

VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN THE RURAL AREA. STUDY CASE, LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OF THE BERZOVIA COMMUNE, CARAS-SEVERIN COUNTY

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Abstract

In addition to the economic investment and sustainable development strategies, an organization needs to create a good communication strategy, in order to attract tourists, investors, to promote a specific area, or to improve the quality of life. This strategy should be designed to build a strong relationship between the public administration and the local community who is directly involved in the actions carried out in the area. Thus, the residents are informed about the projects developed and they can be more involved in the process and express their opinion, which is helpful for the public administration, if they take the time to listen the feedback from the community. The research aims to identify the visual means of communication used the the rural governance of Berzovia from Caras Severin county for transmission of various messages of public interest. The methodology used is based on qualitative research methods such as observation collection of the visual data and semiotics analysis. Following analysis, it was found that messages sent by means of visual communication reached faster to the receptors, which led to a participatory attitude much higher in community projects developed, than other projects which were based on non-visual communication.

Key words: communication, message, prints, rural area

INTRODUCTION

The critical issues that may negatively influence the promotion of an area are the lack of a strategic development plan, the poor status of infrastructure, the lack of transparency and access to the information as well as issues such as aging population, youth migration to the cities and abroad, as following the jobs deficit in the rural area.

Despite the severity of these problems, they can be overcome or at least improved, whether it will outline a communication strategy that will help public institutions to build strong relationships with the target audiences, which demonstrates that the authority cares about the its community, debunking the citizens preconception that the public officials are guided by their own interests and using illegitimate power that was given to them due to their political affiliation.

Image transfer is achieved between the political and administrative which enhances the public's distorted image of the civil servants and lead to an unconstructive relationship for the whole society. [8]

This raises *public cynicism*, according to which government policies and officials are from the start incompetent, corrupt and manipulators. A consequence of the public cynicism is distrust and a lack a belonging to the community sense. [1]

Therefore, it is of great importance to change all these preconceptions, because the lack of information and communication with the public, degrades the relationship between public institutions with the local community, and then slows down the realization of the projects for increasing the quality of life for locals. In addition, the public image of an institution aims to increase its reputation among the public, by offered services and

through the communication system used. Institutional awareness increases as its audience's needs are met.

If distortion occurs between the desired image and perceived, means that the messages or the means used were not adequate for the transmission to the public.

Public communication is a form of communication through messages sent with public information. Also, the public communication aims the knowledge of the needs and wishes of the population, so that the public institutions, can meet them. Moreover, this is the foundation of the marketing vision in the public administration. [4]

Therefore, when we want to communicate an idea, we must take into account the education, the environment and the audience experience. For an effective communication, it must be kept within a proper function, even if sometimes it is imperiled by some bottoming, barriers, which create a big problem. This is asserted by the impossibility to convey what we want to express, or by incapacity of picking-up the correct message by the receiver. For a problem to be solved is necessary to know, indentify, compliance, accept it and to pass some levels and strategies for situation optimization. [6] It must be discovered which are the familiar means of communication for the audience is and will take into account the intellectual and the emotional level to set the most effective means of communication, to send the desired messages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research in the field of communication, inquires methods and techniques used in social fields. These are notably, qualitative, of which we used for this paper, observation, documentation, visual data collection and semiotics analysis.

This research aims to identify the visual means of communication used by the rural public administration Berzovia, in Caras Severin to transmit information of public interest.

In this respect, it performed an analysis based on qualitative interpretative means using

observation, visual data collection and semiotics analysis. To interpret the results were consulted dictionaries of symbols and specialized studies.

Semiology, is considered by Saussure as a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life, in order to become aware that we live in a world of signs and we can understand this world only through codes into they are organized.[5]

The rules and the conveniences are representing the language with which we transmit sounds, words or images. The signs are bring together a sound or an image (signifier) with a concept (signified) and decrypts its relationship with other signs and the context of the dissemination.[7]

Furthermore, we will examine the means of visual communication, which are found in the form of printed materials (posters, leaflets, journal) and as an electronic means (DVD, website of the village) by which the rural public administration of Berzovia sent messages to the local community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Berzovia is located in the north-western part of Caras Severin county, on DN 58 B, and is 24 km from Bocşa, 36 km from Reşiţa and 70 km from Timişoara. The area is surrounded with hills with elevations up to 230 m, is crossed by Bârzava river, having particularities of culture and architecture and making it the border between the mountain and plain areas of Banat. Following the archaeological excavations, were found the remains of a Roman legion settlement, known as the IV-th Legion Flavia Felix, whose existence is attested in the area till 119. [10]

The message is clear, concise and short, the reception will be easier. For the distribution of the information and the promotion of the community the administration of Berzovia, uses especially offline communication through prints such as: posters, leaflets, brochures, and for the online communication, they use the new official website of the commune.

The first means of visual communication in question is the emblem of Berzovia comunne.

It is displayed on the commune public institutions (city hall, community center, tourist info-center, school) and it has the function of the official logo of Berzovia's commune. Unfortunately, this logo is not used on official documents of the municipality, which would increase the visibility of the distinctive mark of the village.

The emblem is decorated with distinctive and symbolic signs, which remember the specifics and the history of the place. [3]

The emblem of Berzovia consists of three heraldic figures: on the left, there is a Roman helmet, the right, a golden bell with a cross and at the bottom, a cluster of grapes. Background colors of the shield are blue and red, and are divided into four parts: two vertical of same dimensions, and two horizontal of different sizes. On the outer shield is represented a fortress.

According to the semiotic analysis, the helmet stands for the IV-th Roman legion Flavia Felix, who was stationed on the Berzovia's territory for 20 years after the Dacian-Roman War.

The golden bell decorated with the cross illustrates the ancient occupation of the inhabitants, of workers in bronze and iron. The cross reference the membership of the Christian community.

The cluster of grapes, indicate the main category of land use (vine nurseries).

The fortress which surrounds the shield represents Berzobis, the daco-roman settlement with a long history, which reflects the millennial existence and continuity of the community in this space.

The colors used are both primary and each has a meaning, which reinforces the message sent by the heraldic figures.

Red is a symbol of vitality, action, creative masculinity, war and especially the victory. Blue is the coldest and deepest color, transcendental, which represented with red indicating the battle between heaven and earth. In ancient Rome, all gladiators were marked with red and blue when you enter the hippodrome to symbolize the sacredness of their potential sacrifice. [2]



Fig. 1. The emblem of the Berzovia Commune
Source: personal archive

Another visual communication is to use prints for the dissemination of the information on campaigns of general interest. An example, is the national campaign „*Locul deșeurilor nu este în preajma ta*” - "The place of wastes is not around you", in areas assigned to the Berzovia commune, held on 31st of October 2015. This green campaign, aims to protect the environment by free collecting of appliances and electronics households. For the message to get better at public areas (which often is careless about the environment), were used the printed posters and leaflets with information related to the campaign.

On these posters and leaflets appeared information about the prizes that could be won at the raffle extraction.

The colors chosen for the leaflets were used to attract the eye and for ease the reading. The combination of yellow, white and green is one of the most visible and captivating. Green is the symbol of environment and of ecology. Yellow is used to highlight key words and prizes that can be won (e.g. 40 RON, 20 RON), the date, the locations and the hours of the collection (e.g. October 31st, Saturday, 9:00-16:00, Berzovia, Gherteniș, Fizeș).

The slogan and the image on the poster are slightly ironic and imperative (*Your hen eggs better on nest!*) The viewer will mentally combine both text and image with the motivation to take action and to be actively involved in this recycling campaign. However, if that still fails to reach the civic side of the audience, the call becomes irresistible as a result of the money and goods prizes prepared for the ones that will participate to the waste collection. The campaign has mobilized the community of Berzovia, so that they came in large numbers

to get rid of the items which are not needed any longer.



Fig. 2. Leaflet for a recycling campaign
 Source: own processing after campaign materials

Another example of using prints as a means of communication is to promote the area in terms of tourism. To reach a larger number of people by sending tourism information and promotion of the commune, there where built a info-center, but also a web page with general information about the community. The project was funded by the European Union and the Romanian Government through the Rural Development Fund, so that the center was built in 2014 and the official launch will take place early next year. For promoting the area were used brochures with general information and DVDs about the Berzovia commune. The brochures included representative illustrations, a short history, information on how to reach the villages, what tourism attraction exist, the number of contact of the main places and a slogan (*Enjoy the magic of history and culture in a memorable tourist destination!*). Brochure design is simple, focused on the representative places of the commune. The text is easy to read, the frequency of the word Berzovia is increased, in order to memorize easily common names, and the partners logos are positioned in the page header. The main image represents a traditional fountain,

located in heart of the village, next to the Orthodox Church of Berzovia. The fountain symbolizes perpetual rejuvenation, through the living water drunk with the clay jug, which in this case indicates the longtime existence of an old community in lands of Berzovia.



Fig. 3. Promotional brochure of the Berzovia commune
 Source: own processin after promo materiales from the public administration of Berzovia

Also, the tourism promotion was made by sharing edited DVDs with videos about the history of the commune and with other specific elements. Packaging is identical to the brochure covers used for the promotion of the tourism in the area. It distinguish the image and text unity that perpetuate the idea of sending the message: Berzovia is located on the settlement of an ancient Dacian civilization.



Fig. 4. Berzovia's promotional DVD
 Source: own processin after promo materiales from the public administration of Berzovia

For the online space, it was created a web page entitled *www.infoberzovia.ro*, where can be found information about the characteristics of the area, traditions, customs and sights, and other useful information in Romanian and in English. The site has the categories: About

Us, Geographical position and Natural environment, Local flora and fauna, Brief history, Local culture and recreation, Guest Book and Contacts. [9]



Fig. 5. Web page of the Berzovia's info touristic center
Source: www.infoberzovia.ro

The last communication material studied is the journal of Berzovia. The journal is free distributed every month and contains four pages of general information, poems, interviews, traditions, customs and quotes of the mayor, representative images of festive events in the commune. It has the standard format of the magazines of the Journalists Union from historical Banat and comprises the emblem of Berzovia, above, on the left, next to the journal title.



Fig. 6. Jurnal de Berzovia (octombrie 2015)
Source: Public administration of Berzovia archive

CONCLUSIONS

A communication strategy is to create a solid relationship between the rural public administration and the local community by adapting the message through the media to its audience.

The design of the advertising materials for publications, banners, posters, leaflets, brochures, it was intended to have a unity of conception and message through the use of distinctive images (logo, slogan).

Following the development of social networking sites, an effective solution to increase awareness is by creating and managing an official fan page of the commune on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, for communicating the information about village life and events of general interest, to reach the youth and the urban residents, whose access and orientation towards social media is widespread.

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