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Strengthening relationships with residents via internet and mobile communication in territorial marketing on the example of the city of Częstochowa

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Summary. In the partnership approach, majority of territorial marketing activities are addressed to key clients, mainly residents, to intensify their sense of brand identification and connect them with a given territorial unit both on the functional and emotional levels. The paper assumes that in territorial relationship marketing, more and more often, internet and mobile forms of communication with residents are used, which is supported by the example of marketing activities used by the City of Częstochowa. At the same time, by the use of own research, an attempt to evaluate these activities from the residents' perspective was made. Results indicate that although many forms of contact with residents via the internet and mobile applications are used in Częstochowa, including those with a more direct and personalized character, interested parties themselves are not fully aware of their existence and use them to a very limited extent.

Introduction

One of the results of the reform of local government is the increase of social participation, consisting of, among others, in co-deciding by inhabitants about local initiatives (e.g. by voting for tasks submitted to the Citizens' Budget) and

solving current problems. It is reflected at the level of self-government territorial units (STU) in the increased interest of local community in its development, translating into a greater involvement of residents in local affairs and participation in decisions and actions undertaken by authorities, aimed at co-creating the value of the area (Kuźniar, Kawa, 2016, p. 279–280).

Although within territorial marketing, defined as the overall activity of local, regional or nationwide entities aiming at creating processes of exchange and influence through recognition, shaping and satisfying the needs and desires of residents (Szromnik, 1997, p. 36–37; Rudolf, 2011, p. 244), one can reach for various solutions to build relationships with the “client”, in the opinion of practitioners in this field, majority of activities in this area comes down to promotion. Meanwhile, curiosity, intrigue and inspiration, and as a consequence mobilizing representatives of specific target groups to act, requires nowadays undertaking activities that go beyond standard forms of communication with the market (Niedzielska, 2017, p. 143–144). An interesting alternative to classic forms of STU communication with the environment is on-line activity and through mobile applications, which allow for greater individualization and interactivity of messages, and, as a consequence, building more lasting relationships with their recipients.

The aim of the article is to present the specificity of territorial relationship marketing in theoretical approach and on the example of solutions undertaken as part of marketing communication strategy of the city of Częstochowa, as well as the presentation of results of own research in the field of the subject. In the article, apart from the method of critical analysis of the literature, the survey method was used, via an on-line questionnaire.

The specificity of territorial relationship marketing

Development of territorial marketing consists of three basic generations. Initially, activities in its scope were limited only to promotion of a place (place promotion), then have taken form of selling a place, and later evolved towards strategic marketing (Kobylińska, 2011, p. 63). The long-term nature of actions resulting from the strategic approach allows to interpret territorial marketing as a philosophy based on the assumption that achieving a territorial unit’s success is possible through the client-focused activities conducted in competitive conditions (Szromnik, 2006, p. 36; Wanagos, 2011, p. 281), which assume developing loyalty relationships with clients and alliances with business partners (Rydel, Ronkowski, 1995, p. 5; Petrykowska, 2012, p. 62–63). In this perspective, marketing can already be seen through the prism of partnership, under which, stressing the importance of mutual understanding and trust, is defined as a process of planning, developing and nurturing a climate of bond, promoting dia-

logue between the organization and its stakeholders (Tzokas, Saren, 1996, p. 59, taken from: Petrykowska, 2012, p. 63).

The adoption of relationship marketing paradigm changes the management model of local self-government units which use it. It does not seek to transform the market environment into the sphere of influence and domination, but by using a partnership approach, it intends to absorb the external environment, i.e. to involve stakeholders, primarily the residents into an organizational structure (Rogoziński, 2002, p. 21; Dobska, 2009, p. 121). However, not all business solutions can be transferred directly to public administration, due to the dual role of a resident – a customer who is sometimes a tax-paying citizen who is a subject to legal regulations and sometimes acts as a typical customer who purchases a service from the public sector and expects its high quality (Pukas, 2015, p. 290). Certainly, the characteristic of relationship marketing, striving to attract and retain customers in the long term and building a lasting relationship with them based primarily on quality and customer service can be successfully implemented on the STU market. The specificity of local government consists in the cooperation of members of a given community in management. By responding to the needs of residents, but also their prediction and even creation, local authorities contribute to the improvement of material conditions and spiritual development of residents, and consequently the entire territorial unit (Kuzniar, 2012, p. 432). The nature of the ties built with the environment translates into the loyalty of residents understood as the result of their perception of benefits that comes from the relationship with STU, satisfaction with these relationships and trust to the place of residence (Olivier, Swan, 1989, taken from: Szulce, Walkowiak-Markiewicz, 2012, p. 248–249). A loyal resident is the one who promotes his place of residence and provides it with additional value (Reichheld, 2003, p. 105, taken from: Szulce, Walkowiak-Markiewicz, 2012, p. 249). His loyalty grows with the time of his cooperation with a given local government unit, taking on an ever more durable and stronger form (Garbarino, Johnson, 1999, p. 70–87, taken from: Szulce, Walkowiak-Markiewicz, 2012, p. 249).

To summarize, partnership is participation in something, that is, continuing to build lasting relationships with environment, based on mutual benefits. It should be noted that communication (both formal and informal) plays a key role in such a marketing approach, which ensures the flow of information between participants and more and more often allows for individualization and interactivity of messages (Lard, 2011, p. 489).

Initiatives in the field of relationship marketing as an element of building long-term ties with residents

As mentioned earlier, the specificity of residents as stakeholders of a territorial unit depends on their duality. They are not only the main target market determining decision-making process and implemented actions of local authorities, but also participate in creating the value of a given unit. Their needs and desires should always be the main determinant of decisions and actions undertaken, and their level of satisfaction is the basic measure of assessment of activities of self-government authorities (Kuźniar, Kawa, 2015, p. 280). The most common and the most consciously used by the local government authorities form of communication with residents is broadly understood promotion, which aims primarily to inform about the region, commune or city, to convince about its advantages and benefits contained in the local (regional) offer, impact on target markets by attracting the desired buyers of territorial offer and shaping a positive image, both among internal (i.e. residents, entrepreneurs), as well as external reference groups, mainly tourists and investors (Kuźniar, 2009, p. 649). When it comes to building relationships with residents, classic forms of promotion based primarily on advertising give way to forms of more personalized contact, mainly of mobile and on-line nature. Internet and mobile applications are becoming an increasingly appreciated and popular means of communication between local government authorities and target markets, because a professional, system-oriented virtual and mobile communication system allows to combine the advantages of many media (TV, newspaper or poster), making it less expensive and at the same time an interesting form of influence on the external and internal recipients of the territorial offer (Kuźniar, 2009, p. 648). In addition, a clear evolution of solutions in the area of STU communication can be noticed, because municipalities, cities and regions, more and more aware of the need to compete for diverse recipients of their offer, must be active on many levels of internet communication (Gębarowski, 2011, p. 449). Internet or mobile applications are used not only as a medium of communication advertising the values of a given town, but also enable current information about the “life” of a given municipality, city or region, actions or decisions of the authorities, etc. (Kuźniar, 2009, p. 651). STUs also appreciate the importance of social media, word of mouth marketing and viral marketing. Online activity of the city of Częstochowa is visible on websites, starting from the official website of the city (www.czestochowa.pl) through other websites, including wczestochowie.pl, czestochowa.naszemiasto.pl, twoja-czestochowa.pl, www.aleje.czestochowa.pl, on social networks, most often integrated with the website (including Częstochowa – city profile, Aleje – tu się dzieje, Co, gdzie, kiedy w Częstochowie, Częstochowa NaszeMiasto.pl) and in mobile applications. As for the latter, one can include:

- Apply yourself Czestochowa (free mobile application cooperating with the city portal as a city guide with the so-called option augmented reality),
- OpiekaNova for Częstochowa city (an alarm application designed mainly for active seniors allowing to minimize the risk of danger by informing relatives about the need for help via SMS),
- SISMS (a free local information system that already operates in several hundred municipalities and cities, through which local governments and various entities provide up-to-date information on matters affecting the living comfort of residents by three channels, via SMS, e-mail or Blisko app),
- Częstochowski Rower Miejski (an application that allows you to rent a city bike),
- mPay (an application that enables, among others purchase of public transport tickets, paying for parking, topping up pre-paid cards and paying home bills by phone).

Taking into account the relational nature of marketing activities of local government units addressed to residents, the importance of electronic administration (e-government) in communicating with them should be emphasized, i.e. the use of information and telecommunications technologies in public administration, in conjunction with organizational changes and acquiring new skills in order to improving the quality of public services provided, strengthening the citizen's involvement in democratic processes and supporting state policy. In EU plans, e-administration is part of a broader concept – the development of an information society and a knowledge-based economy – in line with the postulates of the Lisbon Strategy (Budziewicz-Guźlecka, 2011, p. 522). In Częstochowa, the On-line office is the platform for such communication. In addition to the geoportal for residents and investors and the user's guide, the essential function of e-services is to arrange visits concerning, among others, issues such as civil status records, housing allowances, personal ID cards, business and population records, vehicle registration, complaints and applications of residents or issuing employment and remuneration certificates for retirement purposes. An important tool for communication of the On-line office with the inhabitants of Częstochowa is the so-called electronic platform of public administration services, so-called e-PUAP, i.e. an IT system for making basic services available to citizens and entrepreneurs and public institutions via electronic means. In the Częstochowa On-line office, it was divided into two zones, i.e. a client and an official. The account created on it is used as an electronic locker to receive official correspondence. It should be emphasized that the majority of activities related to the functioning of e-services of the City of Częstochowa is a consequence of the State Informatization Plan for 2007–2010 and is subject to

constant modernization and expansion in order to improve relations with the inhabitants.

Relationship marketing in the perception of the inhabitants of Częstochowa in the light of the results of own research

As one of the measures of management effectiveness of the local government unit is the degree to which it facilitates the citizens' life, satisfying their needs and desires (Kuźniar, 2011, p. 541), it was decided that the analysis of the chosen subject in the theoretical approach will complement the results of empirical research on selected aspects of communication as part of relationship marketing in the perception of Częstochowa residents. The aim of the study was to determine the level of knowledge of activities in the field of mobile and on-line communication directed to residents among respondents and learning their opinions on the nature of the activities undertaken. The survey was conducted using the online survey method via a Google form containing 19 basic questions and three survey questions about the gender, age and place of residence of respondents. The selection of the sample was non-random – incidental, while the interpretation of the test results was made using the inductive-deductive method. The study was attended by 109 people (as of 31.05.2018), mainly in the 36–45 age group (46.8%), with a majority of women (65.0%).

As the study showed, the communication of the City of Częstochowa with residents via social media is particularly appreciated, almost 50% indicated this source of information as the most frequently used for obtaining information about the city and related events (the reference point was a 5-point Likert scale). Interestingly, the official website of the City of Częstochowa is much less popular, as almost 40.0% of respondents (39.4%) consider it to be the most rarely used source of information. Internet forums and mobile applications are also very popular (respectively 53.0% and 50.4% of the lowest value). The vast majority of respondents (83.5%) believe that the availability of information on the City of Częstochowa in recent years has increased. This translates into greater activity of respondents in the area of obtaining information about the City of Częstochowa and communication with it in recent years, the intensification of which was declared by 53.2% of respondents. 38.5% of people participating in the survey are considered to be moderately active in the field of communication with the City of Częstochowa via the Internet and mobile applications, while only 7.3% are considered very active in this area. Although the majority of respondents are aware of the functioning of the Częstochowa Office on-line (65.3%), only 37.0% of them have ever used it. Respondents are not unanimous as to the knowledge about the main function performed by that office. It is used to book visits, which was marked only by 39.8% of respondents. 20.4% think that business documents are collected through it, and 35.7% do not have any

knowledge about it. Respondents do not have any serious objections to the website of the Częstochowa On-line Office, as most of them (40.5%) assess the usefulness of the site, i.e. page transparency, ease of navigation, and time savings at 3 (on a 5-point scale). The respondents' knowledge about electronic administrative services platform in Częstochowa is moderate, only half of the respondents know the concept, and an even smaller percentage of people have ever used the services available there (only 23.3%). A positive aspect, however, is the fact that people declaring the knowledge of ePUAP mostly correctly interpret the acronym present in the name. Another issue raised in the study indicates that the surveyed people are poorly involved in initiatives aimed at strengthening the ties between the city and the inhabitants. This is evidenced by the fact that although 83.5 respondents had heard about the Częstochowa Resident Card, over 76.0% of the surveyed people do not have it, and only one of respondents uses it often. When it comes to the respondents' activity in the use of mobile applications and online sources, it is also unfavorable. From among 10 mobile applications, respondents indicated that only the MZDiT timetable was used frequently. Other applications are either completely unknown (eg OpiekaNova, e-microfirma, Apply yourself Czestochowa) or known, but used to a negligible extent (e.g. Czestochowa City Bike or mPay – public transport ticket or parking machine in the phone). Knowledge of social profiles and websites related to Częstochowa was better. When it comes to “FB profiles” liked by respondents, these include mainly information about current cultural and sporting events, i.e. Aleje – tu się dzieje (46.8% of indications), Co, gdzie, kiedy w Częstochowie (42.2%) and Częstochowa Naszemiasto.pl (32.1%). The official city profile was placed on the next position (30.3% of selections). The most popular websites related to the City of Częstochowa, which are used by respondents are: czestochowa.wyborcza.pl (54.1%), the official website of the city – www.czestochowa.pl (52.3%) and czestochowa.naszemiasto.pl (41.3%).

Respondents, although they note that the recent years, both the availability of information about the City of Częstochowa and their activity in their acquisition and communication with the city have increased, they are not unanimous in terms of the level of ties with Częstochowa. Only 28.4% of people think that their bond with Częstochowa has strengthened in recent years. 12.8% of people think that the relationship has weakened, while 58.7% evaluate it as unchanged.

Conclusions

The practice of territorial marketing often shows that although it is defined as the overall activity of local, regional or nationwide entities aiming at creating exchange and influence processes by recognizing, shaping and satisfying the needs and desires of residents and other stakeholder groups, including mainly tourists and investors; in fact, these activities are limited not so much to market-

ing communication as to the promotion of self-government territorial units. Communication has a bi-directional nature and this feedback is often missing in the relations between local government units and the market. The marketing practice of Częstochowa shows that although classic forms of advertising give way to more personalized forms of communication with residents, people are not fully aware of their existence and use them to a very limited extent. The same applies to solutions in the field of electronic administration, which offers residents a number of little-known facilities. As shown by the survey among Częstochowa residents, informal sources, i.e. social networks, are definitely more popular than the official on-line communication channels of the City of Częstochowa. A relatively low percentage of respondents use the On-line office, the ePUAP platform and the Częstochowa Resident Card. To a very small extent, respondents also reach for mobile applications regarding the city offer. These results should lead us to think about the fact that, if the Częstochowa authorities want to successfully promote modern forms of communication with residents, they should first consider how to effectively reach them with the message promoting such projects.

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Zacieśnianie relacji z mieszkańcami za pośrednictwem komunikacji internetowej i mobilnej w marketingu terytorialnym na przykładzie miasta Częstochowa

Słowa kluczowe: marketing terytorialny, marketing relacyjny, komunikacja mobilna, komunikacja internetowa

Streszczenie. W podejściu partnerskim gros działań z zakresu marketingu terytorialnego kieruje się do kluczowych klientów, głównie mieszkańców, aby zintensyfikować u nich poczucie utożsamiania się z marką i związać ich z daną jednostką terytorialną na poziomie funkcjonalnym oraz emocjonalnym. W artykule założono, że w terytorialnym marketingu partnerskim coraz częściej sięga się po internetowe i mobilne formy komunikowania się z mieszkańcami, co poparto przykładem działań marketingowych stosowanych przez Urząd Miasta Częstochowy. Jednocześnie, za pośrednictwem badań własnych, podjęto próbę oceny tych działań z perspektywy mieszkańców. Wyniki wskazują, że choć w Częstochowie stosuje się wiele form kontaktu z mieszkańcami za pośrednictwem internetu i aplikacji mobilnych, w tym także działań o bardziej bezpośrednim i spersonalizowanym charakterze, to sami zainteresowani nie do końca są świadomi ich istnienia i korzystają z nich w bardzo ograniczonym stopniu.

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Cytowanie

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