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## **Model of marketing communication system by local government units in the context of the marketing 4.0 concept**

*Doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. Robert Bęben, Ph.D.*

Integrated marketing communication, local government units, management maturity, communication maturity, integrated marketing communication process, Weberian administration, new public management, (new) public governance, hybrid marketing communication tools

### **Abstract**

Local government units (LGUs), like commercial entities, are also subject to the impact of the changing environment. Recent years have brought major changes in the quality of communication by public institutions. Among the leaders of a systemic, strategic approach are large urban centres, central-level institutions and bodies of the Marshal Office. However, the dynamics of the changing environment forces changes in the composition of numerous promotional or information tools. In addition, new tools constantly appear on the market, some of which are worth implementing in the communication between local government units and stakeholders who are the elements of a marketing communication system.

As a result of systemic and economic transformations that have taken place in Poland in the last twenty years, local government units have become forced to compete with one another based on the principles of free market competition. The intensity of such competition has forced municipal authorities to create a distinctive image of their own centres, based on relevant, unique features<sup>1</sup>. The focus of communication is no longer limited to public utility services offered to the residents or investment properties, but also includes the entire city and its values. When undertaking marketing activities, the LGU acts not only as the administrator of a particular area, but also as an entity seeking investors or additional financial resources. The marketing communication by the local government unit is aimed at ensuring appropriate public perception, an inflow of investors, tourists or new residents. *Due to a large number of stakeholders and the interpenetration of certain communication processes, it is necessary to*

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<sup>1</sup> J. Adamczyk, *Ekonomiczne problemy usług*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego 2011 No. 663 2011, p. 11

*use a model approach in order to illustrate the multidirectional communication process aimed at increasing the attractiveness of a given area in terms of investments, tourism and settlement potential.*

The main research problem of the paper can be formulated as the following question: how should marketing communication activities undertaken by local government units be planned in order to use social potential, modern communication tools and channels. In addition to the main problem, several ancillary research questions can also be posed, including:

- *What is the role of marketing communication in the activities of LGUs?*
- *What are the conditions for undertaking marketing communication activities by LGUs?*
- *What tools can be used by LGUs in marketing communication?*
- *What tools are actually used by LGUs in the processes of marketing communication?*

The main theoretical and cognitive objective is to identify the existing tools and conditions of the marketing communication process in a dynamically changing environment. The practical goal, on the other hand, is to illustrate the optimal processes in the system of marketing communication of local government units, supporting the authorities and employees in the implementation of the assumed objectives by building effective, participatory communication with stakeholders. At the time when the assumptions of this paper were formulated, the 4.0 concept was relatively new, but the dynamic development of the marketing concept has made the 5.0 model more popular nowadays. The differences between marketing concepts and their importance in the context of implementation of the objectives of this paper are discussed further herein.

The first step of the research was a literature review (**chapter I**) in order to verify whether the literature on the subject of marketing communication of local government units (LGUs), or public institutions, fully reflects the specific nature of the functioning of these entities and treats the issue in a comprehensive way, not only providing general indications, but above all addressing the image-related and communication complexity of LGUs. This thesis was the starting point for the literature review. The author assumed that marketing communication tools and channels offer the possibility of building relations with the environment, thus strengthening the image and market position of the entity. However, only the proper integration of their individual elements, taking into account the heterogeneous nature of LGU structures, makes it possible to increase or maintain the effectiveness of the market communication processes carried out by local government units.

The **second chapter** deals with issues related to market competition between entities and concepts of strategic approach to management in the area of public administration, demonstrating that certain principles also apply in the case of local government units. The individual sections of this chapter present three management concepts, relevant to further considerations, which force changes not only in marketing communication, but also in the management of LGUs. An attempt has been made to capture the evolution of LGU management in the context of changing tasks. The last section attempts to describe the specific nature of management processes in local government units.

The **third chapter** of the dissertation focuses on individual instruments and channels of marketing communication, which may be used by local government units to communicate in all marketing communication system. An attempt has been made to systematise all marketing communication tools, compare the various existing systematisations and discuss individual tools in terms of their usefulness and suitability for the communication activities undertaken by local government units. The chapter attempts to present a new systematisation of the mentioned tools, used in the chapter devoted to the presentation of research results.

**Chapter four** discusses marketing communication of local government units in the context of the author's own research. A synthesis of marketing research related to the implementation of marketing communication strategies in various institutions and administrative bodies at the local level, as well as a study of communication preferences of the residents of Gdańsk is also discussed. This chapter also attempts to verify the phenomenon of *perceived identity*, i.e. responsibility for various issues, as attributed by stakeholders.

The last, **fifth chapter** attempts to describe the model of the marketing communication system processes by local government units, along with the characteristics of its elements, conditions and mechanisms of implementation. As part of the research, an analysis of the patterns of communication between LGUs and the environment has been conducted, the concepts of *communication and management maturity* and *communication routers* have been introduced, and implementation-related recommendations with regard to management and communication models have been presented for local government units.