MARKETING COMMUNICATION POLICY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS A TOOL FOR FORMING THE IMAGE OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

ABSTRACT

A part of research results concerning the state of the effectiveness of marketing activities of local authorities of Ukraine, in which authors took part and prepared the analyst report, and also their own researches are presented in the paper. The study found that marketing communication activities for forming the image of urban transport service providers in the studied regions were carried out mainly in the form of information campaigns and weren’t aimed at target audiences.

The study discovered that in 2017—2020 in Ukraine (except for the temporarily occupied territories) there were some measures to increase awareness of the responsibility and important role of urban transport service providers.

It is established that citizens of Ukraine are informed about the problems of urban public transport at three levels. First, at the national level, the most popular were information and educational activities, image social advertising in national media, Internet portals, information and educational programs and publications, reproduction and distribution of printed materials (booklets, leaflets, posters, academic literature).

Secondly, at the regional level (oblast level) were popular publications and videos on the Internet, manuals, radio and television programs, social advertising on regional state television and radio, outdoor advertising (billboards, city lights, posters), conference organization were disseminated and seminars, flash mobs and social events. Third, lectures, classes, role-playing games, business games, workshops, booklets, leaflets and conference materials were organized at the local level.

At the same time, the system in conducting marketing communication activities for forming the image of urban transport service providers during the study could not be found. The study identified shortcomings in the communication process of public services with target social groups. An analysis of marketing communication activities implemented and planned for implementation by local authorities. On the basis of research results and conclusions some recommendations are offered in the article.

Keywords: management, local development, image, local politics, marketing, marketing communications, transport

JEL Classification: M30, M31

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is important to develop marketing policies of public transport services in order to improve the overall image associated with it, restrain current users from switching to private vehicles and attract new users. Marketing of public transport represents an opportunity for transport companies to promote their products, but apart from this, it also has certain positive impact on the consumers. The issues comprise congestion, air pollution, excessive and uneven energy consumption, waste management, low culture and quality of services. In the context of urban public transport, marketing policy on communications envisages the establishment and operation of a single system of transport services where «mobility service providers» consciously cooperate and promote their services in the market as a single service. This single service is a complex of
various transportation options offered to passengers as part of a package or set of services. The communication with target customers who are consumers of services is pivotal because it increases [1—6]: the levels of social inclusion by providing all citizens with access to urban services; economic attractiveness of cities for employers, businesses, and tourism as mobility services which improve access to jobs and places of residence; environmental friendliness (reduction of noise pollution, efficient use of public space, and improvement of air quality) and road safety; saving time and money; flexibility of urban routes, as users will be able to use cloud platforms and applications for their trips, book tickets, and use electronic payment services.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Foreign researchers [3; 4] argue that the global determinants of demand for communications and smart integrated mobility are harmonization and integration of payment models; focusing on sustainable development; stimulating the demand for mobility services for passengers, especially tourists, and encouraging the participation of the private sector in the development of platforms and the provision of mobility services; dynamic spatial allocation and pricing in cities and regions (for example, curbs used for mobility at one time and for leisure at other times of the day) and space design for people rather than cars; understanding the behavior of travelers and its changing methods; understanding the role of key actors and providers of mobility services, such as city or regional authorities, travelers, the private sector (mobile service providers and technology companies developing applications and platforms) and understanding each player’s balancing patterns to improve mobility. In addition, the social orientation of the development of urban public transport determines the need to address the pressing problem of the consumption culture of services among the population. Counter-marketing in such an environment is an effective tool to persuade consumers to forgo free or ticketless travel as such demand is contrary to the public interest.

The following methods are used to identify causal relationships: theoretical method, which involves building a mathematical model based on axioms; experimental method, which consists in comparing the results of control and experimental groups; econometric method using instrumental variables (IV), differential method (DID), regression discontinuity (RD) method. Research on the impact of marketing on the reputation is the subject of behavioral economics. Behavioral economics is the science that studies the real behavior of economic agents and the corresponding psychological factors that influence economic behavior. The following scientists have made the greatest contribution to the study of the functions of social behavior: Ottoni-Wilhelm et al.; Samek and Sheremeta (explored why people do charity), Card et al.; Kosfeld and Neckermann (explored how to motivate people in the workplace), Hedblom, Hickman and List (explored why corporate social responsibility can be a profitable strategy, whether investing in it has a positive impact on company profitability) and others.

**AIM AND OBJECTIVE**

The object of the research is the effectiveness of the communication process and the elements of communication between governmental authorities and passengers for forming the image of municipal service providers. The aim of our research is to analyze marketing communicative measures for forming the image of municipal service providers.

**RESULTS**

For the past 20 years, non-governmental and governmental organizations in developed countries have actively used counter-marketing, mainly in the form of educational campaigns aimed at raising awareness of health risks. The effectiveness of such measures is confirmed empirically. In the United States, the number of smokers decreased from 44% in 1950 to 19% in 2011 [7] due to the anti-cigarette campaign. O. B. Zviahintseva [8; 9] identifies the following types of counter-marketing:

1) advanced marketing as a set of highly efficient activities. They are not inferior to the marketing activities of enterprises that produce hazardous goods with unwholesome demand. The rate of decline in consumption of socially hazardous goods determines the level of influence of such marketing;

2) following counter-marketing activities emerge as a reaction to enterprises that produce socially hazardous goods. Such actions cannot be viable by their nature. It is more important and effective to prevent new consumers from consumption of harmful products than take measures to persuade carriers of unwholesome demand to abandon the consumption of socially hazardous products;
3) lagging counter-marketing is ineffective as the marketing activity of enterprises produces hazardous products with unwholesome demand.

The modern communication strategy of enterprises providing urban public transport services in Ukraine comprises: raising public awareness; formation of skills of passengers’ conscious behavior; preventive work with pupils and students.

Depending on the target audience, preventive work divides into primary, secondary, and tertiary: primary prevention informs the citizens about the problems of urban public transport; the focus of secondary prevention is a specific risk group. Some educational activities inform citizens and develop skills of ethical behavior; tertiary prevention aims at those who have violated the rules of behavior in public transport.

In our opinion, marketing communication in urban public transport is a system of campaigns and educational activities to change behavior of different social groups. They form awareness among preferential groups and the rest of the population. Thus, the purpose of marketing communication activities in urban public transport in Ukraine is the formation, implementation, control of effective informational and educational measures and preventive work aimed at forming a sustainable culture of consumption of urban public transport services. This goal requires the completion of the following tasks: raising public awareness of the public transport rules; overcoming the demand for «free travel» (except as provided by the current legislation of Ukraine) through the implementation of information measures; spreading of accurate information about subsidy programs; implementation of educational programs for school students during their academic year. They emphasize the importance of compliance with the traffic rules in public transport. Considering promotion as targeted influence through the system of messages on target consumer groups, the priority communication channels in this market of services are personal communications in workshops, seminars, press conferences, round tables, brain-rings, street activities, hotlines on city issues in public transport.

The citizens are informed about the problems of urban public transport on the following levels:

1) national level: informational and educational activities as social advertising in the national media, Internet portals, informational and educational programs, and publications, reproduction and distribution of printed materials (booklets, leaflets, posters, academic literature);
2) regional level (oblast): publications and videos on the Internet, manuals, radio and television programs, social advertising on regional state television and radio, outdoor advertising (billboards, city-lights, posters), organization of conferences and seminars, flash mobs, and social events;
3) local level: organization of lectures, classes, role-plays, business games, workshops, distribution of booklets, leaflets, and conference materials. It comprises the activities for rural residents of the nearby regional cities.

Regarding the content of the information, we suggest: informing the public through media, special printed materials about trends in urban public transport; conducting large-scale information campaigns among the population to prevent violations of the traffic rules in public transport and opportunities to receive assistance by preferential categories.

Information materials should contain the most complete and specific information for the selected target groups and follow the defined theme and purpose. Preparation of materials consists of the following stages: search and analysis of available sources, a rough copy of the text, and expert assessment to identify inaccuracies in the information. A psychologist assesses the material for adolescents. Elaboration of sources [10, p. 87—88] and our research allowed us to offer general recommendations for the preparation of information materials:

1. Availability. The target audience understands information materials and education campaigns (IECs). To do this, use the language, style, symbols of specific target groups (e.g. parents);
2. Reliability of information. Information users are different. Some may immediately believe the information provided, others will verify its accuracy. They will check figures or other statistics and government documents;
3. Argumentation. It is always necessary to provide arguments (just 5—9). In the process of elaboration, there should be a reference to a familiar and sufficiently authoritative source of information.
4. Information works. During preparation for the information and educational campaign, it is necessary to discuss and predict the results. The information requires careful development and dissemination;
5. Feedback. A well-organized distribution process is a two-way communication with different target audiences;
6. The content of the message. The information should disclose general forms of behavior, and statistics on urban public transport. Component messages should appeal to the «general public» and representatives of preferential groups who are at risk of falling into the group of violators. The effectiveness of communication will increase if supported by
examples and facts from the lives of the residents. In this case, the content of the message will be a stronger argument for listeners;

7. The message must contain a slogan. The information should briefly provide judgments, attitudes, and skills to its campaign participants: contact details (for example, the site, hotline phone number), request a ticket for the driver, report the fact of unethical behavior of the employee in the city transport system, etc.

There is no one-size-fits-all attitude to the emotional coloring of a message. Some are highlighted by shocking visual elements, while others convey positive messages. Various target audiences require their indicative thematic preferences:

1. General public. The purpose is familiarization with the problem of the target groups, actualization of a problem. Information materials may contain information on innovations in the field of public transport in the country (region, city); forms of control over the safety and quality of services; fines;

2. Youth. Objectives of informational and educational activities [11]: to inform students about the rules of conduct and traffic rules in urban public transport in the developed countries; to form students’ models of safe and constructive behavior in urban public transport. Information and educational activities on the problem of urban public transport involve familiarizing young people with the following regulations:

   ▪ Rules for the provision of passenger road transport services and Annex from 26.09.2007 № 1184, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 176 of February 18th, 1997 [12];
   ▪ Rules for the provision of services by urban electric transport and the Annex, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 1735-00 of December 23rd, 2004 [13];
   ▪ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «On the establishment of quarantine to prevent the spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, and stages of mitigation of anti-epidemic measures» № 392 of May 20th, 2020 [14];
   ▪ subjects of activity in the field of urban public transport in Ukraine;
   ▪ the role of state and non-governmental organizations in Ukraine in the implementation of work on urban public transport, etc.;

3. Contact audience (urban public transport service providers). Objectives: a partnership to inform target audiences. Thematic preferences: providing information on the rules, sanctions for non-compliance, and ways to improve public transport and contacts to get detailed information.

The complexity of the problem of obtaining reliable and relevant information on the mechanism of urban transport is exacerbated by the fact that modern community management systems must quickly implement all technological innovations and respond to consumer demands. On the one hand, access is provided to structured data related to transportation in the form of accounting and statistical reporting, data from validators who read e-tickets on public transport. On the other hand, there is no completely unstructured data in the form of feedback on the quality of services received from customers. The latest data is very important for marketing communication policy, as any type of service should be based on the needs of consumers. Even If such information is stored somewhere, it is not ordered nor structured. In public transport, we are interested in customer feedback on the Internet and social networks, particularly in the form of text and images. Therefore, there is a need to import such unstructured data into a single database of data management and information processing of public transport.

The analysis of unstructured data is of great value, as it reveals that customers think about the services received, how they respond to all innovations and changes in the pricing and quality of public transport services. You can manually monitor feedback both on the web and on social networks. However, this is extremely difficult due to the daily flow of information. Therefore, providers should use specialized software applications for processing structured and unstructured data. Storing 80% of all data, most of which is unstructured, outside the database, leads to the fact that they cannot be used for effective management decisions and timely response to inquiries and complaints from consumers. Being at the beginning of the path of effective search for data processing tools generated by consumers on a daily basis, we offer a business process model that describes the procedure for automating large data sets using artificial intelligence. To do this, we propose to break down all the work into elementary components and record them, because the result of processing customer feedback is a process that is constantly repeated.

Figure 1 presents the overall architecture of the data management platform. This flowchart allows outputting this data for processing and storage in the CRM-system (Customer Relationship Management) and provides business analysts and management with some necessary tools to analyze data on the quality of transport services.
Practical experience of international organizations and Ukrainian public associations indicates that comprehensive promotional campaigns are effective and efficient ways to raise culture of consumption of public transport services. Such campaigns combine some activities and cover various channels of communication: communication with the media (interviews), lectures for representatives of the potential risk group, lectures for experts; meetings and round tables, distribution of information materials for the target group, broadcasting of informational video and audio clips on public transport, hotline consulting. The campaign with various channels conveys information throughout the community (from regional to local levels). Additionally, it uses a cross-sectoral approach, combining the efforts of NGOs and the state.

The following factors should be taken into account when choosing message distribution channels: the target audience's access to communication channels (the Internet); the target audience's trusts to local newspapers or TV channels; frequency of the transmitted or broadcasted information message; number of the target audience with the access to the communication channels (newspapers and magazines, TV, and radio); available funds for the production of information materials. The most reliable and popular channels of communication are used to address the target audience (Figure 1).

The following are the characteristics of different communication channels in terms of the effectiveness of the message to different target audiences, indicated in [15]. The study discovered that in 2017–2020 in Ukraine (except for the temporarily occupied territories) there were some measures to increase awareness of the responsibility and important role of urban transport service providers: email and the Internet; participation in social events; visual advertising; souvenirs: pens, folders, badges, T-shirts, etc., which can be used as prizes and gifts at various public events; handouts; leaflets; brochures; booklets; posters, stickers, calendars, postcards; commercials on TV, advertising on radio and in films; articles, interviews, and contribution programs in media.

Summarizing the existing scientific approaches, we can conclude that economic research is aimed at identifying cause-and-effect relationships, not just correlation. The most effective methods of studying the impact of marketing on the image level are multivariate regression analysis (attempt to control all relevant factors), instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, differential methods, sample selection model (Heckman), controlled experiment with random distribution.

In order to assess the influence of a number of factor traits on the resulting trait, we used multifactor correlation-regression analysis. It allowed obtaining an adequate model that can be used to predict the impact of certain controlled marketing factors on the level of government image.

The analysis of scientific papers on the assessment of the level of image of the subjects revealed the lack of a single methodology for assessing the quantitative or qualitative level of reputation in general and the reputation of municipal service providers as a rising feature in the model in particular. Considering the reputation of municipal service providers in the context of public utility, we believe that the quantitative value of this indicator may vary depending on the number of employees involved in marketing activities, coherence of their work, experience, incentives, funding for image activities and their share in marketing activities.

The initial data for correlation-regression analysis to determine the influence of marketing factors on the reputational effect of municipal service providers are given in table. 1. The reputational survey included a study of 10 experts (united local
communities’ managers and state administrations) using questionnaires. The evaluation of each indicator was determined by experts from municipal service providers. Data for correlation-regression analysis were provided by 6 united territorial communities of Ternopil region, Ternopil regional state administration and 3 district state administrations of the region (Table 1).

**Table 1. Data for correlation-regression analysis**

| Municipal service providers (MSP) | Number of employees in the field of marketing, persons | The level of co-ordination of actions of persons responsible for the image (points, max = 5) | Experience in the field of public relations, years | Level of stimulation and encouragement of employees responsible for the image (points, max = 5) | Share of marketing activities aimed at forming the image of a leader or MSP (in the total share of all marketing activities, %) | Marketing budget per year, thousand UAH |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Symbol Y                          | x1                                                  | x2                                | x3                                             | x4                                                  | x5                                                  | x6                                           |
| 1                                 | 10                                                  | 8                                 | 2.5                                            | 16                                                  | 3.1                                                  | 50                                            |
| 2                                 | 7                                                   | 11                                | 2.8                                            | 10                                                  | 3.21                                                 | 20                                            |
| 3                                 | 6                                                   | 2                                 | 3                                              | 4                                                   | 0.1                                                  | 15                                            |
| 4                                 | 5                                                   | 2                                 | 3                                              | 13                                                  | 0.2                                                  | 15                                            |
| 5                                 | 4                                                   | 11                                | 2.6                                            | 8                                                   | 0.4                                                  | 10                                            |
| 6                                 | 7                                                   | 1                                 | 2.5                                            | 15                                                  | 1.8                                                  | 60                                            |
| 7                                 | 5                                                   | 4                                 | 5                                              | 15                                                  | 1                                                    | 10                                            |
| 8                                 | 4                                                   | 1                                 | 5                                              | 16                                                  | 0.2                                                  | 10                                            |
| 9                                 | 9                                                   | 8                                 | 3                                              | 15                                                  | 0.9                                                  | 30                                            |
| 10                                | 7                                                   | 2                                 | 3                                              | 16                                                  | 0.5                                                  | 30                                            |

Source: authors’ research [21; 22].

Coefficient of multiple correlations:

\[
R = \sqrt{1 - \frac{0.00951}{0.6309}} = 0.8317
\]  

(1)

The relationship between \( Y \) and \( x_i \) is strong. Since \(-1.321 < r_1 = 0.0212 < 1.321\), the residual independence property is satisfied, there is no autocorrelation.

\[
R^2 = 1 - \frac{11.219}{36.4} = 0.6918
\]  

(2)

Let’s test the hypothesis of general significance — the hypothesis of the simultaneous zero of all regression coefficients for variables:

\[H_0: R_2 = 0; \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \ldots = \beta_m = 0; H_1: R_2 \neq 0.\]

This hypothesis is tested using \( F \)-Fisher distribution statistics (right-hand test). If \( F < F_{kp} = F_{0.1; n - m - 1} \), there is no reason to reject hypothesis \( H_0 \).

\[
F = \frac{0.6918}{1 - 0.6918} \cdot \frac{10 - 6 - 1}{6} = 1.122.
\]

Tabular value for degrees of freedom \( k_1 = 6 \) and \( k_2 = n - m - 1 = 10 - 6 - 1 = 3 \), \( F_{0.1; (6; 3)} = 8.94 \). Since the actual value of \( F < F_{kp} \), the coefficient of determination is not statistically significant and the regression equation is statistically unreliable (the total insignificance of the coefficients for factors \( x_i \) is confirmed).

The following multiple regression equation was obtained:

\[
Y = 0.7068 + 0.1094x_1 - 0.6348x_2 + 0.1609x_3 + 0.03822x_4 + 0.04588x_5 + 0.4442x_6.
\]
Possible economic interpretation of model parameters: increase $x_1$ by 1 unit leads to an increase in $y$ by an average of 0.109 units; increase $x_2$ by 1 unit leads to a decrease in $y$ by an average of 0.635 units; increase $x_3$ by 1 unit leads to an increase in $y$ by an average of 0.161 units; increase $x_4$ by 1 unit leads to an increase in $y$ by an average of 0.0382 units; increase $x_5$ by 1 unit leads to an increase in $y$ by an average of 0.0459 units; increase $x_6$ by 1 unit leads to an increase in $y$ by an average of 0.444 units.

The statistical significance of the equation was verified using the coefficient of determination and Fisher’s test. Empirical research has shown that the level of image of municipal service providers can be interpreted using functional and statistical dependencies. The resulting econometric model reflects the relationship between controlled marketing factors and image. It is adequate and can be used to assess and predict the degree of impact of municipal service providers on public opinion.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The authors hypothesized the heterogeneity of the development of taxi services according to environmental friendliness and business automation. We conducted an expert survey to test the hypothesis and obtained initial data for clustering taxi services. Taking into account the results of the study, we have formed an indicative list of measures within the IPC in the field of urban public transport, which is given below:

1. Create and ensure the functioning (content) of the thematic web portal and the official websites of public authorities’ thematic pages about public transport in Ukraine and state policy in this area.
2. Organize annual public information events on the occasion of memorable dates related to public transport, as well as to ensure the coverage of information in the media.
3. Organize conferences, round tables, seminars in the regional centers of Ukraine.
4. The State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting regularly informs the population of Ukraine about the rules and state policy in the field of urban public transport.
5. Broadcast TV commercials and promotional videos on urban public transport.
6. Hold annual all-Ukrainian competitions for the best publication in the print media, TV and radio programs on urban public transport.
7. Ensure, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the development, production and distribution of informational and explanatory publications on urban public transport (posters, leaflets, calendars, etc.).
8. Conduct workshops and courses, information seminars on professional development of employees of public authorities and local governments responsible for public relations and interaction with the media, and personnel of regional units and territorial bodies involved in urban public transport.
9. Conduct workshops in cooperation with non-governmental organizations for representatives of regional and local media on raising public awareness of the rules and public policy in the field of urban public transport.
10. Conduct seminars, lectures, lessons, etc. on public transport for teachers of secondary and higher educational institutions, schoolchildren and students.
11. Together with non-governmental organizations and media representatives organize public events (round tables, discussions, debates, lectures, presentations) on urban public transport.
12. To hold in cooperation with non-governmental organizations annual all-Ukrainian competitions for the best social advertising on urban public transport. An example of the best practice is the annual all-Ukrainian competition among pupils and students on "Transport of the Future", held by the Department of Marketing of West Ukrainian National University in the annual All-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference with international participation Competitiveness of domestic public transport service providers: current challenges and European experiences [16–19].
13. The statistical significance of the equation was verified using the coefficient of determination and Fisher’s test. Empirical research has shown that the level of image of municipal service providers can be interpreted using functional and statistical dependencies. The resulting econometric model reflects the relationship between controlled marketing factors and image. It is adequate and can be used to assess and predict the degree of impact of municipal service providers on public opinion.
It is proposed to highlight the following determinants of the development of marketing communications policies for urban public transport in Ukraine: the use of innovative services, such as mobile phone applications, tracking and analyzing urban infrastructure; unification of payment systems and active use of Big Data payments; innovative ecosystems, namely the implementation of the model of «smart» urban public transport based on ecology and recycling; introduction of digital technologies through new mechanisms and services that make public transport more user-friendly; raise citizens’ awareness of urban environmental problems.

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місцевої влади України. Дослідження виявило, що маркетингові комунікаційні заходи з метою формування іміджу надавачів послуг міського транспорту в досліджуваних регіонах здійснювалися переважно у формі неспрямованих на цільові сегменти ринку інформаційних кампаній.

У ході дослідження виявлено, що у 2017–2020 рр. в Україні (за винятком тимчасово окупованих територій) відбува- лись поодинокі заходи з підвищення усвідомлення відповідальності і важливої ролі надавачів послуг міського транспорту.

Установлено, що громадян України інформують про проблеми міського громадського транспорту на трьох рівнях. По–перше, на національному рівні найбільш популярними були інформаційна та освітня діяльність, іміджева соціальна реклама в національних засобах масової інформації, Інтернет–порталах, інформаційно–освітніх програмах і публікаціях, відтворення та розповсюдження друкованих матеріалів (буклетів, листівок, плакатів, академічної літе- ратури). По–друге, на регіональному рівні (рівні областей) поширені були публікації та відеоролики в Інтернеті, посібники, радіо– та телевізійні програми, соціальна реклама на регіональному державному телебаченні та радіо, зовнішня реклама (білборди, сіті–лайти, плакати), організація конференцій і семінарів, флешмоби та суспільні події. По–третє, на місцевому рівні відбувались організація лекцій, занять, ролевих ігор, ділових ігор, майстер–класів, розповсюдження буклетів, листівок і матеріалів конференцій.

Разом з тим системності у проведенні маркетингових комунікаційних заходів для формування іміджу надавачів послуг міського транспорту в ході дослідження не вдалось виявити. У ході дослідження виявлено недоліки в комунікаційному процесі державних служб із цільовими соціальними групами. Здійснено аналіз маркетингових комунікаційних заходів, реалізованих і запланованих до реалізації державними органами. На основі результатів дослідження і висновків запропоновано низку рекомендацій.

Ключові слова: управління, місцевий розвиток, імідж, місцева політика, маркетинг, маркетингові комунікації, транспорт

JEL Класифікація: M30, M31