
Enhancing Scientific Institutions through Local Authority Initiatives: Insights from the West Pomeranian Voivodeship

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of this article is The aim of this article is to present local government units (jsts) as entities that, by means of promoting their local scientific institutions or their achievements, promote their region/city and influence its development.

Design/Methodology/Approche: When shaping the image of a city/region, various areas of development should be showcased in order to attract the interest of entrepreneurs, investors, residents or tourists. The research hypothesis was defined as follows: Building the image of a region by showing development in different areas creates an opportunity for different groups of message recipients to become interested in the region, therefore one such area could be the promotion of scientific institutions. The following research methods were used in the study: case study and content analysis of documents and materials.

Findings: Without a proper promotion strategy of the jst and a decision of the region's authorities, the promotion of scientific institutions and their activities will not be achieved. Only mutual cooperation can contribute on the one hand to a better presentation of the region's image, and on the other hand to a positive image of the scientific institution and the results of its scientists.

Practical implications: The activities presented in the article may serve as a hint for other local governments or cities that would like to cooperate more with scientific institutions and, through their promotion, influence the perception of these entities and their scientific achievements while building a positive image of their region.

Original/value: The article is of practical use. The results can be used by municipalities planning to promote scientific institutions in their region.

Keywords: Promotion, local authorities, scientific institutions.

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1. Introduction

Poland has a three-tier structure of local government within which there are communes, districts and voivodeships. These three legal forms are precisely the units of local self-government that function locally or regionally.

The Act on the Self-Government of the Voivodeship defines the objectives that the Voivodeship Self-Government should pursue. These include, for example: nurturing Polish identity and developing and shaping the national, civic and cultural awareness of the inhabitants, as well as nurturing and developing the local identity; stimulating economic activity, increasing the level of competitiveness and innovation in the voivodeship economy; maintaining the values of the cultural and natural environment, taking into account the needs of future generations; and shaping and maintaining spatial order.

Another point of this law specifies the voivodeship development policy, which consists, among others, of: supporting and carrying out activities to increase the level of education of citizens; supporting the development of science and cooperation between the spheres of science and economy, supporting technological progress and innovation, as well as promoting the values and development opportunities of the voivodeship. (Act on Provincial Self-Government)

Local authorities often adopt entrepreneurial and innovative attitudes, based on partnership with the social sector and business, which involve the exchange of information, willingness to cooperate, sharing knowledge and skills (Kartajaya, Kotler, and Setiawan 2021; Kłeczek, Pluta-Olearnik, and Pukas 2020; Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2017). They create the necessary conditions for joint ventures, initiatives and pose new challenges to local authorities, which begin to play the role of mediator and coordinator of the various actors operating in the municipality (March 2020, <https://www.ideoforce.pl/akademia/czym-jest-marketing-50,631.html>).

It should also be mentioned that each municipality has several target groups that it wants to reach with its promotional activities. Depending on the purpose of the campaigns organised by the municipality, which aim to change the way of thinking, perceptions, opinions and evaluations, the most important target groups in such activities should be: inhabitants, local individual entrepreneurs and investors, local government representatives, opinion leaders - social activists, journalists, scientists, creators (Szromnik, 2008; Szromnik, 2015; Rudewicz and Czapliński 2023). A group of tourists visiting the municipality should also be added.

Local authorities play the role of the main entity that prepares, organises, implements, coordinates and controls all the marketing undertakings concerning the a given place, in which a given territorial unit is the main object of reference for the benefits offered to partners (Szromnik 2011; Brańka 2018; Florek 2013). A key role

is to change the classical concept of marketing developed due to the functioning of commercial entities (Kartajaya, Kotler, and Setiawan 2021; Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2017). The marketing orientation of the activities of public entities, whose aim is not to obtain measurable economic profit, but to meet specific social needs, is therefore the result of a deepening and expansion of the classical, narrow understanding.

Due to the change in the perception of the mechanisms of obtaining resources (human, financial, organisational), public entities, including cities and universities, prepare an offer aimed at different groups of customers-recipients (Florek, 2013; Glinka, 2017; Brańka 2018). Local governments do not always have a clear perception of the goals they pursue and what strategies they should follow to get there (Ma, Jong, Hoppe, and Bruijne, 2021; Rudewicz and Czapliński, 2023)

The promotion of scientific institutions and what is implemented by them is one of the most important challenges of our time (Rudewicz, Czapliński 2023, <https://www.marketingjournal.org/marketing-5-0-technology-for-humanity-an-interview-with-hermawan-kartajaya-and-iwan-setiawan/>).

It is through such activities that it becomes possible to show new solutions for both society and entrepreneurs that have been created by local scientific units. Interaction between local authorities and universities is not based on obligation, it is voluntary for both parties. The agreement between the local government and the higher education institutions determines the nature and extent of the cooperation. Irrespective of the ability of local authorities to shape effective cooperation, without the willingness, ability and activity of universities and other actors in the environment, these activities may not produce the expected results.

In this respect, local government has a significant informational and organisational role to play in activating cooperation partners. Depending on the type of relationship created, more or less dynamic development processes and activity of the local economic potential can be triggered. Higher education institutions can trigger positive relations and cooperation (Gorzelak, 2000; Rudewicz and Czapliński, 2023, <https://www.marketingjournal.org/marketing-5-0-technology-for-humanity-an-interview-with-hermawan-kartajaya-and-iwan-setiawan/>).

The self-government of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship carries out many promotional activities in three main areas: sensitive community (culture, universities, cooperation with NGOs, health, minority rights), green leader (bicycle roads, clean environment, ecological education, forests, green countryside, green power plant of Poland) and West Pomerania dynamic, modern region (logistic hub, modern transport, creativity and innovation, tourist region). Joint marketing activities, emphasising the attractiveness of the city's offer, based on the principles of partnership, internal communication, can be an opportunity to build a coherent

and positive image of a higher education institution, city or region (Adamczuk, 2015),

The aim of the article is to present local government units, on the example of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, as entities that promote their region/city by means of promoting their local scientific institutions or their achievements. In addition, the article provides examples of the implementation of a modern university promotional campaign in social media. Monitoring trends and a certain repetitiveness in marketing communication, the voivodeship prepared a video campaign in a storytelling narrative prepared for specific social media.

2. Promotion of Universities by Selected Local Government Units in Poland

Provinces or cities in Poland include universities in their promotional activities. The objectives of these promotional activities vary. The city of Wrocław has long since implemented campaigns aimed at secondary school students under the title 'Wrocław - the city that develops', 'Wrocław - your climate', 'Now Wrocław'.

The programme „Młodzi w Łodzi” was created to encourage young people to bind their future with Łódź, to support the career development of Łódź students and to provide local entrepreneurs and potential investors with highly qualified staff. The programme is implemented by the Łódź City Council's Economic Development and International Cooperation Office, which, in cooperation with Łódź's largest universities and leading employers, implements the programme's initiatives, such as the internship and apprenticeship portal, paid summer internships, a scholarship programme, free training, company visits and a discount card.(www.mlodziwlodzi.pl)

In the brand strategy of the capital of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship until 2013, great importance is attached to strengthening the city's function as an academic centre. One of the main target groups identified for communication activities are future students who do not live in Rzeszów (coming from both cities that are academic centres and towns where there are no universities). The creators of the strategy (employees of an entity external to the City Hall), as part of the recommended promotional activities, proposed (Gębarowski 2011):

- ☐ to carry out a cyclical action entitled. 'Studying in Rzeszów' - addressed to secondary school students (especially from Podkarpacie and neighbouring provinces);
- ☐ implementation of a programme under the working title 'Unique fields of study', aimed at extending the didactic offer of Rzeszów universities with fields of study going beyond the standard educational offer and at filling niches in Polish higher education;

□ to conduct a campaign entitled 'Rzeszów invites 'Rzeszów invites' - encouraging final-year students of selected fields of study to settle in the city and become involved with Rzeszów-based high-tech companies.

Unfortunately, much of this has not been implemented. The city of Rzeszów still runs various actions aimed at students, e.g., the lottery 'Register in Rzeszów'. This action is organised by the City Hall and its aim is to persuade students living in Rzeszów to register in the city (www.w.prz.edu.pl).

The Pomeranian Voivodeship has concluded an agreement between local and academic institutions on the 'Study in Pomorskie' aisle, the aim of which is to support activities aimed at internationalising Pomeranian universities, improving their competitiveness in the international arena and attracting talent to the region. Study in Pomorskie activities include cyclical events to integrate foreign students, lectures, visits by representatives of European universities and psychological support groups. (www.gospodarka.pomorskie.eu)

Participants in the agreement undertook to develop an annual action plan, which will define the scope of joint activities to be carried out in a given year, identify their leaders, and define the annual financial commitment of the signatories of the agreement. The funds necessary for the implementation of the agreement will come from the budget of the Pomorskie Voivodeship (the Self-Government of the Pomorskie Voivodeship has decided to set aside funds from the Voivodeship's budget for 2017 in the amount of PLN 100,000) and the budgets of the universities - signatories to the agreement. Study in Pomerania is a joint initiative of higher education institutions, which will include the following activities:

- creation of a coherent and effective promotion of Pomeranian universities in terms of their teaching and non-teaching offer;
- creating an information platform about the scientific position and research potential of universities and the attractiveness of Pomeranian cities, the Tri-City Metropolitan Area and the voivodeship;
- changing the image of the voivodeship as a place friendly to foreigners, enabling them to study at a high level, improving the quality of services provided to students and staff from abroad;
- increasing network connections of HEIs at the level of the voivodeship and beyond, intensification of research, development, implementation and socio-cultural cooperation, organisation of joint projects by the Pomeranian universities (e.g. participation in trade fairs and exhibitions, conferences).

Joint activities of the Self-Government of Pomorskie Voivodeship and Pomeranian universities are to contribute to increasing the number of foreign students and those from outside the Pomeranian Voivodeship studying at Pomeranian universities, retaining graduates of Pomeranian secondary schools at regional universities, creating a joint, coordinated and effective promotion of Pomeranian universities in

terms of their teaching and non-didactic offer, improving the image of the voivodeship as a place friendly to foreigners, enabling high-quality studies, improving the quality of services provided to students and staff from abroad, and increasing networking among Pomeranian universities (www.old.ug.edu.pl).

3. Characteristics of Promotional Activities of HEIs Implemented by Western Pomeranian Voivodship

In the heart of Europe, in the north-west of Poland, lies the fifth largest region in Poland - the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. The area of the entire region is 23,000 km². The capital city of the region is Szczecin and the total population is 1.7 million. (www.cig.wzp.pl)

In 2017, the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship launched a project with EU funding, as part of the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020, Priority Axis 1 Economy, Innovation, Modern Technologies, Measure 1.14 Strengthening the position of the regional economy in the national and international dimension. One of the aims of the project was to show the potential of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship through the preparation of a 'modern, innovative and creative' campaign, part of which was to show and promote scientific institutions through the prism of creative people, innovative ideas and modern solutions.

The activity included the preparation of a series of 30 short videos presented in social media, recorded in a storytelling narrative. The films were supposed to show innovative products, creative entrepreneurs or modern company solutions - and all of this, of course, in relation to the region. The assumptions were successfully realised, resulting in, among other things, more than 30 million views. There was no doubt that this formula of promotion was working and needed to be extended to include the promotion of science and universities.

Undoubtedly, the greatest ambassador of the entire campaign regarding the promotion of science and universities was Nikola Bukowiecka, whose Facebook video was viewed by more than 1 million people. People's reaction was so good that all national TV stations wanted to see the young talented scientist and all newspapers described her subsequent achievements.

Nikola Bukowiecka is a graduate of the University of Szczecin, where she obtained her master's degree in physics, with a specialisation in medical physics. She is also a graduate of the West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin, where she obtained an engineering degree in automation and robotics, specialising in control theory. She is a physicist at the Space Research Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a member of the Solar System Physics and Astrophysics Team. She is among an elite group of women who have significantly distinguished themselves in 2021 by their active activities in many fields and are an inspiration to others through

their knowledge, skills and achievements. She works with agencies such as POLSA, ESA and NASA. The effect of the promotion launched by the West Pomeranian Voivodeship has exceeded everyone's expectations.

In addition to showcasing young people who are studying or have completed their studies in the region, the voivodeship also promotes prizes won or various achievements by young students on an ongoing basis. One example worth mentioning is the 'Noble West Pomeranian' awards for the most outstanding scientific achievements in the region. This is an initiative that the voivodeship supports financially, but, what is no less important nowadays, perhaps even more importantly, it encapsulates in marketing terms by creating content that promotes the most talented in a form tailored to the target group.

Here you will find in-depth articles that show the complexity of the work of young scientists, but you will also find short Facebook videos that briefly and simply describe this complex matter. One example is the doctoral student from the West Pomeranian University of Szczecin, Michał Cichowicz, who received the West Pomeranian Nobel Prize for his work on a novel prosthetic leg.

The West Pomeranian Voivodeship has based its communication on social media profiles, making the West Pomeranian Facebook channel one of the most popular in the country (the channel currently has over 166,000 followers and this number is constantly growing). Of course, the channel is complemented by a profile on Instagram, thanks to which the target group can be widened even further. The content prepared by Western Pomerania is 21 video materials per month. Most of these materials are lifestyle content aimed at building reach, and 2-3 are videos promoting scientific institutions, business environment institutions or entrepreneurs.

The second channel is Western Pomerania News, which has a more informative role - it publishes current information from the life of the region, progress in ongoing investments, etc. Here the communication is more formal and detailed. This makes it possible to reach a completely different audience.

Business content requires a presence on other platforms such as LinkedIn, where the effects of the promotion of scientific institutions are increasingly visible,- where the content published is more businesslike, aimed at entrepreneurs and business practitioners, or Spotify, where longer conversations on the most important topics are found.

The use of new media, with dedicated modern communication, made it possible to reach the region's inhabitants, as well as potential tourists visiting the region and even investors, as they offer the possibility of creating dedicated messages targeted at the specific audience. Thus creating the best way to build the accessibility of our brand for the region's inhabitants.

Monitoring trends and a certain repetitiveness in marketing communications, in 2019 the region's authorities decided to put the accent on the production of film footage, which offered a much greater opportunity than static images. This was a decision resulting from trends just emerging in social media, which indirectly resulted in the creation of the Western Pomerania account on TikTok.

Promoting the region's brand is also about creating its image. Western Pomerania is not just about tourism, but a modern, open and innovative region, full of creative people. The West Pomeranian Voivodeship does not have a formal cooperation agreement with universities in the voivodeship. Despite this, the voivodeship actively supports many activities organised by universities in the voivodeship, e.g. promotes the largest scientific conferences, achievements and awards of students and academics, events organised by universities, organises numerous training courses and workshops to improve the competencies of academics.

Another example of activities, this time supporting scientific and teaching staff at universities, was the project Western Pomerania - where business meets science. It created the Science Haven, a series of meetings and educational materials dedicated to West Pomeranian representatives of the world of science, designed to strengthen their entrepreneurial attitudes and equip them with tools useful for taking action to actively participate in the market and develop science-business links.

4. Conclusions

Based on the literature reviewed and case studies from different regions and cities, there is a clear link between the promotion of a city or region and the universities in the area. Universities play a significant role in regional development through various mechanisms, including economic contribution, dissemination of knowledge and fostering innovation. Key areas of benefit for each party include:

- economic area, where universities contribute to regional economies by attracting students who use local services and businesses, thereby increasing economic activity. Universities implement sustainable entrepreneurship support programmes that help improve regional entrepreneurial ecosystems and promote economic revitalisation.

- knowledge and innovation area, where academic institutions serve as critical sources of knowledge and innovation that can stimulate regional development. They provide the necessary knowledge infrastructure and engage in learning activities that benefit the local economy. In addition, they facilitate knowledge and technology transfer, which is essential for creating new ventures and stimulating regional economic growth. This can include the commercialisation of research and the establishment of spin-off companies.

- area of urban development and planning, where the university community can be a driving force for urban development by embedding knowledge in local social and economic networks.

Academic institutions have a significant impact on regional promotion through economic contribution, fostering innovation and shaping regional identities. Effective collaboration between scientific institutions, local communities and policy makers is essential to maximise these benefits. Public policy support and strategic planning are key to maintaining and enhancing the positive impact of scientific institutions on regional development.

The vast majority of provinces allocate funds from their budgets for the operation of universities, for the expansion and improvement of infrastructure facilities, improved teaching conditions, research infrastructure, and scholarships for students. Each provincial government has also allocated money from the regional programme European Funds for a specific province for a number of different activities. Local authorities, wishing to develop economically and attract companies or investors to their areas, also need well-qualified staff. A number of promotional activities are also intended to attract young people to the region and help them stay there after graduation.

The West Pomeranian Voivodeship is taking many measures to support science and higher education in the voivodeship. An additional form of support over the past few years has been the promotion of students, scientists, developed solutions and technologies. These activities are mainly promoted online in the form of posts and videos in social media, sponsored articles online, podcasts and interviews, exposure campaigns on websites, articles in the printed press. The main aim of these activities is to showcase the region's potential, with the indirect aim of attracting candidates to study in the voivodeship..

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