Irina V. Guzhova

The Old Siberian City in New Media

In Search of Cultural Codes

Abstract

New media, as a factor of the globalization process, extend the boundaries and promote intercultural communications. Nowadays, when choosing their travelling destinations, international travellers, no matter who they are (tourists, business people, migrants or students), start by investigating the websites of travel companies and city internet-portals. Therefore, to attract potential visitors to a certain town or city it is essential to present the place in the right way in terms of new media contents.

There is a certain difficulty, however, with the on-line presentation of small towns that have a long history and old architecture. The problem is that the pretension of the new media to *universalism* necessarily conflicts with the positioning of a *unique object*. In other words, for effective on-line positioning and the creation of a unique image for such towns in the minds of potential visitors and investors, it is insufficient to rely only on new media technologies. To prove this proposition, we have investigated a great number of municipal sites belonging to different towns and cities, only to found that they look very much alike. To ensure the effective positioning of a small town on the world wide web, it is necessary to figure out the corresponding visual *culture codes* (U. Eco, N. Luhmann, Y. Lotman, K. Rapay). We will demonstrate that the codes must both reflect the object uniqueness and meet the target audience expectations and stereotypes.

The possibility of using such an approach will examined in this essay by turning to the example of an old Siberian town – Tomsk (founded in 1604). We believe that the wooden architecture of the town has great potential as a visual culture code.