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IMAGE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The article deals with the question of creating and sustaining a strong, positive image of public administration institutions. The idea is to emphasise the importance of putting efforts to manage the image actively and to present the undisputed benefits that this process brings. Hence, the paper explains thoroughly the characteristic of an image itself and how it developed to the so-called 'rational approach'. Then the authors analyse very specific ideas and assumptions which lay at the basis of undertaking measures in the field of public relations, which differ substantially from the motivation in private companies. Moreover, the article scrutinizes crucial groups of the public which might be attracted to the region by its positive perception and profoundly analyses the instruments of image management, at the same focusing on the fields in which public administration institutions ought to take up measures in order to build a positive image.

Key words: *image, public administration, media relations, serving inquirers, sponsoring*

INTRODUCTION

Institutions in public administration are interested in being able to influence the public and, as a result, operate effectively. Adequate image and strong identity are necessary not only to make an institution recognizable, but also to create a positive opinion about it among society. Taking this aspect into consideration makes it substantially easier for an institution to function.

Image is all about what people think of an institution, it is a set of impressions which do not necessarily have to reflect reality, in other words: objective assessment¹. It is created as a reaction to an array of incentives transmitted to an office's clients. The

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¹ A. Davis, *Public relations*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 2007, s. 47 - 49; J. Alt-korn, *Wizerunek firmy*, Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu, Dąbrowa Górnicza 2004.

fact that image itself is subjective² is an extremely important feature, because it means that image can be influenced and changed, so the public opinion of an institution might be created freely. Taking all these considerations into account, it could be concluded that the image is a factor which should be managed and at the same time treated as an important field of public administration management.

1. EVOLUTION OF IMAGE MANAGEMENT

The attempts of state authorities to influence their image can be found even in ancient times. Throughout the centuries all sorts of rulers tried to win over the peoples with their generosity; it was also extremely popular to back up renowned artists and inventors, both financially and in their beliefs. In the process of creating a positive image, they used tools of social influence, such as architecture (including building palaces and monuments), sculpture and literature. All these actions are proof that public authorities have long been aware of the importance of gaining the trust of masses, which in turn allowed them to rule their empires more effectively.

Perception of the nature and importance of creating positive image have evolved in time. One of the most crucial breakthrough moments in terms of developing implementation of image management in public administration was the time of creating political and social democratic systems and the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. At that time societies started to express the need for systematic and organized communication with governments. The states could not ignore this phenomenon, hence considerably more attention to positive relations with the masses was put. As a result, we could observe fast development of scientifically based techniques of persuasive communication.

Over the years the so-called 'rational approach' to creating image has been developed and implemented³. Today this idea constitutes the philosophical and sociological foundations for appropriate image management. It says that the point of view of any individual, or an institution, should be expressed in a sincere and precise way. It is extremely important that at the same time we should show determination, which could be interpreted as standing for our right to be respected. Instead of giving in, mutual communication ought to be aimed at winning social trust and reputation. This is the proper way to create and manage image of any public administration office.

In today's world, institutions of public administration are one of the crucial fields in which citizens have a direct contact with the state, understood as a system of governing. Therefore, mainly these very institutions are responsible for how the public perceives this system and its representatives. This aspect lets us realize very clearly how important it is to take care of the positive image of public institutions.

Also, the importance of active image management is confirmed if we take into consideration the two crucial functions of administration: an authority function and a service one. The first one says that every public administration office has legitimate power to impose actions onto citizens. It is entitled to make administrative decisions

² D. Newsom, A. Scott, T. J. Vanslyke, *This is public relations. The realities of public relations*, Wadsworth, Belmont 1989, s. 424 - 425.

³ Z. Knecht, *Public relations w administracji publicznej*, Wydawnictwo C. H. Beck, Warszawa 2006, s. 4 - 5.

which must be obeyed by the public. It could be said that from this perspective citizens are subordinate to the institution. However, there exists another vital function, a service one, according to which public administration is supposed to provide services. In other words, administration has been created to fulfil citizens' needs connected with all the administrative aspects of their life. In this meaning the public should be treated as a client. The importance of this approach is even more visible if we take into account the fact that administration is financed from the taxes paid by the citizens. Thus, the legal authority has been conferred by the public, which at the same time is a client of this service. That is why it is extremely important to keep the balance between these two functions, especially not to allow the authority function to dominate. In achieving this objective, a vital role is played by all the actions connected with creating and sustaining the appropriate image of public administration.

2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONDITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PRIVATE COMPANIES

It seems important to emphasise that the ideas and assumptions which lay at the basis of undertaking measures in the field of public relations in public administration offices are different from the motivation of private companies. First of all, there is a different hierarchy of objectives. In the case of public administration, the ultimate goal is to show what matters the office deals with and, as a result, to create the atmosphere of social acceptance and high assessment of their actions. However, the level of support and trust does not have any impact on the office's position in the system, neither has it an influence on its funds nor is it any threat to any department's existence. As for private organizations, the utmost goal is to generate profits. So, creating image is just the way to secure financial stability.

Another difference is connected with the motivation of both parties. Public administration seems to be *obliged* to undertake measures in the field of creating image, especially in terms of informing about public offices actions and initiatives. It is also an ethical responsibility; since public departments are financed by tax payers, it is the offices' duty to prove that they perform the job in a legal, honest and effective way. Regarding private companies, the decision to get involved in any actions in the field of image management is once again conditioned by the possibility to increase profits.

Thirdly, there is an essential difference regarding the initial public interest of both institutions. The unique combination of the abovementioned authority and service functions conjures up a permanent interest of public administration offices. These features create the tendency among the public to constantly monitor and judge the work of civil servants. In the case of private businesses, such initial interest does not exist at all. Generally, for the public, including the media, it does not make any difference if any private company appears on the market or not. Hence, companies are forced to trigger off such curiosity themselves.

Also, the threat from the competition is another factor that differs the two parties substantially. Because of the statutory foundations, public administration institutions do not have any real competition. Each office operates in the separate, independent fields. Hence, the competitive fight between them does not take place. Concerning private business, it is obvious that the competition is most often strong.

This difference has another interesting consequence. Because of lack of competition, public departments have a possibility to cooperate with other offices to a vast degree, they may exchange information and practical experiences, initiate associations in order to achieve common objectives, count on support from other sectors. On the other hand, private companies are left on their own – very few competitors would find a common ground to start cooperation.

Finally, there exists very important difference regarding the consequences of mistakes in creating proper image. For the public office, the ultimate result of negative image is just the decrease in level of trust. Private companies may lose their market share and, as a consequence, go bankrupt.

It seems vital to be aware of the abovementioned differences, since it lets us understand more profoundly the circumstances and conditions in which public offices operate and, as a result, create and manage their image more effectively.

3. VISUAL AND NON-VISUAL IMAGE FACTORS

To understand the characteristic of public administration institutions' image fully, it is vital to be aware of the fact that it consists of both non-visual and visual factors⁴. The first non-visual aspect that influences the image is personal contacts with an office's clients. The way a client is provided with the service is the crucial element on which administration builds its positive opinion. This is the reason why such great importance ought to be attached to a proper training of civil servants. The preparation should consist of both adequate job qualifications and good manners. It is essential to realize that qualifications and professional job experience is not enough to build an appropriate image if this element is not accompanied by civil servants' polite behaviour. Another non-visual factor is indirect contacts, which include such instruments as communication by post, e-mail, posters, etc.

The next extremely important factor is so called 'overheard opinions' about a public institution. It is vital to realize that the image of any public office is spread to a big degree by and among people who do not have a direct contact with the institution. It is a natural process that the members of general public discuss the issues connected with some department and in this way they create its image, even if they do not visit the institution at all or do it very rarely. These people simply rely on the opinions of the ones who are the clients of a public office and they spread the word. In connection with this fact it seems important to mention the rule of 'silent majority'. The basic idea lying beneath the rule is that generally most people do not have strong, thought-out opinion about most events and situations which happen around them. They simply do not put any effort to scrutinize the situations profoundly in order to find out the pure facts about them, which would allow the people to build their own *objective* opinion. However, if asked about any views regarding some events, most people *will* express the opinion, and it will be the one which, as they believe, is expressed by the majority of the public. In other words, they will unconsciously join the views of the assumed biggest group of people. It is a result of a natural tendency not to stand out from the rest. In this way people who do not have a direct contact with administration offices start expressing and spreading opinion about them. The 'silent majority' rule, together with the 'overheard

⁴ Z. Knecht, *Public relations...*, op. cit., s. 7.

opinions' factor, constitute a very important phenomenon, which has to be taken into account in the process of creating a positive image.

The last non-visual element of public administration image is successes and failures of an institution. They are connected with an office's activity mostly in the field of economy. The image is created as a consequence of how the public perceive the results of actions in such areas like e.g. attracting new investors to the region, creating new job places, balancing the public budget, developing various industries. Moreover, there ought also to be included undertakings linked with social and cultural life of local communities. Among them we could include the support of the most needy groups of local communities, like the poor, the sick, the disabled, and contribution in developing cultural spirit of local inhabitants. Both the positive and negative examples of the abovementioned actions have a considerable impact on the perception of public administration, thus on its image.

Regarding the visual factors which constitute public administration image, one of the crucial ones is the name of an office itself, together with its graphic representation. These two elements could be accompanied by a crest or an emblem. Another factors are the architecture of an institution's building and interior design. Here, it is important to state that all of the abovementioned elements must be concise with proper colours.

The next visual factor is the way in which both interior and exterior of an institution are labelled with proper signs showing directions and explaining the structure of an office. In everyday process of providing services, for clients it is extremely important to be informed fully regarding in which places different administrative matters are being dealt with. By such clear visual information clients do not get lost in an institution, thus they do not waste time. As a result, they do not get irritated, which otherwise could lead directly to negative perception of whole office.

Another visual element is all printed and audiovisual materials produced by an institution. It is essential to remember that all of them should be concise regarding their shape and colours.

The last factor is the appearance of public administration personnel. All civil servants must comply with a proper dress code. This element, together with the rest of the abovementioned visual factors, creates visual identity of an institution.

The crucial feature of visual factors is simplicity. Applying this rule allows the image to be more unambiguous and concise. It seems important to take into consideration the fact that the public remembers considerably better the elements which are not too complicated; then the perception is more effective. Another trait of visual factors is a necessity to stand out. It means that these elements must be constructed in the way that allows them to be easily recognized and distinguished from the surrounding. The last feature is functionality. It is a very technical aspect which stresses the importance of easy adaptation of all the visual elements. In other words, it must be easy to put the colours and graphic elements into practice.

4. GROUPS OF THE PUBLIC ATTRACTED BY LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

Regarding local administration departments like commune offices, a positive image of these institutions has a direct impact on the way the public perceives the region in which

the offices operate. Thus, in this way the local administration gains the possibility to attract to the area different groups of the public. One of the crucial groups are current and potential investors⁵. It is obvious that for each region it is one the priorities of a local policy to develop economic aspect of local life. The bigger number of investors setting up their businesses, building plants and other companies in various industries, the bigger possibility for the region to decrease negative economic and social trends such as high unemployment rate or low public budget incomes. However, from investors' point of view, the region must be perceived as a reliable and friendly one. They must be assured of high qualifications of local civil servants, which are visible through local administration successes, about which it was stated earlier in this very dissertation. This aspect is the one which triggers off investors' interest in some particular region. In other words, the *image* itself is the factor which at the very beginning initiates future contacts and cooperation with local administration: if the image of some region were negative, investors would not get interested in it and would not contact its representatives at all.

A similar rule can be noticed regarding the interest in some particular region or a town expressed by potential, future inhabitants. In the process of making a decision of moving and settling down in some new area, people consider and analyse profoundly numerous features of the potential place. Among them we could mention the availability of modern and peaceful surroundings, which means that in the plan of development the local authorities should include proper areas for new settlements. What is more, there should be developed adequate road infrastructure, in this way providing people with easy and fast connections with most places of interest, such as work. This aspect is extremely important regarding the towns and countries which are satellite settlements to a major city. In this case, effective transportation seems crucial, as most inhabitants commute daily to the city.

Potential inhabitants also take into consideration easy access to such institutions like a hospital, a kindergarten, a school, a post office, etc. All these services are exceptionally important, since they are a part of people's everyday life. Easy and fast access to them makes inhabitants' daily routine considerably more comfortable. However, it is vital to be conscious of the fact that most often, the first incentive which makes a potential inhabitant get interested in some particular place is not all the abovementioned aspects, but the *image*, the opinion of the area which is expressed by the public. The people who are looking for a new place to settle down first hear some opinion about the region, and only if it is positive, they decide to proceed and get into more profound scrutiny of the place.

The last major group that often is of the interest of local authorities are tourists. This very specific group of people also gets attracted to some particular region or a town mostly by well created image of these places. However, it seems important to realize that nowadays the very fact of possessing outstanding natural environment potential is not enough. It must be accompanied by well developed, modern tourist infrastructure. Local institutions ought to take into account the fact that they may host both native and foreign visitors. All of them require a high standard of services, including

⁵ R. Maćkowska, *Znaczenie kreowania wizerunku samorządu terytorialnego*, [w:] *Public relations instytucji użyteczności publicznej*, pod red. E. Hope, Scientific Publishing Group, Gdańsk 2005, s. 199 - 201.

appropriate hotels, hostels, guesthouses or camping sites. Moreover, the events promoting local culture are also sought-after and appreciated. Only taking care of all those abovementioned aspects may create a positive image of the place as a tourist attraction.

To sum up, investors, inhabitants and tourists constitute extremely important groups that local institutions should be interested in. These groups may contribute substantially to the economic and social development of a region. However, very often the initial phase of their interest is conjured up by well created image of the chosen place. Therefore, measures taken up in the field of public relations seem undisputedly fundamental.

5. IMAGE MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENTS

5.1. Media relations

One of the crucial instruments which can be used by public administration in order to create and sustain a positive image is contacts with the media. It is widely known that media have an extremely big influence on the public, contributing to creating its opinions. That is why, it is absolutely necessary for administration to start cooperation with them. For both parties it is important to realize that they have the same general objective, which is informing the public about what is happening in a region. Mutual awareness of this goal seems essential to establish long cooperation on firm basis.

However, to be able to build effective relations with the media, first it is important to learn the specification of a journalist profession⁶. Their work environment is very complicated and stressful. First of all, the typical feature of journalists' work is fast pace, especially if we take into consideration the so-called electronic media. Each editorial team puts a lot of effort to gain some information as first. The fact that each medium tries to gain some advantage over the rest leads to creating strong competition, also between journalists inside the teams. Only the leaders in this profession are able to improve their profits considerably. Additionally, journalists are still pressured by their editors to master their skills and improve effects of work. Moreover, there exists an extremely important ethical and social aspect of the profession. Journalists ought to be objective, present views of all the parties of any conflict, respect feelings and sensitivity of the receiver of information. All the abovementioned features create very unstable and demanding work environment. Thus, it is crucial for public administration offices to be aware of it and, as a consequence, adjust the ways of cooperation to this specification. Only in this way the mutual objective can be reached effectively.

There can be pointed out a few fundamental rules of cooperation which must be obeyed by civil servants. First issue is connected with the question whether to try to make friends with a journalist or not. The first thought may lead us to the belief that having a relationship on a friendly, unofficial basis might be a good option. However, in reality such a relation does not function well. Although friendly contacts may often help in daily cooperation, it should be assumed that in the case of a crisis situation – meaning that some unexpected, negative situation in some public institution has taken place - a good journalist will always choose good news instead of cherishing friendly relations with some civil servant. In other words, it is naive to rely on a journalist's loyalty. Thus,

⁶ K. Giedrojć, *Public relations w administracji*, ALPHA pro, Ostrołęka 2004, s. 53 - 57.

the mutual relations should be based on professional, formal contacts, which at the same time ought to be characterized by mutual respect⁷.

The ways of contacting with the media may vary. In the case of daily contacts, the most common are telephone conversations or meetings to discuss current matters. Apart from these obvious and typical ways, there could also be pointed the so-called comments, which is a form of public institution's reaction to any events or problems that are currently of interest of the public. Another, more complex form of contacts with the media is an interview and a press conference, which mostly are organized in order to inform, explain or comment more profoundly on local issues.

No matter which of the abovementioned tools are used in media relations, however, the rules and principles regarding how to behave to create and sustain a positive image of an institution are similar and universal. First of all, there is a general and absolutely fundamental rule which says that public offices' servants cannot tell lies. It is unacceptable to mislead journalists deliberately. By lying, there is no possibility to defend oneself effectively, since if the lie is discovered, civil servants lose all the arguments in discussion. When this fact is publicized, it may cause enormous damage to an institution's image.

Moreover, it is extremely important to make sure that an institution is a source of both interesting and at the same time current information. Only such a characteristic of the news might be valuable for a journalist. Otherwise, a media representative will lose interest in the public office and, as a result, it will not be able to build an image effectively. It seems important to remember that a journalist who deals with local issues possesses as good knowledge and information as a public servant does.

At the beginning of any kind of the abovementioned contacts with media, it is crucial to establish clearly the very subject of a conversation. It will allow a spokesperson to control the process of giving the right information, at the same time avoiding a threat of losing the main subject of a talk. In this way questions can be answered right to the point and, which also seems extremely important, each refusal of an answer can be justified objectively. It is also good to put into practice the rule which says that if an institution is not able to give an answer during a meeting or a telephone conversation, the media representative should be informed that they will be provided with such information as soon as it is checked and verified. In the case of lack of possibility to answer some question at all, the reason should also be clearly stated. In this way an institution shows respect and the fact that it treats media seriously.

In the case of giving information in form of a comment, it is important to state that the public office may be asked for taking a position on some local events as a third party, in other words as an expert. It is a very desirable situation for an office, since it provides it with a possibility to present public administration as a very professional, independent party.

Regarding a press conference, there are two vital aspects which influence building a positive image of an institution. Firstly, a conference ought to be organized only if there are some very important local issues to be discussed. It means that the subject of a conference must be current and attractive enough to be able to prepare a complex and

⁷ J. Flis, *Samorządowe public relations*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2007, s. 65 - 68.

concise message. The worst situation occurs when there is no clear and appealing topic and the media have difficulties in creating good, professional news out of it. To help avoid such problems, another abovementioned aspect should be implemented. It is connected with preparing appropriate press conference materials. They ought to include not only the information which is directly connected with the subject of the conference, but also more general info which, in an institution's opinion, could make journalists interested in. For instance, it should include information regarding other crucial fields of an office's activities, projects completed, recent successes, etc. Such info helps to show a wider picture of an institution, it is a chance to emphasise its role in local life and development.

5.2. Serving inquirers

It seems to be an obvious fact that a positive, direct relation between a client and a public administration's office is of fundamental significance in creating an image of any institution. Absolutely crucial element of the relation is a civil servant, since this person is a representative of administration and they are directly responsible for dealing with inquirers' matters. However, there are two aspects which constitute a well, professionally prepared servant⁸. First of all, administration office workers need to possess profound knowledge regarding both their position and the structure and regulations concerning a whole institution. They are expected to have qualifications which will allow them to handle clients' administrative matters fast and effectively. However, this aspect ought to be accompanied by another one. Apart from professional knowledge, civil servants must behave in a certain way. In other words, they must have particular features of character. Firstly, it is important to possess a will to be helpful in dealing with inquirers' problems, connected with being outgoing and friendly. At the same time they should be emphatic and patient. Also, all their actions ought to be characterized by high ethical standards. However, an office worker must be resistant to stressful situations, which will inevitably occur in the process of dealing with inquirers. That means that they must be assertive. In other words, being nice and friendly does not mean that civil servants cannot stand for their rights, but these rights must be expressed in a way which does not hurt the other party's feelings and dignity. To sum up, both adequate qualifications and appropriate behaviour constitute a well prepared civil servant. It is essential to remember that *both* these aspects must be implemented at the same time. Only then the process of serving inquirers can be genuinely professional and, as a result, lead to creating a positive image of an institution in a long term.

Another element which builds positive direct relations with a client is the so-called front line. It consists of two aspects: a help desk and a navigation system. A help desk is a sort of a reception situated right at the very entrance to an institution. It should be run by a professional servant who needs to have thorough knowledge about the whole institution, all the matters which are dealt with there and the characteristic of all processes which constitute the whole structure of a department. The idea is to be able to serve an inquirer right at the help desk, thus to provide them with all the necessary information and documents. The desk should be equipped with all the typical forms to be handed over. Moreover, a receptionist is a person who ought to help clients to fill these forms. So, they should be kind of middlemen between a client and a particular depart-

⁸ K. Giedrojc, *Public relations...*, op. cit., s. 82 - 84.

ment. It serves two extremely important purposes. Firstly, a client is served fast and in one place, which increases their satisfaction. Secondly, in this way other office workers are not involved in the process of handling an inquirer's problems. They can concentrate on other duties, which increases their effectiveness.

The second element of a front line is a navigation system. It is a concise and clear way of information regarding how to reach all places and departments in a whole institution. The first element of the system is abovementioned reception. However, it should be supported by a system of signs which show directions, room and floor numbers, etc. It is important to remember that this sign system must not be limited only to the interior of an institution, but it should also cover its surrounding. The idea is to create a situation in which an inquirer is led to the institution.

Taking all the abovementioned elements of a front line, it can be concluded that it is supposed to create a service model in which each person will feel supported and taken care of in case of any problems. Such a service influences positively the way people perceive public administration.

Analysing the ways inquirers should be served by public institutions, it seems vital to mention the most important indirect tool: the internet. Nowadays web pages and e-mails are natural and common sources of information and communication instruments. For administration this tool might serve the purpose of creating a positive image extremely well. Definitely it has numerous advantages in this field. Firstly, a webpage of some institution provides the public with information permanently. Thus, it is very convenient, since it enables inquirers adjust their contacts with an administration to the daily routine. What is more, they can choose and download information, documents and forms - and send them back, if necessary - themselves. As a result, it saves time enormously. From administration's point of view, having their own webpage serves another important purpose regarding building an image. A webpage allows an office to publicize information without involving the media. It may be in a form of a press service, informing about recent events, projects or successes. In this way a public institution becomes independent of any go-between. As the usage of the internet continues to grow, this direct possibility of creating a positive picture becomes increasingly important for an administration.

5.3. Sponsorship

At the very beginning it should be emphasized that there can be pointed out *two* kinds of sponsoring in which a public administration office has a possibility to get involved. Firstly, there is a typical financial sponsoring, within the confines of which an institution allocates some amount of money in local initiatives which seem important for local authorities, e.g. charity campaigns, financing scholarships for different groups of students, sportsmen or artists, financing meals for children.

Secondly, however, local administration has a vast range of possibilities to get involved in such undertakings by being active in the field of so-called institutional support⁹. It consists of different kinds of non-financial help. For a local public office the most common instrument is connected with management of commune infrastructure. Thus, local authorities can make available commune buildings, rooms, means of trans-

⁹ K. Giedroń, *Public relations...*, op. cit., s. 98.

port or a telecommunication appliances. What is more, the support may have a form of providing people with different kinds of advice. It might be legal advice regarding all administrative matters, or organizational and expert advice in case there is a need to solve problems connected with setting up and running some company. Another sort of non-financial help is patronage of some local events. In this way these undertakings become more formal and prestigious.

Despite supplying local administration with an array of tools, sponsoring seems to be a tool which is often neglected by public institutions. However, there are numerous circumstances which show clearly that involvement in such actions is very natural and understandable. One of the crucial factors is the fact that *both* local public institutions and social organizations have the same objective. They both operate to fulfil some public needs, to reach objectives vital from a social point of view. Moreover, it is important to stress that public administration is financed from the public budget, in other words – from taxes paid also by local inhabitants or investors. These two factors suggest that local public departments cannot neglect such social aspects of local life.

Another circumstance stems from legislation. Most public institutions operating in some region have statutory obligation to be active in the field of social initiatives. What is more, they are supposed to spark off or support not only social undertakings, but also initiatives connected with cultural, economic or political activity of local people.

Analysing the possibilities of using different kinds of sponsoring, it is crucial to stress that such an activity offers a very big opportunity to create a strong image of administration. It is connected with the fact that the decision to support the abovementioned causes in the form of sponsorship is very rarely perceived by the public opinion as a move which is supposed to bring administration benefits. Such actions are thought to be disinterested. Instead of perceiving public institutions as the party which gains some profits, they are believed to be sensitive to social matters, responsible or generous. Therefore, being involved in sponsoring is such an important element of creating a strong, positive image.

CONCLUSIONS

Public administration institutions have a vast range of possibilities to create an image. It is an obvious fact that a positive image makes it easier for public offices to operate in a region and provide their services more effectively. Well-established public opinion increases the level of trust to administration. As a result, it creates an atmosphere in which potential, future negative information regarding some public department will be verified by the public positively. It is a very precious advantage.

Moreover, a positive image of local institutions develops the feeling of prestige. It is desirable to live and work in a region which is perceived as a rich, friendly and fast developing one. Also, such a belief builds the so-called consumer loyalty, which in other words means that local people have a very subjective approach to their region or a town. Finally, a positive picture of a region very often conjures up local patriot acts and elicits social initiatives. Thus, inhabitants are activated to take care of local issues along with civil servants¹⁰.

¹⁰ Z. Knecht, *Public relations...*, op. cit., s. 9.

However, creating and sustaining a strong, firm image requires a lot of effort. It is a consequence of the features of the image itself. First of all, it is an individual, very subjective category. What is more, it is not permanent, meaning that it may change at any moment. Also, a strong, positive picture of any institution or a person is created in a long term. Finally, an image itself is very complex, which means that there are numerous factors that influence and build it. Therefore, it is necessary that image management is characterized by a very systematic, concise and long-term approach.

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ZARZĄDZANIE WIZERUNKIEM W ADMINISTRACJI PUBLICZNEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy kwestii budowania i podtrzymywania silnego oraz pozytywnego wizerunku instytucji administracji publicznej. Ideą autorów jest zwrócenie uwagi na istotność aktywnego zarządzania wizerunkiem oraz przedstawienie niewątpliwych korzyści wynikających z podjęcia takich działań. W pracy na wstępie gruntownie wyjaśniono cechy samego wizerunku oraz ewaluowania jego idei do tzw. koncepcji racjonalnej. W dalszej części autorzy dokonali analizy specyficznych uwarunkowań zarządzania wizerunkiem w instytucjach publicznych, wskazując różnice w odniesieniu do motywacji firm prywatnych. W artykule scharakteryzowano również głównych odbiorców działań public relations, a także szczegółowo przeanalizowano instrumenty możliwe do wykorzystania w ramach zarządzania wizerunkiem instytucji publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: wizerunek, administracja publiczna, relacje z mediami, obsługa petenta, sponsoring