

**Elements of Romania's Country Branding vs.
British Stereotypes in *Gândul* Campaign
"Why don't you come over to Romania?"**

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Abstract

Starting from the idea that the process of country branding is meant to highlight those elements that differentiate a country from others, this study intends to show how Romania's country branding is shaped through a series of posters in a campaign initiated by the Romanian newspaper *Gândul* in response to *The Guardian's* anti-Romanian migration campaign. The study focuses on the linguistic analysis of the elements that underline Romania's country branding, viewed in opposition with those linguistic elements that suggest British stereotypes.

Keywords: *country image, country branding, British stereotypes, Gândul campaign, Romanian immigrants*

1. Introduction

Being a relatively new concept (coming into use in the 1990's), country branding appeared out of the need to help countries create a positive image that may help them differentiate from other countries in a very competitive environment.

The term country branding, often called nation branding as well, refers to a set of tools that help shaping a real, positive and attractive image of a country with the aim of providing a distinctive self-image, an identity to the respective country in order to be granted international recognition and reputation. Though the terms country brand and country image are sometimes used interchangeably, a clear

distinction has been made between them: if “a country’s or a nation’s brand generally refers to the common images, perceptions and associations people have about that nation” (Prelipceanu 2015: 153), a country’s image “refers to the set of opinions, beliefs, impressions and ideas people have about that country” (Gertner & Kotler 2004, in Prelipceanu 2015: 154). That is why different people may have quite different images about the same country, hence steps must be taken to change perceptions and influence the attitudes of others towards that respective country.

All in all, the difference between a country's image and a country brand is that the former can be formed without concrete and targeted actions, while the latter is the image of the country resulted from the efforts made in this respect by that country. It means that the country brand is more than just the country image, but, at the same time, it englobes it; the country brand is a country image that is consciously influenced and directed in a certain direction favourable to the country. An essential aspect of country branding is knowing the main aspects that influence the image of a country.

Through this process of country branding a state manages to differentiate itself from another, especially in the eyes of tourists and business people. The main aspects of a country with which the tourists and business people come into contact form the most important dimensions of a country branding (Brymer 2003; Roberts 2004; Kyriacou & Cromwell 2004; Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002): tourism, export brands, domestic and external policies, investment, immigration, people, culture and history.

2. Romania’s country branding

Starting from the idea that “branding a country is the building of possible associations for itself, its inhabitants and products” (Mittilä & Laurén 2014: 370), Romania’s country branding represents the “sellable” image of the country, taking into account its characteristic features and the values it is promoting.

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Nevertheless, the image of Romania has been controversial for years (Prelipceanu 2015: 157), oscillating between positive and negative connotations. The good image is sustained by beautiful geographical areas (Transylvania), cultural symbols (Dracula, Hagi, Nadia Comăneci) and economic realities (Dacia cars). On the other hand, Romania is negatively correlated by foreigners with some bad economic and cultural aspects such as poverty, beggars, crime, gypsies and orphans.

Along the years, there have been designed and carried out several big country branding campaigns in Romania:

- a) "The Eternal and Fascinating Romania" (1995)
- b) "Made in Romania" (2000)
- c) "Dracula Park" (2001)
- d) "Romania, Always Surprising" (2004)
- e) "Fabulospirit" (2006)
- f) "Romanians in Europe" (2008)
- g) "Romania, Land of Choice" (2009-2012)
- h) "Romania. Explore the Carpathian Garden" (2010-2015)

3. *Gândul* campaign "Why don't you come over to Romania?"

Fearing a huge number of immigrants to the UK from Romania and Bulgaria after the lifting of the labour market restrictions in 2014, the UK government approved the launching of a negative advertising campaign, suggestively called "Don't come to UK" and which was meant to keep away immigrants from these two countries. Focusing on the downsides of life in the UK, the campaign delivered the message "Please don't come here".

In response to the discriminating British campaign supported by *The Guardian*, the Romanian newspaper *Gândul* launched the "Why don't you come over?" campaign, offering the British people reasons to visit Romania. In a partnership with GMP Advertising, *Gândul* also addressed a challenge to their own readers, to come up with ideas, poster designs or slogans with the implicit message "Come to Romania".

4. Research questions

The paper aims to be a qualitative analysis of the slogans used in the “Why don’t you come over?” campaign. The analysis was based on three research questions:

1. What elements of Romania’s country branding can be depicted in slogans?
2. What are the British stereotypes against which the elements of country branding are targeted?
3. What are the linguistic markers used for illustrating these elements?

5. Data and analysis

From an esthetical point of view, the posters that constitute *Gândul* campaign are simply conceived, with no visual elements to distract the attention of the viewers from the written message. On a blue or red background, this written message constitutes the core of the poster, linguistically portraying Romania’s country branding. There are, however, some repetitive elements:

- a heading that identifies the initiator of the campaign, written in the upper left corner: *A campaign by gandul.info*.
- a general slogan in the down left corner, *We may not like Britain, but you will love Romania*, that places in an antithetical relation the Romanians (*we*) and the British (*you*): if the former do not like Britain, the latter are assured (through the use of the modal verb *will* denoting prediction for the future) that they will love Romania.
- the title of the campaign, *Why don’t you come over?*, in the down right corner, which shapes itself under the form of an invitation to travel suggested by: the rhetorical question, the phrasal verb *come over*, the symbol of a plane and the shape into which the message is embedded, resembling a luggage label.

If we take into consideration the main dimensions of the country branding, the posters analysed can be grouped into:

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a) posters that emphasize Romania's tourism as an important element of country branding

We have the most beautiful road in the world according to your top motoring show states one poster (Figure 1). The form of address is direct, due to the use of the personal pronouns of first and second person, those implying an open dialogue between the locutors (*we* – the Romanians) and the interlocutors (*you* – the British). The former shape the image of their country as the one possessing the perfect landscape through the use of the absolute superlative of the adjective *beautiful* (*the most beautiful road in the world*). However, this image is the result of the British opinion, as suggested by the pronominal adjective *your* attached to the noun phrase *top motoring show*. The noun *top* is also important, as it brings into discussion the idea of the most important position in a ranking scale (whose key words are *preference* and *popularity*).

b) posters that emphasize Romania's investments, (economy)/economic situation as an important element of country branding

b.1. *Your weekly rent covers a whole month here. Pub nights included.* (Figure 2)

A poster states that *Your weekly rent covers a whole month here. Pub nights included.* The economic dimension of the country branding rendered here provides the image of a country with low rents. This image is also constructed on the opposition between Romania and Britain, linguistically expressed by the pronominal adjective *your* (in reference to the British) and the adverb of place *here* (in reference to Romania). This country image is, at the same time, constructed starting from a stereotype regarding the high standards of living in Britain, in terms of accommodation and leisure time. Starting from this stereotype, the Romanians offer a cheaper alternative in their country, where a monthly rent (*pub nights included*) covers just one week in Britain. The reference to *pub nights* is not an ordinary piece of

information; the reference is made, implicitly, to the British people's favourite way of spending their free time.

b.2. *Our Tube was not designed with sardines in mind. Sorry, sardines!* (Figure 3)

Another poster ironically postulates *Our Tube was not designed with sardines in mind. Sorry, sardines!*, alluding to the stereotypical image of the overcrowded London tube. In opposition, Romania's image is one in which the system of subway transportation (at least) is, if not better, at least lighter than the British one.

b.3. *Our draft beer is less expensive than your bottled water* (Figure 4)

Stating that *Our draft beer is less expensive than your bottled water*, a new poster clearly emphasizes the different purchasing power in Romania and in Britain, the opposition (undoubtedly in favour of Romania) being linguistically marked by the possessive adjectives *our* (*Our draft beer*) and *your* (*your bottled water*) and by the use of the comparative of inferiority referring to the price (*less expensive*). What is more interesting, ironic and conclusive at the same time, is the fact that the two things compared are not identical: the price of the draft beer in Romania is compared to the price of the bottled water in Britain. These two are not randomly chosen, as the idea is to persuade the British by touching their (stereotypical) soft spot: their love for draft beer.

c) posters that emphasize Romania's cultural characteristics as an important element of country branding

We serve more food groups than pie, sausage, fish & chips (Figure 5)

By stating that *We serve more food groups than pie, sausage, fish & chips*, one cultural characteristic of Romania is again placed in opposition with a British stereotype, in an attempt of shaping the image of a country with a wider range of dishes (*We serve more food groups*) than Britain, well known only for *pie, sausage, fish & chips*.

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d) posters that emphasize Romanians as an important element of country branding

d.1. *Charles bought a house here in 2005. And Harry has never been photographed naked once.* (Figure 6)

In the slogan *Charles bought a house here in 2005. And Harry has never been photographed naked once*, the implicit emphasis is on people, more precisely, the journalists who, in this case, help at creating the image of a country that respects the privacy of the British Royal family. The comparison between Romania and Britain is accomplished only on an implicit level, as we can deduce the fact that, since 2005, when Charles bought a house in Romania, Harry has never been photographed naked, which is not the case in Britain, where a series of pictures of the kind appeared in British tabloids.

d.2. *We speak better English than anywhere you've been in France* (Figure 7)

The idea of people helping to create the country branding is obvious in the slogan *We speak better English than anywhere you've been in France*, where the parallelism between Romanians and British is overtly marked by the personal pronouns *we* and *you*. However, the opposition – in this case – is not between Romanians and British, but between Romanians and French, as the object of comparison is the English language, which is *better* spoken by the former. There are two stereotypes here: an explicit one, regarding the French, who are well-known for their poor English, and an implicit one, regarding the British, who speak no other language than their own.

d.3. *Our newspapers are hacking celebrities' privacy, not people's homes* (Figure 8)

The slogan *Our newspapers are hacking celebrities' privacy, not people's homes* alludes to the *News International phone-hacking scandal*, in which employees of some British newspapers published by News

International were accused of phone hacking in their pursuit of new and exceptional stories. The idea encompassed by this slogan is that Romanian newspapers, even though they are also hacking, are better than the British ones, as they go only after celebrities and not after regular people. At the same time, the opposition is between *privacy* and *homes*: the Romanian newspapers invade only famous people's privacy, and not plain folks' homes.

Conclusions

Analysing the slogans used in the "Why don't you come over?" campaign, we can notice that the elements used to form Romania's country brand respect the general dimensions established by specialists with respect to country branding, namely tourism, economy, culture and people. No matter the dimension, Romania's country brand is constructed in an explicit or implicit opposition with British stereotypes, the slogans often using the pronouns (first person *we* in opposition with second person *you*), possessive adjectives (*our* – as contrasted to *your*), qualifying adjectives in the comparative or superlative degree and adverbs in the comparative degree. To sum up, Romania, as depicted by the slogans analysed, is a beautiful country, where the cost of living is cheap, where tourists can find plenty of dishes to choose from and where paparazzis hunt only celebrities, but in a decent manner. All these are placed against Britain's being stereotyped as an expensive country, with a very crowded system of transportation, with only one well-known type of dish and with journalists that are so nosy that are sometimes able to break the law for a good story.

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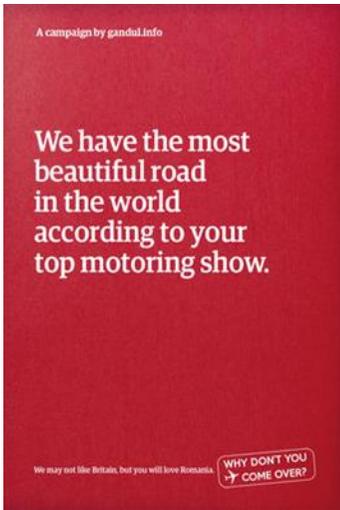


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

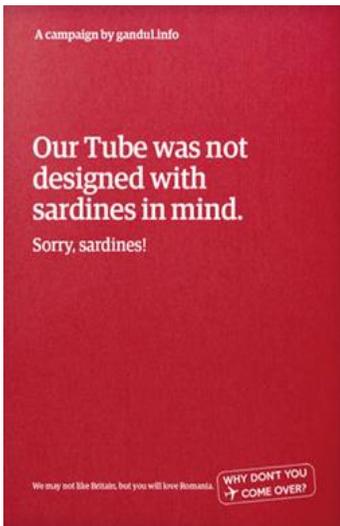


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

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Fig. 5

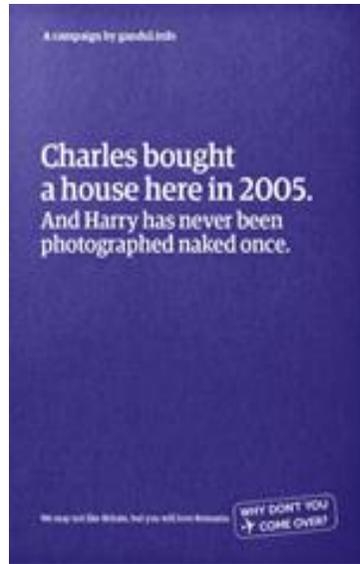


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

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