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COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS OF TOURISM SLOGANS³¹

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes effectiveness of tourism slogans from the perspective of communication strategies and semiotics. In the context of marketing, slogans indicate short phrases that communicate descriptive or persuasive information about the brand. Tourism slogans are one of the best ways to communicate tourism destination image to the market. This paper analyzes the complex issue of tourism advertising from the perspective that puts emphasis on slogans as semiotically structured signs. After the introductory section the paper discusses various approaches to the analyses of tourism slogans. It is followed by describing the issues in tourist destination communication, i.e. the larger social, political, economic, and cultural climate in which tourist destinations create their images and project their voices. They include the "opportune moment" for communications, the need to understand and capitalize on the psychology of constituencies, the best mix of communication channels and the ethical dimension of tourism industry communication. Tourist destination needs to pay attention to communication strategies because missed opportunities and potentially dangerous threats to industry performance are the unwanted alternatives. The paper then considers the possibilities for applying communication strategies on Croatian tourism industry. However, the adoption of slogans (the key part of a communication strategy), as most of other decisions related to Croatian tourism, causes many disputes.

Key words: communication strategies, communication effectiveness, slogan, tourism promotion, Croatian tourism.

³¹ Review article

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we deal with the issue of the effectiveness of communication in tourism or its contents, which are seen from a different perspective, with an emphasis on strategic communication and its semiotic immanence. The content of the communication process in the tourism industry are the messages transmitted towards the tourist market. In tourism, the key messages are the tourism slogans of the destinations that seek to position themselves strategically through advertising. Therefore, this paper will start with the theoretical explication of the efficiency and structure of organizational communication in tourist destinations. This will be followed by the issue of advertising in tourism and its purpose to present a clear and convincing message (a slogan), to the market. Advertising is, in fact, information communication and tourism is important because of the perceptive planning of communication. Finally, we will deal with the strategic communication, which in the saturated tourism offer nowadays aims to develop identity, image and reputation of tourist destinations.

Since without content there is no communication, there is a question of its comprehensive understanding so that tourist destinations communications can achieve the set goals through slogans. For that reason this paper is specifically focused on the study of tourism slogan from a semiotic perspective. Specifically, we will try to view a complex issue of tourism advertising as an integral part of the promotional mix (Harrel, 2008) from a different perspective. It primarily puts emphasis on slogans as structured semiotic signs rather than observing them as functionally based sales propositions, regardless of their uniqueness. Such an approach is in keeping with the tradition of cognitive linguistics, later extended to semiotics, which is based on the most recent theory of metaphor, which was originally developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This new approach represented a radical shift from former merely rhetorical and stylistic practice, which often regarded the metaphor as a redundant language ornament. It opened a new perspective where the metaphor came to be seen as a primarily cognitive phenomenon that affects the basic processes of human thinking and, consequently, universal understanding of our environment.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS

The concept of communication comes from the Latin word *communis*, which means common. Communication and communication processes are studied through numerous scientific disciplines, and, accordingly, there are many definitions of the term. Communication involves interaction between the sender and the receiver regarding the contents of the communication process, i.e. information or messages. Thus, communication can be defined as the process of transferring information or message from the sender to the recipient. Most of the usual activities of humankind include communication. However, in order to fulfil its purposes, communication needs to be effective, which means senders and receivers should share the codes of understanding the message.

Vreg (2002) in his article *European Culture and Tourism Communication* defines communication as a convergent process in which senders and receivers exchange information. According to him, it is a situation of interaction dependence. Persuasion is interactional in attempting to meet the needs of both parties in the communication process, i.e. the one who convinces and the one who has to be convinced. He maintains that the tourism communication policy of a particular tourist destination depends on national policy and its objectives and on the evaluation of other factors in the communication process. They include the media and techniques available and the characteristics of the audience and communication situations in which messages are received. The contents of communication policy in tourism, as highlighted by Vreg, are usually designed as the result of a compromise between the pressure of the state policy and the potential reactions of the tourist market.

Organizational communication represents processes used by an organization in order to convey information about itself. Argenti and Forman (2002) in *The Power of Corporate Communication* define organizational communication as forms of expression and concepts with which an organization is presented to the market, or to existing and potential customers. According to them, organizational communication deals with issues related to - identity, image, reputation, advertising, and communication in crisis situations.

Communication affects all the relationships an organization is involved in because its very survival depends on the ability of managing communication with investors, business partners, human resources, consumers and other interested parties. The effectiveness of organizational communication,

according to Argent and Forman (2002), depends on the fulfilment of the following preconditions:

- consideration of broader social, and especially political, economic and cultural environment
- in which organizations operate;
- creation of appropriate conditions for communication;
- understanding of the market;
- selection of communication channels;
- taking responsibility for the ethics of communication.

Effective communication involves reducing unnecessary 'red tape', because a cumbersome bureaucracy makes it difficult for the communication process and creates procedures that slow the adoption of strategic decisions.

A department in charge of communication should contribute to the result of the organization. The task of this department is to develop a message that is properly displayed. Confusion in communications, for example, in tourism, in terms of conveying messages to investors contradictory to those directed to tourists is not desirable. One of the initial problems in designing the department of communication is whether it is necessary to keep all the activities of the communication process centralized or the activities should be decentralized and left to the individual structural units of a particular system to decide how to manage the communication in the best way (Argenti & Forman, 2002). The centralized function allows organizations to control easily the activities of communication. Decentralized functions, on the other hand, gives the individual structural units the opportunity to shape such function according to their own needs, not to the needs of a tourist destination as a whole. The move towards centralization may reflect an increased demand of tourist destinations to react quickly, focusing on the problems that affect the whole tourist destination. On the other hand, the choice between centralization or decentralization usually comes down to assessing the size of a tourist destination. Perhaps the best structure is the combination of a strong centralized system and a decentralized network of operations that maintain coherent communication while adapting the function to the specific needs of independent structural units.

Given the complexity and inherent heterogeneity of organizational structures, communication in tourist destinations is not unique. The structure of tourist destinations is affected by the interaction of domicile communities, executive authorities (local, regional, national), the tourism sector and tourists. In this context, the communication within the organizational structure of tourist destinations (internal communication) is complex and

heterogeneous. The effectiveness of internal communication is difficult to determine, because it turned out that in practice, many programs have failed regardless of the quality of procedures and management practices (Oliver, 2001). As tourist destinations are characterized by a low degree of formalism and centralism, internal communication cannot be subjected to the rules that would be widely accepted.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF TOURISM ADVERTISING

Increasing competition offers a variety of options to consumers, but without a positive effect on many tourist destinations. The consumer gets a choice, becoming a focal point of the market. Holloway and Robinson (1995) argue that the most important organizational question is: "Why should consumers buy the product of an organization and not from its competitors?" However, a long term success of a tourist destination demands clear understanding of how potential tourists react to a number of variables when deciding on consumption.

Advertising means a paid use of the media, which seeks to improve the reputation of the organization as a whole, not only to promote its partial products. A successful presentation of a tourist destination as a whole may have a positive impact on the efficient reaching of its objectives. Advertising may reinforce the reputation of a tourist destination among consumers and increase the overall value of the tourism product. However, according to Stanley (1991), no organization can mislead the public with excessive publicity. Advertising should be strategic, i.e., oriented towards the future in accordance with the offer of a tourist destination on the market. Advertising may be in conflict with other forms of communication, which can produce an unclear image of a tourist destination among interested parties. Since advertising can tell a story about the destination as a whole, it can also be used for the purpose of simplifying its image with tourists.

Advertising should strive for presenting a clear and convincing message to key stakeholders, i.e. tourists, investors, human resources and domestic community. Although it may be the best way for a tourist destination to introduce itself directly to the market, advertising can never be impartial. Moreover, the message is highly affected by the media (newspapers, magazines, television and radio shows) it appears in (Argenti & Forman, 2002). Choosing a communication channel should therefore be appropriate. Advertisements often fail to point out a clear message about the value of a tourist destination as a whole. People can remember the message, designed to attract attention, but they can forget, and even fail to acknowledge the

actual content of the message. However, advertising still represents one of the most effective ways to convey a message.

According to Vreg (2002) information and communication are used in tourism advertising. Information and communication help us understand the facts and data, as much as travel ideas. In reality, a tourist is exposed to a variety of information and influence - geographical, historical, cultural, and other information, offering facts or objective information about the environment, weather, prices, inflation, traffic, and other intentional information and comments with their persuasive role. An individual wants to find out as many facts as possible about the desired destination. He is interested in different types of information in order to create an opinion about the events in a country. Individuals as independent personalities actively seek for information and they are not just passively exposed to the activities of the media or other sources of information. Information diversity in the media environment can lead an individual to look deliberately for dissonant facts and opinions, which has been proved by numerous studies.

Of particular relevance are the ways in which potential tourists look for relevant information on which they base their decisions. Tourist destinations have to move their offering potentials closer to consumers. However, communication with the market can be useless if it fails to recognize who the consumers are and how they behave. In tourism, as in any other economic sector, it is necessary to know all aspects of consumers' behaviour in the targeted market. Different markets require different approaches (Vellas & Becherel, 1999). Professionals in advertising must understand why people go on vacation. However, they also need to understand why each of them opt for Croatia, while others choose to go to Spain, Italy, Greece or other competitive tourist destinations. It is unlikely that a tourism product will attract in the same way all types of potential tourists.

Perceiving a tourism product by a tourist can also be analyzed psychologically. In fact, communication, from the theoretical point of view, is based on the models of observation in clinical psychology (Oliver, 2001). Porter's (1985) theory of competitive advantages can be applied to perceptual communication planning. Perceptive planning is a technique that identifies gaps in the market for detecting the need for new products or competing products in terms of specific characteristics such as price and quality. This is a useful concept in integrating marketing communications with the organizational communication of a tourist destination. Porter's theory of competitive advantages suggests that it is important for a tourist destination to understand how its physical, human, financial and invisible aspects must be subjected to a common overall assessment. From the

perspective of the planning process, the communication processes must integrate the main values of a tourist destination.

In conclusion, a tourist destination uses advertising in order to inform the market about its tourist product, but also to convey a message about its values, not necessarily in an objective way.

TOURISM SLOGANS

Slogan, as a term derives from a Celtic expression *Slaugham-ghairm*, a battle cry or a call to individual gathering of Scottish Highland clans, which was used on the battlefield in order to encourage each other in attack and provoke the enemy. Later, after being accepted throughout Europe, it served to the members of the same group as a password of mutual recognition at night or in battle. By the 18th century the word slogan had started being used among native speakers of English in the sense of the distinctive note of any person or group of persons (Denham, 1850 qtd.in Shankle, 1941).

In the area of marketing the slogan refers to a short expression that conveys descriptive or convincing information about a brand. Slogans and other elements of the brand, such as name and logo, produce effective interaction and are offered to the consumer as “a hook” that helps in capturing the essence of the promotional campaign (Keller, 2003). In the same way tourism slogans are often defined as one of the best ways of transferring the tourist image of a particular country to the travelling public (Lee, Cai & O’Leary, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that most advertising campaigns, designed to promote cities or countries as tourist destinations, are focused on slogans as the central guiding principle of the campaign. To be effective, such a slogan has to fulfil two assumptions. These include content and style, which means that a successful slogan must transfer a 'unique selling proposition' in a pleasant and memorable way. Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is a term that was originally developed by Reeves (1961), which divides the USP in three components: the benefit obtained by purchasing a product, its uniqueness that singles it out from the competition and the power to encourage the target audience (Reeves, 1961).

So far different approaches have been offered to the analysis of tourism slogans but here focus will be given on a few authors who have offered empirical research, covering a large number of destinations at a given time. They mostly use the USP criteria as a framework for analysis. Richardson and Cohen (1993) offered a coherent model by developing a four level scale when analyzing the slogans of individual states in the US. Level 0 refers to slogans without USP, level 1 to the statements calling for the purchase of products; level 2 to those who point out how good the product is; level 3 to

the statements that express the quality of the product, although not unique, and level 4 which meets all the USP criteria. There are also four other criteria by which the USP differs from other propositions: (1) claims about the product that are either true or false; (2) there is only one such claim or several thematically coherent ones; (3) the customer is informed of the product benefits; and (4) the claims about benefits are unique. Various authors in their analysis of tourism slogan apply the methodology based on the USP with standard tolerances. For example, Lee et al. (2006) in the analysis of 46 slogans in the United States have divided them into five categories:

1. Buy us because we are good (Come Find Idaho; Genuine Nebraska).
2. Common attribute-based (Missouri- Where the river runs; Arkansas - The Natural State).
3. Unique attribute-focused (Arizona- Grand Canyon State; Colorado- Totally Winteractive).
4. Exclusive appeal (Virginia is for Lovers; I Love New York).
5. Average Joe (Delaware – The First State; New Jersey and You Perfect Together).

Miller and Henthorne (2010) in their analysis of Caribbean slogans generally observe similar categories, but by complementing textual analysis with images and by comparing the previous slogans for the same destinations, they identify various development strategies.

Level 1: Buy our product (Your Cayman Islands. Discover our Islands; Travel Guyana).

Level 2: Our product is good (It's better in the Bahamas; Bermuda – Feel the Love).

Level 3a: Virtually any country could claim the same attribute (Antigua & Barbuda - The beach is just the beginning; British Virgin Islands - Nature's Little Secrets).

Level 3b: Many claim the same attribute (Guadeloupe - Archipelago of Discoveries; St. Martin - The Friendly Island).

Level 4a: Unique product attribute which is not a product benefit (Grenada - The Spice of the Caribbean; Maagical St. Maartin).

Level 4b: Unique selling proposition (Belize - Mother Nature's Best Kept Secret; Suriname -The Beating Heart of the Amazon)

Pike (2004), implements the criteria of classification offered by Guba (1978), which suggests internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of

slogans as the ideal target, and offers quite a different set of criteria relying on the value attributed propositions.

- Functional destination attributes: ‘Tropical North Queensland – where rainforest meets the reef’; ‘Hurunui – alpine Pacific triangle’.
- Affective qualities: ‘Brisbane – its happening’; ‘West Virginia – wild and wonderful’.
- Travel motivation benefits: ‘Hawaii – the island of Aloha’; ‘Ruapehu – where adventure begins’.
- Market segmentation: ‘Dive into the heart of exotic Micronesia’; ‘Hawkes Bay – wine country’.
- Symbols of self expression: ‘If travelling is your passion, Brazil is your destiny’; ‘Pack your six senses – come to Peru’.
- Countering risk: ‘Cuba – peaceful, safe and healthy tourism’.
- Brand leadership: ‘Zambia – the real Africa’, ‘Egypt – where history began and continues’; ‘Eastland – first to see the light’.
- Focus: ‘Kalgoorlie-Boulder – gold capital of Australia’; ‘Auckland – city of sails’.
- Unfocus: ‘Curacao – in the Southern Caribbean. Real. Different’; ‘Ecuador – nature, culture, adventure and travel’; ‘Take time to discover Bundaberg, Coral Coast and country’.
- Combinations of the above: ‘Northland Naturally – first region of New Zealand’; ‘Michigan. Great Lakes. Great times’.

Of course, individual solutions in the above mentioned examples can be questioned because of their ambiguity and multidirectionality. However, the intent of this paper is not to praise or criticize the existing approaches to the analysis and categorization of slogans, since they indicate specific aspects of slogans through a different point of view of the researchers.

A SEMIOTIC APPROACH TO CONCEPTUAL MAPPINGS IN TOURISM ADVERTISING

A semiotic approach that is proposed in this paper as a different model of analysis is based on several theoretical assumptions. The first is generally understood as an anthropological categorization and prototype thinking as primary aspects of human cognition (Lakoff, 1987). From its beginnings, humans race is faced with its environment by placing it in appropriate categories, starting with binary oppositions (edible-inedible, friendly-hostile, male-female, etc.) as the easiest way of categorizing. Binary oppositions, including marked and unmarked forms together with the commutation test,

lie at the foundation of semiotic analysis or analysis of any structure of sign systems (Chandler, 2002). Commutation test, in particular, makes selection from a paradigm of different signifiers and their attributed signifieds which are possible in a given syntagmatic order. Simply said, in the context of a tourism slogan we check the possibility of including a variety of possible concepts that would fit in their value propositions.

The notion of concept lies in the core of the conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive linguistics, later extended to cognitive semiotics. It started being developed in the last decades of the previous century, mostly based on the theoretical assumptions of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The main idea of the theory is that metaphors are not just mere language ornaments (previously often considered redundant and an obstacle to clear understanding), but on the contrary, they appeared to be a natural way of human thinking and therefore are omnipresent in language and thoughts. Most of them are based on our bodily experience as a human race, which was later transferred with its entire language repository mostly, but not exclusively, into the abstract categories of human reasoning and cognition. This metaphorical transfer occurs within the process of mapping from source to target domains, where the former is a metaphorical expression and the latter is its meaning. For example, a conceptual mapping TIME IS MONEY is possible because we talk about the target TIME by comparing it with MONEY, where both can be spent, saved, wasted, etc.

A similar methodology was used in our previous research (Sušac, 2013) of the most dominant categories used in tourism slogans of national tourist boards on global scale. The assumption was that numerous language solutions used in presenting tourist destinations with a highly condensed proposition could be reduced to a limited number of ‘umbrella terms’ or source domain categories leading to our desired image of a tourist destination as GOOD or POSITIVE. This methodology also follows a basis semiotic pattern that a sign is everything that stands for something else – in this case a real or imagined quality and attractiveness of a tourist destination. It includes not just metaphorical, but also metonymical mappings that unlike metaphors occur within one single conceptual domain (e.g. A PART FOR A WHOLE).

The research corpus contained more than a hundred slogans of national and regional tourist boards, mostly presented during the World Tourism Fair (WTM) in London in 2012, which were classified through the corresponding conceptual mappings. As already established in the aforementioned analyzes, one slogan could lead to more value propositions (Pike, 2004), so that some of them, where applicable, were categorized under more than one

mapping. Moreover, it revealed that the most recent tourist slogans are grouped within just a few dominant concepts.

The analysis showed that most dominant concepts derived from tourism slogans are clustered around the idea of a tourist destination as SUPERNATURAL, (Kerala. God's own country; Live your myth in Greece; Iceland is my spiritland; India. Eternally yours; North Cyprus – Timeless beauty; Magical Kenya; Zimbabwe –a world of wonders...) UNIQUE (Uniquely Singapore; Australia. A different light; There's no place like Hong Kong; Sicilia. Everything else is in the shade; Ireland – Awaken to a different world; Bulgaria - Unique in its diversity; Nicaragua – unica... original! ...) AUTHENTIC (Cuba autentica; Costa Rica – no artificial ingredients; Croatia - The Mediterranean as it once was; Montenegro - Experience the wild beauty; 100% Pure New Zealand; Malta–Truly Mediterranean...) and UNDISCOVERED (Discover the unexpected Luxembourg; Serbia - Discover undiscovered; Romania – explore the Carpathian garden; Peru – empire of hidden treasures; Sierra Leone – the freedom to explore; Come to Bangladesh before the tourists...). However, in most of the cases the slogans that lie behind these concepts reveal very few unique selling propositions that would distinguish them from the competition, but on the contrary, they remain at the level of mere declarations of their own 'qualities'. What is it then that makes them unique, natural or authentic? Surprisingly or not, unsorted slogans (which resisted any kind of common categorization) appeared to be 'more unique', not because they merely declare themselves as such, but because they show it. For example, the slogan Holland - add some orange plays with a unique symbolic feature of the destination - orange, placing it in a very effective, but rarely used, concept of a delicious meal or a drink. Colombia (The only risk is wanting to stay) really risks by pointing out the negative stereotype of itself as a dangerous destination, turning it into a positive concept of honesty. California (Find yourself here), on the other hand, uses a very effective and very simple way of promoting the idea of individualism it is normally associated with, combining it with the dominant tourist concept of exploration and getting to know ourselves.

The mentioned results of analysis also implied a question whether a slogan should be based on exclusively unique semiotic concepts in order to express a unique selling proposition? Not necessarily as the cognitive theory of metaphor recognizes not just fresh and new concepts, but also some original language solutions within existing old concepts. What is so unique about Belarus when being promoted within the 'worn out' concept of friendship and 'hospitality beyond borders'. It simply reverses the negative

stereotype of an isolated European country in a positive self-irony where hospitality is placed within a 'new' environment.

In conclusion, this different semiotic approach to the analysis of slogans showed that the conceptual theory of metaphor can be complementary to the existing models. It does not imply that all slogans are inherently metaphorical, but it shows that we can use the same methodology for the identification of the central concepts shared by many different slogans and transfer them to the idea of an attractive tourist destination as our target concept or domain. There are multiple benefits from this approach. In the first place, when we realize that slogans are conceptually structured, it can help us in creating original language solutions within existing concepts or may lead us to create fresh and new concepts, which will promote the advantages of a tourist destination in the best and different way. This also suggests that a very useful strategy lies in combining several existing concepts within a single slogan, so that fused elements can create an original image of a destination. Shortly, the formula is very simple – discovering the ways the slogans are structured can help us create efficient communication strategies for any tourist destination.

TOURISM INDUSTRY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The idea of the application of strategic communication in tourism is taken from the strategic destination management. However, while strategic management in tourism deals, first of all, with issues concerning profitability and general economic issues, the communication strategy, on the other hand, is aimed at the development of identity, image and reputation of tourist destinations.

In order to achieve satisfactory results in communication processes for a particular tourist destination, there is a need to develop its communication strategy, which includes the process of setting objectives, guidelines for implementing the strategy and the criteria for its evaluation (Bunja, 2002). The effectiveness of communication strategy depends on those who are responsible for its implementation, markets and channels that seek to reach specific market segments and key messages (Rouse & Rouse, 2001) – or slogans. Tourist destinations should adopt the practice of strategic communication or may otherwise be faces with missed opportunities (Bunja, 2015). It can threaten the profitability of tourism related activities in the destination and ultimately high price may be paid as a result of neglecting adequate communication.

Communication strategies, in general, tourism included, may have offensive or defensive character. Strategic communication in modern

tourism includes tourism advertising and the management of identity, image and reputation of a tourist destination.

The identity of a tourist destination is a concrete manifestation of its reality. If there are a wide variety of tourist destinations with identical attributes, then the identity is a category that makes difference. Tourists are beginning to be aware of the differences that are not based on the product itself but on ideas. The identity achieves the strongest possible communication effect, because it enhances tourists' memory of the destination. The image of a destination is the way it is perceived by tourists and others who are in a certain relation to tourist destinations. Associations and impressions that remain after interaction with tourist destination create its image. This image is based on how individuals or groups of people perceive the destination. Reputation, although an intangible category, affects the results of the tourist destination. Reputation has important strategic repercussions for the tourist destination because it draws attention to the attractive properties of destinations and increases its competitive features, such as pricing policies or similar.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have dealt with the complex issues of creating the content of the communication process in tourism in an interdisciplinary way. In other words, we have tried to show that the cognitive theory of conceptual metaphor can serve as a tool not only for the analysis but also for the creation of slogans and that may be complementary to the existing models. The benefit of this approach is manifold. First of all, when we realize that tourism slogans are conceptually structured, it can help in the creation of original language solutions within existing concepts or may lead us to create fresh and new concepts that will promote the benefits of the best tourist destinations in a different way. This also suggests that a very useful strategy lies in combining several existing concepts within a single slogan, so that amalgamated elements can create an original image of the destination.

The primary applicative purpose of this paper is to suggest to decision makers in tourism in Croatia, as well as in other tourist destinations, that in developing communication strategies for the design of slogans the semiotic model presented in the previous sections can be a useful model or an alternative.

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