



KAPITEL 4 / CHAPTER 4⁴

PROVISION OF THEMATIC INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES

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Introduction

The provision of information to the public by local self-government bodies today plays an important role because it serves as a tool for informing residents about the current state of affairs and creates a possibility of feedback, in other words, it helps to involve residents in solving various community issues. In this context, a correct choice of the objects of critical attention within the framework of information policy is a key criterion for the success of the activity of local self-government bodies (LSGBs), which lies in the interaction of authorities and the population by informing them. Quality communication allows residents to be informed why the issues of local importance sometimes cannot be resolved in the way they would like local self-government bodies to do it. Communication is necessary to create trust and build strong relations between the community and local self-government bodies.

Most often, LSGBs communicate with such target groups as community residents, business representatives, external and internal investors, and tourists. Each target group must receive information and quality communication relevant to its interests, taking into account the desired content and the way it is received.

Usually, LSGBs when communicating with the public limit themselves to the promulgation of public information, which is mandatory according to current legislation. However, trust in the local government depends on how effective the local government's communication with the residents is. The provision of information to the public has a significant impact on their involvement in solving local problems. Therefore, the local authority needs to know what topics are of interest to the residents of the community. When building effective communication, it is important to take into account a gender approach (that is, the topics of information that are of interest to young people, active working men and women, pensioners, entrepreneurs, socially vulnerable categories of the population, etc.).

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4.1. Theoretical and applied aspects of the provision of thematic information to the public by local self-government bodies

Researching the specialized literature on the provision of thematic information to the public by local self-government bodies within the framework of designing and implementing their information policy, it should be noted that the range of problems is characterized by a high level of publication activity of both domestic and foreign scientists and practitioners, and this indicates their growing interest in the development of theoretical and practical aspects of this research and substantiates its growing relevance for modern society. In particular, a significant part of the publications [1-4, 9-11] relates to the research of an information strategy as a tool for establishing effective interaction between local self-government bodies and society.

Studying professional literature and practical aspects of the provision of thematic information to the public by local self-government bodies in other countries, scientists distinguish the following thematic areas [5]: housing; roads; recreation and facilities; planning; libraries; environmental protection; fire service; a voter register.

In European countries, the functions and spheres of influence of local self-government bodies differ [3,8], and this leads to a different approach to conducting their communication policy.

Local self-government bodies publish important data, such as community development, health care, education, recreation, crime, and interesting stories about their citizens. Strong communication of local self-government bodies creates the trust of citizens [6].

One of the priority areas of state policy today is directing the activity of local self-government bodies in the conditions of the formation of information society and active implementation of information technologies.

The orientation of the communication policy of local self-government bodies on the use of the latest means in working with information is reflected in their information provision. The issues of improvement and unification of the processes of obtaining, accepting, using, transmitting, and storing information, which is a basis of informational relations between local self-government bodies and the population of the administrative-territorial unit, are becoming relevant.

The process of disseminating information about the activity of local self-government bodies is being updated to ensure the transparency and openness of the functioning of councils and their executive bodies and to increase the efficiency and



effectiveness of their current work. Depending on the nature of the information that is the object of critical attention from local self-government bodies, the main modern information technologies have acquired the following configuration:

1. Technologies for providing information (web pages) give wide opportunities for information dissemination using convenient navigation, search, and free replication in large volumes. Information appears promptly and is available around the clock for instant presentation, which is an ideal environment for monitoring legislative acts, the decisions of self-government bodies, and providing the population or special bodies with the opportunity to quickly receive a different kind of statistical, analytical, or methodical information. For this purpose, there are special “Methodical recommendations on the procedure for placing, providing and updating information on the web servers of territorial executive bodies of Ukraine”, approved by the State Communications Committee of Ukraine.

2. Information dissemination technologies (newsgroups, mailing lists) make it possible to quickly and with minimal costs spread certain information among a huge audience, which is an ideal environment for addressing the decisions of local self-government bodies to citizens for examination.

3. Information exchange technologies (e-mail, forums, chats, video and audio conferences) provide a constant high-speed information channel, which supposes a two-way exchange of information between a large number of participants, which is an ideal environment both for interdepartmental discussion of decisions made by local bodies and for their comprehensive discussion.

It is the website of the authority that is the main communication link that connects it with the recipients of administrative services, i.e. with the community. Therefore, it would be irrational to use the official website of the local self-government body exclusively as an electronic bulletin board, an electronic information stand, or as a promotional product created for an external audience. The existence of an official website creates powerful and significant technical and administrative advantages for the local self-government body, which can fundamentally change the very ideology of providing administrative services.

The materials that make up the information content of the official website by their nature can be divided into three categories:

- static materials that must remain relevant for a long time (presented in the form of HTML pages containing text, graphics, and multimedia components);
- dynamic materials, the relevance of which remains only for a limited time, so



they must be systematically updated (databases together with the information and search system). A characteristic feature of dynamic materials is that the decision to update them, completely determined by external circumstances, is made and executed by the site administrator;

- streaming materials, i.e. those that lose their content relevance within a short period (several days, and sometimes hours). Streaming materials are updated regularly, as they are received. These materials are sent to the site through external channels in an automatic (or automated) mode and are stored on the site only until the next update.

Current legislation only in some cases contains direct requirements for local self-government bodies to place information on the Internet. So, the information posted on the Internet under the requirements of the law includes:

- activity plans for the preparation of regulatory acts (Article 13 of the Law of Ukraine “About the Fundamentals of State Regulatory Policy in the Field of Economic Activity”);

- notification of the publication of a draft regulatory act to receive comments and suggestions, draft regulatory acts, and relevant analyses of regulatory impact (Article 13 of the Law of Ukraine “About the Fundamentals of State Regulatory Policy in the Field of Economic Activity”);

- reports on tracking the effectiveness of regulatory acts (Article 13 of the Law of Ukraine “About the Fundamentals of State Regulatory Policy in the Field of Economic Activity”);

- information on the implementation of regulatory activity (Article 14 of the Law of Ukraine “About the Fundamentals of State Regulatory Policy in the Field of Economic Activity”);

- decisions on the development and approval of urban planning documentation, and local development rules (Article 30-3 of the Law of Ukraine “On Territorial Planning and Development”);

- results of the public discussion of the projects of urban planning documentation and local development rules (Article 30-3 of the Law of Ukraine “On Territorial Planning and Development”);

- lists of real estate objects in need of reconstruction, lists of buildings, premises, and land plots that are or may be leased (Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Permit System in the Field of Economic Activity”);

- lists of citizens who have the right to receive social housing in extraordinary,



priority order, and general order (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated July 23, 2008, №682);

- announcement of planned purchases of goods, works, and services for budget funds (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 17, 2008, №921);

- annual procurement plan and changes to it (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 17, 2008, №921);

- Information on preliminary qualification of procurement participants (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 17, 2008, №921).

The authors believe that to build such relations, local authorities should inform the population about their problems and, even, the mistakes they make in the course of their activity [7]. In this context, success can be achieved by ensuring that residents are constantly informed about the main achievements and problems in the community. At the same time, different topics will be interesting for different people, so it is important to avoid information overload. In this context, the issue of defining those objects of critical attention becomes relevant. The purpose of the research was to identify topics for the effective provision of information to the public by local self-government bodies.

4.2. Identification of the objects of critical attention within the framework of the provision of information to the public by local self-government bodies

The research was conducted to achieve the goal. Its informational basis was a sociological survey within the framework of the project “Information asymmetry in the interaction of local self-government bodies and the residents of rural areas: analysis of the causes of occurrence and ways to overcome them”, implemented with the financial support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany, 2021-2022), which considered the topic of the efficiency of informing the residents of rural communities, in particular, to what extent residents are interested in the events taking place in their community and which topics are the most important to them. The survey was conducted using questionnaires among the residents of rural areas in eight territorial communities in the Southern, Central, and Western regions of Ukraine. The error of representativeness is $\pm 5.2\%$. The final sample consisted of 3,018 people (residents older than 14 years), the average age in the entire sample was 42.9 years,



(min=14 years; max =84 years), 1,571 women took part in the survey, which was 52.05%, and 1,447 men (48%). The distribution of answers to the question “Are you interested in what is happening on the territory of your territorial community?” showed that 56% of respondents are interested or very interested in community issues (Fig. 1).

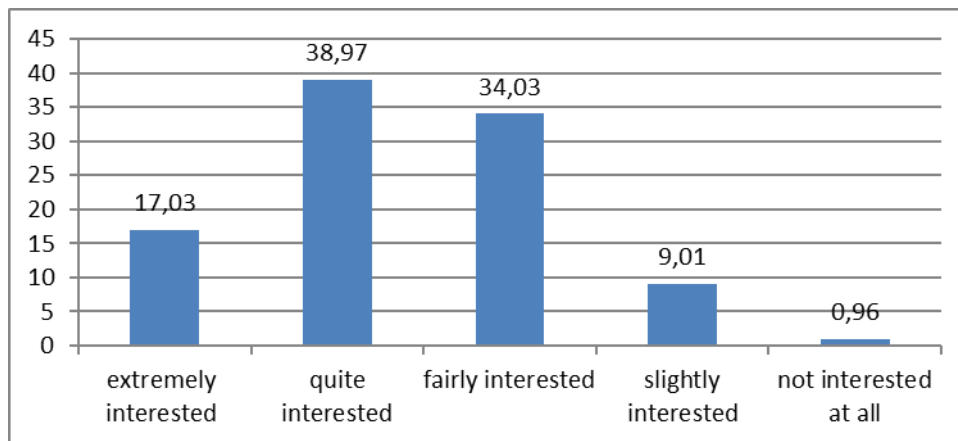


Fig. 1 - Interest of the residents of rural TCs in local events, % of respondents

Source: own development

Regarding the question of how the authorities inform the residents of the territorial community, the majority of the respondents answered that it was satisfactory (34.72%), bad and very bad (22.17%) (Fig. 2), which indicates that a significant number of local self-government bodies need to improve their information policy.

The other studies [12] confirm that rural TCs do not often use a professional approach for information disclosure, in particular in social networks.

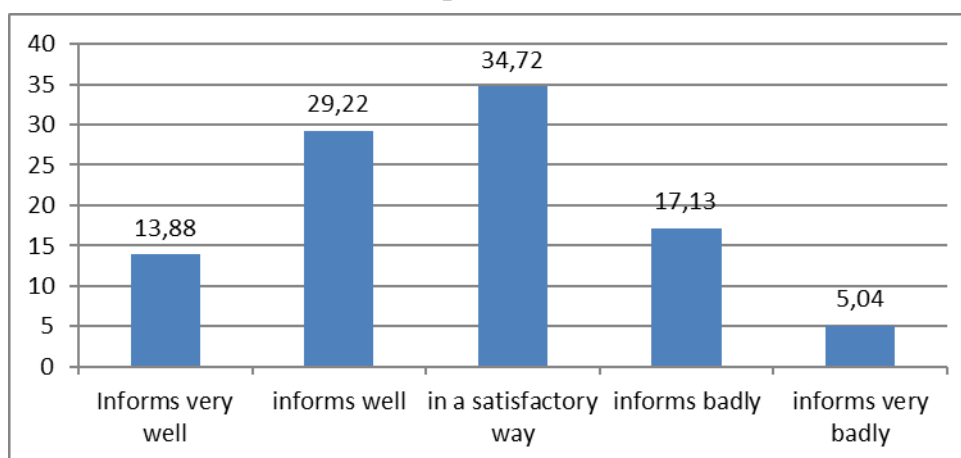


Fig. 2 - Level of the provision of information to the residents of rural TCs by the local self-government bodies about the results of their activity

Source: own development



LSGBs need to know what news is of interest to community residents. The respondents were asked to rank five different groups of news by the degree of importance (where 1 is the most important, 5 is the least important) (Table 1)

Table 1 - Interest of the residents of rural areas in various newsgroups

News	Distribution of the interest in the news (where 1 is the most important, 5 is the least important), %					Total, %
	1	2	3	4	5	
International	20,74	10,77	9,39	19,08	40,02	100
All-Ukrainian	24,59	24,93	21,49	26,34	2,65	100
Regional (those related to the regional level)	5,97	20,15	40,00	21,93	11,95	100
Local (those related to my village/ urban village /city or community in general)	34,74	30,04	16,27	16,49	2,46	100
Information about me and my immediate environment	25,36	11,88	10,60	13,17	38,99	100

Source: own development

The results showed that residents are most interested in the local news that concerns their village or community in general (priority 1– 34.74%, and priority 2 – 30.04%), in the second place with the first priority there is personal information and the information about the immediate environment (25.36%). The least important for the residents of rural areas is international news (40.02%). It is interesting that in the second place among the least important news (38.99%) there is also news about personal information and the immediate environment. Moreover, it even exceeds the percentage of answers with the first priority. This shows that the majority of the interviewed residents are self-sufficient and do not depend on the opinions of others, at the same time, a significant number of residents, on the contrary, are most interested in themselves and their immediate environment.

When researching priority topics that are most interesting to the residents of rural areas, it was found (Table 2) that this is reporting on local budget expenditures/incomes (53.1%); information (reporting) on the activity of the head of the community, local officials, local deputies (51.91%), and infrastructure projects (50.15%). The educational sphere, land issues, and social projects also received a significant level of interest.

**Table 2 - Areas that the residents of rural areas are most interested in**

Areas	Residents' answers, %
Cultural events: their announcements and results (celebrations, concerts)	36,16
Sports events: their announcements and results	31,06
Infrastructure projects implemented/planned for implementation in the community: repairs, construction	50,15
Information (reporting) on the activity of the head of the community, local officials, local deputies	51,91
Reporting on expenditures/incomes of the local budget	53,10
Educational sphere, extracurricular activities: children's competitions, the success of schoolchildren, volunteering, etc.	45,91
Social projects	43,75
Land issues	44,05
Transfer of ownership or leasing	12,89
Economic development projects	26,65
Other (please, specify)	0,00

*Note The sum of responses does not add up to 100%, as the respondents could choose up to 5 most important areas.

Source: own development

Let the authors consider whether there are gender differences regarding the topics of marketing communication with the population. As can be seen from the results presented in Table 3, the hypothesis that there are no gender and regional differences in determining priority information topics for local self-government bodies in marketing communication with the population is confirmed.

Table 3 - Areas of interest of men and women in local information

Areas	Women, %	Men, %
Cultural events: their announcements and results (celebrations)	41,5	30,2
Sports events: their announcements and results	23,4	39,2
Infrastructure projects implemented/planned for implementation in the community: repairs, construction	50,7	49,4
Information (reporting) on the activity of the head of the community, local officials, local deputies	49,9	54
Reporting on expenditures/incomes of the local budget	51,6	54,6
Educational sphere, extracurricular activities: children's competitions, the success of schoolchildren, volunteering, etc.	50,4	40,9
Social projects	44,6	42,8
Land issues	41,2	47,1
Transfer of ownership or leasing	11,4	14,5
Economic development projects	27,5	25,7
Other (investment activity, leisure)	0,06	0,2
All took part in the survey	×	×

*Note The sum of responses does not add up to 100%, as the respondents could choose up to 5 most important areas

Source: own development



Both women and men are almost equally interested in infrastructure projects, the information on the activity of the head of the community, local officials, local deputies, expenditures/incomes of the local budget, social projects, and economic development projects. The differences are traced in the following information: women are much more interested than men in cultural events (a difference of 11 percentage points) and in the educational sphere, extracurricular activities: children's competitions, the success of schoolchildren, volunteering (a difference of 9.5 percentage points). At the same time, men are more interested in information about sports events (by 15.3 percentage points more).

Therefore, when forming high-quality communication, in addition to determining the purpose, goals, objectives, and communication channels, LSGBs should pay attention to the topic and content of messages for each target audience. In the future, research should be conducted that will relate to the definition of optimal communication channels from the point of view of the population.



Conclusions

The rapid development of information technologies significantly transforms communication and changes the needs and methods of obtaining information. Long-term and trusting relations between local self-government bodies and residents of rural communities are based on regular and high-quality communication and receiving relevant information for the target group it is aimed at. After all, the population of the community is a sufficiently segmented target market, but local self-government bodies mostly do not attach importance to this.

The results of the research showed that the residents are most interested in the information related to reporting on expenditures/incomes of the local budget, on the activity of the head of the community, local officials, local deputies, and infrastructure projects. It was also investigated that there are no gender and regional differences in determining priority information topics for local self-government bodies in marketing communication with the population.

The improvement of communication activity for local self-government bodies should be permanent and flexible, taking into account changes in the external environment. The proposed recommendations for LSGBs to improve communication with the residents of rural communities should be accompanied by sensitive feedback.

So, the above material reveals the vector of the provision of thematic information on the part of local self-government bodies within the framework of designing and implementing their information policy. Within the framework of this research, the peculiarities of presenting and conveying information to the population of the administrative unit, based on the nature of the message, to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the communication policy, are also revealed.