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## Promotion in the agenda of public administration : the case of the communes in the Tarnobrzeg district

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**Anna Kołomycew**

**PROMOTION IN THE AGENDA  
OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
(THE CASE OF THE COMMUNES  
IN THE TARNOBRZEG DISTRICT)**

**Introduction**

Modern public administration is to be characterised by its openness and the democratic nature of its structures: efficiency, effectiveness and entrepreneurship (Płoskonka 2008: 171). It is expected that organs of public administration will be the actual creator of entrepreneurship that initiates and impacts on the course of developmental processes in areas that are subject to their governance. Wishing to meet ever growing societal demands, the organs of public administration are forced to include new, pro-active and professional forms of action in their „traditional” administrative agendas (Osiński 2008: 38)

According to J. Osiński (2008: 40–41), such novel solutions and models of governance and management – so far typically exclusive of private sector actors – could be fruitfully applied in that domain of public administration that is constituted by its information- and promotion-focused activities.

**1. Promotion as an instrument of action in the sphere  
of public administration**

Promotion is an instrument of market communication, alongside product, price and distribution, which means that it is a concept narrower than market communication with which it is often erroneously

identified (Szymoniuk, 2006: 16). It involves both informing and persuading, that is activities that create demand and/or create a positive image of a brand and its producer: an enterprise, an organisation or a public institution (Szymoniuk 2006: 16). The information side of promotion agenda is also indicated by Kotler's definition depicting it in terms of a series of activities undertaken in order to impart information related to the given product's (service's) features or aiming at persuading the buyer to buy the particular product (service) (Kotler 1994: 90).

The aforementioned definitions indicate that promotion as practiced by units of public administration is a form of communication between the administrative structures and their external environment. It facilitates the communication of information concerning a planned action, an offer or ways to finance public tasks (Mazur, Zieziula 1999: 183).

To finally resolve the issue of the definition of promotion as practiced by units of public administration, it needs to be stressed that the term „promotion of public administration” covers all of the activities that result in promoting the given public administration unit, that is both its activities that are addressed to its external environment and activities that are pursued within the internal domain of the given structure of public administration.

## **2. Specificity, aims and forms of promotional activities as practiced by public administration**

The specificity of public administration agenda accounts for the fact that it is impossible to directly translate and apply the forms of promotion that have been proven effective in the practice of private enterprises. As much as units of public administration are subject to market economy and as much as the economic rules are applied to their agenda, the offer of the public sector is slightly different than that of commercial entities. The majority of products and services offered by public administration at its various levels continue to be characterised by their intangibility and social utility (Mazur, Zieziula 1999: 183).

The specific nature of the public administration offer makes it necessary to modify and diversify the forms of promotion that are used in

the private sector. Taking into account the type of product (service) offered by public administration and the direction (location of the addressee) of the potential promotion activities, following Sekuła, promotion could therefore be divided into:

- Economic: internal and external,
- Social: internal and external;
- Cultural: internal and external (Sekuła 2008: 289).

Internal economic promotion aims at stimulating entrepreneurship of entities in a predefined domain. Promotional activities oriented to the external environment are in turn to attract capital, tourists, to facilitate local entrepreneurs' participation in an external economic environment and to build partner relations with other actors.

Social promotion – in its internal dimension – is to create structures of civil society, build linkages, relations and the identity of members of the given local community that is related to the local territory. External activities of social promotion are to reinforce a positive image of developmental processes in the given unit.

In the case of internal cultural promotion, the aim is to reinforce identities basing on a coherent whole constituted by local culture, tradition and customs. In its external dimension, it is important to promote local culture formatted as a specific product.

In general, activities that aim at promotion, especially in the domain of public administration and that use public money, must be carried out according to a plan, economically and professionally. It does not mean that such activities will always produce expected results. This is why it is so important to define their objectives, choose adequate means and forms of promotion as well as to devote adequate financial resources to this aim (cf. Sekuła 2008: 289–290).

According to Pabian, promotion (including promotion of and by units of public administration) has two basic objectives, in principle corresponding to its functions, that is promotion is to inform and to stimulate demand (Pabian 2008: 32). Only within these functions one may define the more precise objectives of promotional activities. Within the range of those promotional activities that serve the purpose of informing, one finds the objective of presenting the nature of the given public institution and its offer to the market (cf. Wiktor 2001: 46). The core of the stimulating function resides, in turn, in exerting an impact on attitudes and decisions of the addressees at whom the promotion is

targeted in order to incite them to buy or take advantage of the offered products and services.

The message sent by public administration must be targeted at a pre-defined receiver (individual and collective). The specification of the type of the receiver results in modification of the messages authored by public administration both in terms of their contents and forms. The effectiveness of the promotional activities may be boosted by the preceding analysis of the existing image of administration that prevails in the public opinion (Mazur, Zieziula 1999: 186–187).

Promotional activities require the use of an adequate set of instruments including commercials (presented in the press, on the radio, on television, during exhibitions and fairs, profiled as gifts and souvenirs, gadgets, forms of public relations and publicity, direct promotion, sponsoring as well as other, special forms of promotion (e.g. direct mail) (Szromnik 2007: 208). In the case of Polish territorial units, the most frequently used forms of promotion include: commercials (as a rule in the form of gadgets, leaflets and hand-outs), illustrated albums-tourist guide books of the given area as well as broadly understood outlets of information (for instance offices/officers responsible for promotion) (Szromnik 2007: 208). Locally organized mass events (for example „days [festivals] of the city/town/commune”, picnics, other seasonal events) also belong to most frequently deployed forms of promotion carried out by administration – in particular by local administration.

More sophisticated promotional activities are capital-intensive. Knecht perceives them in terms of „good investment” (Knecht 2006: 162). Promotion may not be seen as yet another unnecessary type of expenditure covered from the budget of a public unit. It may not be believed to be that kind of public administration activities that easily allows for making „savings” by being delegated to ordinary public administration employees instead of hiring specialists, either. Similarly to good investments, well prepared promotional activities produce effects in a longer perspective. In any case, this kind of investment should be entrusted to professionals because of the necessity to carry out long-term and uninterrupted agenda that ought to be independent of changes occasionally affecting the situation in the given administration unit, such as a crisis, noticeable improvement, change of staff or any kinds of pressure and influences.

### **3. The application of instruments of promotion in the communes of the Tarnobrzeg district**

The forms of promotion applied in the communes of the Tarnobrzeg district<sup>1</sup> do not differ from solutions employed by other, comparable units. Virtually all of the communes in this district became experienced in applying just one form of promotion, that is commercials. The local authorities only rarely use sponsoring by becoming „patrons” of local events and offering material support for sports or cultural activities. The remaining tools of promotion and image-building in the sphere of self-government administration, such as public relations or publicity are used but in a not fully professional way. In the analyzed communes, the responsibility for contacts with the media is delegated to regular employees who, as a rule, are also responsible for the promotion of the communes. Alternatively, the tasks related to public relations are delegated to the commune secretaries. Only in the commune of Nowa Dęba since recently monthly press conferences started to be organized (cf. the commune website, Nowa Dęba... 2009).

The communes in the Tarnobrzeg district do not take advantage of direct promotion as an instrument of promotional activities, either. This type of promotion could be used during an exhibition or a promotional fair. However, the analysed communes have not participated in such events so far. Nevertheless, the existence of units responsible for promotion or information desks in the offices of these communes could be taken as an equivalent to forms of their direct promotion since they provide for a direct contact of a citizen, a tourist, a local entrepreneur or a would-be investor with a representative of the communal office. The image of the territorial self-government unit is then highly dependent on the quality of such customer service.

Due to limited space, the analysis presented in this paper will only cover the most characteristic solutions applied in the domain of promotion as registered in the communes of the Tarnobrzeg district (see table 1). The data concerning the communes were collected by means of a questionnaire. The survey was conducted in the analyzed units between February and April of 2007. The survey data were complemented with

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<sup>1</sup> The Tarnobrzeg district (*powiat*) occupies the northern part of the Podkarpackie Voivodship (Province). It was organized in 1998 in accordance with the territorial-administrative reform. The district includes four communes (*gminy*): the City and the Commune of Nowa Dęba, the City and the Commune of Baranów Sandomierski, the Commune of Grębów and the Commune of Gorzyce.

current information available on the communes' websites, in the local press as well as by information gathered by interviewing the staff of the administrative units.

**Table 1. Forms of promotion in the communes of the Tarnobrzeg district**

Commune name			
Nowa Dęba	Baranów Sandomierski	Gorzyce	Gębów
1	2	3	4
Units responsible for promotion			
part of the department of organisation – 2 employees dealing with promotion	a separate department dealing with promotion, investments, fund-raising as well as the issues related to defense, work safety and crisis management, since 2006	a 2-staff unit dealing with promotion and assistance programs, since 2007	an independent office dealing with promotion and sports, since 2006
Gadgets			
brochures, leaflets, ballpoints, calendars, T-shirts, mugs adorned with the commune logo, office gadgets	leaflets, informational brochures, mugs, bags, calendars, office gadgets, welcome signs [„witacze”], commercials broadcast on TV Polonia and TV4	welcome signs [„witacze”] along the roads leading to the commune, a billboard displaying information and promotional materials, billboards appearing at different occasions, publications concerning the commune co-financed by the commune authorities	no information available
Local press (specialized in promotion&information)			
„Nasze Sprawy” – a quarterly (free of charge)	„Gazeta Gminy Baranów Sandomierski” – a monthly, an annual budget information booklet „Skąd mamy pieniądze i na co je wydajemy?”	„Chata. Pismo kulturalno-historyczne” „Nasze Forum”	no periodical published in the commune

1	2	3	4
Promotional events			
42 events a year, including Dni Nowej Dęby (Nowa Dęba Festival), Przegląd Zespołów Folklorystycznych (Parade of Folk Dancing and Musical Groups); Sobótki plenerowe (an outdoor ancient Slav festival to celebrate the vernal equinox), Turniej Mikołajkowy (Santa Claus Tournament), Uli-Noga (Streetball)	Seasonal events, including Dni Baranowa (Baranów Festival), Bieg Nadwiślański (Race along the Vistula), Splyw kajakarski (Canoe Race), Piknik na rozpoczęcie sezonu (Picnic opening the Season) and Beaujolais Nouveau (at Baranów Castle)	The most popular: Dni Gorzyce (The Festival of Gorzyce), Gminne spotkania z kulturą (Communal encounters with Culture), Piknik rodzinny (Family Picnic) and many other seasonal events	Gminny Przegląd Kołęd i Pastorałek (Communal Festival of Carols), Konkurs Plastyki Bożonarodzeniowej (Competition of Christmas Art), Mini-lista Przebojów (A Mini-list of Hits), Konkurs Tenisa Stołowego (Table Tennis Tournament) etc.
Commune websites			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• updated information about the commune</li> <li>• legal acts</li> <li>• practical information</li> <li>• contact with the authorities</li> <li>• www.nowadeba.pl</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• updated information about the commune</li> <li>• legal acts</li> <li>• contact with the authorities</li> <li>• „e-fair – the communal” forum of advertisements and auctions</li> <li>• promotional films</li> <li>• Virtual Museum</li> <li>• www.baranowsandomierski.pl</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dull visual design</li> <li>• rich information offer</li> <li>• sample documents to upload</li> <li>• electronic issues of periodicals</li> <li>• www.gorzyce.itl.pl</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not updated</li> <li>• the majority of links dead or under reconstruction</li> <li>• www.grebow.com.pl</li> </ul>
International contacts			
Partner communes: Ploemeur (France) Fermoy (Ireland) Suhowola (Ukraine)	No international cooperation	Partner commune: Deggingen (Germany).	No international cooperation

Source: The author's data basing on a survey carried out in the communes of the Tarnobrzeg district between February and April 2007.



The communes of Nowa Dęba and Baranów excel in terms of commercials and promotional gadgets. The gadgets in Nowa Dęba are the most diversified and, importantly, they have been designed in a professional manner. The same applies to leaflets and brochures presenting information. These are properly designed, regularly updated (they are published once a year on average), owing to which the information they contain is current (cf. Questionnaire/Nowa Dęba).

The commune of Baranów Sandomierski was the only one of the analysed territorial units to opt for a television promotional campaign. The spots promoting the commune appeared on Polonia TV and TV 4. This commune also offers attractive promotional gadgets. The attractiveness of the spots promoting this particular commune is greatly facilitated by its natural and historical specificity, including its castle that is known as „little Wawel”<sup>2</sup>.

Local periodicals constitute this form of promotion that is targeted at the respective local populations more than at tourists or investors. In principle they are dominated by information and not by promotional contents. In Nowa Dęba, since 1994, a territorial self-government quarterly „Nasze Sprawy” has been published which is also available in an electronic version. In Baranów Sandomierski, they publish a monthly entitled „Gazeta Gminy Baranów Sandomierski” as well as a booklet that provides information about the communal budget that is addressed at the commune’s members. It is entitled „Skąd mamy pieniądze i na co je wydajemy?” (Where we get our money from and what we spend it on?). The booklet is published on an annual basis. Its publication is financed by the commune’s budget. Their wide circulation (one may get the periodicals in a paper and/or electronic form) and their free of charge distribution make the periodicals an important source of information about events that are organized in the communes, the communal authorities’ decisions, planned investments and directions of the communes’ development.

The commune websites belong to those instruments of promotion that have the broadest potential to make an impact. Unfortunately the communes do not fully take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet. The commune of Grębów was evaluated the worst in this respect. Its website is uninteresting, not updated, and the majority of links under construction (already for 2–3 years!). The websites of the remaining communes are regularly updated including much information

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<sup>2</sup> Wawel is the name of Cracow’s royal castle – Translator’s note.

about the communes, their authorities, and local events. They contain sub-pages displaying practical information (transportation timetables, procedures to deal with administrative issues, addresses of the most relevant services etc.). The websites of the communes in the Tarnobrzeg district display the current information provided by the authorities and data bases listing entrepreneurs and non-governmental organisations. Moreover, they enable the user to contact the commune's authorities, for example *via* a module „Pytania do burmistrza” (Questions to the Mayor) (this applies to Nowa Dęba and Baranów Sandomierski communes).

The most elaborate and visually attractive is the website of the commune of Baranów Sandomierski. The commune's innovative solution was to display on the website a local advertisement catalogue and hold an auction service „i-jarmark” (e-fair). From the tourist perspective, Wirtualne Muzeum Lasowiackie (the Lasowiackie<sup>3</sup> Virtual Museum) has proved to be an especially interesting offer. Thanks to photographs, historical outlines and films displayed in this manner, one can „visit” the region of the lasowiacka culture (cf. Baranów Sandomierski's website).

International cooperation of territorial self-government units treated as a form of promotion is aimed at attracting foreign tourists and entrepreneurs, and – on this basis – at attracting foreign capital investments, too. Two of the communes in the Tarnobrzeg district – Nowa Dęba and Baranów Sandomierski – decided to engage with this form of promotion.

Nowa Dęba signed partnership agreements with three foreign territorial units. The first was a French unit – Ploemeur. The cooperation of the local authorities was preceded by several years of youth exchange related to badminton teams (Informacja... 2003). In 2002, those contacts were formalised, while socio-economic development, culture, sports and education were designated as areas of mutual cooperation (Uchwała... 2002). However, the occasional visits paid by the representatives of the local authorities abroad gave rise to accusations. The charges were related to the fact that the youth exchange had been dropped and the partnership was limited to reciprocal visits by the local decision-makers that did not produce any beneficial results apart from increasing the financial burden on the communal budget (*Urzędnicy...* 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> Lasowiackie – an adjective derived from the name of one of the ancient Polish folk tribes Lasowiacy – Translator's note.

Subsequently, an Irish territorial unit (Fermoy) was included in Nowa Dęba's international partnerships (Umowa... 2003). Despite the fact that the partnership lasted for several years, the expected investors did not appear. In spite of the lack of success in this respect, the commune decided to form another partnership in 2005, this time with a Ukrainian territorial unit of Suhowola, declaring aims identical to the objectives of the former partnerships (Uchwała... 2005). The communal authorities stress that this cooperation develops well and serves to exchange experiences (Lewicka 2008: 19). Nonetheless, it is difficult to identify any concrete effects of the cooperation between the two partners.

The commune of Gorzyce has cooperated with German Deggingen since 1999 (cf. the questionnaire – Gorzyce). The goals for which the partnership was established were similar to the ones declared in the case of Nowa Dęba. They were related to an exchange of experiences in the area of practice of territorial self-governments and local administration, observation of the partners' activities and the promotion of the Polish unit abroad as well as oriented to attracting foreign investors (Umowa... 1999).

## **Conclusion**

The case of the communes in the Tarnobrzeg district evidences the fact that while carrying out their promotion agendas, local administration units usually limit them to the use of most common forms of promotion, such as gadgets and brochures, the publication of periodicals, the maintenance of Internet home-pages, and to establishing international partnerships. These activities are, however, lacking in terms of professionalism and long-term planning. Another of the serious problems in the domain of the commune promotion involves erratic distribution of their promotional gadgets. In some cases, an inability to use the most universal instrument – the Internet – for the purpose of the information-promotion agenda is quite striking.

The implementation of the promotional agenda not only belongs to the communes' tasks, but it is also a necessary condition of building their competitive advantages and creating their investment attractiveness. In an era of competition for external capital, it is important that local decision-makers are capable of skillfully taking advantage of all of the available means that promise to attract entrepreneurs and investors as well as mounting the support and approval of the local community for the local agenda.

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