

EDITORIAL

The year 2020 will surely be remembered as a crisis year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the changes it caused in the functioning of the globalized world, affecting all segments of society, business, economy, social life, education, and even interpersonal relationships. The consequences left by the *lockdown* have permanently changed our views on life and work, as well as enabled faster adaptation to new technologies, digitalization and working remotely. Crisis communication theory teaches us that every crisis is also an opportunity if used wisely. For this reason, these phenomena and their consequences are the subject of scientific research around the world. And on that track was the fourth edition of the international academic conference: *Communication Management Forum 2021: Post-pandemic world - a bad picture or a good opportunity?*, which was held in Zagreb on 19 and 20 March 2021, organized by Edward Bernays University College, the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and the Institute for Tourism.

Conference participants tried to provide answers to questions such as what consequences did the pandemic have on the economy, tourism, business, education; in what direction will societies develop in the future; how will citizens and organizations behave after the pandemic; how were we informed during the pandemic and whom did we trust; how have institutions implemented crisis communication strategies; how staying at home influenced media consumption, but also content creation; what were the effects of distance education, etc.

For this special issue of *Media Research*, after the review procedure, we selected seven interesting and useful papers dedicated to research related to the Covid-19 pandemic, but also the devastating earthquakes that hit Croatia in the same year, which further contributed to the trauma, confusion and uncertainty, as well as the greater unity of Croatian citizens – on the one hand, and crisis communication by national institutions – on the other.

Sunčana Tuksar and Danijel Labaš, in their paper *Every Cloud has a Silver Lining': Humour and Persuasiveness in Social Media Images During Lockdowns*, explore images (memes, GIFs, photos, etc.) consumed by social media users during the lockdown period (March-June 2020), in order to establish a relevant transmedia communicative research model that uses images to contextually document this period. The method they used was visual semiotic analysis, which examines the reliability of coding between images. The results of the research confirm the modal judgments related to the humour construct as a valid document of the pandemic situation, and the research itself can be a model for further narrative cognitions.

Stjepan Lacković, Mateja Šporčić and Marina Baralić, in the paper entitled *War and Apocalypse Metaphors in Media Discourse on the Pandemic and Earthquake in*

Croatia, start from the assumption that metaphors used in the media are not mere rhetorical tools, but that they deeply influence how we conceptualize reality and act on important social issues, as well as explore the use of conceptual metaphors in public discourse related to the corona crisis and the crisis caused by the earthquake in Petrinja.

In the third paper, Milica Vučković, Stana Odak Krsić and Marija Volarević deal with the Communication of Croatian Politicians on Instagram at the Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Towards Whom, How and With What Effect? Using the content analysis method, they analysed the content on the Instagram profiles of ministers and members of the crisis headquarters, as well as the Croatian Prime Minister and President. The analysis determined how and in what way politicians communicate, whether the content is adapted to young people and whether they encourage engagement in their posts, while the method of structured interviews with selected public relations practitioners assessed communication three-dimensionally: in terms of content, public appearance and charisma of politicians on Instagram.

Dejan Gluvačević and Zvonimir Grgas dealt with the consequences of the pandemic on Croatian tourism, i.e. traditional events in the article *The Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Communication of Events in Croatian Tourism*. The results of their research showed that there was a change in communication to some extent, however, not to the extent that it could be established that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the communication activities of event organizers. However, a key innovation in communication is the emphasis on the safety of visitors when organizing events, which could be maintained more permanently.

Marina Mučalo and Anita Šlentić in their article entitled *Radio in the Promotion of Croatian Tourism: The COVID-19 Era and After* deal with the role of radio, as a medium that is especially pronounced in crisis situations, in the Croatian tourist offer. Namely, it is known that Croatia is one of the leading European car destinations, and the habit of listening to the radio while driving is consumed by almost half of the population of the European Union. Therefore, the efforts invested in achieving the best possible tourist results should include radio stations, i.e. their broadcasting of part of their program in foreign languages, especially in the Adriatic Croatia area. However, the research findings indicate a lack of informative and promotional tourist content on the analysed radio stations. The authors rightly conclude that, with a synergy of tourism entities and radio stations, radio could prove to be a reliable business partner.

In their paper, Josip Popovac and Vanja Gavran analyze the impact of the pandemic on the business operations of electronic media in the Republic of Croatia. Their research collected data on the financial impact of the pandemic, but also its impact on the quality of media service providers' programs. Furthermore, the authors obtained

information on the number of employees in the surveyed media who were infected with the COVID-19 virus and the number of deaths, as well as data, i.e. an assessment of the media on how the media themselves informed the public about the pandemic and how the relevant institutions informed the media about the pandemic.

The last academic paper in this special issue, whose authors are Lucijano Jakšić, Krešimir Dabo and Marija Volarević, deals with the analysis of pseudo-events in the strategic communication of higher education in Croatia, which is one of the universal tools in public relations, regardless of the pandemic (when online events were extremely common). The authors investigate the public perception related to selected pseudo-events in Croatian private higher education, which is characterized by high competitiveness and the effectiveness of this type of communication activity in general.

From the wide range of papers submitted, there were other extremely interesting and useful topics, as well as quality research. However, due to the limited space, we were guided by the editorial judgments and ratings of the reviewers, giving priority to the above papers.

An exceptional team of valuable associates from Edward Bernays University College participated in the realization of this issue, and we thank them for their cooperation. Special thanks to the authors and reviewers for their dedicated engagement with the editor and editorial board, as well as the editor-in-chief who made possible dedicating this special issue to *Communication Management Forum 2021*. The other papers of the participants will be published in other journals and in the corresponding conference proceedings.

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Issue Editor