

# The image of politician women in the Romanian media

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**Abstract:** *In contemporary Romanian society, the battle that women take part of, in a quest for achieving equality in rights and opportunities with men, seems to have reached a dead end. Women are present in state mechanisms, even if in a small number, but instead of advocating for the rights of their fellow women, they borrow masculine attitudes and behaviors, trying to run from the "female politician" label. I believe that one of the major causes for this is the stereotyped image of women perpetuated by mass media, therefore the research question explored in this research paper is: what are the ways in which online newspapers characterize the image of Romanian politician women? The emphasis is on gender stereotypes use by the media. Content analysis will be use in order to answer the main questions.*

**Keywords:** *politics, gender roles, stereotypes, document analysis, women politicians.*

## Introduction

One of the main goals of any modern democratic society is the equality achievement of its society members, for both men and women. Status and gender equality should be promoted in all areas of life, both through institutional regulation, individual rights, but also through behaviors and attitudes, for the latter the media playing a major role. In this issue, the role of media is undeniable. Through the power to direct the society and to impose standards of thought, mass-media should be the pioneer leading to eradication of gender stereotypes by promoting egalitarian values.

However, as Mihaela Miroiu stated (political scientist, theorist and known feminist activist in Romania) „the recipe for a woman to be almost completely

uninteresting for the media is to be professional, pupil or student. If a woman is law breaker, she has much higher chances. If they are retired, media opportunities for women are lower than the offender, but five times higher than those professionally active"<sup>1</sup>, media is not nearly as fair as it should be.

Moreover, if we look at politics, over-representation of men in key positions of political leadership makes clear the need of women to be visible in the political arena, to be active members with decisive power in political problems and especially in issues of interest for them.

In the last years there has been widely reported in Romania the need for progress on the political representation of women, ensuring their access to high-level political decision-making spheres, together with their male colleagues. Once in politics, women are accused of masculinization, of adopting male behavior patterns as a way of asserting political struggle and resistance. As the media subjects women to an amount of gender and status stereotypes, by whom women are identified, the politics force women to confront these stereotypes in their desire to exercise the function.

The present paper seeks to unite the media and political domain by analyzing how politician women are characterized and represented in the media. In order to do so, we research the main themes of the feminist theory and the way mass-media constructs the women's image.

The research question of the study is: *what are the ways in which online newspapers characterize the image of Romanian politician women? Are they using gender stereotypes or not?* The emphasis is put on phrases and formulations that describe women's political image and on media coordinates that are used in portraying events of the public life of our analyse subject. In order to detail the research question, we use a secondary research question: *to what extent the image of female politician reflected in tabloids, differs from the image reflected in the general media?* In order to test our hypotheses, we will analyze the women mediatic portrait of those in management positions in the Romainan Government by employing content analysis investigation.

## **Theoretical background**

Mass-media provides to the public filtered information about the world, the gender dimension being par excellence an area where media is crucial. Mass-media does not only reflect cultural norms and realities. In fact, mass-media forms and recreates culture. Media and media discourses socializes in large, influences decisions and human behaviors; transmits stereotypes and social models, imposes

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1 Prefață de Mihaela Miroiu in Vladimir Pasti *Ultimele inegalitate. Relațiile de gen in România*. Ed. Polirom 2003 pp. 32-33 („rețeta ca o femeie să fie aproape complet neinteresantă pentru media este să fie profesionistă, elevă sau studentă. Dacă o femeie este infractoare, are șanse mult mai mari. Dacă sunt pensionare, șansele mediatică ale femeilor sunt mai mici decât față de infractoare, dar de cinci ori mai mari decât ale celor active profesional”)

constraints, promotes standards and values. Moreover, mass-media educates on how we should perceive and look to the other; media generates gender expectations and promotes or not the marginalised women groups in against men groups.

Media plays an important role in contemporary society, setting up public relations and private practices, maintaining and changing rules, representations and ideological assumptions. It can be said that, from an agent of social control (years 1960-1980), the media has become an agent of social change. Media promotes patterns of thinking for a global population, reduces the micro and macro cleavage, constructs, representations, social realities (hyper-realities) (apud. Frumusani in Dragomir, 2002:47).

The rutinisation of mediatic content in everyday life introduces, strengthens or expands the dominant ideological distortions contained therein (ethnic sexual, religious and gender stereotypes). Media products with reference to women (print, audio, video and electronic press) often presents a degrading and negative image of them, thereby damaging the image of women in society, causing serious repercussions on how women self and hetero-evaluate themselves and are how they are perceived by men (Handrabură 2007:4).

According to Partnership for Development Center (PDC), the „publicized” and „media seller” woman image can fit easily into categories defined as: mother, daughter, wife or mistress, nurse, housewife, sexy, available, dependent, low, hysterical. If the woman is a VIP then she is singer, model, presenter, wife/daughter of a VIP male. Meanwhile, the man in media products is most often: politician, banker, superior, protective, savior, professional, dynamic, powerful, efficient, competent, mature and free, and male VIP’s are politicians, business man, football players.

According to the PDC it would be ideal that the media would be encouraged to develop codes of conduct, professional guidelines, rules of conduct and other instruments through which gender equality and equity is promoted, alongside the idea that men and women are both equal as media consumers and producers of media products.

Stănciugelu Irina attributes the lack of women from the Romanian press due to operating logic of the media (Bulai&Stănciugelu, 2004: 138-139) News with and about women appear as far as their selection is performed under the information contract that each paper concludes with its readers, in other words, there does not exist a conscious reflection of gender issues, there is only the emerging picture of Romanian women built on the logic operation of the media.

A key concept refers to the distortion phenomenon as a mechanism of media coverage for women. Despite the population that women represent, they are underrepresented in the media content. Many aspects of women’s lives are not properly reflected by the media. The media fails to redefine the concept of femininity by portraying it in relation to the femme fatale portrait and unrealistic images of women.

Romanian media is dominated by the victim or executioner woman, abused, beaten, thief or murderer, deceived, prostitute, loose morals, procuress, infant killer or spouse killer, unconscious, or liar women etc. (Bulai, Stănciugelu, 2004: 135). It is hard to believe that women from Romania can be found in the newspaper's images, as well as hard to believe a realistic woman profile resulted through the media's images.

According to the Global Media Monitoring Project<sup>2</sup> project results from 2010, project coordinated in Romania by Prof. Daniela Frumușani, only 24% of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news are female. This picture is incongruent with a reality in which at least one half of the world's population is female. The contrast between men and women is continued by the professional disparities. The only two occupational categories where women outnumber men are women presented as homemakers (72%) and those presented as students (54%). What is more drastic is that from the total of global news studied by GMMP, 46% of stories reinforce gender stereotypes, almost eight times higher than stories that challenge such stereotypes (6%).

As media subjects, women are present in celebrity news, in media and art in a 46%, but marginal in the political field, only 13%. This percentage is a reflection of the real presence of women in politics (women are underrepresented in the ministries, political parties, Parliament etc.).

### **Women representation in politics**

Originally, feminist theories have emphasized that politics is a field of male monopoly where women did not participated as subjects, not formulated policies, which led to gender theories formation. Politics is believed to be an almost exclusively male field. Political thought has been almost exclusively male, and when women became subjects of political theorizing, they brought attention and debates on experiences that mark mostly women (pregnancy, abortion, women association with those socially disadvantaged, the sexual objectification of women, prostitution, discrimination- more in Miroiu 2004). Miroiu states that the women status on how they are represented or represent themselves in politics is due to the fact that women's issues lack from the political agenda (apud. Miroiu in Pasti 2003:30-31). Many of the problems faced especially by women are not found on the political parties agenda.

Women and their problems are classified in the social protection chapters (alongside children, disabled persons and elderly), thus suggesting the idea of a female victim than the one of a female competitor. More, political programs and campaigns on birth support, parenting, education resources on children and youth are not designed by women but by men.

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2 <http://www.whomakesthenews.org/>

In terms of political life and election campaigns, those are dominated by a „masochistic aggression“ compatible with“ an uncivilized confrontation between roosters that are lurking to strike the opponent» (apud Miroiu in Pasti 2003: 31). Pasti suggests that the Romanian political environment of the early transition was hyper-aggressive, primitive and patriarchal, shaped by the popular male model, at least until the 2000 elections. Political environment is not represented by a competition for the conquest of political supporters for public projects, but a competition for winning power. Politics is ritualized and masculine (Pasti 2003), while unpromoting nighter male virtues as: integrity, courage, boldness, nor feminine values of empathy, cooperation, caring, responsibility.

At the same time, once in politics, women tend to forget that there are women, says Miroiu. They adopt intentionally or not the patriarchy ideology and the male style or they are disregarded as political partners. Also, women politicians tend not to introduce laws for women (apud Miroiu in Pasti 2003: 32-33). Women entered in politics adopt male behavior patterns, because political behavior patterns are designed as male behavior. One of the most surprising aspects of women in politics, at least in Romanian politics – is the lack of a specific political behavior, the lack of an own female politician style(Pasti 2003:218). Women into politics tend to become masculine, embracing a political discourse, political behaviors, attitudes and values of politics designed by and for men. Women who have climbed the hierarchy of Romanian political parties did not do it as representatives of women, but as asexual human beings, by giving up to the assertion of female identity.

To be accepted in the intensely masculine areas of public life and politics, women have to give up their assertion of being women, in favor of an artificial neutral position, that their male colleagues do not have. The direct consequence is the perpetuation of patriarchy, even if the number of women would surpass the one of men in groups of power and public life.

National Agency for Equal Opportunities between women and men shows that women’s reluctance to enter politics, on one hand and the reluctance of parties to promote them to management positions, on the other hand, is seen not only by a lack of their representation at the political level but also by difficulties in the development of democratic principles in public life and sustainable economic development of society<sup>3</sup>.

The Euro Poll conducted in 2009 with the occasion of the International Women’s Day, on a sample of 3,500 women and 5,500 men in the 27 EU Member States show that over two thirds of participants believes that politics is dominated by men. But only one in 10 believes that the imposition of a quota in the ratio between women and men in politics is a good thing.

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3 <http://www.anes.ro>

Descriptive representation of women has been extensively by researchers. The presence of women as legislators, cabinet members, prime ministers and presidents helps to compensate for past and present injustices and contributes significantly to the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Women representatives urges other women to engage in politics, being true role models, inspiring other women and girls to be politically active themselves (Thorsten, 2005).

Wolbrecht and Campbell demonstrate increased participation in political and policy discussions among teenagers, once the number of women in politics is significant (Wolbrecht&Campbell 2007; Campbell&Wolbrecht 2006). Norris said the presence of a successful woman candidate as a member of Parliament predicts a stronger campaign volunteer and a stronger presence in the vote (Norris&all, 2004).

While women are expected to clarify the role their gender would play in political campaigns, at the same time they must justify their participation in an area dominated by men, that of politics. Construction of gender identities (Anuradha, 2008) in politics has real consequences not only for women candidates, but also for their ability to exercise power and to control the image. The patriarchal view of society assigns men and women different roles by which individuals are characterized. Because female and male spheres are antagonistic, female political leaders acting in a sphere dominated by men are considered unsuitable due to their femininity. This means that due to the intrinsic quality of the women, they can not assume male tasks. And if female leaders are trying to be bossy and assertive, these behaviors are considered unfeminine. In other words, the issue of femininity is used both as a scale of judgment, and also as disqualification in women's quest to become political leaders.

### **Leadership and stereotypes**

Gender is an important factor both in the path to power and as a way of exercising leadership as a source of legitimacy that leaders uphold. Perceptions of gender stereotypes, gender structural preferences and expectations have a significant impact on behavior and performance style. At the same time, gender power sources can be used by leaders to strengthen and legitimize stereotypes in exchange for political power.

There is an open debate in the literature on whether women and men lead differently. There are elementary conceptualizations of gender and leadership, including reductive biological explanations (Carole 2005: 12-14) that states that not only men and women lead differently, but this is due to biological differences based on genetic and hormonal differences that produce different leadership styles. If the leadership style of men and women really different or is just built as it is, the importance lies in the effect that this difference has on the relationship between the leader and his followers.

There are even theorists who claim that the inclusion of more women in national or international political machinery would have the effect of changing the style of governance in these institutions. This argument is known as moral capital argument that says that women are less corrupt unlike their male colleagues, they are less likely to behave selfishly or opportunistic, bringing the benefits to a democratic government of the society (Dollard & all 1999).

Researchers believe that the leadership style of women and men is different, women are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative. Leadership differences between the sexes can be attributed to agent characteristics or communal characteristics held by women and men that generate different ways of working and thinking (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

However, the disadvantage is greater on women. As shown by Eagly and Karau (Eagly & Karau 2002:576), meeting the gender role and the leadership role, tends to create prejudice in both directions for women. Thus, compliance with the gender role of women can bring them a disadvantage in fulfilling the obligations of leadership and compliance to the leadership role can bring them a disadvantage in their role of gender. These two forms of prejudice may manifest by less favorable attitudes towards women leaders than man leaders.

Also, women's leadership style tends to more democratic than men, reflecting the legitimacy problems that women face. Outweighs the preference for transformational style of leadership from women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Gender differences in terms of employment are felt in employment fragmentation (Rosser 2001). Women are often criticized for the lack of authority traditionally associated with leadership (Chliwniak 1997). Thus, women must choose whether to violate social norms or adopt the traditional, often masculine expectations to prescribe to the leader image.

In terms of stereotypes, Laura Grunberg sought to identify gender stereotypes in advertisements for the Romanian media, in print and broadcast media. The premise is that advertisements reflect and construct cultural values of dominant groups and that they tend to reflect and capitalize on stereotypes in general and particularly on those of gender stereotypes (Grunberg 2005:131). The evolution of gender patterns promoted by advertisements is closely linked with developments of such models in society and politics.

Grunberg's study conclusions were that, overall, the investigation confirmed the continuation of the well known gender stereotypes, both occupational and psychological: passive woman – active man, housewife – public man, dependent woman – independent man, gossip and cheerful woman – quiet and serious man etc.). It noted also that there is promoted mainly advertising content saturated in stereotypes (including those of gender). Largely through advertising gender stereotypes prejudices are reinforced and not erased; the femininity and masculinity are built especially in differences terms, not similarities; eroticism and female

sexuality are over commonly used; there is a discrepancy between the model of femininity and masculinity proposed by advertisements and reality. Few real women and men are found in the analyzed spots. Gender stereotypes are combined evidently with age, appearance, type of activity stereotypes. Promoted femininity is equivalent with youth, beauty while masculinity with maturity and public life.

Gender stereotypes promoted by advertisements and identified by Grunberg include: food, hygiene, cleaning and cultural promotions by women, while men promote alcohol brands, technical products and even some medications. Women promote household products in a greater proportion than men. At the same time, women are frequently present in domestic areas (they wash, cook and take care of the body), while men are more common in public spaces, where they are active and dynamic and not least, a consumer (Grunberg 2005). Often stereotypical representations about women include women from the domestic sphere, nymphomaniacs women, mentally incompetent, animalistic or women represented as objects (to people) (McDonnell 2007:18). In contrast, men are often dominant, heroic, competent. These representations reinforce the rules where men are related to the public, while women are associated with the private sphere.

Also Roventă-Frumușani (apud. Roventă-Frumușani in Dragomir&all 2002) identifies conservative representation of women in media content analysis of print and online media and advertising. Female roles are limited to those of wife, mother, housewife in the private space, or independent woman, but dependent on beauty and fashion industry. Also, social problems have become feminine: the feminization of poverty, unemployment, the poverty of single parent families headed by women, teenagers-mothers crisis etc.

The lack of women on the public sphere is due to their tendency to specialize in areas like health, education, culture, conceived as a kind of extension of domestic responsibilities. Therefore, prestigious areas such as politics, finance, international relations remain for men.

At the same time as news actors (apud. Roventă-Frumușani in Dragomir&all 2002), women are systematically under-represented, on one hand because of culture and male networks and, on the other hand, because of economic and political subrepresentation. Women in the news are either anonymous examples of an uninformed public, or housekeepers, neighbors, mothers, wives, daughters of the men on the news, or victims of crimes, accidents, catastrophes.

Roventă-Frumușani stresses that in the public sphere, women are not just less visible than men (experts, opinion leaders), but also treated on other standards. If for men the political experience and antecedents counts, for women the family status and physical appearance are essential.

Marginalization of female experience is reflected also in the discursive strategies of mass-media where prestigious professions are only masculine (Mrs. Minister, Mrs.



Rector, on one hand, and daycare, nurse, teacher, hair dresser, on the other hand), or by the overestimation of physical and marital indicators (young and beautiful woman, wife of X), at the expense of their identity.

In terms of politics, Kathleen Dolan showed that in electoral races women tend to adopt the same set of policy proposals as men, while the voters examine women in terms of gender stereotypes (Dolan 2005:31). It is assumed that women candidates have more compassion and are more honest than men, as men are seen as strong leaders and good at making decisions. In terms of problems, the public tends to see women more liberal than men, more interested in issues affecting women, children, education and health and less focused on issues as businesses, economy and foreign affairs. Meanwhile, in electoral races, men feel constrained in behavior when competing with women as not to be seen as attacking female opponents through negative attack strategies (Fox, 1997).

## **Methodology**

As the literature review pointed out, the media plays an important role in contemporary society through its ability to design and promote patterns of thinking about the realities around them. In this way, the media can promote or disadvantage groups and gender identities, women often being the marginalized group.

Knowing this, the present study aims to examine how gender stereotypes are perpetuated and enforced by the press. We start from the assumption that media filters and promotes gender stereotypes to the public, discriminating women.

The research question of the study is: *what are the ways in which online newspapers characterize the image of Romanian politician women? Are they using gender stereotypes or not?* The emphasis is put on phrases and formulations that describe the political feminine, and on media coordinates that are used in portraying an event of the public life of a personality. A secondary research question was used: *to what extent the image of female politician reflected in tabloids, differs from the image reflected in the general media?*

To test our assumptions, we used qualitative research through the content analysis method of newspaper articles from the general and the tabloid press. The analysis is carried out during the period of one month, December 2010. The newspapers articles were selected for the 1 December 2010 – 1 January 2011 period from the following journals: Adevărul and Jurnalul Național qotidians and Click and Libertatea tabloids.

We considered that the analysis of a month for the four journals is sufficient to sketch the dominant identity profile of the management policy of each journal in hand. In fact, every newspaper has its own identity, its market profile on the discourse on women.

This analysis does not aim to focus on the representation of the politician woman image in relation to the opposite gender, but focuses on the distinct dynamics of symbolic representation of women politicians in online media independently.

The subjects of the analysis were: Elena Udrea, Roberta Anastase and Elena Bănescu politicians. These politician women were deliberately chosen for the analysis because we believe that their political visibility is high as having major leading political positions, and all three belonging to the party in government, respectively the Liberal Democratic Party. Their image analysis reflected by the media will allow us to see how the media uses gender stereotypes portraying politician women.

The literature review revealed the studies conducted on women in the general sense as reflected in the print media, or through advertisements. Therefore, for the content analysis we must take in consideration other coordinates for examining the female politician images. The analysis grid of these three cases of female politicians was built in accordance with the literature. Because the literature identified only those stereotypes quantified in role status stereotypes of women, or the ones in association with household chores or the beauty myth (as stated in Naomi Wolf book), we utilised a different analysis grid for the politician women.

The content analysis grid contains: *political function dimension* (representations of women in terms of office they hold), *the beauty dimension* (call on the myth of beauty and related gender stereotypes associated with these representations), *private life dimension* (emphasis on the events related to privacy and family) and *VIP/public life dimension* (public appearances reported by the media).

Moreover, each dimension is quantified in subdimensions of analysis. Thus, **the political function dimension** is composed by *title, party affiliation, political campaign, political opinions, the dismissal or promulgation of laws, political or social programs implemented, policy actions, the perception of political opponents or supporters* units of analysis. Similarly, **the beauty dimension** includes *physical appearance, intellectual appearance, fashion, women's political attitude and age*. **The private life dimension** includes *status roles, family life, trips, parties*, units of analysis, and least, the **VIP/public life dimension** is composed by *TV appearances, media statements, fashionable appearance*.

After the data collection stage, we realised the data conceptualization through the open (tematic) coding method (Marian 2007) for a more easier identifications of analysis categories, determining the frequency of occurrence, the extent represented by each category of analysis. All information has been summarized and aggregated in corresponding tables. There has been analyzed a total number of 199 online newspaper articles.

Nr. of articles by newspaper	Elena Udrea	Elena Bănescu	Roberta Anastase
Click	22	3	0
Libertatea	33	7	12
Adevărul	44	2	13
Jurnalul Național	44	4	15

Dominant dimensions of analysis:

	<b>Click</b>	<b>Libertatea</b>	<b>Adevărul</b>	<b>Jurnalul Național</b>
<b>Elena Udrea</b>	Beauty dimension	Political function dimension	Political function dimension	Political function dimension
<b>Elena Bănescu</b>	Beauty dimension	Private life dimension	Beauty dimension	Political function dimension
<b>Roberta Anastase</b>	-	Political function dimension	Political function dimension	Political function dimension

### **Elena Udrea's image profile:**

During the analysis period for the *Click* tabloid, in regarding Elena Udrea's public image, there were identified a total of 22 news and articles with a direct or partial reference to Elena Udrea. There were identified 14 news titles with direct reference to Elena Udrea. *Click* headlines are based on sensationalism, on phrases that shock and attract attention, as can be seen: *"Udrea-no matter how high your heel is, important is how and what you work"*, *"Udrea broke hearts at Sânnicolau Mare"*, *"Elena Udrea, visited by a bear for her birthday"* etc.

The analysis grid revealed that Elena Udrea, the Minister of Development and Tourism is best represented by the beauty dimension point of view. The most number of references to Udrea are portrayed in terms of beauty, then on the political function dimension and ultimately in terms of family life and public life dimensions.

The beauty stereotypes are significant in creating the media portrait of Elena Udrea according to the *Click* tabloid. Thus, from the physical characteristics point of view, Elena Udrea is seen as a very beautiful politician, *"more beautiful than on TV"*, *"the beautiful lady who serves as minister from 90's onwards"*; she is constantly characterized for her blond hair color: *"the blonde from Cotroceni"*, *"the elegant blonde with disheveled hair"* etc. The aspects of fashion or clothing are highly politicized; the emphasis is put on the shoes that the politician is wearing, the price of the shoes and how high the heels are: *"she became famous in Romanian politics for her extravagant clothes or for high class shoes"*; *"with 8-10 inches heels and a cost of tens of minimum wages"*. Even though the politician is constantly criticized by her appearance, Elena Udrea is placed in a high position between the best-dressed politicians.

In terms of appearances of in *Libertatea* tabloid, on the analysis period, we identified a total of 33 references, from which 25 news with direct reference to Elena Udrea. Unlike *Click*, the headlines of *Libertatea* news are centered on the Minister actions, on her political and social programmes: *"Udrea transforms Petroșani in a sky resort"*, *"Udrea built in 2011 a total of 400 nurseries"*, *"Elena Udrea inaugurated the Borsec skiing"* etc.

The best represented dimension is the political dimension, nearby followed by the beauty dimension. Regarding the political title listed in the news, Udrea is best described as the Minister of Regional Development and Tourism, president of

Bucharest PDL, PDL leader titles. However, even though the political dimension should be separated from gender stereotypes, Udrea is ironically called at the same time the PDL sunshine, the PDL blonde, the Political Engine. Nevertheless, many news describe the politician's actions, political programs and public policies that Udrea initiated and developed.

In *Adevărul* daily newspaper, there were identified a total of 44 stories about Elena Udrea, 25 with direct reference to her. The newspaper headlines focus mainly on the political opinions or projects undertaken by the Minister. We remember the following headlines: "*Udrea – a verison taken into account for the maternity leave is the period reduction with an increase in allowance*", "*Udrea assaults Oprescu*", "*Elena Udrea: Boc dosen't leave the government*" etc. However, like some of the tabloid headlines, *Adevărul* points or mocks out the Minister situation: "*Elena Udrea falls because of her heels*", "*Elena Udrea, the shadow of Sissi Empress at the Herculane baths*", "*Elena Udrea, visited by a bear for her birthday*" etc.

Unlike *Click* and *Libertatea* tabloids, *Adevărul* portrays the most Elena Udrea from the political perspective of the function she has, being timidly followed by the beauty dimension and almost inexistent by the private life-family life and public life dimension.

Like *Adevărul* newspaper, *Jurnalul Național* focuses mainly on the politician characteristics of Elena Udrea's actions; the beauty dimension is poorly represented and the private and the public life are not represented at all. The political dimension consists of political actions taken by Udrea analysis, the exercise of the Minister functions, public policies proposals and favorable or unfavorable oppinions according to political opponents.

### **Elena Bănescu's profile image:**

Member of European Parliament, Elena Bănescu's image is faintly represented in news. In *Click* tabloid there were a total of 3 news about Elena Bănescu, with direct reference to her. The articles headlines focus on sensational titles: "*Fabio-I want to have sex with Elena Bănescu*", "*The Elenes have look-alikes at Hollywood*". Because there was not a large number of news, none of the analysis scale is more evident. We can find information about the appearance of the politician, details about her private life and the call on her political title.

The description of professional achievements manifested by Bănescu's political decisions and opinions are lacking. We must take into consideration the status stereotypes used by the newspaper, by associating Elena Bănescu's image with the one as the daughter of President ("*the youngest daughter of President Traian Bănescu*", "*Bănescu's youngest*").

In the *Libertatea* tabloid, there have been identified a total of 7 articles referred to Elena Bănescu. Again, the newspapers headlines rely on sensational in order to capture attention: "*EBA, expected at the airport by her boyfriend, Syda*", "*EBA, among*

*the most publicized MEP's*", "*Fabio-I want to have sex with Elena Băsescu*". The family life dimension is best represented, followed by the political office, the celebrity and beauty dimensions. In terms of the political dimension, Elena Băsescu is portrayed by status stereotypes: "*the youngest of the President*", "*the President's daughter*".

The political dimension portrays Elena Băsescu as recognized by the EBA appellation instead of the official title she holds. At the political image level, Elena Băsescu is noted to be among the most publicized MEP's, but other details about her political function are not provided.

In *Adevărul* newspaper, we find only 2 news regarding to Elena Băsescu, therefore the public representation of the politician is almost inexistent. In these two news, Băsescu is represented from the beauty dimension point of view, with emphasis on her fashion style.

The other generalist newspaper, *Jurnalul Național*, identified a total of 4 news regarding to Elena Băsescu. Surprisingly, the political dimension is the one best represented. On her political title, Elena Băsescu is recognised as a young Member of the European Parliament, PDL representative for MEP's, member of election observation delegation for Moldova Republic.

### **Roberta Anastase's profile image:**

Roberta Anastase's profile analysis on the *Click* tabloid, highlights that she is not present as a public person or political figure in the newspaper's published articles in the analyzed period. We comment this situation by taking into account that Anastase's profile may be regarded as uninteresting for the newspaper's specific, therefore there are not provided any information related to Anastase's public image.

In the *Libertatea* tabloid analysis there were identified a total of 12 articles referring to Roberta Anastase. Of these, only 3 news are referring directly to the Chamber of Deputies President and they rely on the element of sensationalism in their presentation: "*Ioan Oltean would marry Roberta Anastase, if he weren't already married*", "*Băsescu, EBA and Anastase celebrated Udrea in Sinaia*". The political dimension is best represented, the beauty, private and public life dimensions are not outlined. On the hand of the political duties, there are identified some of the political activities of Anastase's and many contrary opinions regarding to her.

There were a total of 13 articles referring to Anastase in the daily quotidian *Adevărul*. Of these, only one headline makes direct reference to the President of Chamber of Deputies: "*The President of Syria offered a mirror of 1000 Euros to Roberta Anastase*". The profile image of Anastase for *Adevărul* newspaper is built only on the political dimension, the beauty, private and public life dimensions had not have any annotation. It should be noted that in the political dimension, only one story is centered on the image of Roberta Anastase, the other 12 news containing only references to its political positions.

Like the *Adevărul* quotidian, *Jurnalul Național* presents the image of Roberta Anastase only expressed by the political dimension of hers; the others dimensions of analysis are not represented. There were a total of 15 stories with reference to Anastase, 4 of which the politician is the main subject. The newspapers headlines with direct reference to Anastase are contrasting: two headlines attack the politician ("*The dictator Roberta embarrassed by Geantă*"; "*Anastase committed it again-the contra vote does not matter!*"), and two headlines present the politician attacks towards her adversaries ("*Anastase- the PSD objective is to block the FMI tranche in January*", "*Anastase- ideal would be that the opposition to be present at the censure motion*"). The political dimension is best represented by the politician own opinions but also the opposition opinions towards her political strategies.

### **Discussions and conclusions**

The content analysis of the tabloids and mainstream journals on the three female politicians can illustrate several types of clear and distinct modalities of how they are perceived.

Hence, Elena Udrea is the most predominant described by the newspaper articles. The central dimension of analysis that dominates Udrea's image is the political dimension. The achievement of political office function, political and social programs carried out, the political opinions of the opponents or political allies are extremely well drawn. Udrea's presence as representative of an important ministry as well as with an increased interest in her public image, determined that Elena Udrea to be found as subject of a significant number of news.

However, the political dimension is closely followed by the beauty dimension, as a way of sketching the media portrait of Elena Udrea. Mostly the tabloids are offering countless details on the politician appearance, her fashion style, her attitude, often newspapers insisting on such details, or even repeating the news during the days.

In Elena Băsescu's case, her image is best outlined by the tabloid media that by the mainstream dailies. The beauty dimension shapes the mediatic image of Elena Băsescu. There have been identified a great number of status stereotypes associated with Elena Băsescu, by negatively associating her image with her father's reputation, the President Traian Băsescu. At the same time, we identified a small number of news with reference to the politician, as a subject of low interest for the newspapers columnist policy.

At the opposed pole, we find the Head of Chamber of Deputies, Roberta Anastase, strongly represented by the political dimension image from the newspapers. We can say that Anastase represents a case of political masculinization because the beauty or public life dimensions were not identified.

In the present study we tried to outline how women politicians are represented by online newspapers and what are the stereotypes attributed in their characterization. In the attempt to investigate the way in which online newspapers characterize the

politician women image, we found out that the press employs heavily gender stereotypes. Even if in the two of the cases reviewed, those of Elena Udrea and Roberta Anastase their dominant image is the politician one, the political criterion is intertwined with the beauty dimension for Udrea's case.

This analysis revealed that although the cases chosen for analysis are politician women in high positions of leadership, they are still criticized or commented according to their ability to fulfill the roles of status (of being a good wife, or a good daughter), and there is a strong emphasis on beauty, appearance and to compliance with certain requested attitudes.

To answer the second research question, we observed a content difference between how the tabloid and the general press choose to treat these cases of politician women. The tabloids accentuate details about the appearance aspects, fashion and attitudes of the politician women, or her presence as a public figure in the fashionable world, or on private life details. If the cases do not conform to these requests, they can easily be missing from the tabloids articles, as shown by Roberta Anastase's case.

We agree with Mihaela Miroiu when she says that the recipe for a woman to be almost completely uninteresting for the media is to be professional, student or pupil. Roberta Anastase's representation highlights this statement. When „spicy“ details about private life or appearance and fashion are lacking, women's image represented by the media is dry.

Women from this analysis have gained newspaper representation by combining their strictly political representation with the one of a celebrity or beautiful woman image. Their media portrait is not strictly professional, but fastens also the other dimensions of analysis, as the beauty dimension or the public life portrait in order to capture the public's attention.

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