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Prije i poslije lokalnih izbora - novi mediji u procesu oblikovanja civilnog društva (slučaj Poljske)

Sažetak

Analiza situacije na nacionalnoj političkoj sceni stvara dojam da su sve granice pozitivnog marketinga prekoračene i da postupci političara podsjećaju na brutalnu, zlobnu kampanju za vlašću, a ne pošteno natjecanje između ideja o izbornim problemima. Stoga je teško govoriti o pravilu natjecanja koji je preduvjet za marketing. Ali ipak pogledajmo marketinške aktivnosti koje se obavljaju na malo drugačijem nivou političke sofisticiranosti, a to je lokalni parlament.

Članak koji slijedi je analiza aktivnosti koje su obavljali političari u Poljskoj prije i poslije lokalnih izbora u 2002. i 2006. Izbor ovog perioda koji je okarakteriziran nije slučajan, slijedeći faktori su ga naložili: kao prvo, ovo su bili prvi izravni lokalni izbori za gradonačelnika/upravitelja općina, kao drugo, broj članova vijeća je zakonom smanjen (i općinskih) – što je najavilo zanimljivo natjecanje i kao treće, možemo primijetiti utjecaj novih komunikacijskih tehnologija tijekom izborne kampanje koja je izgleda pripremljena mnogo profesionalnije za svaki od lokalnih izbora.

Ključne riječi: lokalni izbori, društveni mediji, ICT, marketing, lokalna javna sfera, lokalni mediji, lokalni političar

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Before and after the local election – new media in the process of shaping civil society (the case of Poland)

Summary

The analysis of the situation on the national political scene creates the impression that all boundaries of positive marketing are transgressed and politicians' actions remind a brutal, full of venom campaign for power, rather than an honest competition between ideas on election issues. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about the rule of competition, which is a prerequisite for marketing.

The following article is an analysis of activities pursued by politicians in Poland before and after the local elections in 2002 and 2006. The choice of the period, which was characterized, was not random, it was dictated by the following facts: first of all, those were the first direct local elections for mayors/municipality heads; secondly, the number of council members was reduced by law (both municipal) – all of which heralded an interesting competition and thirdly we can observe the impact of the new communication technologies especially during the election campaign which seems to be prepared more professionally each local election.

Key words: local election; social media; ICT; marketing; local public sphere; local media; local politician

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Introduction - What is marketing needed for in politics?

It is a well known fact that political marketing is not the same as business marketing, despite their obvious similarities. Business marketing is targeted at customers. Its purpose is to increase the sales of goods through a commercial network that runs from the producer through the distributor to the seller. All actions taken in relation to business marketing are targeted at consumers.

On the other hand, political marketing is addressed to voters. Its aim is to increase the support for a political party or a politician. Marketing activities are targeted both, at voters and the media, which not only transmit, but also reinforce and process information. Therefore, the role of the media in political marketing is slightly different to their role in business marketing. A political party is the counterpart of the producer, but does not have at its disposal a commercial network, a shop shelf where a product can be put to be found by a consumer. The 'product' of the political party - a politician or a political project - is available for the overwhelming majority of the voters through the media. The main data carrier on the way from a politician to a voter - a counterpart of the commercial network - are the media.

The essence of political marketing is to convince the citizens to one's own political ideas. Michael Bongrand defines political marketing as *"a collection of techniques used to create a specific picture of the candidate among his electorate, to promote his person, to single him out from his rivals and to gain the maximum number of votes using the lowest level of resources."* (Borucka, Skrzypiński, 1995: 8)

Marketing activities are pursued all the time, but they are intensified during the election campaign. Marketing actions taken in this time have even a specific name – election marketing. Its aim is to popularize the candidates and the party's political program, to gain the highest amount of votes by the candidates and, in consequence – win the elections or achieve the best result possible.

Both, political marketing as well as the widely understood political communication serve a central, somehow definite objective of politics – to gain and stay in power. In democracies power is gained through victorious elections, therefore, the fact that marketing activities are intensified during election campaigns should not be surprising. Political parties in Poland are

only beginning to familiarize themselves with marketing methods; they use them more often in parliamentary elections as well as on a smaller scale, outside of them.

Ulicka claims that the changes in political actions that are dictated by political marketing caused the increase of personalization of political power, changes in the functioning environment of political parties and evolution of social attitudes – the appearance of new motivations to participate in political life (Ulicka, 1996).

According to Joseph A. Schumpeter „Every party at any moment, always has a certain set of rules or program points, which can be equally characteristic to it and important for its success, as brand products sold by a department store are important to its success". What is more, parties and politicians “*attempt at the regulation of political competition in a way that is similar to certain practices of a commercial union. The psycho-techniques of leading the party and of acquiring supporters, slogans and melodies to which people dance, are not a mere addition. Rather, they are the very essence, the content of politics*” (Schumpeter 1995: 353). Therefore, political marketing is not a supplement to politics or an effective and expensive setting for political activities, it is the ability to use the natural resources of the party in an effective and suitable way depending on the situation.

Activities in the field of political marketing start with the change in the way of thinking about a politician, and then they concentrate on gaining support for his actions. The politician and the party are treated, in accordance with the philosophy of political marketing, as products, which have to sell high. Advertising campaigns are similar to those invented for cars or washing powers. Professional advertising agencies implement them and professional graphic studios as well as teams of image creation specialists take part in them.

Graphic symbols of the party, election slogans, content and layout of posters/leaflets are prepared with equal care as if they were meant for commercial goods. Politicians want to limit the impact of the activities of their opponents by criticizing them. Negative campaign is pursued in politics much more often than in traditional marketing of goods or services. Common for political and business marketing is the fact that they both refer to the emotions of receivers, and therefore are dominated by a persuasive function.

In business marketing, an important factor that contributes to the continuous presence of a company on the market is the “post-shopping

behaviour". It is not enough to advertise a product until it is bought, one has to make sure that the customer is happy (satisfied) with the purchase so that they buy the same goods again. This happens only when product quality either fulfils the client's expectations or surpasses them. Whereas, lack of satisfaction appears when the consumer's expectations are not fulfilled, for instance, when the client believes that the goods were not worth the money (Falkowski & Tyszka, 2001). An analogous situation happens in the case of political marketing. If a politician wants to hold his office for a longer time, he has to concentrate on post-election behaviour of citizens. It is especially important when it comes to local government, because voters assess the candidates through the prism of their achievements in the municipality/powiat, and not on the basis of their party affiliation.

Cwalina and Falkowski (2005) stress the fact that in business marketing the idea of post-shopping behaviour was thoroughly analyzed in many studies, which highlighted the importance of the consumer's satisfaction with the purchased goods for the success of the company on a competitive market. Undoubtedly, such satisfaction is important not only because the client will most probably buy other goods from the company, but also because he will deliver the positive opinion about the company to his friends. This kind of information, next to advertising, is a very effective way of promotion.

Therefore, the following questions should be asked: *Are the same mechanisms used in political marketing? How important for politicians and their image are promotional activities pursued during the between-election period? Does an election success depend only on the activity level of the candidate during the election campaign? Do post-election activities of the candidate have a bigger influence over his possible victory in the next elections?* According to Cwalina and Falkowski (2005) the issue of post-election behaviour in political marketing seems to have even greater importance. After all consumers buy products all the time, they can exchange the goods if the purchase turns out to be defective, on the other hand, political elections are held once in a while and one has to wait for another elections to fix their mistake. Therefore, the majority of political life takes place before elections. This is why it seems obvious that politicians, in order to comfortably govern and give themselves a real chance for re-election should really take care of their image strictly in the pre-election time, or in another words, in the time between elections.

The aim of the following analysis is to discuss the effectiveness of pre-election and post-election marketing on the example of the shaping of local government structures in the *dzierżonowski powiat*. As an introduction, it has to be stressed that marketing activities undertaken by local politicians and their parties are different from those that are pursued on a larger, nationwide scale. Of course, this is understandable because the objective is the same – to gain the voters' trust and keep it for as long as it is possible. What is really important in political marketing, on the level of local government, except for a campaign before the elections, which is a reflection of activities typical of election propaganda (e.g. positive/negative campaign, posters, direct marketing, advertising in the media), is what kind of image of a mayor/*powiat staroste* will crystallize while he is in office in a town/*powiat*. As it was mentioned before, the inhabitants consider efficient management of their town more important than the mayor's party membership, which is why local election committees, which are not affiliated with any political parties, win local elections more often. Members of the local parliament are constantly assessed. While voting on a given candidate, the people hoped for the implementation of their postulates, e.g. to restore the taxi rank on the market square; to solve a problem about a local grammar school; to introduce limitations on the building of huge department stores, etc. Therefore, a proposition can be made that for the local structures, post-election political marketing is equally – or maybe more – important than pre-election marketing.

To recapitulate the theoretical discussion one positive aspect of political marketing on the local level has to be mentioned, which is the influence it has on the creation of the civic society. According to Kolczyński: *“a local elections campaign should stimulate public debate about the basic problems of the local community, in which its members as well as representatives of parties that take part in the elections should participate. Therefore, an active aspiration to the creation of a socially accepted program that would tackle local problems, justifies participation in discussion”* (Kolczyński, 2006: 314). The conclusion that stems from this is clear: the voter – inhabitant participates in a social dialogue that takes place right before the elections, familiarizes himself with the problems of his region and has the chance (using his voice in the debate – the right choice) to solve them. Political marketing is a brutal fight for the power, but also a construction of the civic society.

Case study – methodology

The paper is based on the qualitative and quantitative research. For making comparison survey was carried out before and after the local election both in 2002 and 2006. It is analysed the case of the Lower Silesia Region (Dzierżoniów county). This comparative study was prepared due to: 1) interviews with politicians; clerks; journalists; entrepreneurs; 2) questionnaires distributed between inhabitants (532 collected questionnaires); 3) national statistics reports; 4) municipality statistics reports.

Local politicians activities - before and after the elections

In order to analyze the source material, it is necessary to describe the specific political situation in the dzierzoniowski powiat in 2002. Before the elections in 2002, in the urban municipality of Dzierżoniów, there was a permanent crisis that resulted from the way in which the power was taken over by the then town council in 1999 (after elections). The powiat authorities (left-wing politicians) were infamous until the elections in 2007, which were finally won by Obywatelski Blok Samorządowy (Civic Self-governmental Bloc), which took over the power. Up till then, the people's trust toward the powiat authorities was very low because of many bad decisions that deteriorated the powiat's financial situation and its economic development.

The campaign in 2002 in dzierzoniowski powiat was exceptionally intensive. A few conditions influenced this state of affairs: first of all, the amendments to the Act on municipal local government – direct elections and the introduction of a limit to the number of council members; secondly, the desire to remove the current council members (mostly left-wing) from power; thirdly, the development of the media in the powiat and the use of their potential during the election campaign (possibility to reach a wide range of receivers) and fourthly, the participation of professional advisors in the campaign. All those factors influenced very distinctly the election campaign, which, in the dzierzoniowski powiat, was based on criticism, irony, aggression, colloquialisms and vulgarity. The campaign was characterized by the 'fight for power' or 'against it'. The fight between

the committees was very 'fierce' and its participants stopped at nothing on their way to victory. It is worth mentioning at the very beginning that one of the parties that were distinctive in comparison to others when it comes to its expressiveness, and sometimes even vulgarity, was very successful. The growing social dissatisfaction about the current local government had definitely a huge influence over the election results, what was used by new election committees, especially OBS.

The analysis of marketing activities that were pursued by the parties shows that there is nothing surprising or original about them, what results from small budgets of the parties.

The specialists who prepared advertising campaigns of the parties used the old-fashioned methods of promotion, remembering at the same time about the psychological and social impact of their products. They often referred to spatial perception of reality by humans and to our ability to distinguish colours.

The personality of a man and his behaviour is frequently interpreted through the colors that the person prefers, because of that clothes, additions or the background which is behind the candidate can influence the voters' preferences. Colours are like a peculiar language which directly influences the unconscious and emotions.

Well-chosen colours, graphics and logo not only drew the voter's attention, but also influenced the creation of a specific identity of a party or committee. The combination of proper colours and lines has become a peculiar visual code of a party – it has become recognizable on the 'election market'. The proper choice of colours was especially important in the creation of an aesthetically pleasing image of every committee in the *dzierżonowski* powiat. The colours reflect different symbolism, because of that no-one should be surprised at the omnipresence of blue during the campaign, since this colour means 'longing, faith, faithfulness, fertility, infinity' (Kleszcz, 1996: 6). The majority of the parties that participated in the elections chose blue as the dominant colour. Therefore, election announcements, leaflets/posters felt like heaven. Blue shirts of the candidates, blue background in the pictures, blue background of the sponsored articles and finally a blue logo. Candidates of the left also chose blue over red, which up till then was ubiquitous in their materials and now started to appear scarcely. Members of *Liga Polskich Rodzin* [League of Polish Families] remained faithful to the 'red' because the colour reflected their national ideas in the best way possible. The lofty rhetoric of the

Dialog Samorządowy [Local-government Dialogue] was accompanied by the green colour which is equated with ‘peace and hope’ and yellow associated with ‘light, innovation’, but also with ‘superiority’ – what fully reflected the nature of that party.

Except for the colours, important in the creation of the party’s image is also the design. Every party has to possess its “feather in the cap”, which is distinctive, easy to recognize and remember, reflects the party’s personality and its aspirations, traditions and prestige. Mostly nationwide parties included their logo on the election posters (e.g. SLD [Democratic Left Alliance], Samoobrona [Self-defense], LPR), local election committees used only their logotypes¹ (e.g. FS, DS), OBS and Zgoda Samorządowa [Self-government Consensus] stood out in this regard.

Apart from the colour, shape and sound, the voters’ imagination is also influenced by the word. According to Kamińska-Szmaj (1996), the job of an election slogan (a means of advertising) is to attract the voters’ attention and to suggest certain political behaviours. An election slogan is the most concise and synthetic verbal formula directed at the mass receiver. An effective slogan has an attractive, original language form, which is why it is easy to memorize and consequently influences the emotions and decisions of voters. No wonder then, that the slogans of local committees include positive words that refer to certain values, e.g.:

- work, success, common (e.g. *Common job – Common success* – OBS);
- future, development, opportunity, Polish (e.g. The future of the town is in Polish hands, Development of the town – an opportunity for Polish families – LPR);
- consensus, wall, defensive (e.g. Self-government consensus is a defensive wall of the town – KW Zgoda Samorządowa);
- education, development, work, justly, democratically (e.g. *Education - Development – Work, Justly - Democratically - Locally* – SLD);
- better, tomorrow (e.g. *For a better tomorrow* – KW Dzierżoniów XXI Wiek [Election Committee Dzierżoniów 21st century])

Let us take a look at the way those slogans, graphic marks and programs are perceived by voters. In the way the 2002 election campaign was run in the dzierżoniowski powiat, its new professional shape can be perceived. All election committees used traditional leaflets, posters,

¹ Logotype is a lettering composition that includes an abbreviation of a word or a multi-word phrase

billboards, buses and rented cars. The majority posted their ads in local newspapers or on the Ziemia Dzierżoniowska [Dzierżoniowska Land] web page – www.doba.pl. The mouthpieces of the elections were the local radio “Sudety” and the “Vectra” TV station where, during debates, candidates for council members, mayors or municipality heads met. Sometimes, the media served as a field of battle between different parties. Exceptional in rhetoric were the advertising campaigns of OBS and DIALOG SAMORZĄDOWY. Both parties regularly published in the local press election articles whose volume sometimes equaled an A3 format sheet of paper and was rarely smaller than the A4 format. Members of both parties were representatives of the right-wing option – OBS is closer to the center-right, whereas members of Dialog Samorządowy represent the ideas of the far right. The campaign of both parties was full of aggression, recriminations, criticism, sometimes, the authors of mottos and slogans would even forget about the appropriateness of style, about the power of the word and the respect for the receiver. This verbal war waged in one of the newspapers, on the radio and TV, turned out to be successful because OBS took over some of the electorate of the left wing.

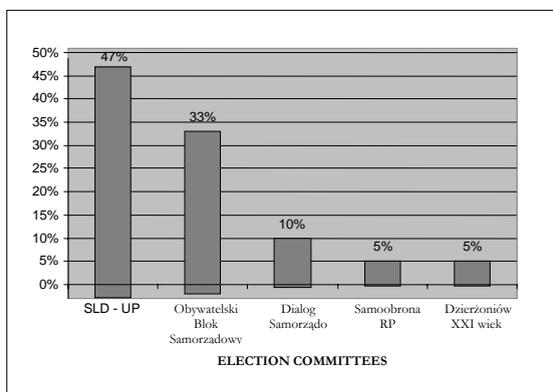
The promotion of activities pursued by all committees is extremely important for all election campaigns, promotion that is a response to the expectations and perception abilities of the voters. The politicians from dzierżoniowski powiat usually ‘sell’ their programs during Dzierżoniowskie Presentations – a local entrepreneurship fair, which is held annually on the last Saturday of September. On that day all election committees meet on the playground of the Sports and Leisure Center in order to recommend their ‘product’ to potential voters in a friendly atmosphere. The effectiveness of those endeavors is increased by the presence of all candidates who actively participate in the promotion of their party. What is more, independently of the Dzierżoniowskie Presentations, there are also other festivities and picnics organized where the participants are given pens, mugs, caps, mascots, balloons and sweets - of course all those gadgets are adorned with a party logo or the picture of its leader.

Parties like Samoobrona, Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) or Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) reinforce their image through meetings with the leaders of nationwide structures. In the dzierżoniowski powiat the following politicians participated in the campaign: Andrzej Lepper, Zbigniew Chlebowski, Adam Lipiński. However, the results showed that the inhabitants preferred to vote on local election committees rather than big political parties.

Campaign effect – voting results

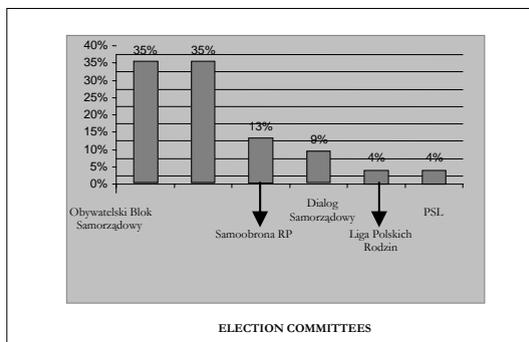
A detailed picture of the balance of powers that appeared after the 2002 local elections in dzierzoniowski powiat is represented by the graphs below:

Fig. 1: 2002 Elections to Dzierżoniów city council



Source: Statistics of Dzierżoniów Municipality, 2002

Fig. 2: 2002 Elections to Dzierżoniów powiat council

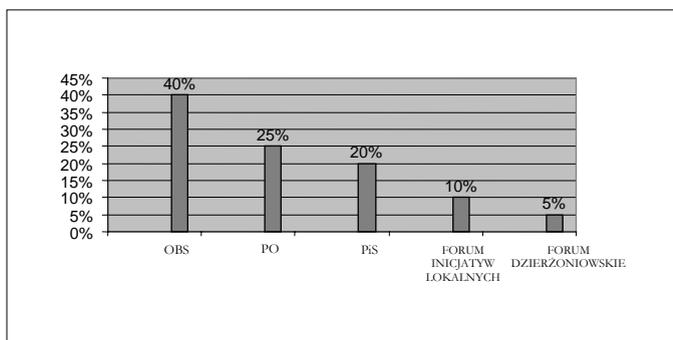


Source: Statistics of Dzierżoniów Municipality, 2002

The results clearly show the success of two parties SLD UP [Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union] and OBS. The electorate of the left in the dzierzoniowski powiat (like in the rest of Poland) is rather disciplined and faithful to its candidates in all elections thus increasing the low turnout. It needs to be stressed that SLD's 2002 election campaign was rather mild and deprived of excessive expression (limited to posters, leaflets with candidates and their political program), this was a result of the fact that the majority of its candidates were politicians with extensive experience in local government, frequently they were council members of previous terms. Activities taken by SLD did not remind a war on words and pictures, rather they were a campaign that stressed the services of its candidates for the benefit of the local community in previous terms.

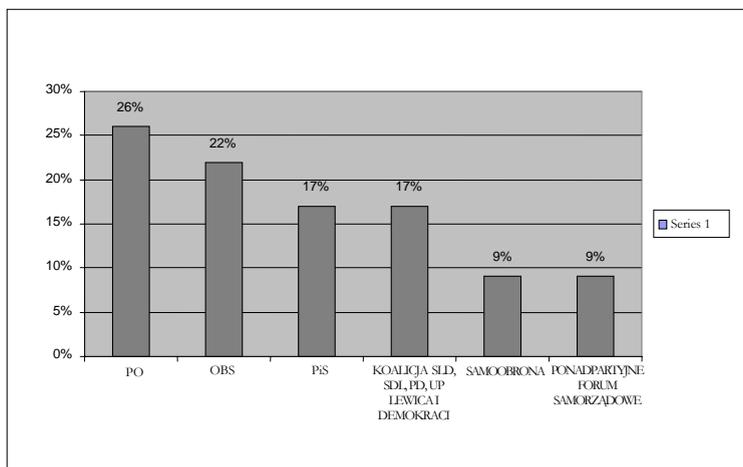
In comparison, the 2006 election results were as follows:

Fig. 3: 2006 Dzierżoniów town council elections



Source: Statistics of Dzierżoniów Municipality, 2006

Fig. 4: 2006 Dzierżoniów poviát council elections



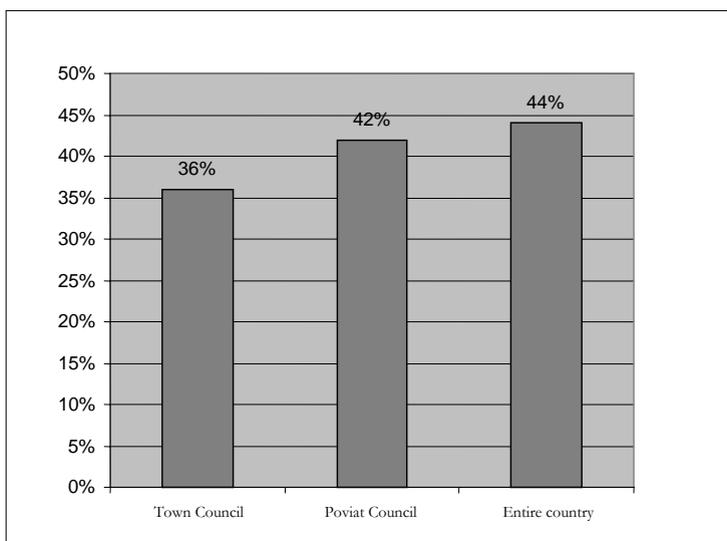
Source: Statistics of Dzierżoniów Municipality, 2006

The 2006 local elections in the dzierżoniowski poviát were won by the central right (PO, OBS), to some extent, this reflects the tendencies dominant in Polish politics - lower trust for left-wing governments. However, it should be noticed that the members of Platforma Obywatelska in the 2002 elections were members of OBS, therefore the majority of the same politicians stayed in power. Especially noticeable is the OBS's success in the Town Council elections. This victory meant another four years of office for a large group of council members from this party. They managed to win the voters' trust in the 2002 elections after a fierce fight with the left and the far right and then do it again in 2006. Such an election result stems from, as was mentioned before, the distrust to the left and, on the other hand from the voters' content with the actions taken by local authorities. When OBS took over the power in 2002, they did not make empty declarations. Instead, they referred to a few most important issues for the region, e.g. serving the town; creating a government for Dzierżoniów that would possess authority (undermined during the previous term), promising consensus and cooperation with other local governments (what was up till then impossible); raising EU funds for investments; attracting a strategic investor to the Dzierżoniowska Economic Zone and ending the long-standing conflict

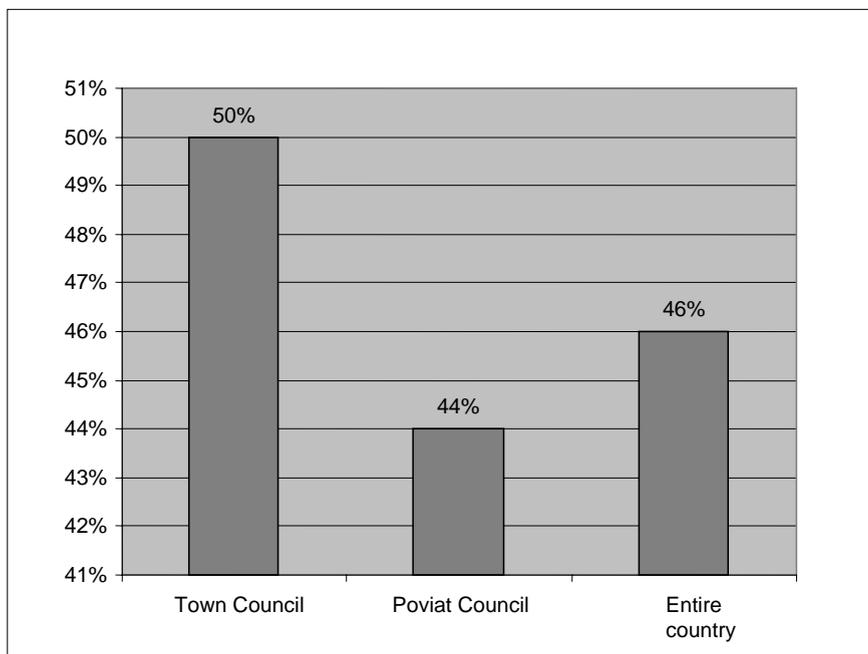
about a local grammar school. The majority of OBS's postulates was implemented and, what seems most important, everything took place without an unnecessary show and pompousness what was positively assessed by the inhabitants.

Another crucial aspect of local democracy building that should be mentioned is the participation of inhabitants of municipalities/poviats in elections. The indicator of civic maturity of the society is the election turnout:

Fig. 5: 2002 Local elections - turnout



Source: Statistics of the Commission of National Elections, 2002

Fig. 6: 2006 Local elections - turnout

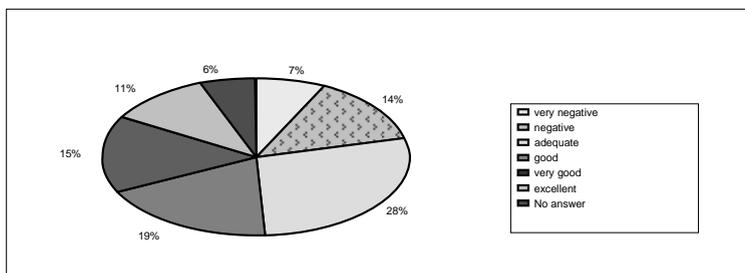
Source: Statistics of the Commission of National Elections, 2006

According to a research by TNS OBOP, Poles use the privileges of democracy, however the results of the polls clearly show that this applies mostly no issues of nationwide interest (2001 parliamentary elections turnout – 46 per cent, 2001 presidential elections turnout - 61 per cent), in case of local democracy the participation of the society is significantly lower. This is a result of a negative attitude to local governments, half of the respondents stated that local elections will bear no influence over the region's development. However, one can guess that such a viewpoint results from the voters' lack of knowledge and fears rather than from an opposition to democracy, therefore information transfer is extremely important for the shaping of the voters' consciousness.

While analyzing the turnout in the *dzierżoniowski powiat* during the 2002 and 2006 elections, one cannot omit its significant increase in *Dzierżoniów* (14 per cent). A 50 per cent turnout is a very good result for

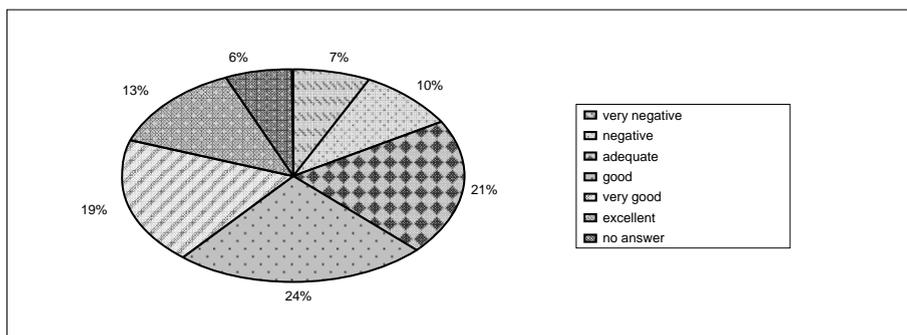
local elections. W few factors influenced this increase. The most important one was the growth of trust and improvement of the relations between the town's government and the inhabitants (fig. no. 7, 8, 9).

Fig. 7: Town Hall in Dzierżoniów customer satisfaction analysis – assessment of relationship (authorities) - 2002



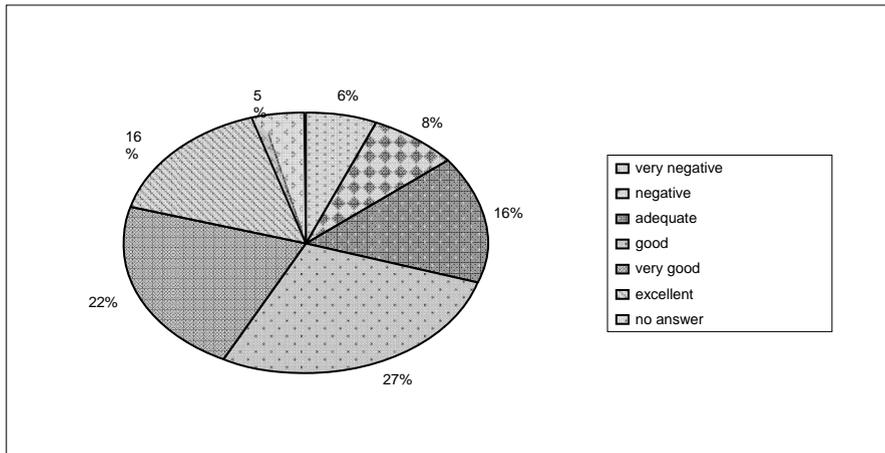
Source: Own survey, 2002

Fig. 8: Town Hall in Dzierżoniów customer satisfaction analysis – assessment of relationship (authorities) - 2004



Source: Own survey, 2004

Fig. 9: Town Hall in Dzierżonów customer satisfaction analysis – assessment of relationship (authorities) – 2006



Source: Own survey, 2006

The research results indicate that the rule of openness and helpfulness towards the inhabitants, adopted by council members, proved to be very successful - the assessment of the relationship between the inhabitants and authorities significantly increased. The problems of the region became most important and private interests ceased to play a significant role, this changed the negative image of the local parliament effectively. The number of expensive and spectacular endeavours was limited and the saved resources were spent on road and school repairs, social help, etc.

Moreover, the new council members, aware of the important role played by information, effectively used the benefits of access to the media and published all information about their activities in local press/ the Internet gave interviews to the radio/TV or simply participated in meetings with inhabitants. However, it is worth noticing that contrary to the previous authorities, they did not promote their own image but the results of their actions. In the press far more often appeared reports from meetings with investors in which the mayor participated, however more important than him was the company and its offer. Therefore, one can presume that this kind of promotion proved to be efficient because in the

2006 elections OBS was very successful, both in the town and the powiat, without pursuing an aggressive and intensive campaign similar to the previous one.

The analysis shows that the inability to reach out to voters and wrong selection of information is, without doubt, one of the most basic causes of lack of interest in local elections. The majority of Dzierżoniów inhabitants that did not vote in the 2002 elections justified their decision by stating that there was not enough information, the content or the form of the communication was wrong – mostly too vulgar or too sophisticated. They also drew attention to the fact that this was only a ‘struggle for power and nothing will change in the town anyway’. In their opinion the issues important to the town were disregarded and the campaign was just a battle between the ‘new ones’ and the ‘old ones’. The same people, asked about their participation in the 2006 elections said that they would vote because the council members ‘turned out to be good’ and the mayor did not stop at ‘pre-election promises and did what he promised’. In an answer to the question: *What made you take this decision?* - the majority admitted that they did not want ‘things to change for the worse’.

Dzierżoniowski powiat inhabitants, when asked about the sources of information about candidates and committees that participated in local elections, indicated the following:

- family, friends (2002 - 42%; 2006 – 35%)
- media (2002 - 25%; 2006 - 33%)
- acquaintance with the candidate - (2002 - 13%; 2006 – 10%)
- posters, leaflets, brochures (2002 - 10%; 2006 – 12%)
- pre-election meetings (2002 - 4%; 2006 - 3%)
- visits of the candidate at home (2002 - 2%; 2006 – 1%).

The limited flow of information resulted in the fact that election decisions were mostly made on the basis of the opinion of the family and friends or personal acquaintance with the candidate. However, it should be noticed that the situation is changing very rapidly and the means of mass communication (like in 2006) in the area of local communication are becoming most crucial - this definitely influences the improvement of contact with voters and therefore the level of turnout. A little less important are posters, leaflets and least effective were visits of candidates at homes. While talking about the effectiveness of ‘home visits’, it has to be mentioned that they were not well received by the youth, whereas the

elderly (pensioners) had very positive opinions about a town council candidate who used this form of promotion and it can be assumed that, owing to their support, he became a council member.

The analysis of the popularity of different forms of political advertising among voters also proves that during campaigns before the elections to the national or European parliament, the preferences are slightly different. The first rank is occupied by television election programs; the second – discussion with family and friends; the third – reading of press reports about the election campaign, the fourth – reading and watching of election posters. A conversation with a party member and a verbal attempt at convincing the voter to vote on a given party is the last².

The role of the media in election campaigns is indisputable, they create the politicians' image and ensure their electoral success or failure. However, it has to be remembered that the situation in Dzierżoniów is not equal to the one in Warsaw. Regarding campaigns in bigger cities (e.g. voivodship cities) the impact of the media (mostly regional) on the public opinion is much higher than in powiat towns – even those that are developing rapidly. In the dzierzoniowski powiat, the pre and post-electoral campaign was revolving mostly around local media, e.g. *Tygodnik Dzierżoniowski* [Dzierżoniowski Weekly], „*Sudety*” radio, „*Vectra*” TV, www.doba.pl web page. Regional media that included the most information were: *Gazeta Wroclawska* [Wroclawska Newspaper] and *Słowo Polskie* [Polish Word]. It needs to be mentioned that in 2002, owing to closer relations of the local media with the acting local authorities and various election committees (e.g. the owner of the local “Vectra” TV was running OBS's campaign; „Tygodnik Dzierżoniowski” published Local Government Guide for all municipalities), the reports on the campaign were most probably not very objective, but much more exciting and attention gripping.

² Research on the changes in election campaigns in the context of the alternations in voters' behavior, conducted by R. Cavrol in 1989 (European Parliament election campaign).

Do we really need local media in local elections – society voice?

This part of the paper is based on the research which was done in the dzierzoniowski powiat after the election in 2006. The main goal of the research was to assess media usage in the local election campaigns. The method for gathering data was a self-administered survey, distributed and collecting from households with the help of the messengers within one month after the election in 2006. One question of the questionnaire sought to canvass voters' preferred information sources in the lead up to the 2006 local government election. Choices listed were: local television, local newspaper, local radio or internet; "other sources" (that is, brochures, letterbox drops or leaflets; how-to vote cards; acquaintances and word-of-mouth; direct contact with candidate(s)); and none of the above (that is, neither mainstream media nor "other sources").

Respondents who nominated "other sources" as their main source of information were asked to indicate which source they most used for information (that is, brochures, letterbox drops or leaflets; how-to-vote cards; acquaintances and word-of-mouth; or direct contact with candidate(s)).

A further question asked voters to elaborate on their use of local mainstream media by indicating how often (that is, "regularly" through to "never"), they used radio news, the internet, television news and the newspaper to learn something about the candidates and the election. Two demographic questions about the respondents' gender and age were included to allow analysis of differences among respondents.

Across the sample, the local newspaper was the most used medium for information about the election. However, 22 per cent of voters in the sample bypassed the remaining traditional media and turned to "other sources" for information about the poll. Local television and radio were most-used by less than 15 per cent of respondents, while the internet barely registered as a principal information source 5 per cent.

More than two-thirds of respondents who elaborated on their use of "other sources" turned to brochures, letterbox drops or leaflets to gain information about the election. Acquaintances and word-of-mouth were next. Little separated direct contact with candidates and the use of how-to-vote cards as sources of information.

Statistical analysis shows no significant preference by gender for “other sources” of information about the election. One third of all female respondents used “other sources”, compared with 25 per cent of all male respondents. Little separates men and women in the proportion of respondents who did not use mainstream or alternative media for information. There was no significant difference by age in the use of mainstream media for election information. Two-thirds of all respondents aged 45 years and above used mainstream media to inform their vote, compared with 60 per cent of those aged 44 years or under. Age was not a significant indicator with regard to the use of “other sources” for election information. Just over 29 per cent of all respondents aged 45 and above preferred non-mainstream media for their election information, compared with 37 per cent of respondents aged 44 years and below. However, more than 55 per cent of respondents did not use the media at all for local elections. Respondents who uses media as the mainstream source of information most of them indicated a clear preference for the local newspaper, with 47 per cent saying it was the source they used “regularly” to learn something about the election and the candidates. Then followed radio (18 per cent), television (14 per cent), and the internet (12 per cent).

Statistical analysis shows no significant preference by gender for use of the local newspaper to inform voters ‘decision-making’. Just over 27 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men “regularly” used the local newspaper to learn something about the election and the candidates. Women (12 per cent) were more regular users of television news than were men (8 per cent). As noted, voters in the sample used a variety of information sources when deciding who to support at a local government election. They tended to rely most on the local newspaper.

The internet was very rare the first choice for political news and analysis (around 5 per cent). The findings suggested it was not a tool for engaging the voters. Both men and women avoided it, with 83 per cent of men and 88 per cent of women saying they “very rarely” used the internet to learn about the election and the candidates. Among just the few respondents who “regularly” used the internet, there is a clear and unexpected preference from those aged 35 and above (77 per cent). Young people (18 to 24 years) accounted for just a fifth of regular users.

Candidates can reach voters (taking part in this research) across all demographics using one main alternative to mainstream media. Perhaps

this result reflects declining public interest in mainstream media election coverage.

Brochures – except family and friends opinion - are the most used information source (69 per cent) for respondents who get their information about candidates from non-mainstream media. They are equally preferred by men and women. While most of men and women turn to acquaintances and word of mouth for information about candidates, the heaviest users are aged 35 to 60 years. As direct contact with candidate is rather less popular source of information only a few percent of all respondents (mainly young – 18-24) rely on direct contact with candidates. Women more than men obtain candidate information from how-to-vote cards, while men are more likely than women to get information from direct contact with candidates.

Voters who were taken into consideration in this study used a wide variety of sources for information about the poviat election. Between them, the local traditional media were the most popular sources (used by 66 per cent of respondents). Yet almost one-third of voters bypassed “the central arena of election campaigning”, preferring instead to learn about the candidates from brochures, pamphlets, leaflets and informal social networks.

Abstract

The analysis of actions taken by local politicians in the dzierzoniowski poviat before and after the elections, allows to point out similarities and differences in election marketing pursued on the national and local level. In both cases the effectiveness of the campaigns depends most of all on promotion that is suitable for the type of the receiver. In case of the elections to the local parliament, committees that are not part of any major party are more successful because they promote the image of a *"Council member - a friend of the town, a real man"*. The area on which all the promotional activities are pursued is constituted by the candidate's work for the benefit of the town and its inhabitants, because of that in case of local elections, post-election marketing plays a significant role in the creation of an image of the future councilman.

However, the role of pre-election marketing cannot be neglected. Regarding this issue, the most important thing is to correctly assess the situation before elections. First, the objectives have to be set, then one should assess the strengths and weaknesses (of self and the opponent) and judge the preferences of the voters.

Well-thought out and well prepared pre and post-election campaigns not only fulfill the informative and agitation functions but also influence the shaping of attitudes typical of the civic society. Findings suggests that candidates for local council elections should examine their campaign strategies. Instead of relying on one traditional mainstream media source to get their messages to voters, candidates may need to produce multiple messages for mainstream and alternative media. While the study shows the internet is not yet a commonly used source of election information, this may change by the next local government elections in 2010.

Methods and sources

Methods

1. Comparative study:
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative
 - Interviews with: politicians; clerks; journalists; entrepreneurs (67)
2. Questionnaires:
 - 1000 – distributed
 - 532 – collected
 - Respondents - age: 15-70; 54% men; 46% women
 - Sample selected to reflect the population at large
 - Year: 2002; 2006
 - Country: Poland

Sources

1. Author's survey – 2002; 2006 (based on questionnaires)
2. National Statistics Reports (2002-2006)
3. Municipality Statistics Reports (2002-2006)

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