

The image for Albanians from the reflection of Mother Teresa's sanctification in Italian media

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Abstract

The image is a phenomenon that has always been an interest to human beings, although in recent years it has become a primary subject of conservation. What other people think about us or even what we think of them is based on the interaction we have with others in our daily lives. In this paper, the image will be seen beyond the interpersonal level, and the aim of a country's image as part of a country's public diplomacy will be explained. The purpose of this paper is to understand the way in which the coverage of Mother Teresa's consecration has affected Albania's image. The research question here is what the Italian media have had in influencing Albania's image using their point of view. The main Italian newspapers: Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, and La Repubblica have been selected for this paper within a two-year period, analyzing 41 articles published about Mother Teresa. Findings testify that these three newspapers have had great media coverage and in most cases, did not hide the origin of the Saint Mother Teresa, writing in the title that she was Albanian. Such an event of a person with powerful universal values positively affects the image of Albanians throughout the world.

Keywords: *Mother Theresa, the image of Albanians, Corriere della Sera, la Repubblica, la Stampa, Vatican, sanctification.*

The creation of an image of a country

Building the country's image in the period in which we live is a very important issue both at the personal, institutional and state

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level. Designing a positive image of foreign audiences for a country means convenience in achieving its foreign policy goals. The overwhelming public opinion in these countries can be indirectly influenced in creating a friendly policy, while there may be benefits in different areas. "The purpose of this communication is political and economic, but also cultural. Through external communication, state and non-state actors aim to create political alliances to achieve foreign policy goals as well as trade, tourism benefits, investment growth, cultural benefits, and the delivery of their values¹. "The term image usually means an image, a figure or a parable of a man, an item, a phenomenon, etc., reproduced in the human mind based on previous perceptions and impressions, without being this man, thing or thing etc.² While a nation's image can be understood as a hardened bias, and this does not happen suddenly, it is often created in long historical processes.³ In his book *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*, one of the most renowned scholars Michael Kunczik says the process begins with some experience in the early life of man; in school, in children's books, fairy tales and leisure literature, theater and may include accounts made by relatives, acquaintances, and friends.⁴ Raising the image, according to Joseph Nye, which has created the so-called "soft power" term today, and which includes many elements that foreign policy must use to create a country a good reputation, requires a variety of activities to make

¹ Hasan Saliu, "The new nature of Cultural Diplomacy in the age of online communication" *Journal of Media Critiques*, 2017, vol.3. n.10. doi: 10.17349/jmc117206 <http://mediacritiques.net/index.php/jmc/article/view/139/91>

² Fjalori i gjuhës së sotme shqipe, Akademia e Shkencave të RPS të Shqipërisë Tiranë, 1980, f.714.

³ Michael Kunczik, *Globalization: News media, images of nations and the flow of international capital with special reference to the role of rating agencies*, DUI, 2001. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46966/2001-02-Globalization.pdf>

⁴ Michael Kunczik, *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates-Publishers Mahwah, 1997, f. 1.

external opinions *want what we want as well*.⁵ Art, culture, exchanges or well-known personalities have served as tools for shaping the image of a nation. All these elements are included in public diplomacy activities. The word public diplomacy dates back to the middle of the 19th century. Different authors at different times have defined public diplomacy in different ways. Even nowadays, a single definition of this term cannot be given. It can be said that a public diplomacy is a form of communication aimed at foreign citizens, so citizens of other countries. "Public diplomacy today means the communication of state and non-state actors, non-governmental organizations, corporations, individuals, etc. - with the foreign public, with the aim of informing, influencing and engaging in achieving the country's political and economic objectives".⁶

Public diplomacy has three main dimensions used to achieve the goals set by the actors of communication. The dimensions of public diplomacy are classified as follows:

1. Daily news management, response to current developments, which is an activity within hours and days;
2. Strategic communication, which means sending messages to foreign public by focusing on weekly and monthly activities to influence perceptions of external opinions;
3. Establishing long-term relationships, which requires years of activities to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation.⁷

In this paper, interest is the third dimension, including cultural diplomacy as a form of influence of external publics, recognizing them with the values of the country that uses this form of public diplomacy. Joseph Nye defines culture as a set of values and

⁵ Hasan Saliu, "International image of the country through strategic communication, Case of Kosovo", *Journal of Media Critiques*. University of Lincoln, UK. 2017. Vol.3 No.9. doi: 10.17349/jmc117105
<http://mediacritiques.net/index.php/jmc/article/view/113>

⁶ Hasan Saliu, *Komunikimi në diplomacinë publike – soft power-i dhe imazhi ndërkombëtar i Kosovës*, Kolegji AAB, Prishtinë, 2015, p. 5.

⁷ Po aty, f. 50.

practices that give meaning to a society. It may appear in several forms. Usually, it is divided into elite culture including literary, art, education and folk culture which focuses on entertainment of the masses.⁸ The introduction of these values aims at creating an image in the minds of foreigners, but that undoubtedly takes a long time to achieve the desired effects. Creating a positive national brand is a need in the century we live in as today the whole world is a marketplace.⁹

The rapid development of globalization means that any country tries to attract business investors, tourists, visitors, students, key events, researchers, travel writers, and talented entrepreneurs. Any country trying to export products, services, policies, culture, and ideas has been difficult when the image of the country has been weak or negative, while the opposite has happened if the image of the country is strong and positive.

Media is an important element in this process as it enables us to disseminate our message to the target audience. New technological developments have made the information circulate more easily, and as a result, it is more difficult to control the message you are sending to the target audience. Everyone today can get the information they want for everyone and for everything or as Volton says, "Everybody is inside the world."¹⁰ As stated above, the goal of all international communication is to create a certain image for certain reasons.

To achieve attracting the attention of international media is difficult, especially when it comes to small countries and without impact on global politics such as our country, except for negative news that is attractive to foreign media when reporting to Albania. Popular sports (popular) can also influence the

⁸ Joseph S. Nye, JR, *Soft Power – The means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, f.11.

⁹ Simon Anholt, *Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations*

<https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=exchange>

¹⁰ Dominique Wolton, *Të Shpëtojme Komunikimin*, Papirus, Tiranë, 2009, p. 142.

communication of values.¹¹ The values and attitudes of these characters can be associated with the values of the nation itself. Everything is based on perceived perception, because not everyone is able to see how reality is in a given country. So the image is often created only by what the public hear from the media for a particular location. Often this image may not coincide with the reality of a country. "It's not important, but what people have in their head."¹²

So, perceptions are created by the way the media poses an issue. The media itself is influenced by a number of factors when selecting what events to reflect and what are news in these events. The media creates a frame where it sets the event or a "frame" if referring to Goffman. Frames are the principles of selection, emphasis and presentation in accordance with the theories of silence about what exists, what happens and what matters. Frame is considered organizer of the central idea that gives meaning to an event or issue.¹³ The media structure in this way not only what we see but how to see it. Elihu Katz says the media teaches us not only how to think, but what to think about.¹⁴

We all think from the macrostructures imposed on us by the society we are part of. We want or not we, from the moment we are born, to comply with the rules and norms pre-stipulated by society. Our world gets meaning from these rules. As soon as we are born we come up with a set of rules that serve as a guide to understanding the world around us, to communicate. Journalists are also part of this society and as such are influenced by social

¹¹ Joseph S. Nye, JR, *Soft Power – The means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, f.47.

¹² Professor Israel D. Nebenzahl, *National Image and Competitive Advantage pdf*, The College of Judea & Samaria, Palestrealizadana ESPM-SP em 25/jul /2017 http://www2.espm.br/sites/default/files/pagina/palestra_prof_nebenzahl_25jul2007.pdf

¹³ <http://cjms.fims.uwo.ca/issues/02-01/salwm.pdf>

¹⁴ Francise Balle, *Mediat dhe Shoqëritë*, Papirus, Tiranë, 2011, p. 699.

norms and rules. In pursuit of this logic we understand that the information we receive from the media is structured on the basis of structures imposed by society. But, but not only. There are other forces like the government, the economy, international relations, and so on. All of this information we codify in accordance with our background and cultivation. "We all sail through the complexity of the modern world armed with a few simple clichés and they form the backdrop of our thoughts, although we are not fully convinced of them and we do not always accept them."¹⁵ Perception is accomplished through decoding as it does not is simply the result of external sensory stimulation. This explains the importance of the cultural context which gives the ultimate meaning of scattered messages.¹⁶

But the media give a glimpse of a certain place to many of the world's public. Man, often creates different imaginations for places he has never been to.¹⁷ We often do not have the time to get to know more in-depth and more deeply about what's happening in the world because of our daily engagements, just as Simon Anholt says in his work *Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations*. We often judge from what we have heard from the media about a certain place.

"Most of us are too busy worrying about ourselves and our country that we do not have the time to form a complete and balanced picture for about six billion people and almost two hundred countries. We make generalizations for the majority overwhelming people and places we do not know ... When you do not have time to read a book, you judge it by its cover "¹⁸

¹⁵ Anholt, vep. cit.

<https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=exchange>

¹⁶ Francise Balle, *Mediat dhe Shoqëritë*, Papirus, Tiranë. 2011, p. 698.

¹⁷ Hasan Saliu, *Komunikimi Në Diplomacinë Publike – Soft power-i dhe imazhi ndërkombëtar i Kosovës*, Kolegji Universitar AAB, Prishtinë, 2015. p. 70.

¹⁸ Anholt, vep.cit.

<https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=exchange>

In other words, the media can be considered as the biggest influence on image shaping, if not the main, the idea that protects and Kunczik. Pierre Bourdieu says that all fields of cultural production are currently under the influence of the field of journalism.¹⁹

The information we receive from the media helps us to create a perception of reality. Much of the citizens cannot have direct contact with a foreign country or with developments in the outside world and therefore refer to any information received from the media, which is often dependent on governmental information.²⁰ The view that the media has for a given country is also the perspective of the audience of that medium. Often, reporting on foreign affairs by the media determines which is the predominant image of a culture or state.

The reflection of Mother Theresa's Sanctification in Italian Media

Under the patronage of Pope Francis, the ceremony of the consecration of Mother Teresa was held on September 4, 2016, in St. Peter's Square in Rome. As announced, on the first Sunday of September, a nun of Albanian origin known throughout the world for her charitable works, was proclaimed Saint. The ceremony was attended by famous personalities from all over the world as well as the leaders of 13 countries.²¹ This event drew media attention and many people around the world whether they were Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or any other religion. The ceremony was attended by 27 foreign delegations and

¹⁹ Pierre Bordieu, *Mbi Televizionin*, West Print, Tiranë, 2015, p. 74.

²⁰ Saliu, *Komunikimi në diplomacinë publike*, vep. Cit.

²¹ Corriere della Sera, 'Madre Teresa, attesi centomila fedeli domenica stop ai voli su San Pietro' http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/16_settembre_02/madre-teresa-attesi-centomila-fedeli-domenica-stop-voli-san-pietro-1517a390-70fb-11e6-82b3-437d6c137c18.shtml

representatives from various religious communities.²² Media attention was undoubtedly great. *La Stampa* writes:

"The religion that united the church, the government, the Hindus, and the Muslims - is our sanctuary"²³; An event that attracts about 20 million pilgrims from around the world.²⁴ More than 9 million pilgrims have overtaken the holy gates of the four largest basilicas in Rome.²⁵

The Ceremony had a media coverage of Vatican's major events: 600 accredited journalists, including 125 correspondents for online media, 120 for television, direct broadcasts on all official CTV platforms, Vatican Radio, Tv 2000 and Youtube. Vatican Radio also broadcast in Albanian.

The ceremony of Mother Teresa of Calcutta canonization, very important people such as the President of Albania (BujarNishani), Macedonia (Georgia Ivanov) and Kosovo (HashimThaçi), as well as the Queen of Spain Sofia, a personal friend of the new Saint. This information was also written in the *Corriere Della Sera*, which gave a considerable amount of input for this event, along with Mother Teresa's story. The website of this daily news outlet also provided some video footage of the

²² Paolo Rodari, Fabio Butera E Andrea Gualtieri, "Madre Teresa proclamata santa da Papa Francesco: Sempre vicina ai poveri di Calcutta", *La Repubblica*, September 4, 2016. http://www.repubblica.it/vaticano/2016/09/04/news/madre_teresa_santa_a_19_anni_dalla_morte_roma_blindata_per_la_cerimonia-147145290/?ref=search

²³ Paolo Affatato, "L'India si tiene stretta Madre Teresa", *La Stampa*, September 5, 2016. <http://www.lastampa.it/2016/09/05/vaticaninsider/ita/nel-mondo/lindia-si-tiene-stretta-madre-teresa-RpzNB0AZLpTQQnX8BlcsN/pagina.html>

²⁴ Rocca & Paolini, "Giubileo, pellegrini a quota 20 milioni", *La Repubblica*, November 9, 2016. <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2016/11/09/giubileo-pellegrini-a-quota-20-milioniRoma01.html?ref=search>

²⁵ <http://www.lastampa.it/2016/06/11/vaticaninsider/ita/speciale/giubileo-2015/il-sucesso-silenzioso-del-giubileo-della-misericordia-Ga8vV638MmWgPkcHHF89SO/pagina.html>

event, writing: "120,000 in St. Peter for the canonization of Albanian nun ..."²⁶.

From the monitoring of the three daily news outlets, La Repubblica, Corrieredella Sera and La Stampa, it can be seen that media coverage for the sanctification began on 21st of September 2014,²⁷ according to in-depth research of these news reports, and ended on September 26, 2016,²⁸ which when the latest newspapers can be found. In total, 41 different articles were written without including a photo gallery or various video footage and were posted during the ceremony of this sanctification. Corriere Della Sera was seen to have fewer written articles on this topic, meanwhile, the La Stampa news had 30 written articles.

Before this event ever happened, many people may not have heard about Albania and its people, therefore it would not have been easy to avoid these two terms during the broadcast of the ceremony in many world media. This is because, firstly, one of the media outlets that had direct coverage of the event, the Vatican Radio, also broadcasted the event in Albanian²⁹ to honor of the Saint's origins.

Being a well-known and loving person, with her soft-spoken and influential personality, she positively influenced the image of her country. The dedication of Mother Teresa, also known as GoxheBojaxhiu, due to the great media coverage and the great

²⁶ Ester Palma, "Madre Teresa proclamata santa Bergoglio: «Ha messo potenti davanti alle loro colpe» Capi di Stato e fedeli. L'analisi: la suora «tutor» del Papato", Corriere della Sera, http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/16_settembre_04/centomila-s-pietro-madre-teresa-santa-1500-poveri-prima-fila-5cb2fcec-7275-11e6-9754-0294518832f8.shtml

²⁷ <http://www.lastampa.it/2014/09/21/vaticaninsider/ita/news/la-battuta-del-papa-sullenergia-di-madre-teresa-aV7TSPKnVP1iPv4g0scIK/pagina.html>

²⁸ <http://www.lastampa.it/2016/09/26/vaticaninsider/ita/news/la-spiritualit-di-madre-teresa-in-unapp-OsNWcMAA6VxegBb2qCtVj/pagina.html>

²⁹ http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/16_settembre_04/centomila-s-pietro-madre-teresa-santa-1500-poveri-prima-fila-5cb2fcec-7275-11e6-9754-0294518832f8.shtml

value she represents, increased the overall portrayal of Albania and its people. Soft power is the ability to influence others by enchantment. Soft power means creating values that others admire and serve as an example for them. The founder of this concept, Joseph Nye, in the highly quoted monograph *Soft Power, The Means to Success in World Politics*, summarizes that when you make others admire your ideals and love what you want, then you should not invest on sticks and carrots to move others in that desired direction.³⁰

Mother Teresa's presentation as an Albanian in front of a large audience attending the ceremony, as well as the media coverage, allowed her message to be spread and sent to other remote and multi-million-dollar audiences around the world. It was through the media that those who could not be present received information about the event and created their own perceptions from it. The fact that in the international media Albania is mentioned as the birthplace of a Saint like Mother Teresa, no doubt affects the image of Albania and the perception people have of its people. Being a small country whose policy does not affect much in global politics, this event made Albanians and Albania part of the world's media agendas as a counterweight to current reports that mention how Albanians have problems with the law, such as drug trafficking, prostitution network organizers, and so on.

Due to earlier news reports on the negative aspects of Albania and its people, it can be said that the sanctification of Mother Teresa has highlighted another side of Albanians, that of universal values. The nationality of the Saint and Albania in all the articles found was mentioned 24 times and was mentioned once in the title. The media also creates our perceptions of the issue and how it is being dealt with. The press usually addresses issues or events that arise from public discourse and then

³⁰ Nye, Op. cit.

implement them in media institutions where the power of public interest is strongest³¹. The image of Albanians in Italy is mainly related to the mafia and drugs, so journalists writing the news have a preconceived image already embedded in their heads because of the society they partake in. The canonization ceremony could not be ignored because the public interest for this event was enormous, but despite entering into the media, which then turns this event into a public agenda, formally called the agenda-setting by McCombs. Usually, what appears to be a priority for the news outlets, becomes a priority to a considerable extent for the public.³²

Media in this way puts the spotlight on something by shadowing something else. The same is observed in the media coverage that the Italian media makes about the ceremony of the sanctification. Mother Teresa's nationality is hardly apparent and the scriptures are more focused on what the Pope says about the event, the way of organization, the various stories about the Saint, etc. She is more identified with India as she is constantly termed "Mother Teresa of Calcutta" because she lived and died there. Unlike *La Stampa* and *La Repubblica*, the other daily news, *Corriere Della Sera*, does not mention the nationality of Mother Teresa in any of the written articles about this issue but do mention the fact that personalities from Albania have attended the ceremony and that the Vatican radio also broadcasted the ceremony in Albanian.

The portals under consideration focus more on the attributes of Mother Teresa by shadowing her family, her background and focusing on the works she has done all over the world to present

³¹ Noshina, Saleem. "U.S. Media Framing of Foreign Countries Image: An Analytical Perspective". *Canadian Journal of Media Studies*, Vol. 2(1). 2007. f. 150. <http://cjms.fims.uwo.ca/issues/02-01/saleem.pdf>

³² Craig E. Carroll, & Maxwell McCombs, "Agenda-setting Effects of Business News on the Public's Images and Opinions about Major Corporations", *Corporate Reputation Review*. Vol 6. N.1. 2003, p. 37.

her as a sacred belonging to everyone in the world. Her homeland turns out to be all over the world, so all the states where she has made charitable works, especially in Calcutta, India, are trying to project into the minds of the public that they are the country that can be associated with the most influential figure in the world.

Finally, the importance of all the ceremony of the consecration of Mother Teresa lies in Albania's entry into the international media outlets for such a positive affair. Referring to the fact that Albania has been constantly subject to negative news both in the Italian media and in the other international media, this event brought a new image to Albania by transforming it into the country of origin of a Saint which has done so much for humanity all around the world.

Conclusion

From the collected data, it turns out that the whole ceremony is well-covered because the information given to the audience is outdated. However, it is noticed that Albanian terms and Albania have been rarely used. Certainly, such an event has had an impact on the international image of Albania and its people. The way this story was covered by the papers taken for the study, has had some influence on the image of Albania since the association of Mother Teresa's character with our country is to some extent possible. There is a tendency to ignore the fact that Mother Teresa was Albanian, but it cannot be said whether it was done for certain purposes. To determine this, a further study is needed regarding the nature of the news outlets being considered and their editorial policy, a topic that is not part of the subject matter of this paper. Eventually, events or individuals of such levels, despite attempts to fade or avoid for one reason or another, leaves traces in the memories of anyone who hears about them. These three major Italian newspapers have had a

generally positive approach, though the relationship between the protagonist of the event and its origins has been tended to fade.

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