you', 'we win'; Adverbs and prepositions: 'for', 'after', subjunctive of the verbs: 'to get united', 'together', 'next to', 'good'; verbal tenses: 'to support', 'to invest', 'to build'. present: 'do not live', 'it is high time',

Crin Antonescu

Table 4

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
Something obscure, mysterious, doubtful	cognitive	knowledge
Support me	social	affiliation
I serve your interest as well	practical	pragmatism
Invest in Antonescu's shares	values of game and joy	new experience
A common sense campaign	values of game and joy	creative self expression

Secondary items: repetitions: 'financing an election campaign', 'Invest in Antonescu's shares'; verbal tenses: present: 'is', 'I urge', 'you want', 'are'; imperative: 'must', 'look', 'invest'; subjunctive of the verbs: 'to be', 'to participate', 'to support me', 'to sustain'.

Vadim Tudor

Table 5

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
Romanian brothers	social	friendship, familiarity
The only man fighting the mafia	practical	fight, work
Who can catch the thieves and ask them	relative	aggression, justice
You thieves, you bandits what have you done in this country?	emotional security	fear, insecurity
Jail shall eat you alive	emotional security	fear, insecurity
Vadim for president, because he does not lie	values of game and joy	creative self expression

Secondary items: repetitions: 'financing an election campaign', 'Invest in Antonescu's shares'; verbal tenses: present: 'is close', 'fight', 'is', 'can', 'eat you', 'does not lie'; Secondary items: repetitions: 'Romanian', past: 'what have you done'.

George Becali

Table 6

Enunciation / Word	Expressed value	Unit
Romania is confronting a crisis	emotional security	fear, insecurity
The leader they need	practical	pragmatism
A Romania that also God shall love	self achievement	happiness, value in general
The poor rich country.... God, foster the Romanian people	physiological and social	security, comfort, love

Secondary items: repetitions: 'Romania', subjunctive of the verbs: 'to give', 'to
'God'; verbal tenses: present: 'is vote', 'to love'; imperative: 'give me',
confronting', 'need', 'I promises you'; 'vote'