

INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, CASE OF KOSOVO

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ABSTRACT

Countries aim to enhance their image in order to derive economic, trade, tourism benefits, but also to create political and military alliances, cultural or ideological benefits. For this reason, the increase of image is an important dimension for the performance of the state interest. To accomplish this interest by increasing international image of the country, state and non-state actors take various measures often using communication channels, spots, they organize various student's visits, or cultural exchanges etc. This paper deals with strategic communication activities in Kosovo to increase its image, the value selected for this purpose, is communication channel and the expected effect of these activities. Findings show that the most expensive campaigns, was wrong value message, communication channels and the public didn't see in holistic perspective.

Keywords: image, national brand, strategic communication, communication channel, Kosovo.

THE IMAGE OF A COUNTRY

The image of a country worldwide is quite important because by having a good image the country manages to achieve its foreign policies (Saliu, 2013). The word image usually means a picture, figure or image of a person, a thing of a phenomenon etc., which is reproduced in the human mind on the basis of perceptions and impressions from the past without the man himself. So, it is an imagination or a faithful reproduction of someone or something. The image often leaves us in the fabrication of reality or related images (Skoko, 2004, p.23). Kotler (et al., 2002, p.141) defines the country's image as the amount of a wide set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have about a certain country. The image represents a simplification of a number of associations and pieces of information associated with a country (ibid). The image of a country often refers to the national brand; it associates with public diplomacy, international relations and international perception (Zhang et al. 2012, p.77). It links the trust that the population of a country to another country, love of one people for the other country and the desire to interact with them, which creates appreciation and confidence for an product, policy or culture of another country (Laroche, 2005, p.100-101).

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In interpersonal communication, people often communicate for their mutual curiosity and interests, creating different images for something or someone. Information related to the individual, helps to explain a situation. Other people know in advance what you can expect from it or what you can do to it. Goffman (1959) explains that such data to other people can be obtained from different sources and can help not only to judge a situation, but also how to react in a given situation (p.11). However, when these data are lacking, it can only be judged by appearance in order to create an image. If you really do not know the individual, you can gather evidence from the behaviour of his appearance... or use stereotypes (Ibid). While stereotypes according to the founders of this concept, Lippmann (1998, p.xxii-xxiii) are simple, formed improperly and often imprecise trials routine. According to Kotler (et al., 2002), the image is different from stereotypes, because the image is more personal, they are variables of individual perception of a country or segment of society, while stereotypes are widely distributed with gross distortions and carry favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards a country.

As in interpersonal communications, the same happens also with states, but they are much more complex systems than individuals. The world in the first decade of the 21st century has changed in the global communications and also there has been an increase of the people movements. In this sense, the promotion of a positive image of a country is not something new, but new are the conditions for projecting soft power's that have changed more (Nye, 2008, p. 99). These amendments are related mainly to the end of the bipolar world, the growth of democracy, and the development of communication technology (ibid). However, the bulk of citizens cannot have direct contact with a foreign country or with developments abroad and therefore they refer to the information from the media, which often are dependent on government information. People create different images for countries in which they have never been. But while visiting a foreign country for the first time, regardless of how full there were informative context, they see that not everything has come according to the imagination that they had for that country. "Not all the Swiss are bankers ... and Viennese have other things to do besides dancing waltzes" (Kunczik, 1997, p.1). Lippmann (1998, p.5) since the last century has assessed that everything that we believe to be as such, it can be completely different: they toured to India, but formed America.

If the image of a country would be defined as the image of different opinion of foreign publics to our country, estimated by adjectives or qualitative differences, its formation, whether positive or negative, it is a quite complex, long-term process and it includes a wide range of different sources of stakeholder interactive communication. Lippmann says that man creates an impression and imagination of someone or something before you see it. For the most part, we first see and then define, but in fact we first define and then see (ibid). The image of a nation can be understood as a hardened prejudice and this is not unexpected, but it is often created in the long historical processes (Kunczik, 2002). The process starts with an experience that early man's life; in school, children's books, stories and leisure literature, theatre and it also may include accounts made by relatives, acquaintances and friends (ibid, p.1). But, the later, the mass media, such as radio and broadcasting of television programs international newspapers and magazines, programs, cultural exchange, sports, books, news services, etc., are those that perhaps shapers larger image, including education and travel as well as personal experience and play an important role in the creating of

the image. "The mass media are, in fact, those which continuously offering images of nations" (ibid, p.5). But Kunzick in this study does not mention the Internet, which is understandable as the last edition of that book is dated 1997. Nye (2004) whose essay has been the most influential in the last 20 years in the field of relationships and international communication sees the image as a whole of some internal political values of foreign cultural and rational actions. The image of the United States and its attractiveness in other people, it is a mixture of several ideas and different viewpoints, which depends partly on the culture, part of the values and domestic policy, and partly by the substance, tactics and style of foreign policy (ibid, p.68).

The behaviour of the states cannot be said to be similar to the people's behaviour. Goffman (1959) explains that individuals daily try to play their role in order to present the best in everyday life. But real life is not a part of the actor learned by the memory that comes and plays in front of the public. Kunzick (1997) estimates that states are social systems whose behaviour does not correspond neither by the motives of their leaders, nor the motives of the state's population. However, the behaviour of the states in addition to interest can be affected by friendship or closeness that a leader of a country demonstrated against the leader of the country. Here we are dealing with the importance of communications which has to do with the foreign publics, and then the impact that could play the individual in the image of the country. "...It is indubitably important whether the U.S. president and the leader of Russia get on well with each other at a personal level" (ibid, p. ix). The stamens of state actors to other countries influence the domestic opinions to the image of other countries. In other words, the careful use of the words is one of the basic elements to have a good political communication (Waller, 2007, p.20). If a politician or a state official holds negative attitude toward the other country; his supporters understand that it also benefits a trial of a not very positive image for the country. This proves that a country may fail in its efforts to increase impact through measures of public diplomacy, if the leaders of the country who have broad popular support, are not very friendly to the country exercising public diplomacy or try to create a positive image. Ellul (1973), addressing the effects of the international propaganda, highlights the fact that the image of a country could be seriously affected by the statements of government officials to a country who speak their audience to another country. According to him, when there is a national antipathy, even when the facts are incredible, people trust their government, rather than a foreign government (ibid, 242-243). In relations with other countries, cannot be penetrated steadily into a crowd through myths. It cannot be operated with simple facts, the pro or against. To penetrate to the foreign publics, it is impossible to insist and require communication in an atmosphere of intolerance. Having created an image, it acts as a motivating force, and it has an emotional character which leads to good fidelity to thy face (ibid, p. 243). Although in Europe there is a climate of trust and cooperation in addition to several points in the Balkans. However, the world is different mainly strategic and cultural intolerance, primarily between Arab and Euro-American ones as well.

The image of the country as a foreign public perception for a given country or its policies has a great importance in the implementation of foreign policy. There are even researchers who estimate that image often brings greater benefits than any part of the territorial possession. "Favourable image and reputation around the world, achieved through attraction and persuasion, have become more important than territory,

access, and raw materials, traditionally acquired through military and economic measures" (Gilboa, 2008. p.56). Leonard (2002), the most cited practitioner of public diplomacy, considers that public diplomacy is based on the premise that the image and reputation of a country are public goods which can create either an enabling or a disabling environment for individual transactions (ibid, p.9). While Castells (2010a) sees the peculiarities of different countries more as a perception that the imaginary and imagination, according to him, is created through the mass media. He estimates that states and nations today seek to be imagined communities, generated in the process of affirmation. These countries made information products and memory work, but they have value only if recognized by the international media and efficiency in public opinion not only national level (Castells, 2010a, p.157). Castels estimates that this new identity finds more and more ground in the era of globalization, society and culture in the era of mass media, power of information and internet age. The new power lies in the codes of information and images of representation according to which societies organize their institutions, how people build their lives and decide about their behaviour (ibid, 425). what should be taken into account, according to Anholt (2007), is the fact that efforts to increase the image of a country to an international audience, should be extended in order to include the attributes, benefits and offers that are more important or more motivated for the market. The reputation of the country should be carefully directed towards 'true' countries, regions, cities or demographic groups, business sectors or political decision-makers; image has to be improved with more accurate qualities, relevant and distinctive (ibid, 67-68). The focus for this improvement should happen to the countries that are most important to our interests, and not in those places which are more easily influenced (Leonard 2002, p.7). As stated earlier, the image can be obtained in export growth, attracting foreign investment and promote tourism (Hocking, 2005, p.31). The significance of image is not a new Phenomenon in international politics, by starting with the construction of Versailles. Napoleon was aware of its importance as well, but also in the 80s when there were authors who claimed that half of political power consists of the construction of image (Melissen 2005, p. 31). Particular concern was the image on the international scene and the possibility for the national rebranding in the world market (ibid).

But the international image of a country is created and grown, firstly within the country. The best form of cultivation of the image of a country is to be a democratic, to protect human rights and to pursue an open policy. For countries that do not cultivate these values, it is unable to create a positive image in the western media (Kunczik, 1997, p.283).

THE MEANS TO INCREASE IMAGE

Public diplomacy as a discipline that deals with improving the image can be defined as a communication of state actors and non-state actors with foreign publics in order to inform and influence foreign publics' performance. Most scholars, although with slight differences, are mainly concentrated in three dimensions accepted as measures of public diplomacy actions. Leonard (2002), Nye (2004), Waller (2007), Melissen (2005), Snow (2009), Tuch (1990), Christer Jonsson & Hall (2005) etc. focus mainly on the impact and intent of the message in time. This message may be political, military, economic, social, cultural sphere etc. Depending on the time, different circumstances or social context, the effect of these messages can have different effects. "These effects will carry different weight at different time periods and in different contexts"

(Leonard, 2002, p.11). This means that economic message will be attractive in countries with developed economies and export, or political message may present greater interest in countries with an unsatisfactory political stability. For Hong Kong for example, attractive would be the economic message, while for North Korea the political one. In this sense, these spheres of different dimensions of public diplomacy activities can be divided as follows:

1. Management of daily news, in response to current developments, which represents activity within hours and days;
2. Strategic communication, which means sending messages to foreign publics focusing on weekly and monthly activities, to influence external perceptions of opinions;
3. The creation of long-term relationships, which require activities years in order to achieve understanding and cooperation for common values.

The three dimensions of time have an agenda, but also their expected effects have a time limit for the expectation of results. According to Leonard (2002, p. 11), news management is developed within hours and days, while the image of the news for the country can be expected after weeks or months. Strategic communication requires qualified and specialized people and it should include the state machinery to organize events that creates imagination. The third dimension, that of creating of long-term relationships; requires a high degree of trust.

NATIONAL BRAND

As it is known, the countries seek to communicate with foreign publics for economic, financial and touristic interests. In the modern developments in international relations, regionalism and globalization, diplomacy has gone beyond courtesy and has become more and more practical, being replaced more with economic diplomacy. Economic interest arises as a very important component in a country's relations with other countries. The purpose of economic diplomacy is to protect the economic interests of a country in the world and it plays the role of a lawyer at the foreign administration to protect the interests of the investment; to promote the country and its products and to convince as many companies to invest in the country, which it represents.

But this can be understood much more as International Economic Relations between the countries, while economic diplomacy as part of public diplomacy seeks to draw a place in the international arena as a "symbol with many value elements", which Anholt in 1996 called "nation branding". This concept, according to him, however, has to do with competition in the market. "... 'Brand' is a perfect metaphor for the way that it places to compete with each other in the global marketplace for products, services, events, ideas, visitors, talent, investment and influence" (Anholt, 2007a, p.1). But Anholt who founded this concept, 14 years later this term is called "competitive identity" explaining that this identity has more to do with national identity, economy, policy than to do with the "brand" that is traditionally understood (Anholt, 2007b. p. xi) According to him, competitive identity is a term used to describe the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and trade, investment, tourism and export promotion. This represents a new model to enhance national competitiveness in a global world, delivering results for states, cities, regions etc. (ibid, p. 3). Offers for enhancing the image of a country to a foreign audience, according to Anholt, should

be expanded by including the attributes, benefits and offers that are the most important or the most motivated for the market. The reputation of the country should be carefully directed towards countries 'truth', regions, cities or demographic groups, i.e. where the interest is greater, and the image must be improved with specific qualities (ibid, 67-68).

Since Kosovo does not have investments in the world, while its exports covers imports only 10 percent, the only interest of Kosovo's economic diplomacy is an attempt to raise foreign capital investments. This economic diplomacy should not to be confused with the activities of any economic attaché within the Embassy, because in recent decades, economic diplomacy has changed the nature of diplomacy by overcoming significantly so-called Commercial diplomatic activities. Some time ago, we witnessed the reaction of Albanian country as a friend country. It was the Ambassador who expressed his regret without much diplomatic tact due to the breaking of a company's tender of her country to build a very expensive railway line in Albania . This example and many others attest the fact that diplomacy today is very active in supporting the investment and interests of companies in the places of host country. Exactly constructive engagement with the diplomacy around the world makes the attempt to persuade foreign companies to direct investment in Kosovo, bilateral and multilateral aid, technological exchanges, economic advertising and image increase, therefore active economic diplomacy for concrete interests and vulnerable to Kosovo (Saliu 2008, p.2).

KOSOVO'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE INCREASE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, ATTRIBUTES AND HOLISM

Kosovo launched a campaign to advertise itself to the world. The purpose of this campaign financed by taxpayers with a cost around 6 million euros, was to increase the foreign investments and recognitions. The campaign known as "National branding and making international media campaign for the Republic of Kosovo" was based on a video which in broadcasted in global televisions (BBC, CNN) and afterwards in Albanian-language speaking and local televisions. Besides the video, there were exhibitions of different diverse photos with young men and women shown as "faces of the new country" which were exhibited even in different cities of Kosovo.

The video named as "Kosovo, the young Europeans" is focused in the work made with colours by the youth. They collected wood planks from different parts of the country (water, land, and city) and painted them with the sole purpose to make Kosovo's map, a new state in the world. The message attempted to be given is: this new state has a great percentage of youth who are enthusiastic and seek with insistence to build their country.

But the problem appears when you pose a question which messages should be chosen and what attributes have become symbols to achieve the desired effects. When the British foreign minister Robin Cook formed the group "Panel 2000" in the year 2000, to consult the British presentation in overseas countries, there was a harsh debate (to determine) which attributes should be selected, before it was decided for the list of five messages (safety and integrity, creativity and innovation, British heritage, freedom of expression – correct attitude and open world action) (Leonard, 2002, p.15). This debate even attracted international interest for "re-branding of UK" because every effort for national branding also lays trapped danger because other countries distinguish such attributes where the effect is destined to fail (ibid). Many

others raised the concern that national identity can't be converted in a simple brand, as if we were talking about the sale of common goods such as selling soap. The greatest public diplomacy practitioner and simultaneously a big European supporter of national branding activities, Mark Leonard, also says that if we were talking about tourism, than the special attribute except the beautiful beach views, infrastructure, attractive places and the cultural-touristic offers, in the first place is the price. "The main factor to distinct this kind of marketing is the price of the offer" (ibid).

To analyse the video material with such a big claim, first of all we ask these fundamental questions: What brand can Kosovo present to the foreign investors and how can this brand "be sold", so does Kosovo have anything to export? Does youth represent the most attractive element for the public to which is this 60 second video addressed to? Which focus-group or public is this video addressed to with the attribute of youth? Another issue we want to clarify is if this video has only a commercial message or it also has the political message to increase Kosovo's image, aiming to create the positive public readiness for achieving new recognitions?

YOUTH AS AN ATTRIBUTE

It can be said that Kosovo practically has no export of its products abroad. According to official statistics, in the past ten years export covered only 10 per cent of import. Exports mainly scrap from the pressed vehicles which ones are sent to Albania to get molten. This means that Kosovo as a brand does not represent any attractive commercial message for the outer business community.

The other commercial and central (main) message that is desired to be given is that of youth, selected as the main attribute in the video material Kosovo, the young Europeans (2009). In the video spot (ibid) we see the great enthusiasm of youth to build their country. But, according to the official demographic statistics, every year around 35 thousand young men and women are added to the labour market and the same result jobless. The official statistics show that Kosovo has a very young population with an average age around 30s, which fact is focused by the campaign in different ways. This means that Kosovo is the state with the greatest unemployment and youth. And perhaps the video might have given the message that the labour force in Kosovo is the cheapest. The campaign's focus-group is the global opinion not only the European and Kosovo's young population doesn't present any attractive element for Asiatic, African and Latino-American opinion, either economic or political.

However, we cannot look at the video only as an attempt to publicize the economic purpose of attracting foreign investment, even in a less degree having in mind that this campaign has been launched in early 2009 and lasted until late 2012, at the time when the European interest to invest had been decreased due to the financial crisis. A video could not be seen as an isolated material only as publicity, but also as a communication strategy that aimed to increase the country's image for political benefits. The most accurate and important quality selected by the creator of the video is youth and this attribute is also addressed to the Arab world, Asiatic and Latino - American, countries which still continue to not recognize Kosovo. This new state identity tried to give an attractive message to these countries with "the value of many children". But this did not have any attraction for the increase of the state image in the countries with a high natality. "As a diplomatic method, public diplomacy is far from being uniform and some public campaigns have no connection with international

commitment" (Melissen, 2005, p. 14) Melissen also states that the public-economic diplomacy increasingly acts on bilateral relations, while the multilateral ones are noted more in the international organizations.

In this sense, the message recipient cannot be observed as homogeneous, because the world has very different public. The message can break through in these publics only if it is attractive or has the same values with them. The increase of the image, according to Joseph Nye (2004) who has created the new notion known as "soft power" and it includes many elements that the foreign politics must be used to create a country a good reputation, there is required a number of activities to make foreign opinions desire what we desire. According to him, the influential soft power arises from the glamour of culture, ideals and good political practices of a country, or similar values and universal that a country possesses, which values want to be followed by others (Ibid).

But in absence of any kind of attraction of ideals or good daily political practices of the country (these are introduced in various reports of international institutions), Kosovo really needs the promotion and activities to increase its image, even more having in mind that the Serbian propaganda never stops being against for this new state independence, as seen in the previous chapter. Another reason for the need of promotion in the global Medias is also their effect, as Castells would have named our time, the era of information. During the last decade, global expansion of the informative televisions has issued what is known as media diplomacy or tele-diplomacy and tele-democracy. Of course that Kosovo needs to be presented in "CNN International" and "BBC World", in particular for their ability to have effects (though limited) in defence and foreign policy of several countries. The video has also been broadcasted even in Euronews, Katar, CNN-Turk, Bloomberg and Eurosport (Wählisch&Xharra, 2011, 13).

But however, these broadcasters are not adequate channels for the other part of the world, the Arab, Latin etc. The Israelite company Saatchi & Saatchi which has developed the campaign, has seen more reasonable to do this mainly with the above broadcasters, since it is known that in the Arab world the satellite station with the branch in Qatar, "Al Jazeera", it is being imposed within a short time as "CNN Arab".

The promotion campaign has lately continued even inside Kosovo, on the local broadcasters as: RTK, KTV and Klan Kosova, in various web pages, as well as on the Albania's broadcasters. Many billboards were placed in streets and squares of the cities of Kosovo. But billboards were missing in regional decision-making and commercial worldwide centres. The young people in the photos look like fashion models who advertise for a fashion company, meanwhile the message aimed to be given was that these are "The young Europeans". This message with well dressed the young people, with instruments, laptops, and balls in their hands etc; in fact the matter is for the youth with a high scale of unemployment, poverty and isolation (the visa-free travel) in the continent. For months daily newspapers have published a newspaper page the publicity of the campaign "Kosovo, the young Europeans".

So, the campaign finally was focused more on Albanian surroundings, by confusing the primary public and also the message: from a publicity campaign and public diplomacy for increasing the image in order to gain recognitions and foreign investments, in – intercultural communications campaign to strengthen the idea of identity, including ethnic as well.

CONCLUSION

Kosovo media promotional campaign did not have a clear idea who is the public to be addressed. By content, with youth as an attribute (west values), it was required to influence the countries where the birth rate is great suffer. For the content of the message, the campaign had no seductive elements to the world of heterogeneous public different regions of the world that have not recognized Kosovo, and furthermore the communication channel has not been the right one either.

But the biggest campaign and the most costly for Kosovo image had more influenced the domestic part of the public, who is cultivating a sense of "Europeans", i.e. a "nation branding" in relation to themselves and not with the foreign public. Various media more frequently use the phrase "New Europeans", and it was noticeable in everyday communication. Although, in the internal plan this sensation has been the target of criticism, being considered more as a nonrealistic campaign, because the campaign was focused on domestic opinion with "New Europeans" actually, it represented citizens who were more isolated (for visas) and the poorest in Europe.

Such promotional campaign in order to enhance the Kosovo image should have had a holist focus: another selected attribute and an adequate communication channel should have been found for Arab countries and another for Latin American - different from the attribute "young people" which would have been attractive only for the European opinion.

Kosovo has neither resources nor interest to campaign globally. For small countries without economic resources, tourism and elite culture internationally competitive is very hard to find attributes to be attractive for foreign publics, as well as various communication channels or global media to spread the message to the media. The situation gets even more complicated if the country is also facing negative domestic developments and global media expresses more interest in this than trying to spread positive messages through strategic communication or various media campaigns.

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