
Marketing in the Marketing Strategy of Cities in Poland

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the paper was to identify the place of green marketing strategy in the strategic planning of cities. The paper also deals with the analysis of the reception of the creation of cooperation between local governments, scientific units, business entities and non-profit organisations, for the prominence of environmental promotion and green activities.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research was carried out using the CAWI method in 414 Polish cities, so it constitutes a statistically representative sample, which in turn translates into the possibility of creating conclusions and recommendations with regard to the entire population of local government units on city rights in Poland.

Findings: The authors undertook research related to the analysis of the place of marketing planning against the background of cities' strategic plans and initiated an attempt to place environmental promotion and ecological activities in the city's marketing strategy. According to the study, almost half of the cities do not have marketing plans. Also more than half of the cities do not consider the creation of a green city image as a priority task. The responses suggest a low level of inclusion of green marketing promotion policy in the strategies of local government units. Cooperation of local governments in the field of environmental promotion with other entities also remains at a low level.

Practical implications: The research provides practical recommendations for city managers. In order to increase effectiveness in marketing activities undertaken by cities, they should be planned and coordinated internally (within the organisational structure) and externally (towards the city's stakeholders). Achieving these intentions is possible through the preparation and implementation of a marketing strategy, treated as a programmed system of coordinated activities aimed at long-term goals. Furthermore, the need for greater consideration of the role of green marketing in cities' strategic planning is indicated. To improve effectiveness, it is also important to collaborate in building environmental awareness with other actors including other cities, non-profit organisations and representatives from the world of science are also important to improve effectiveness.

Originality/Value: The research presented here is the authors' original research. To date, there has been no research, on such a large scale, on the place of marketing planning, including the place of green marketing in strategic plans.

Keywords: Green marketing, city marketing, marketing strategy, environmental promotion.

JEL Classification: M31.

Paper type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

In a rapidly changing reality and the associated growing number of problems and challenges facing cities, developing a marketing strategy and embedding it in strategic plans is one important issue in the fight against urban degradation. Marketing planning, including green marketing, is an important part of building a positive image for a city. Environmental issues are currently very important issues due to increasing urban pollution and climate change.

In the study, the authors address the placement of marketing planning in cities' strategic plans and set the goal of determining the place of environmental promotion and green activities in a city's marketing strategy. In addition, they ask the question of creating links and cooperation between cities both with other local governments and with the world of science and non-profit organisations for the joint promotion of environmental protection and ecological activities. This area is still little explored and there are no large-scale studies showing the cities' approach to promoting environmental awareness.

The research was carried out in 414 Polish cities, so it is representative and allows conclusions to be drawn for the entire population of cities in Poland. The completed research may be continued in the future and provide comparative material to indicate changes in the approach to green marketing, in the context of accelerating the energy and climate transition in Poland.

2. Strategic Planning and Green Marketing of Cities

The environment is a permanent, elementary and indispensable condition for the actual functioning of society and its future existence. At the same time, the environment, due to its specifics, should be an area of cooperation between public authorities, including at local government level, as well as environmental protection services and scientific research bodies.

In the literature, the speech of UN Secretary-General U'Thant at the XXIII session of the UN National Assembly in 1968, and the subsequent publication in 1969, of the document, which gave impetus to international interaction on the subject of environmental protection, was seen as a watershed event in the approach to ecosystem analysis: "Człowiek i Jego Środowisko" (Man and His Environment).

This document provided basic data on the most significant negative environmental impacts occurring globally, detailing three problem areas, interpreted in terms of fundamental issues. The report also pointed out the possibility of a serious crisis, initiated by the deteriorating state of the environment, and called for cooperation in order to create effective actions aimed at solving the accumulating problems concerning the quality of the environment (Alberski and Solarz, 1994).

In the EU and the Council of Europe, there are many solutions of an international nature, which also have reference to the functioning of urban areas. There is also no doubt that there is a close link between environmental issues and overall development, in the development of urban areas, which at the same time causes a high correlation between economic and environmental (ecological) crises.

It is also significant that the multifaceted nature of environmental issues is linked to the impossibility of narrowing down the subject of environmental protection solely to the problems of environmental protection itself, in state, regional and local terms, without causal links to such contexts of influence as political, military or economic circumstances of environmental decisions (Lisicka and Lisowska, 2012).

The socio-market situation faced by contemporary organisations and actors in the public administration sphere today is characterised by a high degree of turbulence. Transformations of the status quo, often maintained for many years, are becoming an immanent feature of today's market organisations and local government entities. Appropriately approaching and anticipating these changes is of great importance for the functioning of all actors forming the citizen-worker habitat, also for the realisation of important social goals.

The pace of change and exponentially increasing uncertainty, the multiplication of the number of factors and stakeholders influencing the change processes, have generated the need for a strategic approach to management and development planning, i.e. one that is proactive and flexible towards the changing reality. This approach has found application primarily in the management of enterprises and other large organisations. It is also applicable to the development management of local government units. For voivodeships it is a statutory obligation in Poland.

A number of communes and poviats have also drawn up a socio-economic development strategy, and some communes combine its formulation with the preparation of the basic spatial planning document at the level of the whole commune - currently the study of conditions and directions for spatial development.

Another premise conditioning the necessity of strategic planning of territorial self-government units is the contemporary paradigm of shaping development and management of the region and the local area (city), which is sustainable development, at the same time balanced, not devastating the resources important for sustaining development, self-renewing. This means that environmental, economic and social goals should be realised simultaneously in a socially acceptable arrangement in each of these characteristics, in a way that fully respects the needs of future generations of the area's inhabitants and does not endanger the inhabitants of other areas, including remote ones.

Obtaining such development characteristics is extremely difficult and already moving towards them raises the need for appropriate planning and regulatory tools.

And this is where governance, including strategic planning, can help (Sołtys, 2008). The strategic planning process itself in the local authority system should include specific features of the process, such as:

- capacity for inter-organisational coordination (Alexander, 1992),
- operational choice decisions (Friend and Hickling, 1997),
- social participation (Fisher, 2000).

In analysing the capacity to apply strategic planning methodology to spatial planning in the local government system, Salet and Faludi systematised the classification of planning as: communicative, institutional and interactional (Salet and Faludi, 1999).

The latter integrates institutional and social communication elements. Its essence is the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including authorities, most often in a networked relationship and with a high potential for informational interaction and therefore effective communication in the different phases of strategic planning and management. Such an approach corresponds to the increasing importance of sustainable development in a social setting, assuming a more equal, thus equitable, access to resources, including urban space, institutions and infrastructure.

The characteristics of changes taking place in space, especially in spatial development, including the permanence and irreversibility of many of them, correspond to the characteristics constituting the distinctive features of the strategy, justifying the need for strategic planning in the sphere of spatial management. This is because the characteristics of this planning include the long horizon covered by the plan, and often the duration of the planned activities.

On the other hand, the essence of the strategy includes a flexible response to changes. The most important characteristic of the strategic dimension of city-level strategic planning is the permanence of change, which can be determined by the magnitude of the change and the changes it brings about.

An incompatibility can be noted between the principles of sustainable development, which is a paradigmatic reference to the vision of urban development, requiring a long-term view, consideration of multiple aspects and dependencies, and a similarly long-term view in strategic planning, and the trends of change in strategic planning, such as: moving away from large systemic views, shortening the horizon of activity, operationalisation, the inability to know all the currently important variables, even more so the inadequacy of the ability to predict future states, and the incomplete knowledge of emerging fast-changing dependencies (Lorens, 2005).

Strategic planning methods in designing the development of local government units should take into account all the challenges and problems emerging in urban spaces today (Sołtys, 2008). Also an important issue is the positioning of marketing plans in strategic plans, which should be an integral part of them.

The main rationale for developing marketing strategies for cities is the need to manage the identity of the city, which translates into an internal and external image.

A positive, strong image of a city increases the likelihood of retaining existing residents and attracting new ones, an important issue in view of the depopulation of most cities in Poland. The image also influences interest from investors, tourists and other stakeholders in the city. The rationale for the way in which cities are promoted is determined by the main functions that specific cities perform.

In the case of marketing activities, the issue of budget is also important, which remains problematic for many entities and marketing activities are not included as a priority expenditure in budgets. In Poland, one can see huge differences in the marketing expenditure of individual cities. With a marketing strategy and the role it plays in a city, the awareness of the local government is also important. Developing a city's marketing strategy makes it possible to define objectives, determine directions of development, coordinate activities undertaken, and optimise the amount of funds allocated to individual activities in the field of creating a city's identity.

The fact that cities are paying more attention to marketing results from the need to create a strong city brand, increase the number of inhabitants and tourists, boost the economic activity of local entities and communities, and strengthen the sense of identity and identification of the local community with the city (Raszkowski, 2011).

The problems and challenges currently facing cities lead to an increase in the importance of marketing planning also in the field of green marketing. The green marketing strategy is a response to the need to create modern solutions in the area of territorial marketing and promotion of local governments. Competition between cities and regions for limited resources is becoming more intense. In addition, the prospect of a climate catastrophe is changing the way we think about cities and it is increasingly recognised that they must become leaders in green transformation.

Green marketing of cities, also referred to as green marketing, is part of a trend that has been developing for several years, which points out that current marketing concepts emphasise that companies must engage in broadly pro-social and pro-environmental activities (Hunt, 2011). This prosocial and pro-environmental orientation also applies to cities. With society's growing concern for the environment, development and ecology, a green brand identity provides cities with opportunities to increase their competitiveness (Hui-Ju, 2019).

Green marketing is also changing the perceptions of audiences (Rudawska, 2013). Audiences of city offerings, like audiences of business market offerings, are increasingly demanding that, in line with sustainable development, local governments take action for the environment and its protection. Defining green marketing is not a simple task, there are various social, environmental or business definitions (Suresh Lal, 2015).

According to one definition, ecological marketing (green, environmental) includes all activities aimed at generating transactions aimed at satisfying human needs or requirements in such a way that customer satisfaction from their satisfaction occurs with minimal harmful impact on the environment (Polonsky, 1994). More broadly, green marketing is defined as the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

According to this definition, green marketing is a tool for a company to carry out economically, socially and ecologically responsible activities (Peattie, 1995). Better, green practices show a positive role in meeting customer needs and customer satisfaction (Siraphatthada and Thitivesa, 2020). For many years, a lot of people thought that green marketing referred only to the promotion or advertising of products with environmental attributes (Davis, 1992).

In contrast, the concept of green marketing can be applied to consumer goods, industrial goods, services including city services (Jain, Nagaria, Singodia, 2021). Already since the 1990s, many resorts around the world have used marketing based on creating a green image for the region (May, 1991 and Troumbis, 1991). The dramatic reduction in environmental quality, directly felt by residents, tourists, or businesses, has had and continues to have a significant impact on the reorientation of the urban environmental approach.

An improved environment can play a role in attracting customers and a high quality environment is one of the attractions (Matzler, 2004). A green environment is also one of the factors that determine the attachment of residents to a city (Koszembar-Wiklik, 2022). In the case of cities, it is important that the city's stakeholders have an influence on the ecology of the city, and thus it is important to raise environmental awareness, especially among residents, by promoting environmentally friendly behaviour.

Therefore, better green policies of local governments show a positive impact on customer satisfaction, but also on customer awareness and behaviour, which influences and improves the quality of life in the city. Pro-environmental activities should therefore be a permanent feature of the city's strategy.

3. Research Methodology

The results presented in this paper come from own research, carried out using the CAWI method in 2022. The survey questionnaire was sent to the entire study population, i.e., all the cities in Poland - 954. 414 responses were received, which form the basis of the calculations. The research topics covered a wide range of questions on green marketing in the city, and the results presented in the paper represent a slice of them. Twelve questions were analysed:

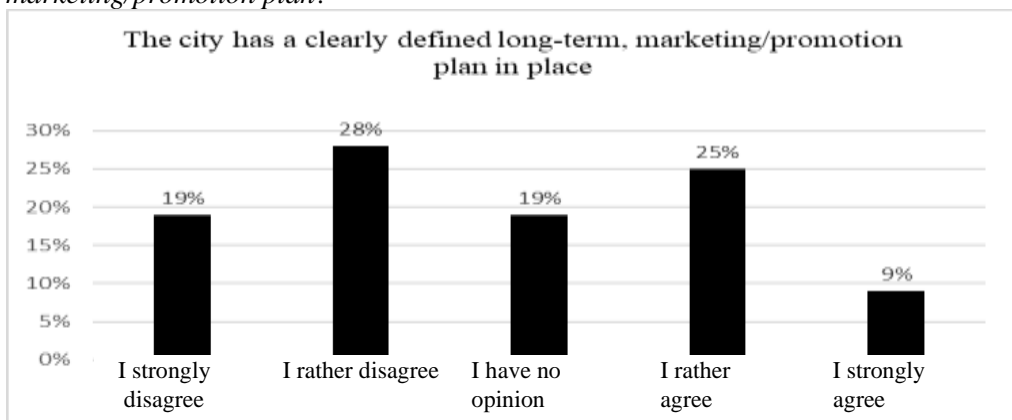
1. Do cities have a developed, clearly defined, long-term marketing/promotion plan?
2. Is the marketing/promotion plan an integral part of the city's strategic plan?
3. Do cities have indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of promotional activities?
4. Is there a specialised organisational unit in the town hall responsible for marketing/promotional activities?
5. Do cities regularly carry out city image surveys?
6. Is creating an image of the city as environmentally friendly a priority task?
7. Is the promotion of environmental protection and the promotion of ecological activities clearly a part of the city's marketing strategy?
8. Does the city spend a significant proportion of its promotional budget on promoting environmental protection and the environmental activities undertaken?
9. Do cities cooperate with other cities to promote environmental protection in the region?
10. Are cities entering into partnerships with the private business sector in order to create the image of a "green city" and take green measures?
11. Do cities work closely with the not- profit sector to create the image of a 'green city' and take environmental action?
12. Do cities work with universities in or around the city to develop environmental solutions and promote a 'green city' image?

A five-point Likert scale was used for all questions.

4. Research Findings

Below are answers to the most important issues related to marketing planning in municipalities and approaches to green marketing.

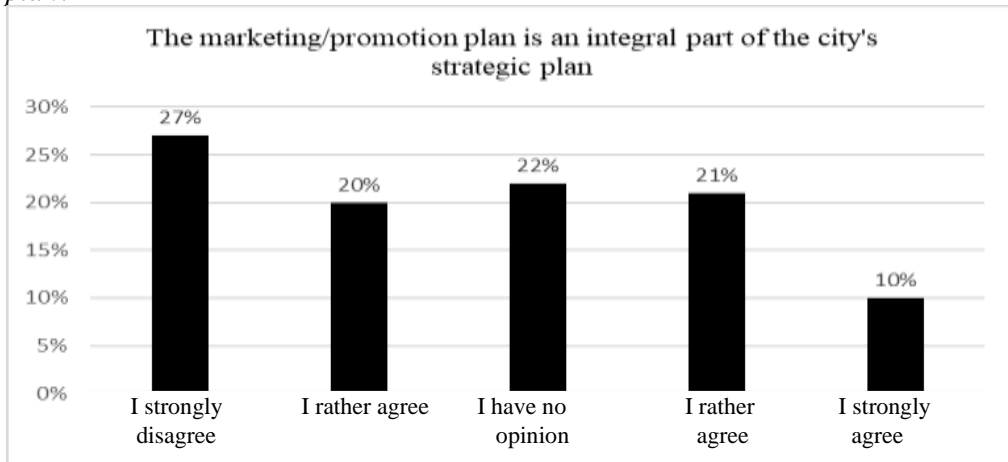
Figure 1. Do cities have a developed, clearly defined, long-term marketing/promotion plan?



Source: Own study.

It is clear from the chart above that the dominant group of respondents is undecided as to the firmness of the indication (72% in total). However, almost half of the respondents (47%) believe that cities do not have developed marketing plans.

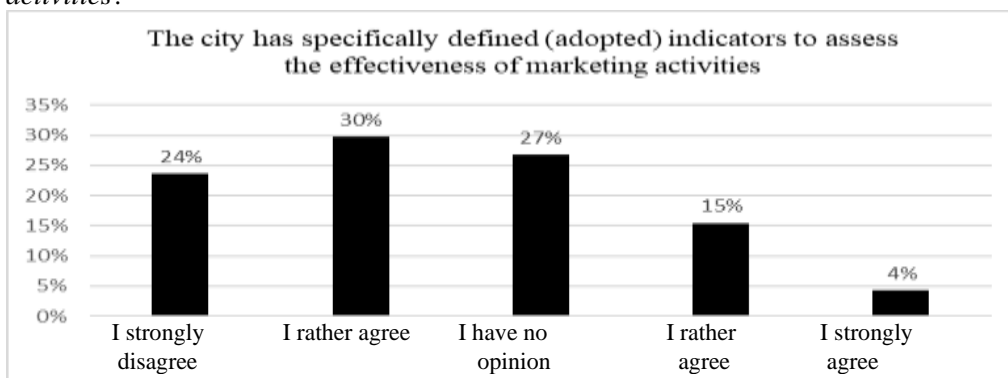
Figure 2. *Is the marketing/promotion plan an integral part of the city's strategic plan?*



Source: Own study.

The largest proportion of respondents (47%) believe that the marketing plan is not an integral part of the overall strategic activities in the municipalities, included in the municipal strategy system.

Figure 3. *Do cities have indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of promotional activities?*

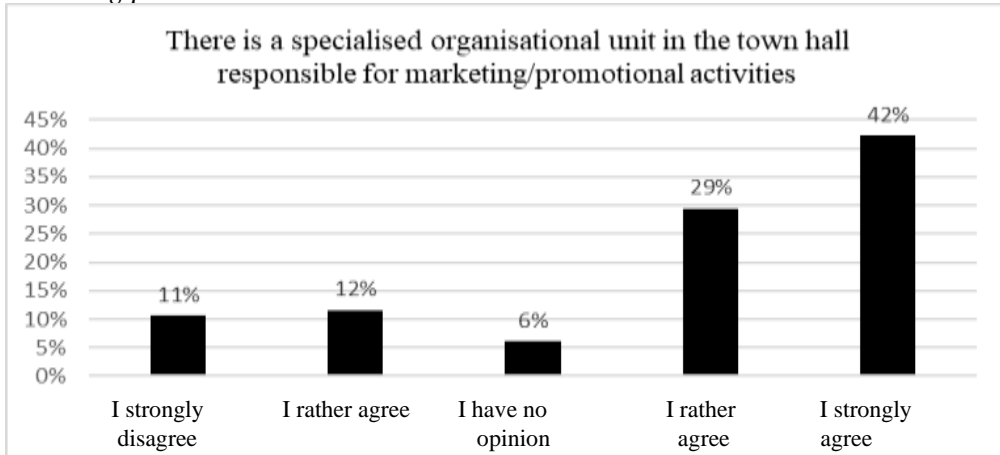


Source: Own study.

Only 19% of respondents felt that the city has specific indicators to verify the effectiveness of marketing activities. Such indications correspond perfectly with the

previous answers, as it is difficult to examine the quantitative effectiveness of the implementation of tasks without having precisely defined general and specific objectives, which are an integral part of any marketing plan.

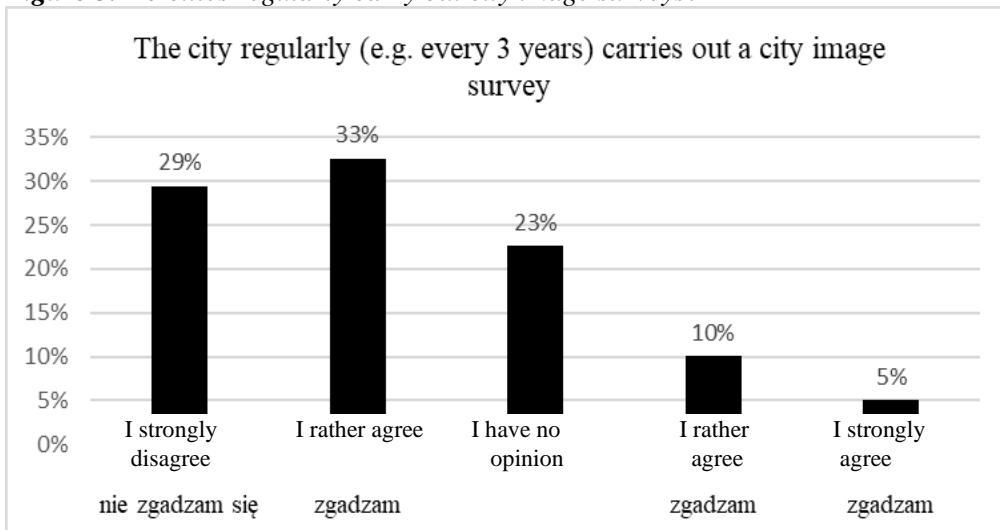
Figure 4. *Is there a specialised organisational unit in the town hall responsible for marketing/promotional activities?*



Source: Own study.

The 71% of indications confirming the existence of a specialised marketing unit shows, at the same time, that there is a lack of correlation between these units' own tasks and the general objectives of the city's promotion activities, as they do not, for the most part, function in a planning regime.

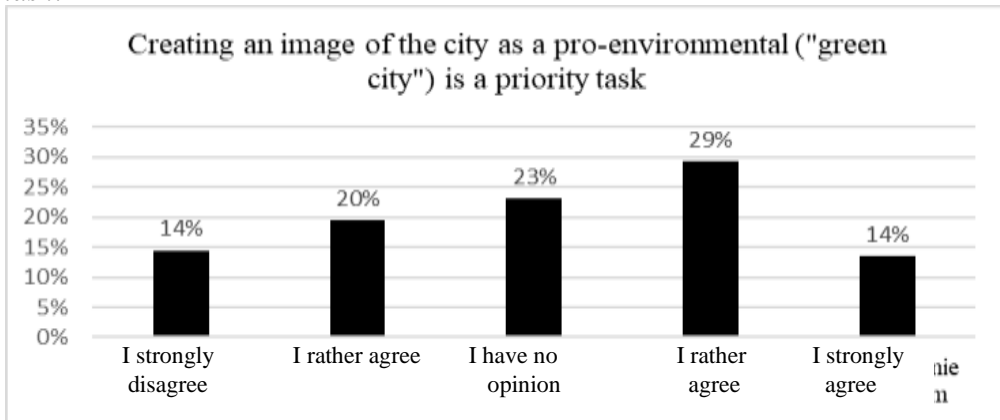
Figure 5. *Do cities regularly carry out city image surveys?*



Source: Own study.

Only 15% of respondents see the successive implementation of such an important task as a city image study. This may be closely related to the lack of formalisation of marketing plans and their integration with strategic plans.

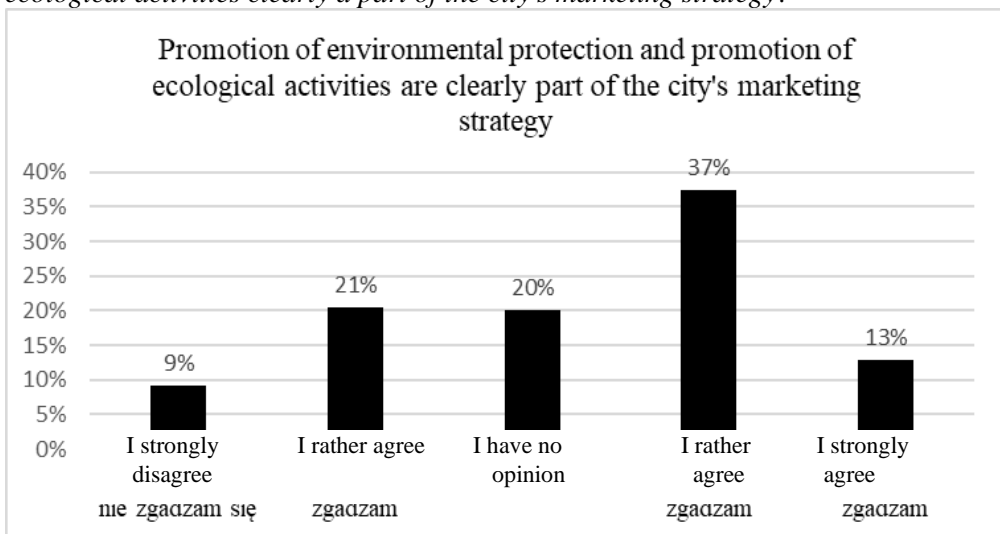
Figure 6. *Is creating an image of the city as environmentally friendly a priority task?*



Source: Own study

Despite the fact that ecology is becoming one of the elementary paradigms of thinking about the development of urban centres, only 43% of respondents believe that creating an image of the city as pro-environmental is among the tasks with the highest status in city plans.

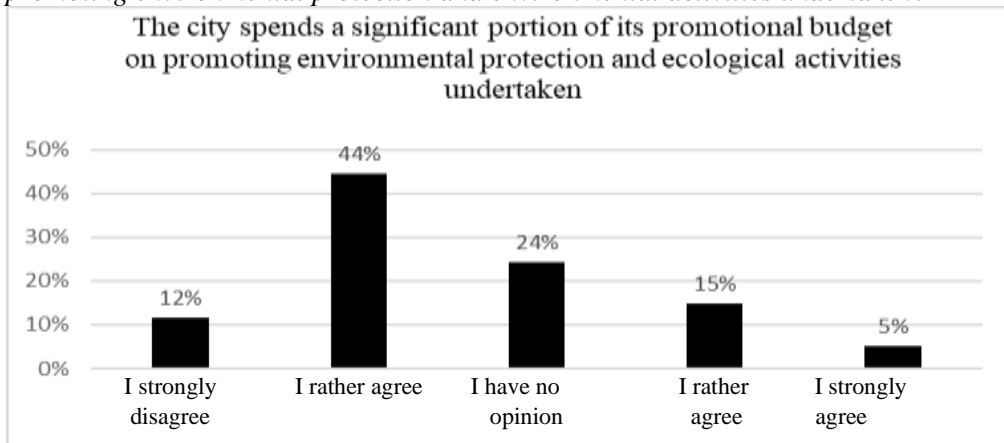
Figure 7. *Is the promotion of environmental protection and the promotion of ecological activities clearly a part of the city's marketing strategy?*



Source: Own study.

Half of the respondents indicate that the promotion of environmental activities is included in the city's marketing strategy. Considering the previous indications, where only 34% of respondents believe that the city has a marketing plan and this means that only 18% of all respondents agree with the statement that the eco-development component is included in the city's marketing strategy.

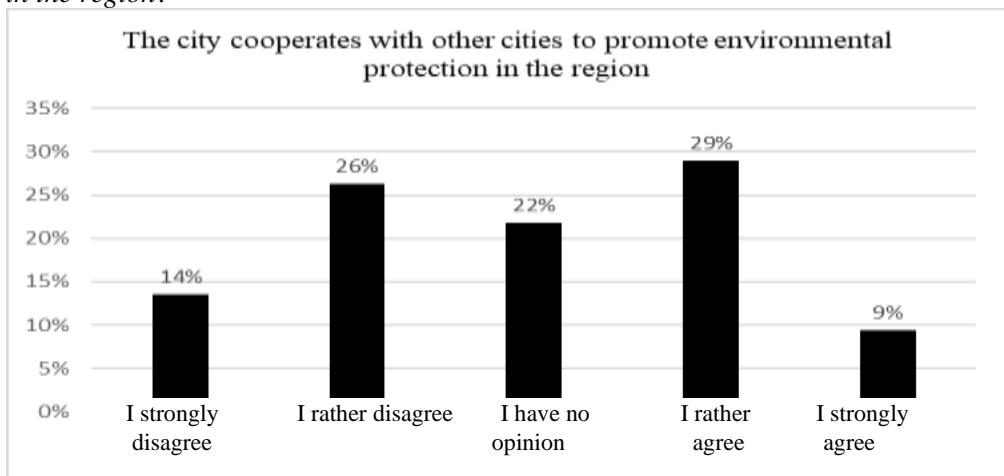
Figure 8. Does the city spend a significant proportion of its promotional budget on promoting environmental protection and environmental activities undertaken?



Source: Own study.

Only 20% of respondents believe that the promotion budget is directed towards highlighting the environmental activities of individual cities. In view of the increasing environmental awareness of citizens and the growing importance of climate transformation activities, this state of affairs will have to change.

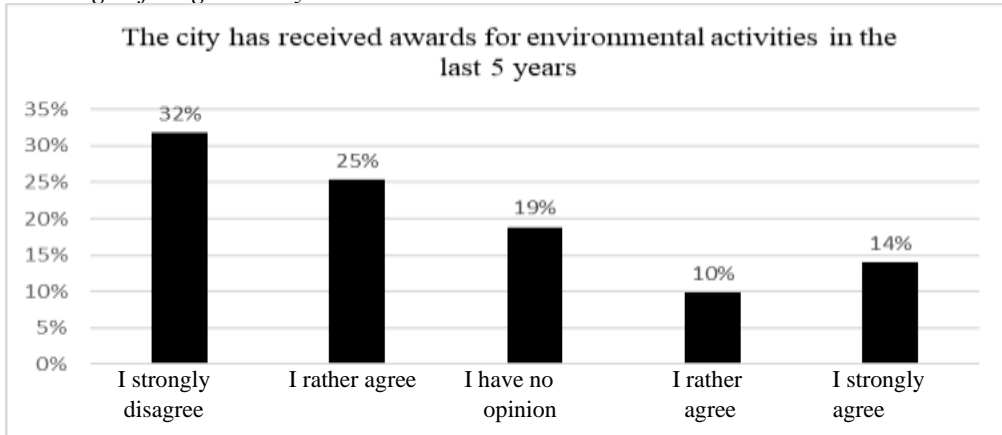
Figure 9. Do cities cooperate with other cities to promote environmental protection in the region?



Source: Own study.

38% of cities cooperate with other cities, this distribution of respondents' answers indicates poor information on cooperation with other cities in the field of promotion, or a half-hearted interest in such a form of cooperation.

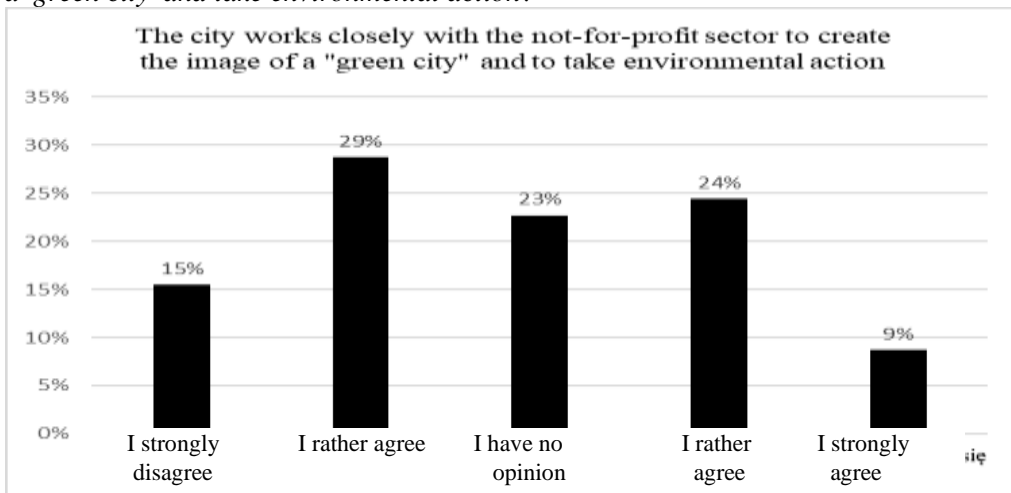
Figure 10. Do cities enter into cooperation with the private business sector to create the image of a "green city" and to take environmental measures?



Source: Own study.

A significant minority of respondents - only 24% - declare that the city has received any awards for environmental activities. This may be indicative of the fact that the component of public awards in the area of ecology is not perceived as very valuable to the promotional strategies of the surveyed cities.

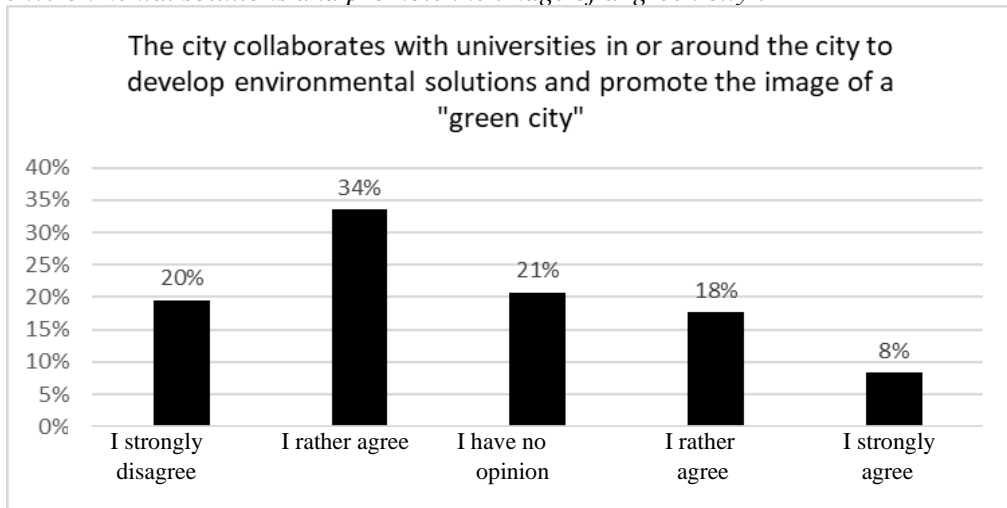
Figure 11. Do cities work closely with the not-for-profit sector to create an image of a 'green city' and take environmental action?



Source: Own study.

The majority of respondents (67%) recognise that there is no knowledge or direct cooperation between third sector organisations and local government in creating the image of a 'green city'.

Figure 12. Do cities work with universities in or around the city to develop environmental solutions and promote the image of a 'green city'?



Source: Own study.

Only 26% of respondents see cooperation with universities as a desirable target model for developing environmental solutions.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The lack of marketing plans in almost half of the cities means that part of their activities is of an operational character, forced by circumstances or discretionary, according to the view of promotion policy in particular internal divisions in the organisational structure of the city, while long-term thinking is missing. Also, in almost half of the cities, the marketing plan is not part of strategic plans.

Such indications may indicate either a lack of orientation towards formal inclusion of plans within local government units or a lack of attention to planning provisions and actions based on discretion of promotion units or orientation of the municipality's promotion according to ad hoc, changeable views of city mayors. In cities, there are no clearly defined indicators of the effectiveness of marketing activities. This means a reduced ability to assess the effectiveness of spending the marketing budget, thus promoting discretionary decision-making by managerial bodies in local government structures.

The existence of a marketing unit in the vast majority of cities indicates an awareness of the importance of these activities in image-building, but it is not

assigned a strategic function, so the effectiveness of its activities may decrease. Failure to include marketing activities as an integral part of strategic planning may indicate a depreciation of the role of marketing in cities and an attribution of mediocre importance to it.

Also, the lack of city image research confirms that cities do not give a strategic place to marketing. This may be indicative of a mentally parametrised view of the city's image, consisting of underestimating direct research and relying mainly on the intuition of decision-makers. The problem is that an intuitive approach does not show the actual state of stakeholders' perceptions of the city and does not allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of marketing activities in terms of city identity construction.

More than half of the cities do not consider the creation of a green city image as a priority task. The responses suggest, on the one hand, a paucity of emphasis on eco-agenda in cities and, on the other hand, a prevalent failure to include green marketing policies in the strategies of local government units. In the multitude of different city functions and tasks facing city managers, ecology is relegated to the background of other activities.

This is confirmed by the fact that half of the cities do not have environmental protection promotion and promotion of ecological activities included in their marketing strategy and only one in five spends a significant part of its promotional budget on that purpose. From the point of view of changes in the global optics of the European Union (adoption of assumptions of the Ff55 package), this may indicate inadequacy of cities for future absorption of EU funds in the planned convergence activities aimed at adaptation to comprehensive climate transformation.

Only one in three towns cooperates with other towns to promote environmental protection in the region. In the near future, such cooperation will have to develop, if only because obtaining funds for climate and energy transformation from EU funds will require the cohesion, complementarity and coherence of the activities of individual municipalities. An example of this can be found in the funds allocated to regional transformation for Upper Silesia (the Fair Transformation Fund), where there is the possibility of combining pro-ecological activities in different municipalities, for example in areas such as land reclamation or the environmental education of children and young people.

Cooperation with non-profit organisations and universities is also weak in this respect. At present, the effectiveness of promotional activities may be increased by NGOs and universities, which form a network of local links and whose activity, e.g. in social media, may change the perception of the municipality by residents and stakeholders. The lack of such cooperation may also derail many grassroots, pro-environmental initiatives of residents and cause, for example, the under-exposure of many partial pro- environmental investments in the civic budgets of individual

municipalities. In addition, cooperation with representatives of the world of science can be helpful in the search for ecological solutions in cities.

This is a difficult situation from the point of view of integrating business, local government and science around ecology. Practical studies on cooperative ventures, e.g. in cluster initiatives, clearly show that the final effect, the most beneficial for the local community, is achieved in the relationship of the so-called triple helix loop. Furthermore, the financial assembly for such ventures can be constructed more efficiently if such cooperation has existed for a long time and the parties show mutual trust, which significantly reduces the transaction costs of such cooperation.

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