

---

## Communication Management within Community Relations by Local Governments in Poland

---

Submitted 11/11/20, 1st revision 18/12/20, 2nd revision 17/01/21, accepted 18/02/21

Slawomir Gawronski<sup>1</sup>, Kinga Bajorek<sup>2</sup>, Dariusz Tworzydło<sup>3</sup>,  
Anna Karwacka<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The authors show the essence of communication management as part of public relations activities, carried out by specific market entities, such as local government units.

**Design/Approach/Methodology:** This article is the result of a broad, although regional, research conducted in Poland in 2020.

**Findings:** Based on the results of empirical research, the article shows the purposefulness and legitimacy of actions taken by Polish local governments in the field of communication with the market environment, in the context of the impact of community relations.

**Practical Implications:** Local government units with activities referred to as territorial marketing are among the numerous spheres of social life in which the marketing method of management is revealed.

**Keywords:** Public relations, social communication, community relations, environmental stakeholders, local government

**JEL:** M10.

**Paper type:** Research article.

---

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Media and Social Communication, University of Information Technology and Management, Rzeszow, Poland, [sgawronski@wsiz.rzeszow.pl](mailto:sgawronski@wsiz.rzeszow.pl);

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Media and Social Communication, University of Information Technology and Management, Rzeszow, Poland.

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Sciences, University of Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Management, Rzeszow University of Technology, Poland.

## 1. Introduction

The multi-directional and multi-threaded activities carried out by communication managers, and PR specialists require activity in many areas, depending on the target group they plan to reach. In public relations, several main areas are distinguished, which the literature on the subject describes as task spheres. They are "fixed elements, almost unchanging, described by general and specific goals. In their implementation, tools, techniques, and instruments are used, which may be variable, adapted to the situation or program, and depending on what, for example, the development of technology and information systems. The tools are quite often used interchangeably or complementarily within individual fixed task spheres of PR" (Tworzydło, 2017, p. 41). Therefore, in the process of communicating and building relationships, we can distinguish internal communication, crisis management, media relations (including e-PR and cooperation with influencers), investor relations, and relations with other groups of the external environment, e.g., sponsorship, public affairs, lobbying or through the CSR strategy (Tworzydło *et al.*, 2003). From the point of view of the public sector, especially in the context of local government units' functioning, the following areas of communication management also seem to be crucial, lobbying, government affairs, or community relations.

PR activities directed at the most widely understood subject of the organization's environment - society, are called quite variously in the literature on the subject, namely "neighborhood PR" (Gawroński, 2009), "community outreach" or "public participation" (Forest and Mays, 1997), or just "community relations". These activities can be broadly defined as a series of mutually beneficial activities carried out in partnership with one or more parties, the activities aimed at shaping the company's reputation (organization) by presenting it as a good, cooperative member of the community. This type's activities can be carried out on a local, regional, national, or even international scale (Mann, 1997).

The determinant of the scope in which PR activities can be carried out in the organization's operation, and as a rule, most of the impact elements in this regard occurs near the organization's headquarters (Mahendra, 2020). For this reason, community relations are often limited to examining relations with the local community, although this obviously does not reflect the full scope of the impact (Altman, 1999). The local community is the organization's closest neighbours, including the internal environment participants (employees and their families). By using the features of social relations and exchange relations, as well as the factors of these relations, such as trust, mutual control, commitment, and satisfaction, it is possible to achieve stable relations and image goals (Hall, 2006). Seitel (2016) distinguishes 15 typical public relations goals towards local communities, including, *inter alia*, informing the community about the organization's activities, clarifying misunderstandings, responding to criticism and mitigating any reluctance, gaining positive community opinion, and learning about the opinions of residents.

Community relations are one of the main task areas of public relations, relating to building relationships and an atmosphere of mutual understanding with the organization's communities. Community relations is most often said to be local, but activities in this area may also have a regional, national, or even international dimension. It is an area of activity that plays a role of a bond between public relations programs and the implementation of corporate social responsibility. While defining community relations as "a series of mutually beneficial activities conducted in partnership with one or more shareholders, which are activities aimed at shaping the company's reputation, presenting it as a cooperative member of the community" (Gregory, 1997) or as planned activities directed at the community local communities, aimed at achieving the common good (Świątecki, 2001), it is easy to find similarities to the principles of socially responsible business (Tworzydło *et al.*, 2020; Pavlů, 2013).

Conducting a responsible business is learning about and incorporating changing social expectations into a management strategy and monitoring the impact of such a strategy on the company's competitiveness in the market (Heath and Palenchar, 2000). Thus, it is the art of meeting important stakeholders' expectations, searching for a dynamic balance between all interested parties' interests, by the law, and socially accepted ethical standards. In such a definition, attention is drawn primarily because corporate social responsibility is strategic and dynamic and is based on continuous improvement and cooperation with all stakeholders (Kuraszko and Rok, 2020). Thus, community relations are the essence and sense of the functioning of local government. A local government unit's activity is to develop a settled improvement of the unit's activity habitats' situation.

Therefore, all its activities should be focused on implementing programs serving the good of local communities (Choi, 2016; Cochrane, 2020). Therefore, it is nonsense to specify community relations as a task sphere of communication within the marketing of communes and regions. This is because typical public relations goals towards local communities, implemented voluntarily by economic entities, by necessity, and local government units should implement statutory obligation. A significant number of them determine the essence and purposefulness of the functioning of local government units. At the same time, they are treated as the tasks of local governments (Seitel, 2016).

As part of the implementation of these tasks, local government units organize or co-organize various cultural and sports events. However, these events can also be treated as promotional tools, building the market potential and competitive advantage of a city or region; they are also a specific element of the tourist product offered. These activities are directed at the inhabitants of the region, visiting tourists, and the wider environment, even with the use of mass media. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) indicate four components of the marketing process of increasing the value of a city or a region: an urban design (decisive for the city's character), improvement of infrastructure, providing basic services and attractions for residents and visitors. These attractions are a variety of peculiarities and distinguishing features that

contribute to the identity of the city or region, distinguishing it from other, competing places and locations. Some of them constitute a group of permanent attractions, historically inherited or resulting directly from the region's location. These include, for example, sightseeing values, memorial historical sites, monuments and monuments, places of birth or residence of famous personalities, traditional fairgrounds or cultural attractions resulting from the long history of the functioning of philharmonics, operas, theatres, and museums.

The second group of attractions is seasonal attractions, which can be freely shared, improved, and modernized. They stimulate the region's potential in terms of attractiveness for residents, tourists, and investors, and at the same time, can easily become its icon and showcase (Whitford, 2009). These include recreational and entertainment attractions, sports events, various events (including anniversary and jubilee ones), and other seasonal attractions. Their implementation is aimed at the statutory provisions and drawing public attention to a given region, thus attracting tourists and investors (Walo *et al.*, 1996).

However, most of all, these attractions are important from the point of view of the inhabitants, because they improve the quality of life in each city or region, have a measurable impact on the financial situation of citizens, and are a factor that builds the residents' satisfaction with local authorities and living conditions. The use of modern IT tools, the Internet, and various innovative communication solutions by local government units seems to be a common phenomenon, resulting from the pragmatic convenience guaranteed by these instruments in many local government activity spheres.

The Internet and the new media, built on its basis, offer almost unlimited possibilities in acquiring knowledge, communicating, implementing sales functions, promoting, educating, and many other diverse aspects of social activity. The Internet is an excellent and versatile tool used in marketing activities. On the one hand, it enables conducting and developing real business activity in the virtual world. On the other hand, it is an important link, integrating numerous marketing communication tools, complementing, and stimulating their impact (Kane *et al.*, 2009). In the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication, the Internet plays an important coordinating role, enabling complete integration of traditional and non-traditional tools of marketing communication and influences the creation of a clear synergy effect resulting from this integration.

Marketing communication instruments, which can be classified into the group of Internet tools, support marketing goals implemented by other traditional marketing communication tools (Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Moreover, the Internet is used for market research and analysis; powerful databases are built to support and enable more effective customer service, concepts for new products and services are developed, and the Internet is a sales and distribution platform - it turns out that it is a potent, versatile, and highly diversified marketing communication tool (Gawroński and Jakubowski, 2018).

---

## **2. Methodology of the Research Process**

Field research method was applied in the research, a questionnaire interview consisting of standardized questions was used as it is one of the most frequently used methods in social research, allowing to diagnose the characteristics, opinions, attitudes, and values of a given population through interviews with the target group, which is the most accurate reflection of this population sector (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993). The prepared set of questions was analysed and assessed as a part of a pilot study that was carried out in February 2020. The tool supporting the survey was a set of consultations on the construction of the research tool, conducted with the participation of selected press spokesmen of local government units and employees of organizational units responsible for the promotion of these units. The main study was conducted in March and April 2020. The method of field research in the form of a questionnaire interview was selected and applied as one of the best available methods aimed at collecting the original data to describe a population sector too large to be directly observed. Due to careful, random selection, a representative group of respondents was obtained, and their answers were collected. It can be assumed that their features reflect the characteristics and attributes of a wider population. Carefully constructed questionnaire questions provide data in the same form from all respondents (Babbie, 2013). The selection of the research method was based on strengths, namely the fact that surveys consider the types and number of variables that can be studied, require little development and administration, and are relatively easy to generalize (Bell, 1996). Of course, the fact that polls only provide estimates for the real population should not be considered (Salant and Dillman, 1994).

The request to participate in the study was addressed to 185 local government units (commune and regional levels) from the Podkarpackie region. Information on the analysed issues was obtained from 142 local government units, which means that the collected research material was obtained from 76.7% of entities of the studied population. Such a high rate of received responses makes it possible to extrapolate the survey results to the entire population - all local government units in Podkarpackie region.

The statistical description used frequency and mean distributions on ordinal scales, post hoc multiple comparisons, pairwise correlations, Spearman's rho coefficient, chi-square, Phi and Cramer's V statistics.

## **3. Event Marketing as a Community Relations Stimulator**

The surveyed local governments conduct quite an intensive activity in organizing entertainment events of various nature and rank. The following events constitute the most frequently organized events and they also have a promotional dimension for the region - the organizer: sports events, cultural events, educational and scientific events, promotional events (including occasional and anniversary events).

As local government units in Poland are legally obliged to support physical culture among children, adolescents and adults, the most frequently organized sports events are those of an amateur nature. Local governments are sometimes their organizers, but usually their role can be defined as co-organizers, cooperating in this respect with educational institutions, sports associations, and non-governmental organizations. Local and regional events predominate, but Podkarpackie local governments also organize competitions and events of a multi-regional, national, and even international dimension. Table 1 presents detailed information in this regard.

**Table 1.** *What kinds of events are (co-) organized by your unit in the field of amateur sports events? (N = 142)*

Description	Number of answers	Percentage of answers
Local	107	75,3
Regional	83	58,5
Multi – regional	29	20,4
National	14	9,8
International	7	4,9
Does not organize any events	11	7,7

**Note:** *The percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.*

**Source:** *Own creation.*

Local government units usually support such events; less often, they aspire to organize them independently. Their activity in the field of sport is limited to the involvement in the organization or support of the organizers of amateur events and relates to events, sometimes even spectacular ones, related to professional sports. As professional sport relies, to a greater extent, on the support provided by private sponsors, the involvement of local governments in this area is relatively low. It turns out that only 21 (14,7%) among the surveyed local government units organize or cooperate in sports events related to professional sports. Most often these are regional (58,5%), local (75,3%) and multi-regional (20,4%) sports events.

The local governments' survey was also concerned about the involvement of the surveyed units in the organization of cultural events. The following kinds of events were classified into the research to obtain more precise data, music, film, and theatre, others. The inhabitants of each region's cultural life take place mainly with the participation and mediation of numerous cultural institutions. There is no doubt that they initiate important cultural events and motivate and encourage participation in projects aimed at maintaining cultural heritage and creating new trends. The rich offer of various forms of institutionalized activity in the field of culture considers the needs and tastes of each interested person to enrich the image of the province. In most cases, these events are local in nature and serve to integrate the local community, transmit cultural heritage, and provide entertainment. However, some regional events are of high level, national, and sometimes international importance, thus becoming an

---

excellent promotional tool used in the region's communication marketing area with its surroundings.

In terms of musical, cultural events such as the organization of festivals, concerts, or reviews, the surveyed local government units are being relatively active. This area's cultural activity is supported and implemented by communal and municipal cultural centers, community centers, and non-governmental organizations whose activities are financially supported by local governments. Most organized music events are local (29,8%) and regional (21,3%) events.

Local self-governments are involved in the organization or co-organizing cultural events of a film or theatre nature less frequently. This is most likely because these are usually relatively expensive events, organized on a mass scale, and for these reasons, they are usually organized in large or at least medium-sized urban centers. Nevertheless, 11,3% of the surveyed local government units are involved in such activities. These are events of a diverse nature - both amateur film reviews, local and environmental theatre reviews, and events organized for children and youth.

In most cases, the organized film and theatre events have a local or regional dimension. Nevertheless, the respondents pointed to a few examples of nationwide and even international events. Besides organizing music, film, and theatre events, Podkarpackie territorial self-government units are also actively involved in art reviews, literary meetings, exhibitions, and cultural and artistic competitions. For the study, these events, defined as the collective category "other cultural events," refer to all initiatives undertaken by the surveyed local government units in the field of cultural activity, not falling within the scope of music, film, and theatre activities. Such activity is carried out and supported by 19,6% of local government units organizing or co-organizing events and events in such a broadly defined scope. Most of the events organized are local in nature, but 12 national and international events are also organized in the Podkarpackie region.

A manifestation of local government units' involvement in cooperation with educational and scientific institutions and research and development institutions, entities supporting innovation and enterprises is organizing, co-organizing, or inspiring the organization of events with an educational and scientific value. Various conferences and symposia organized by local governments and achieving substantive goals also create a positive image, support the search for partners for cooperation, and enable new investors' acquisition. Sometimes they can also be treated as an attraction from the point of view of residents and tourists. They often provide media coverage to a given region, presence in national news services, and create interest in public opinion.

The information obtained in the research shows that 78 such events are organized in the studied region, characterized by the cyclical implementation, and are organized by 49 local government units. Educational and scientific events organized by the surveyed local government units are local and regional in nature, although in eight

cases, there are events of national and international importance. While this category's events are important from the point of view of institutions and enterprises operating in each region and potential investors, it seems much more important for the inhabitants to provide entertainment by organizing various events that enable active, interesting, and enjoyable time. Entertainment events play not only an integrating role for residents. They are also an excellent promotional tool that attracts tourists to the region; they enable sponsors and partners' acquisition for further cooperation and sometimes provide publicity. This category of events includes various family picnics, anniversary celebrations, occasional celebrations (local government holiday, summer day), harvest festivals, etc.

According to the respondents' information, as many as 11 (7,7%) among the surveyed local governments organize this kind of entertainment events of various nature. Most often, these are, of course, events of local and regional importance and scope, organized by municipalities. The regional self-government relatively rarely organizes such events.

The information on the nature of the organized entertainment events is supplemented by data obtained from the surveyed representatives of local government units on their own promotional events. Anniversary events usually inspire such events (e.g., the anniversary of the city's location, receiving or regaining municipal rights) or are related to a specific date as the Day of the Commune or a similar celebration. It turns out that as many as 96 of the surveyed local government units (67,6%) organize their own promotional event, permanently included in the calendar of regional events, gathering residents and local authorities and numerous guests, visitors, and tourists. Only about the 41 surveyed units (mainly regions), it is impossible to indicate the occurrence of their own promotional events. The distribution of the respondents' answers in this respect is presented in Table 2 national, and even international dimension.

**Table 2.** *Does the unit represented by you organize its own promotional event? (N = 142)*

	<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>Percentage of answers</b>
<b>Yes</b>	96	67,6
<b>No</b>	44	31,0
<b>I do not know</b>	2	1,4

*Source:* Own creation.

Clarifying the issue of defining the recipients of local governments' marketing impacts is defining the most important target groups of these impacts, for 89.8 percent. Of the respondents, the most important target group should be residents, which explains the significant involvement in the organization of events, the main target of the region's inhabitants. This confirms that cultivating positive relations with local communities within community relations should be a strategic task of each local government unit.

---

#### **4. Research on the Preferences, Expectations, and Satisfaction of Residents**

The marketing orientation of towns and regions, related to the consistent focus on customers' needs, is expressed by more than a dozen slogans that should be implemented by all local government institutions. The set of twelve "commandments" is as follows:

1. the client (the applicant) is the most important person;
2. there are no more important matters than those of the clients;
3. we work to solve problems of the local community;
4. we engage all forces and skills to deal with clients' matters;
5. the client is a human being, not a matter;
6. customer satisfaction is our goal;
7. a satisfied customer is the source of job satisfaction;
8. the applicant justifies the workplace of each employee of the local government or municipal company;
9. the applicant pays remuneration to local government employees;
10. there is no office without applicants;
11. working conditions of local government institutions should be shaped with the customers and not employees in mind;
12. the applicant is always right, and if he is not, it should be explained to him so that he is convinced that he is actually right.

The author of this concept Szromnik (2007) concludes that local government units' marketing orientation is the orientation towards clients, related to the constant confrontation of municipal institutions and enterprises' activities with the needs and expectations of appropriate groups of people and organizations. The key issue from the point of view of the possibility of making such a confrontation is marketing research, necessary in any form of activity, carried out in accordance with the concept of being research can be defined as "the process of defining a marketing problem and marketing opportunities by means of systematic collection and analysis of information and recommending actions to improve the marketing activity of a given organization." (Przybyłowski *et al.*, 1998).

Therefore, the role of marketing researchers is to assess. To assess the needs and diagnose the desires of consumers and provide information helpful in planning to satisfy these needs. Marketing research should be carried out by all entities operating in a competitive market and dealing with the exchange process. From the point of view of communes' marketing and re, from- also by local government units. Observing citizens' behavior, determining their expectations and behaviors is useful, but even necessary from developing a marketing strategy and a set of marketing-mix tools that effectively affect target groups. Therefore, marketing research can help determine the properties of products, programs and services offered by local government units, determine which incentive es have the greatest persuasive power, and shape the distribution and communication policy with target groups. Feedback from residents can be an essential part of evaluating the program and activities of a

local government unit. It is also hand assessing citizen's program and activities satisfaction with the local government has implemented programs and services. It also enables the assessment of the degree of remembering and reacting to the campaign by target groups, facilitating the planning of subsequent programs and communication campaigns (Kotler and Lee, 2000).

Research on preferences, expectations, and opinions of a settlement unit's inhabitants is still not a standard in Polish reality and is rather rare. About the surveyed local government units, only 21 entities (14,8% of the respondents) confirmed that they conduct this activity type. Most local government units in the Podkarpackie region- 71,1 percent - do not conduct marketing research among citizens. Every fifth local government unit is involved in marketing research could be assessed positively, as indeed one could expect an even worse result. However, evaluating the systematic nature of conducting such research leaves no doubt that in most cases, they are conducted, if not incidentally, then certainly too rarely and with too much irregularity.

Among the surveyed entities declaring to conduct marketing research among residents, only 3,3 percent conduct this research systematically, analyzing residents' public mood and opinions more than once a year. The vast majority of the surveyed local government units limit their activity regarding an annual survey (11 of responses) or even less frequent activity. As Podkarpackie local governments' activity in diagnosing the inhabitants' needs, analyzing their desires, and searching their opinions leaves much to be desired, a legitimate question is why this is happening and what barriers make it difficult to undertake such activity. The most frequently cited reason for the lack of marketing research is, not surprisingly, the lack of funding. Considering the fact that conducting such research, especially in the age of the information society, the possibility of using new technologies and the Internet does not involve excessively high costs; it seems that the financial argument is only a failed attempt to explain the lack of one's own activity.

Although time constraints, high costs, and the lack of financial resources to cover them often make it impossible to conduct research, especially in the public sector, Kotler and Lee (2000), the authors themselves, indicate the possibility of conducting low-cost research. Referring to Andreasen (2002), it is suggested to use the following research methods:

- Systematic observation,
- General surveys,
- Small-scale attempts.

Also, they recommend seeking partners to co-finance research costs and engaging the local research community and academic communities, willing to help and usually being involved in the implementation of such projects (Gawroński, 2013). The remaining reasons for the inactivity of the surveyed local government units, diagnosed during the survey, seem to be more likely and much more worrying.

The representatives of 25,3 percent of the surveyed local government units that do not conduct marketing research do not see the need for research and consider it useless. Almost every fourth (24.9% of respondents) lack knowledge on this subject. The above numbers indicate that despite the relatively high declarative marketing awareness of the surveyed units' representatives, market orientation and knowledge of the principles, goals, tools, and techniques of territorial marketing are at a low level. The full picture of barriers hindering marketing research implementation in the surveyed local government units is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *What barriers stand in the way of conducting research on the preferences and expectations of residents in terms of communal and administrative services? (N = 142)*

Description	Number of answers	Percentage of answers
There are no funds for this type of activity	68	47,9
There is no need	36	25,3
There is no knowledge about the issue	35	24,9
Resistance of the inhabitants of the settlement unit	2	1,4
Workers' resistance	1	0,7

**Note:** *The percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.*

**Source:** *Own creation.*

Despite numerous barriers indicated by the respondents, local governments in Poland are trying to promote activity. One of the elementary verifiers of this professional involvement of local government units is membership in the office of the unit responsible for implementing promotional activities. Although promotion is only one of many spheres of marketing impact, it undoubtedly brings together the most spectacular forms of influencing the environment, and for this reason, it should be implemented by local governments. A department responsible for the promotion of the region should be the starting point for implementing the concept of territorial marketing, based on the market way of thinking about the functioning of local government, at the same time allowing conducting market research and opinion polls.

## 5. Administrative Service for Residents

One of the tools for obtaining feedback from residents, learning about their opinions, diagnosing expectations and desires may be efforts to ensure direct relations between residents and local authorities and representatives, employees of local government units. During daily meetings with clients, employees of local government offices and institutions could obtain information important from the point of view of shaping the impact strategy of a local government unit (Krishna *et al.*, 2019). When dealing with their own affairs in offices, interested parties often share their opinions and expectations with officials and point out shortcomings and submit complaints. From this point of view, officials to a certain extent participate in the process of marketing

communication with customers, which is a specific combination of personal sales and customer service - face-to-face communication, during which the relationship with the client is born and developed, his needs are discovered benefits are communicated to him by informing, recalling, and persuading (Manning and Reece, 1992).

The relations between decision-makers - local authorities and residents are equally important. Therefore, so much importance is usually attached to enabling direct meetings of citizens with the president of the city, the mayor, or the governor. On the one hand, such meetings provide the residents with an opportunity to present their issues and arguments directly, and on the other, they are an excellent opportunity to study social moods, analyze the views of residents and their expectations. As it turns out, the surveyed local government units treat this issue quite seriously because, in almost all surveyed units, representatives of local authorities are more or less frequently, but systematically and regularly, at the disposal of the residents. A positive surprise maybe that about 18,3 percent of the surveyed local governments, representatives of the authorities are at the disposal of citizens every day. In other cases, the authorities, more economically, give residents the possibility to join their meetings.

Relations between officials and residents are, on the one hand, an excellent communication platform and an efficient formula for mutual collection of information, and on the other hand - it is a form of activity characterized by an increased risk of conflicts and crises. Dębicki (2001), having analyzed the social research assessing public administration by citizens, classified the most frequent reservations against it: negative assessments of both the administration and the political elite; negative evaluation of service quality; perception of too high costs; perception of too much formalism; perception of ill-treatment of citizens by officials; growing awareness of rampant corruption; negative assessment of services provided by public sectors compared to services provided by free-market entities.

These factors contribute to the low assessment given to representatives of public authority, including local government, by the society, and thus, they negatively influence the opportunity to build mutual relations and lead to numerous conflicts. Hence, within numerous public institutions, including local government units, customer service standards are increasingly appearing, regulating both parties' rights and obligations, based on specific codes of good practice. Establishing unified standards for customer service is sometimes dictated by the real desire to ensure high quality of administrative services provided and the implementation of ISO standards present in local and regional offices. The majority of the surveyed local government units in the Podkarpackie region have not yet developed the standards or standardized and formalized customer service procedures. These units account for 83,1 percent of all respondents.

As much as 9,8 percent of local government representatives surveyed admit that their institutions have developed their own customer service standards. Verification of these data, through the analysis of information contained on these units' websites and

during in-depth telephone interviews, leads to the conclusion that these opinions are exaggerated and, in part, also untrue.

Most of the alleged standards are limited to the quite generally formulated mission of the office or informal customer service rules in a given unit. Some of the respondents, having "developed standards and unified customer service procedures," meant compliance with the administrative procedure code provisions. The collected information (though incomplete) shows that only a few local government units in Podkarpackie have developed the actual standards of customer service.

Representatives of 38 of the surveyed local government units in the Podkarpackie region diagnosed the lack of codified customer service standards in their institutions. Not surprisingly, in the first place, they indicated the lack of funds for the implementation of such an action (72% of responses), confirming once again that the simplest and most frequently used argument explaining shortcomings, deficiencies, or deviations from the canon of good practices is the financial one. It does not seem plausible; it is a rather convenient explanation that applies to all circumstances. Almost the same percentage of respondents (68,3% of responses) do not see the need to implement customer service standards, which suggests a lack of understanding of the essence of public administration's functioning and its mission about residents and applicants.

Although the lack of standardized service procedures, taking the form of a code or other standardized document, does not necessarily have to reduce the quality of administrative services provided, it can be suspected that about the surveyed local government units such a relationship exists, and the chosen answer indicates a rather low awareness of the respondents in market orientation and the role played by pro-quality procedures.

About 48 local government units, there is a lack of knowledge as the main reason for the lack of appropriate customer service standards. Interestingly, a relatively rarely mentioned argument is the expected resistance of employees of local government administration offices, who, after all, would be most affected and limited by the regulations contained in such a document. Among the surveyed local government units that have not yet implemented the customer service standard, only 19 (13,4 percent) are determined to implement this task. In every third local government, there are no planned actions in this direction. The undecided respondents form the largest group, as they could not answer the question of whether there are plans to implement the petitioner service code shortly.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusions**

Many Polish cities' promotional success is determined by a skillful combination of three elements: awareness of the need to adopt a marketing orientation, a precisely developed strategy of operation, and appropriate financial conditions enabling the implementation of these activities. However, it should be noted that a promotional

budget of several million, without a well-thought-out strategy and a developed action plan, means nothing. On the other hand, it is easy to prove effectiveness in the opposite situation, when good ideas, a creative vision of development, and a well-thought-out strategy, without large financial outlays, can effectively and successfully influence the promotion of the region. It turns out. Therefore, appropriate financial possibilities significantly help in the implementation of marketing activities. However, the primary condition necessary for their fulfillment is adopting marketing orientation by local authorities, understanding the need to apply marketing management principles, and, finally, preparing an action strategy in this area.

Intuition and observation of local government units' activities in Poland allow us to conclude that this awareness varies significantly depending on the region, category of local government units, internal and external environment, economic situation, and many other factors. Territorial marketing is already perceived as fashionable and as an indispensable tool for attracting tourists, investors, workforce, and, above all, new residents, necessary for the development of a settlement unit.

## **References:**

- Altman, B. 1999. Transformed Corporate Community Relations: A Management Tool for Achieving Corporate Citizenship. *Business and Society Review*, 102(1), 43-51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0045-3609.00024>.
- Andreasen, A. 2002. *Marketing Research That Won't Break the Bank: A Practical Guide to Getting the Information You Need*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Babbie, E. 2013. *The practice of social research*, Cengage Learning.
- Bell, S. 1996. *Learning with information systems: Learning cycles in information systems development*, London: Routledge.
- Cochrane, A. 2020. In and beyond local government: making up new spaces of governance. *Local Government Studies*, 46(4), 524-541,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2019.1644321>.
- Dębicki, M. 2001. *UrządNIK XXI wieku*, In: Kudrycka, Barbara Ed., *Rozwój kadr administracji publicznej*, Białystok: WSAP.
- Forrest, C., Mays, R. 1997. *Practical guide to environmental community relations*, New York: Willey and Sons.
- Gawroński, S. 2009. *Komunikacja marketingowa samorządów terytorialnych. Świadomość i praktyka działalności podkarpackich jednostek samorządu terytorialnego*, Rzeszów: BBConsult.
- Gawroński, S. 2013. *Pozabiznesowe obszary wykorzystywania komunikacji marketingowej w warunkach polskich: wybrane aspekty*, Warszawa: Aspra-JR.
- Gawroński, S., Jakubowski, R. 2018. Dispute about Public Relations - Between Social and Marketing Communication. *Social Communication*, 4(1), 6-11.  
<https://doi.org/10.2478/sc-2018-0001>.
- Gregory, A. 1997. *Public relations w praktyce*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo PSB.
- Hall, M. 2009. Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Community Relations: Measuring Relationship-Building Results. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(1), 1-21.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1801\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1801_1).
- Heath, R., Palenchar, M. 2000. Community Relations and Risk Communication: A Longitudinal Study of the Impact of Emergency Response Messages. *Journal of*

- Public Relations Research, 12(2), 131-161.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1202\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1202_1).
- Kane, G., Fichman, R., Gallagher, J., Glaser, J. 2009. Community relations 2.0, Harvard Business Review, 87(11), 45-50.
- Kotler, P., Lee, N. 2000. Marketing in the public sector. A Roadmap for improved performance, New Jersey: Pearson Educations.
- Krishna, A., Connaughton, S., Linabary, J. 2019. Citizens' political public relations: Unpacking choices, and emergent and deliberate strategies in building trust and relations among groups in conflict. Public Relations Review, 46, 101853, 1-10. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101853.
- Kuraszko, I., Rok, B. 2020. Społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu i ekonomia społeczna. Retrieved from: [www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl](http://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl).
- Mahendra, A.I. 2020. Simplification of the Role of Public Relations. Journal ASPIKOM, 5(1), 102-114. doi: 10.24329/aspikom.v5i1.546.
- Mann, A. 1997. Stosunki ze społecznością, In: Gregory, Ann (Ed.), Public relations w praktyce, Kraków: Wydawnictwo PSB.
- Manning, G., Reece, B. 1992. Selling Today: An Extension of the Marketing Concept, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Pavlů, D. 2013. Marketing and Marketing Communication in SMEs. European Research Studies Journal, 16(4), 113-126. doi.org/10.35808/ersj/407.
- Pickton, D., Broderick, A. 2005. Integrated Marketing Communication, London: Pearson.
- Pinsonneault, A. Kraemer, K. 1993. Research Methodology in Management Information Systems. Journal of Management Information Systems, 10(2), 75-105.
- Rein, I., Kotler, P., Haider, D. 1993. Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations. New York: The Free Press.
- Salant, P., Dillman, D. 1994. How to conduct your own survey, New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Seitel, F. 2016. The practice of public relations, London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Świątecki, A. 2001. Zintegrowane Komunikowanie Marketingowe, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Best Eastern Plaza Hotels.
- Szromnik, A. 2007. Marketing terytorialny. Miasto i region na rynku, Kraków: Wolters Kluwer.
- Tworzydło, D. 2017. Public relations praktycznie, Rzeszów: Newline.
- Tworzydło, D., Gawroński, S., Szuba, P. 2020. Importance and role of CSR and stakeholder engagement strategy in polish companies in the context of activities of experts handling public relations. Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2032>.
- Tworzydło, D., Humenny, G., Góra, R., Gawroński, S., Soliński, T. 2003. Analiza sfer zadaniowych public relations w przedsiębiorstwach. Rzeszów: Instytut Gospodarki.
- Walo, M., Bull, A., Breen, H. 1996. Achieving Economic Benefits at Local Events: A Case Study of a Local Sports Event, Festival Management and Event Tourism, 4(3), 95-106. <https://doi.org/10.3727/106527096792195353>.
- Whitford, M. 2009. A framework for the development of event public policy: Facilitating regional development. Tourism Management, 30(5), 674-682.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.10.018>.
- Yena, C. 2016. The Study on Determinants of Citizen Participation in Local Government: Focusing on Moderating Effects of Communication between Citizen and Elected Institutions. Journal of Local Government Studis, 28(4), 129-152,  
<https://doi.org/10.21026/jlgs.2016.28.4.129>.