

MARKETING PUBLIC SERVICES: CONCEPTS, REFERENCES AND CONTENT

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Marketing could be a form of a social innovation for the public sector, being a new solution for the main problems faced by public system in promoting its programs, for necessity and efficiency of these programs, representing an ability of keeping the beneficiaries of these programs satisfied and the programs well-developed and implemented by the public sector.

Key words: *public marketing, public services, beneficiaries, public sector.*

The option of the public marketing comes from the extension of domains of its application, as well as a result of a complex process of social-economic life, having the target to satisfy rationally and efficiently the growing needs of people [3]. In this sense, the public marketing's role is getting and maintaining the customers satisfied, developed programs implemented by the public sector, thus, marketing activities offer abilities and forms of social innovation to the participants. Also, by means of marketing techniques, it is possible to find solutions for real problems of the public sector, to maintain the beneficiaries (citizens), to provide information and to implement the programs started by the public sector.

One of the basic sources defines the marketing in public administration as an ensemble of marketing processes and relations, that are well-determined and existing within the components of the administrative system, which, in conditions of political power, allow to implement the laws and/or to plan, to organize, to coordinate, to manage and to control the activities that are a part of services that satisfy the public interest [4, p. 415].

This definition help to identify the objectives and the content of the activity, which accentuates that marketing in public administration imposes a new line of behaviour on public functionaries, that at the same time means receptivity to the citizens' needs, good capacity to adapt to the evolution of the needs and demands of the society, innovative spirit, transparency, willingness to reduce the bureaucracy level, flexibility of the public institutions mechanism, a common vision of the on-going activities and the highest efficiency, reached as a result of an effective orientation towards the real needs of the customers.

That means the fact that every single functionary should use marketing in any relation or contact – it's recommended that they should be well informed, polite, willing and motivated to meet people's needs, and the direct scope of the public administration will be "to serve" (etymologically, the word "administration" derives from the Latin "administrare", that has the meaning "for serving") [3].

Thus, there appears the necessary to examine the mentioned problems, from the customer's point of view, which, according to the opinion of many authors, could be solved by means of marketing. Thus, marketing could become a form of a social innovation for the public sector, being new solution for the problems frequently faced by the public system in programs implementation, and of necessity and effectiveness of these programs. In public sector **marketing represents the ability to get and keep the customers satisfied by the programs developed and implemented by the public sector** [2].

Marketing in public administration is a system research process that, finally, leads to a preliminary study of the market, and for any public administration organization, market analysis allows identifying all the factors related to the customers' demands and preferences, to the ways these could be satisfied, to the factors that speed up or slow down the public administration process [3].

Though, there still feels a lack of marketing concepts in public sector, the literature of specialty provides opinions against the idea of applying marketing in public services, such as:

- introducing to this market does not make sense; domination, intervention in private life of the potential customers and violation of intimacy;

- shows public institutions in a bad light, by revealing its willingness to attract more customers – sometimes it means incapacity to provide services of high quality;
- promotes immorality – an obstacle for the innovation process [6, p.205].

But, the opposite opinions affirm that the development of marketing in this sector is justified as long as it provides a range of tools that could be used for improvement of efficiency and reaction capacity of the public service [7].

Marketing activities in public sector are aimed to draw the difference between the public sector and other service sectors, including: market monopolies, less personalized relations between customers and public services providers, lack of customers segmentation and lack of information on their needs, as well as non-profit organizations with limited resources and, apparently, free benefits, character and content of a specific consumption [1, p.62]. Thus, we can identify some of the marketing concepts that can be applied in the public sector and that are important in achieving the objectives that are focused on customer: public administration is at citizen's service, flexibility – that means a prompt adaptation of the public administration to the constant social changes, public authorities will keep informing themselves with the actual social needs and will foresee those that may appear in the future [3].

Definition of the marketing policies is based on the idea that the public institutions are well aware about marketing's utility and use the concepts mentioned above in their day-to-day activity. But still this is not enough, because in public services context the elements of marketing mix are modified, the impact of the standard characteristics of the services is preserved and the customer's intervention in service providing is noted.

Thus, for making public service to correspond all the needs and demands of the customers, the public institutions have to take the following marketing steps in the product policy domain:

1. study of the customers and of their needs/expectations (opinion polls, marketing research;
2. identification of the image and quality of the public service provided by each institution (developing of inner and marketing communication);
3. development and implementation by the public institutions of procedures that will reduce diversity and will help to increase the quality (development and implementation of "customers relations" service);
4. implementation of European standards an experience adoption in domain of quality marketing, personnel policy, administrative and public marketing;
5. development and extension of human resources policy, development, motivation, evaluation and stimulation, maintaining and raising the fidelity of public sector employees, from the one hand, and setting clear tasks and responsibilities, adapting and training according to the the specific of the post, consolidation of results and of the activity efficiency, allocation of responsibilities of the employees in busy periods or when the number of contacts is too big (inner marketing development);
6. extension of the range of auxiliary or extra services, oriented at the customers, as well as at the employees, contribution obtained via ambiance and physical evidence policy, innovation and information technologies implementation;

For developing the cost policy for public services via marketing optics, the public institutions should take the following measures:

1. to take a rigid control over the nomenclatures of price fixing at the public services from all public sectors;
2. the price level should correspond and be acceptable for all categories of customers;
3. to ensure that the needs of public services are satisfied under conditions of equality and equity;
4. to coordinate the existing price level with the value of the final service provided to the customer;
5. to promote and inform the public/society about the advantages of obligatory contributions and payments in assuring a high quality level of public service, reflected in cost;

For distribution policy development in the public sector through marketing activities it is necessary to implement the following measures:

1. to extend the area of public services distribution (subdivisions, branches, departments, service);
2. to implement systems of reservation, programming and access online or by telephone;
3. to reduce the level of personnel's and customer's involvement and customer in the process of public services delivery;
4. to demonopolise the system of services providing and forwarding the activities to other institutions;
5. to develop the distribution network of public services focused on the criteria of time, cost, accessibility;
6. to facilitate the distribution process by providing a qualitative information support;
7. renovation and innovation of public services;

Promotion and communication in the public sector, even in the most conservative public and religious institutions, have embraced social media, but the ways of promotion of programs and services, as well as communication with citizens can be executed through many channels, informal or formal, interactive or static, via unidirectional, bidirectional or multidirectional channels. Thus, the choice of communication channel is made in major cases by the public institution and it takes into consideration the nature of the message communicated as a response to an individual request or a news of a national level.

Marketing is useful for the public sector, both in providing a base of consumers and for positioning itself with a new vision. Its advantages can be identified when it comes to domestic customers, partners, pricing policy and relations with customers in other markets. It is necessary to mention the importance of this practice, both on external and internal levels, as well as in the categories of public activities, such as in the business sector; organizations providing free services for customers (schools, police, fire); money transfer bodies (social security, tax administration, customs); control organizations (penitentiary, judicial and regulatory institutions) [5, p. 106].

Marketing, also, could advantage the public sector, as well as the public-private partnership, from the point of view of risks, as well as for obtaining transparency and responsibility in domains where departments need market orientation.

As we have mentioned above, some authors are against applying marketing in the public sector, but the social economic reality at national and international levels, reflects many problems existing in the field of public services, the fact that raises awareness of the necessity of marketing application.

Thus, the following arguments could be decisive: marketing is a more precise and simple way to approach the problems of citizens (customers); to identify gaps or "critical moments" in the way the services are provided; to assure a high quality level and additional benefits that will help to improve the quality; an effective communication with public institutions contributes to the improvement of image; it allows to satisfy the needs of society by individualizing the approach, by means of a trained staff; to diversify the access to public services via technological innovation;

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