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Use of Public Sector Marketing and Leadership in Romania's Local Public Administration

Andrei ȚIGĂNAS¹, Tudor ȚICLĂU², Cristina MORA³, Laura BACALI⁴

Abstract

Both marketing and leadership are subjects of high interest especially for private sector organizations, with countless research done regarding their influence on organizational performance. However, their meaning and use changes when put in a public context. Taking into consideration the last 3 decades of NPM reforms both marketing and leadership got a new meaning for public organizations. The present paper explores the theoretical relation between public leadership and marketing as a managerial tool. The second part of the paper concentrates on testing, through qualitative research, whether basic marketing elements are present and used in the management of local public administration in the North-Western Region of Romania. Results show that public marketing is not yet present significantly in the local public institutions that were part of the study.

Keywords: public administration; public marketing; leadership; public services; reform; management.

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Introduction

Both marketing and leadership are subjects of high interest especially for private sector organizations, with countless research done regarding their influence on organizational performance. However, their meaning and use changes when put in a public context. Public organizations are significantly different compared to private ones especially regarding goal and external environment (but not only these), thus both leadership and marketing have to be put into a “public” context in order to be relevant. If in the past, marketing has conventionally been viewed by civil servants as, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, antipathetic to the delivery of public services (Laing and McKee, 2001), reforms started in the eighties mostly in the western countries, encompassed broadly under the term of New Public Management (NPM), have changed this. Adopting private inspired approaches in management and delivery of public service has inherently brought more attention to the concept of marketing and its significance for the public sector (Laing, 2003). Another issue brought by the reforming movements was a different approach to public administration altogether, a more flexible, open, close to citizens’ administration, capable of doing more with less, and responding to the changing context. This means new type of leadership, different from the traditional bureaucrat. It is in this view that we feel leadership and marketing are indirectly linked, as part of a comprehensive change of the public sector that has been taking place in the last three decades. The present paper aims to explain how leadership and marketing are crucial parts of a modern administration with a specific look on marketing component in the Romanian public administration.

After 1989, probably the most utilized word by the political leaders was “reform”. Every party leader, regardless of ideology, was talking about reform of the economy, reform of the state, public administration reform or government reform. Despite of all this verbal debates actual reform was scarce, ambiguous and incremental especially in the beginning of the ’90’s (Mora, Țiclău, 2008, p. 91). Reform initiatives lacked a coherent vision regarding what needed to be done, a clear direction and specific implementation tools and measures to produce measurable results (Cepiku, Mititelu, 2010). Romanian public institutions have been under pressure to permanently change the way they are structured and function, due to numerous factors, but most importantly the prolonged transition period and the EU accession process. Decentralization and restructuring are some of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the last decade regarding public services in order to redefine this sector in terms of effectiveness and efficiency but there is more to do on changing the “traditional administrative culture”. However, the stimulus for transformation and for the adoption of most reforms measures in Romania was to a large extent generated by factors outside the national governments, mainly the European Union. thus, after 2007 pressure for change diminished, which is why in order to continue the catching-up process,

reforms should become a “voluntary” and domestically generated process (Profiroiu, Profiroiu, Mina, Nica, 2011, p. 291). The Romanian public administration still has to fulfill numerous conditions in order to become a modern, citizen oriented system. Marketing is one of the fundamental components in this process, not only in direct relations with citizens but as a component of strategic management. This is directly related to the leaders of the organization who have the authority to start and implement such major changes. Thus, marketing should find its place both as a theory and practice at the private-public sector’s confluence. Is public marketing a current practice in the Romanian public sector? Is the Romanian public sector ready to work using marketing practices? Is public marketing a strategic component of Romanian public institutions? Are Romanian public servants aware of the importance of marketing in the public field? Does leadership have a role in adopting marketing as a priority in the management of public institutions? These are the major questions that this paper tries to answer some of the topics approached by this paper.

The first part of the paper offers the theoretical background for public marketing—concept definition evolution and use in practice. The concept of marketing is linked with the idea of leadership and its role in the process of change. The second part of the paper presents the findings of a research done by the authors regarding marketing use and practices in public institutions in Romania’s North-Western Region. The aim of the research is to provide a general view regarding the use of public marketing practices in their own institution. The data should serve to better understand the role and current position of marketing as a tool and instrument in the management of Romanian local public institutions.

Leadership in the public sector

After almost 7 decades of scientific research on leadership, there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept (Stogdill, 1974, p. 259), leadership being defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, social interaction patterns, role relationships, power and administrative positions. Although this plethora of studies, one question is common: *what is effective leadership?* There are as numerous answers as the number of studies, but not a definitive one, reason being the generality and ambiguity of leadership itself, as a subject of study. Yukl (1989) argues that “the numerous definitions of leadership that have been proposed appear to have little else in common than involving an influence process. This is then taking place within an asymmetrical relationship: the leader is exercising influence over the follower”. He defines leadership “to include influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization” (ibid., p. 253).

Yukl also makes a list of some of the significant definitions (2010, p. 21): (1) Leadership is the behavior of an individual, directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal (Hemphill, Coons, 1957, p. 7); (2) Leadership is the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978, pg. 528); (3) Leadership is exercised when persons mobilize institutional, political, psychological, and other resources as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers (Burns, 1978, pg. 18); (4) Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement” (Rauch, Behling, 1984, pg. 46); (5) Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished (Richards, Engle, 1986, pg. 206); (6) Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990, pg. 281); (7) Leadership is an attempt at influencing the activities of followers through the communication process and toward the attainment of some goal or goals (Donnelly, et al., 1985, p. 362)

From the above definitions we can identify a series of common characteristics of leadership: (1) First, leadership is a *process of intentional influence part of a non-routine activity*, which is different from other similar processes, including management; (2) Secondly, leadership is not only about a leader, but also about a group of followers. Leadership is not an „individual” process; (3) Thirdly, leadership is rather inspirational, by this understanding that is not so close to rational action, more specific for management. This is probably why leadership is so ambiguous but also so attracting for researchers. It is also why under good leadership “miracles can happen”, (4) Last, but not least, effectiveness of leadership is influenced by context, dynamics and external environment (Zaccaro, Klimoski, 2001). The process is not isolated from external factors, and these can make a huge difference.

Having a picture of what leadership refers to, what are the implications for the public sector and compared to private, public organizations differ in the following aspects (Piciău, Mora, Piğânaş, Bacali, 2010): (1) Public organizations deal with collective interest rather than individual one. Main purpose is to achieve common good; (2) Public organizations set a different relation with “customers” (citizens) governed especially by equity and representation than by efficiency and profit; (3) Decisions are taken collectively and usually have a greater impact; (4) Public organizations function in an environment with no competition; (5) In most cases, public organizations offer services rather than products; (6) Public organizations have to be more transparent in their activities and more open to the „general public” more transparency and openness towards the public; (7) Public organizations face greater legal constraints; (8) Authority is distributed and fragmented through the whole system; (9) There is more control and scrutiny from inside and

outside “actors” (higher authorities, citizens, NGO’s, press, private interest groups); (10) Political influence is higher on public than on private organizations.

This means that public leaders, whether elected or appointed face a number of challenges compared to their private counterparts. First, performance measurement in the public sector is more difficult, as performance is harder to define. Public sector leaders have more ambiguous measures of performance in large part because they pursue multiple goals simultaneously, many of whose outcomes are noneconomic and thus are harder to measure (Van Slyke, Alexander, 2006, p. 367). Secondly, authority being more diffuse, fragmented and outside pressures, stronger the decisional process which is far more complex and cumbersome, leaving leaders in a continuous battle for finding support of the other „stakeholders” for their policies. A side effect of lack of authority, is a difference in the leader-follower relationship - public sector leaders often lack the range and flexibility of rewards and the discretion and authority with which to incentivize alignment and sanction divergence among subordinates, including the freedom to hire and fire (Van Slyke, Alexander, 2006, p. 368). Another important issue is the nature of values of public sector, where accountability, transparency, representativeness, fairness, equity, social justice are usually more important than efficiency or cost reduction. Concerning the external environment, public leaders face the task of dealing with a much more diverse set of actors – from political actors that may have legitimacy in influencing policy, institutional actors that are part for the public administration framework and play a part in the policy cycle or representatives of different groups of the civil society who seek to maximize their interest representation.

Concerning these differences, Van Slyke and Alexander (2006, p. 368) conclude the following: “combining what we know about leadership with these internal process, authority, and environmental differences, we see that public sector leaders work with a different tool box and conduct their work in a different job site than do their private and nonprofit counterparts. Many of the skills and competencies transfer across sectors, but when considering organizational leadership and organizational effectiveness, we infer that public sector leaders require a different packaging of these skills to lead and manage the unique nature of public sector organizations”. Unfortunately, the image of a successful leader in the field of public administration in Romania is still centered on an image developed around hierarchic authority, privilege of structures, an omnipotent figure that is capable of resolving all problems of the organization (Hințea, Ringsmuth, Mora, 2006). The myths in the field are still concerned with the boss “Jack-of-all-trades”, omnipresent and who must control the tiniest details of the organizational life, like all myths, they are far from being real and/or applicable (ibid. 2006). This has proven to be true in some extent in some local public health institutions (see Hințea, Mora, Țiclău, 2009). This needs if use of public marketing as a managerial tool is to have a chance.

Public Marketing: a tool for public leaders

As NPM type reforms have been implemented, administration has become more “business like” in dealing with citizens, putting the citizen in the center. This gives great opportunity for public leaders to adopt public marketing as a tool of creating an “open, user friendly and close to the citizen” administration. Marketing can be also an important tool for public leaders to promote their organizations interests and objectives in relation to other institutional or political stakeholders. Still the same reluctance and critiques that are put forward for adopting some private specific “elements” prevail against adopting marketing. One of these critiques is that marketing does not have a purpose in the public sector, as both values and objectives are different in the public arena – this in accordance to the differences presented above. The reluctance of public sector professionals to embrace marketing principles can be viewed as being based on the perception that the public sector and the services it delivers are unique and distinctive, and an adherence of public sector professionals to established transactional conceptualizations of marketing (Lang, 2003, p. 429). But this does not mean that marketing cannot find a useful place in public sector practice, but rather that it needs to be adapted to its specific context. In fact, not few public services have gone “private” in the last three decades, through privatization, public private partnerships, contracting out or concession, and in such an environment marketing seems almost natural. Before going further we should give some general information about marketing.

Philip Kotler (1982), one of the widely recognized exponents in marketing sees the voluntary exchange process with mutual benefits as the underlying characteristic of modern organizations. Thus they need to create instruments that promote such a mechanism in order to attain their goals. In this sense (exchange theory), Kotler defines marketing as the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives... relying heavily on designing organization’s offering in terms of the target market’s needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets (1982, p. 6). The concept of marketing may be defined, from the public sector view, as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes—always interconnected and interdependent - meant to identify, anticipate, create, communicate, deliver and exchange valuable offerings that satisfy clients, audiences, partners, and society at large” (Serrat, 2010, p. 3). The fact that marketing is pivotal to a modern public administration is also underlined by Kotler and Lee who state that: “Marketing turns out to be the best planning platform for a public agency that wants to meet citizen needs and deliver real value. Marketing’s central concern is producing outcomes that the target market values. In the private sector, marketing’s mantra is customer value

and satisfaction. In the public sector, marketing's mantra is citizen value and satisfaction" (Kotler, Lee, 2007, p.11).

Proctor (2007) describes the main two reasons for which the use of marketing in the public sector is inevitable: (1) *Scarcity of resources, especially financial ones* – this has been a constant problem starting from the 80's on one hand because constant increase of demand for better and more diverse public services and on the other by higher dissatisfaction with the performance of the administration and thus a reduced willingness to contribute financially and socially; (2) *Increased competition from the private sector* – one of the most common aspects of any reform movement of the public sector in the last 25 years has been the introduction of competition in the public sector, irrespectively if we are referring to *new public management* or the recent approach called *governance*. In fact, the public sector has long had elements of marketing but they have usually been marginal to the provision of core public goods and services (Serrat, 2010, p 3). Even in a traditional view of public administration, fulfilling citizen's needs and offering goods and services was one of the mains goals of governments. This more so in present times, when citizen's stand at the center of administration and citizen feedback is a mechanism of adjusting policy. Leaders can use marketing tools in order to research citizen-customer behavior and decide on appropriate measures. Information about customers' needs and wants, their attitudes towards the organizations actions, their reactions to proposed projects and the level of complying with certain regulations helps develop efficient implementations strategies (Snavely, 1991). At present, the Romanian public administration presents itself with excessive use of vertical communication and ignoring of horizontal ones, lack of external communication capacity indicates a general lack of public marketing skills (Hinþea, Ringsmuth, Mora, 2006).

Marketing is also a good tool on promoting the organizations interest to other public organizations involved in the policy process, especially when leaders need support for larger projects, that involve other public stakeholders (central government for example). This is even more true in the case of loval public administration which are confronted with complex situations characterized by increasing responsibilities, diminishing resources from the central budget, increased competition from other local administrations (for attracting resources or investments), increasing expectations on the behalf of citizens and the community. In order to function at least acceptable in this difficult environment, public organizations need to develop a clear strategic vision that will take them a step ahead of other organizations (Hinþea, 2008, p. 52), and marketing tools, especially market research is especially useful.

Another use of marketing for public leaders is as an „education tool”. One good example is fiscal evasion where „educating” the public about the costs of such behavior can bring higher level of compliance. Even more specific, is social marketing as a tool for creating and encouraging „good behavior”. Another aspect

of this could be increasing public participation levels, which represents a link between members of society and government, ensuring that the decisions taken by non-elected officials carry legitimacy by providing a form of dialogue and interaction between decision makers and the people who are affected by government’s policies (Baba, Cherecheș, Mora, Țiclău, 2009, p. 7). Doing so, policy proposals where the public has an active role, have better chances to be accepted and build trust between government and citizens. According to Philip Kotler, there are six private sector practices which may be successfully used in shaping the marketing of public services (Kotler, Lee, 2007): Total Quality Management, Customer driven strategy, Creating self- management teams, Visionary leadership, Outsourcing, E-Government or e-information. Van der Hart (1991) developed a classification of public services where marketing can be an effective tool, based on the level of interaction with the citizens and the degree to which citizens directly pay for public services or goods.

Table 1 Types of public services - adapted from van der Hart, 1991,p. 36

Degree of direct contact with the citizens	Degree to which customer pay directly for services		
	High	High	Low
		Criminal Justice Emergency services	Council housing Postal Services
Low	Central Government departments	Customs&Excise	

Van der Hart argues that in services where the degree to which customers pay directly for services or where there is no direct contact between the citizens and the public administration marketing is less relevant as a managerial tool. Justice is one example where, although in a situation to connect directly to citizens as a consequence of the indirect relationship between service utilization and payment, the service is ultimately not dependent on the service users or their agents for its income and hence survival – marketing in such a situation is not most relevant; in this case, relationship between such service providers and users is likely to be framed in terms of citizenship rather than consumerism given the existence, and indeed primacy, of a strong social benefit dimension within such services (Laing, 2003, p. 437). By contrast, when considering organizations where there is direct contact with the public and also direct payment for services (Postal services) van der Hart argues that the potential of marketing as a managerial tool for leaders is higher because their survival depends much more on the financial resources coming from the “citizen-clients”. In Romania, this assertion has been somewhat confirmed, as șandor and Tripon show (2008, p. 108) that regarding customer relation there is a significant difference between the implementation of client satisfaction measuring programs – seen as a step towards the “citizen-client” view. First, results indicate a moderate orientation of the administration towards citizens, but most importantly “strong differences between institutions due to the

very different nature of their customers” and the relation they have with them” (ibid.).

As Laing argues (2003, p. 437), the increasing emphasis placed on the citizen as a customer reflects a fundamental change in assumptions about the role of the state in the provision of social welfare services, the role of public sector organizations as agents of change, and hence in the relationship between the state and its citizens, leaving a much wider area for marketing use in this sector. Thus, the conservation of democratic values can be done through the intervention of the state through its policies and the actions of the administration, although these are ever more complex, not by “eliminating the state” but by shifting its role (Frunză, Frunză, 2009).

Marketing use in public organizations - a qualitative research on public authorities of Romania’s North-Western Region

This section of the paper aims to provide an overview regarding the use of public marketing in decentralized institutions. By using a qualitative research method based on document analysis, we have tried to identify within each institution included in the research whether practices related to public marketing exist. To better measure and analyse the concept of public marketing, we have chosen several indicators consisting in budgets allocated to marketing initiatives, activity- reports and public marketing objectives. We also have sought to draw up a complete data base classifying institutions on the criterion of hired personnel or even specific departments with marketing responsibilities. This research has been preceded by an exploratory one unrolled in 2010 in Cluj County. At that moment we have pre-tested our methodology at the aim to improve our survey.

Methodology

The research includes 102 local public institutions of several counties of the Northern-Western part of Romania such as Cluj, Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Salaj, Satu-Mare and Maramures. This sample represents 48% of the universe investigated, formed by 210 institutions. Thus, to compile the sample, we have chosen 17 public institutions by each county selected for this study, consisting in the most important and representative decentralized and *deconcentrated*⁵ public authorities. To each of those 102 designed authorities (17 institutions of 6 counties), we have sent a formal request of public information as a tool to gather the necessary data.

The whole qualitative research took rise in three hypotheses:

- The first hypothesis was that public organizations of Romania’s North-Western Region have no institutionalized public marketing activity. We

have made this assumption based on the pilot study did earlier on Cluj county which confirmed this (Țiclău, Mora, Țigănaș, Bacali, 2010). We chose to look at the organizational chart of each institution.

- The second hypothesis was that public organizations of Romania's North-Western Region have no budgeted public marketing activity. We have designed as a variable in the case of each institution the amount of funds allocated to public marketing and also their share in the total budget. The indicators chosen have been public budgets of the selected institutions for years as 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.
- The third and the last hypothesis was that strategic and operational objectives of public organizations of Romania's North-Western Region have no public marketing elements. We have designed as a variable the activity of selected institutions and as indicators activity reports and strategic or operational plans regarding marketing activities.

Institutions included in the study sample

The 102 institutions study sample includes two main categories of public organizations named both decentralized. However, there is a difference between them justifying our need to make a distinction: some of them represent the local community like town halls or county councils and some of them are extensions of the Central Government at the local level. Regarding the first category of decentralized institutions, those representing the local community, we have chosen to approach two organizations per selected county: town halls and city councils. Therefore, given that the number of counties is six, the study sample includes town halls of six county-seats as Cluj Napoca (Cluj County), Oradea (Bihor County), Bistrița (Bistrița-Năsăud County), Baia-Mare (Maramureș County) and Satu-Mare (Satu-Mare County).

Table 2- County residence town halls included in the study sample

Decentralized Institutions – County residence municipality town halls
1. Cluj-Napoca (the county seat of Cluj and the residence of the Northern Western Development Region)
2. Oradea (the county seat of Bihor)
3. Bistrița (the county seat of Bistrița-Năsăud)
4. Baia-Mare (the county seat of Maramureș)
5. Satu-Mare (the county seat of Satu-Mare)
6. Zalău (the county seat of Sălaj)

Besides county residence town halls, the sample compiled for this research also includes County Councils of Cluj, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Maramureș Satu-Mare and Sălaj. Therefore, this first category of decentralized institutions, those representing local communities, is formed by a total number of 12 institutions (six town halls and six city councils). This number has an about 12% share of the total sample.

Table 3- County councils included in the study sample

Decentralized Institutions – County councils	
1.	The County Council of Cluj
2.	The County Council of Bihor
3.	The County Council of Bistrița-Năsăud
4.	The County Council of Maramureș
5.	The County Council of Satu-Mare
6.	The County Council of Sălaj

Regarding the second category of decentralized institutions, those representing the Central Government at local level, we have approached through official public information requests a total number of 90 organizations (15 per county). This category of institutions has an about 88% study sample share. The following table will summarize the name of the selected institutions and also the name of the Ministry each institution is subordinated to. The selected organizations activate in various domains such as public finances, employment and labor force, public health and health insurance, education, public order or agriculture.

Work method description

For each selected county we have compiled a document analysis worksheet at the aim to structure and centralize the gathered data. In each one we have introduced the name of each organization and the six items followed by us: the rate of response to the formal request in maximum 30 days according to the Romanian law stipulating the free access to public information, the existence of persons or departments with specific marketing responsibilities, the existence of budgets allocated to marketing in the period of 2008-2010, the existence of budgets predicted for 2011, the existence of public marketing activities in the period of 2008-2010 and the existence of 2011 public marketing objectives. Regarding objectives and activity-reports we have classified our institutions by using three criteria: provided detailed information, provided little information and no answer at all. At the end, we have centralized the data gathered of each county in a common worksheet allowing us to render the data at regional level. The table number 5 is an example of worksheet used to gather the data of Cluj county institutions.

Table 4- Local representatives of the Central Government

Institutions representing the Central Government at local level	
Ministries	Representatives at county level
Ministry of Finance	County Direction of Public Finances
Ministry of Economy and Commerce	Regional Commissariat for Consumer Protection
Ministry of Labor	County Agency for Employment
	Territorial Labor Inspectorate
	Pension House
Ministry of Agriculture	Department for Agriculture and Rural Development
	Agency for Payment and Intervention in Agriculture
Ministry of Health	County Department of Public Health
Ministry of Environment	County Agency for Environmental Protection
Ministry of Culture	County Department for Culture, Cults and National Patrimony
Ministry of Education	County School Inspectorate
Government	Prefecture
General Secretariat of the Government	County Department of Statistics
General Police Inspectorate	County Police Inspectorate
National House of Health Insurance	County House of Health Insurance

Table 5- Document analysis worksheet

Institutions representing the Central Government at local level	
Ministries	Representatives at county level
Ministry of Finance	County Direction of Public Finances
Ministry of Economy and Commerce	Regional Commissariat for Consumer Protection
Ministry of Labor	County Agency for Employment
	Territorial Labor Inspectorate
	Pension House
Ministry of Agriculture	Department for Agriculture and Rural Development
	Agency for Payment and Intervention in Agriculture
Ministry of Health	County Department of Public Health
Ministry of Environment	County Agency for Environmental Protection
Ministry of Culture	County Department for Culture, Cults and National Patrimony
Ministry of Education	County School Inspectorate
Government	Prefecture
General Secretariat of the Government	County Department of Statistics
General Police Inspectorate	County Police Inspectorate
National House of Health Insurance	County House of Health Insurance

Research findings

We have decided to divide the results description in two major components: a general view of the whole Northern-Western Region of Romania and an applied description containing hierarchies between the six selected counties: Cluj, Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Salaj, Satu-Mare and Maramures.

General view of the whole number of institutions of the Northern-Western Region of Romania

Before taking into consideration criteria as budgets, activities or aims, we have to emphasize that less than a half of the selected institutions have been replied the formal request sent to each one: 52% of the total number have completely ignored our request despite their legal obligation to answer. This is a reality betraying a kind of attitude that most of the Romanian public organizations use to have while facing an ordinary request coming from an ordinary citizen. Most of those institutions refuse or ignore to communicate with citizens even under a legal constraint. We consider that public communication is an important public marketing component and its quality affects directly the image of any institution. The lack of interest for public communication may guide us to the conclusion that a prior condition for a well public marketing activity is already missing.

Regarding organizational structures designed to carry on public marketing responsibilities, 71% of the institutions have denied the existence of any kind of department or even person in charge of marketing activities. Only 29% of the institutions replying the request have identified some specific structures or employees having public marketing duties in their job description.

65% of the selected institutions haven't mentioned in their 2010 activity report any public marketing action or initiative taking place in that period. That means that only 35% of them have done so. The figure number 3 synthesizes this idea. Comparing this situation with the one of the previous item, we may identify the existence of a small percent, 6%, resulting from the difference between 35 (the percent of institutions declaring public marketing activities in 2010) and 29 (the percent of organizations confirming the existence of specific departments). This 6% percent represents the share of public organizations having marketing activities despite the lack of persons or departments with formal responsibilities. That means that in those public organizations there is a public marketing activity but carried on in an unprofessional way. Therefore, many public institution representatives use to assume public marketing tasks in a cumulative way with other kind of jobs and definitely without any specific preparation.

Most of the public organisations included in our research, 78%, have recognized that public marketing has been completely unbudgeted in the period of 2008-2010. Only 22% of the selected institutions have presented some financial reports including amounts of money allocated for this activity but with an insignificant share in the total budget.

Besides the lack of public marketing funds or activities, most of the institutions of the Romania's Northern- Western Region are confronted with a worse deficiency: the lack of objectives. To illustrate, 80% of the selected organizations have no goals to reach in terms of public marketing and only 20% of them are aiming to improve their activity or at least to do something in this way. We consider this situation much worse than the previous one: if the lack of 2010 activities or even the non existence of departments with specific public marketing duties may be justified by the lack of resources, the lack of objectives has definitely no justification. The absence of any kind of marketing aims may indicate that public marketing is not a priority for those public organizations. The typical answer often received from those institutions sounded in this way: *we don't have a public marketing 2010 activity-report; we don't have departments or persons carrying on this kind of responsibilities* which means that *we miss public marketing objectives for 2011*. This kind of formulation sets a false and illogical cause-effect relation between resources and objectives. Setting a goal should normally precede resource finding but in most of the Romanian institutions the situation is straight opposite: they use to pretend resources before having a clear image regarding the way to use and manage them. That means before having a vision or a strategy. This reality also betrays problems regarding institutional leadership, and that marketing is clearly something not of top priority.

Finally, the last item is related to public marketing budgets predicted for 2011. Easy to anticipate the percentage repartition is the same as in the previous figure. 80% of the institutions have denied the existence of any budgetary prediction for this year while only 20% have presented some financial views in this area.

Hierarchies between the six counties of the Northern-Western Region of Romania

The previous section of this paper had provided some data concerning the existence of some basic conditions justifying a public marketing orientation in the case of each selected organisation. We also sought to identify the public organisations behaviour in their process of communication with citizens according to their response to the public information request. In the following rows we aim to provide a support of the information already presented by offering a description of the same phenomena but in an applied way. Thus, in the case of each of the six analyzed criteria - the rate of replies, public marketing departments, activities,

budgets, objectives and financial predictions we have drawn up a hierarchy containing the six counties of the region and the data gathered.

Regarding the rate of the institutions replying the formal public information request, we have mentioned that more than a half of them, 52%, have ignored responding to our demand. This percent has been surpassed by public organisations of Cluj County: 67% of them haven't answered to the request. Above the regional average are also counties as Sălaj- with a non-reply rate of 56%, Maramureş and Satu-Mare, both with a non-reply rate of 53%. The only two counties situated below the regional average are Bihor with 50% and Bistriţa-Năsăud with the smaller rate of non-reply, 35%. The table number 6 details the above described situation:

Table 6- Counties hierarchy of non-replies to the formal request of public information

County	The rate of non-replies to the formal request of public information (the regional average: 52%)
1. Cluj	67% above the average
2. Sălaj	56% above the average
3. Maramureş	53% above the average
4. Satu-Mare	53% above the average
5. Bihor	50% below the average
6. Bistriţa-Năsăud	35% below the average

The Cluj County also dominates the hierarchy of public organisations having no departments or persons with public marketing responsibilities. This “domination” is definitely a negative one due to the huge percent of organisations without institutionalized public marketing activity: 83%. Like in the previous case, this percent overcomes the regional average. Counties as Bistriţa-Năsăud and Satu-Mare are in the same situation with percents as 82% and 75%. Three counties have a below average percent: Bihor 67%, Maramureş 63% and Sălaj 57%. The situation is detailed in the table no 7:

Table 7- Counties hierarchy on lack of specialized personnel/departments with specific public marketing responsibilities

County	The rate of absence (the regional average: 71%)
1. Cluj	83% above the average
2. Bistriţa-Năsăud	82% above the average
3. Satu-Mare	75% above the average
4. Bihor	67% below the average
5. Maramureş	63% below the average
6. Sălaj	57% below the average

The lake of 2010 public marketing activities has a rate of 56% at the regional level. This average is once again overcome by Cluj still on the top of the hierarchy with a percent of 83%, followed by Bihor with a rate of 78%. The rest of the counties are situated below the average: Bistrița-Năsăud with 64%, Maramureș and Satu-Mare with 63% and Sălaj with 43%. The table number 8 provides a graphic representation of the above mentioned topic:

Table 8-Counties hierarchy regarding no public marketing activities

County	The rate of absence (the regional average: 65%)	
1. Cluj	83%	above the average
2. Bihor	78%	above the average
3. Bistrița-Năsăud	64%	below the average
4. Maramureș	63%	below the average
5. Satu-Mare	63%	below the average
6. Sălaj	43%	below the average

The lack of hierarchy on 2008-2010 public marketing budgets is different than in the previous cases. Regarding this criterion of judgement, the top-county is Bihor with a rate of 89% followed by Maramureș with 88% and Cluj with 83%, all of them above the 78% regional average. There are also three counties situated under the regional average: Bistrița-Năsăud with 73%, Sălaj with 71% and Satu-Mare with 63%. The presented data are shown in the Table 9:

Table 9- Counties hierarchy for no budgetary allocation to public marketing between 2008-2010

County	The rate of absence (the regional average: 78%)	
1. Bihor	89%	above the average
2. Maramureș	88%	above the average
3. Cluj	83%	above the average
4. Bistrița-Năsăud	73%	below the average
5. Sălaj	71%	below the average
6. Satu-Mare	63%	below the average

In the previous section of the paper we have presented a percent of 80% consisting in the share of the total number of institutions having no public marketing objectives. We have also emphasized the seriousness of the problem, contending that the lake of objectives is a more aggravating circumstance than the lake of financial resources for instance. The regional average is surpassed by Bihor with 89%, Maramureș with 88%, Sălaj with 86% and Cluj with 83%. The “below the line” counties are only Bistrița-Năsăud and Satu-Mare with 73%

respectively 63%. The table number 10 provides a complete image of the above described situation:

Table 10- Counties hierarchy regarding no marketing objectives

County	The rate of absence (the regional average: 80%)	
1. Bihor	89%	above the average
2. Maramureş	88%	above the average
3. Sălaj	86%	above the average
4. Cluj	83%	above the average
5. Bistriţa-Năsăud	73%	below the average
6. Satu-Mare	63%	below the average

The hierarchy on 2011 budgetary predictions resembles very much the previous one excepting some sensitive differences. The order and even the identity of the counties surpassing the regional average are unchanged: Bihor on the first place with 89%, followed by Maramureş, Cluj and Bistriţa-Năsăud with 88%, 83% and 82%. The table number 11 shows at full length the above presented situation:

Table 11- Counties hierarchy regarding no budgetary allocation for 2011

County	The rate of absence (regional average: 80%)	
1. Bihor	89%	above the average
2. Maramureş	88%	above the average
3. Cluj	83%	above the average
4. Bistriţa-Năsăud	82%	above the average
5. Sălaj	71%	below the average
6. Satu-Mare	63%	below the average

Conclusions

At the end of this qualitative research, we aim to set some relations between the already presented research findings and the hypotheses asserted in the introductory part of the chapter. In the first hypothesis of the research we have affirmed that public organizations of Romania's North-Western Region have no institutionalized public marketing activity. Studying each organisational chart received we have found that 71% of the institutions replying the public information request have neither departments or offices nor employees carrying on public marketing responsibilities. This percent may be relevant enough to confirm the above enounced hypothesis at the study sample level.

In the second hypothesis we have stated that public organizations of Romania's North-Western Region have no formal budget for public marketing activity. Analysing public budgets of all the institutions and taking into consideration periods as 2008-2010 and also 2011, we have found that 80% of the replying institutions have neither 2011 financial predictions for public marketing activities nor 2008-2010 budgets allocated to the same kind of activities. The percentages resulted by the data gathered also confirm this second hypothesis. Finally, in the third hypothesis we have stated that Romanian public organisations of the above mentioned region have no objectives including public marketing elements. Therefore, those institutions miss strategic and operational aims in this field. The percentage of replying organisations without public marketing aims is 80% which also confirms the last hypothesis.

Through this data - hypotheses confrontation, we sought to underline the large number of Romanian public organisations unable to fulfil some basic public marketing conditions. We consider that elements as organisational structures, financial concerns, goals and activities are relevant items in order to measure the quality of public marketing within public organisations. The gathered and presented data can't be generalized neither at national level nor at regional in the Northern-Western counties because of the methodology used. However, we feel it is illustrative for the main issue that public organizations face in adopting public marketing as a managerial tool. Some thoughts regarding the results: (1) *Little openness towards the public* – the fact that only half of the public organizations responded to a request for public information indicates that awareness regarding the importance of transparency and openness towards the public is not sufficiently developed. One explanation could be that this type of requests are not as a priority, and along with the other data gathered shows that at least the public organizations analysed are not yet prepared to adopt marketing; (2) *Little or no specific personnel* – according to the data, only around 30% of the institutions have at least one person that has marketing responsibilities according to the formal job description. This is confirming our first conclusion, public institutions do not see marketing as a top priority; (3) *Low budget allocation for marketing thus little or no activity* – both formal budgetary allocation for marketing activities in the last 3 years has been very low, with an average of around 80% which translates in little or no marketing activities and no clear marketing objectives.

Our recommendations remain the same as in the pilot study (Diciu, Mora, Bigănaş, Bacali, 2010): (1) *Create leadership awareness regarding importance of marketing* – by this we refer to public leaders acknowledging the importance of marketing as a strategic component of their organization and implementing such a component at all organizational levels; (2) *Create the formal structure needed to support marketing* – it's hard to imagine successful marketing without specialized personnel, specific goals and objectives, a marketing department, formal budget allocation for marketing and a strategic marketing plan. In the present time public

leaders have to rely on financial “tricks” in order to fund any type of marketing activity.

Further directions

The presented research is an ongoing one. We have started with a short approach of Cluj county organizations (through the 2010 exploratory research), continued at regional level and we seek in the future to extend the area nationally. We aim to complete the sample with more public organisations of representative Romanian counties as Bucharest-Ifov, Braşov, Constanţa, Iaşi and Timiș. Following the same procedure, we will select 17 public organisations per county allowing us to extend the number of subjects and also the geographic area of the survey.

Besides deepening the research at Romanian public organisations level, we also aim to introduce an international comparative approach enlarging the study upon Spanish local public institutions of Leon and Castilla departments. Above all, we are looking forward, as a further perspective, to introduce also a quantitative method measuring the perception and satisfaction of civil servants regarding the quality of the marketing component in the institution they work. Thus, our vision consists in a quantitative method based on a questionnaire we seek to apply to the representatives of the institutions included in our work. This would give us the possibility to compare the information gathered with both methods and see if there are any discrepancies and also get additional information which would not be available through the other methods.

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