

The Image of Local Public Administrations in Transylvania Among Citizens

A Comparative Empirical Study By Locality Size

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Introduction

EVEN THOUGH local or central public governments do not have the same objectives and strategies as private organizations, the latter of which are mainly focused on satisfying customers' needs, on building faith in the services provided, on generating a positive, favorable and proactive image, still, for the former as well it becomes important and relevant to focus on the citizen, on his wishes and on the possibilities of shaping his trust and contentment in the public services provided. The citizen is all the more important for the public administration authorities as, at regular intervals (four, five or more years), he has the opportunity to change the political color of the local, regional and national decision-makers, thus sanctioning their success or failure in appropriately implementing various investments and in the provision of the services he needs. We consider that the public administration is and remains dependent on the citizen, as in the end he is the one who decides in the selection of the local and national representatives. Fostering a positive, favorable image of the public authorities represents, in the knowledge-based society (Potcaliu and Ciurea 2011, 499-503), not only a general idea, but also a relevant strategy, worth pursuing (Libaert and Westphalen 2009, 405-411).

A major challenge for the local public administration authorities is represented by the implementation of the Government's and central authorities' decisions at local level, without altering citizens' perception of the political representatives in any way. Additionally, another challenge is related to the authorities identifying efficient modalities through which they manage to induce in their customers positive, unique elements regarding the services they use and to which they have access, regarding the infrastructure at their disposal, the communication carried out, the quality of the services provided, the conveyed visual identity (Rădulescu 2013, 50-68; Jézéquel and Gérard 2012, 30). Thus it becomes important and relevant to anchor an adequate image in citizens' minds. This can be deduced from a set of perceptions and/or opinions fixed in people's minds throughout time—they shape the dimensions of the phenomenon relevant to them (Mazursky and Jacoby 1986, 145-165).

The rapid provision of high-class, correct and transparent public services represents a fundamental vector not only for the development of a favorable image in the eye of citizens, but also, even more, for the enhancement of localities' attractiveness for both potential investors and indi-

viduals interested in settling down. In order to shape and especially to consolidate a favorable image, the local public administration, similarly to other organizations, must put to use a set of specific means, measures and tools specially directed at the individual. Among these we can mention optimizing ways of service provision, establishing attractive fares, recurring to a citizen-oriented communication, which uses both classic and modern media etc. In order to investigate these aspects, the authors conducted an empirical research in several Transylvanian localities varying in population size. The conclusions drawn allow decision-makers to better understand relevant aspects for the citizen and to elaborate a service offer to his liking.

2. The Local Public Administration

THE LOCAL public administration constitutes an administrative structure that allows the local community to solve its intrinsic problems, resulting from the action of varied coercive factors, but only through the direct control of the central state authority (Vida 1994, 128). This way the focus is on a series of extremely important general principles, such as those linked to decisional autonomy, the decentralization of services, the increase in ways for the local public administration to access funds and financing from various sources, the consultation of the citizen so as to solve local problems (Law 215/2001; Baciu (Suciu) 2014, 30).

Another important aspect both for the citizen and for the local public administration is represented by the need for a strict control of all money spent on various projects and allocated in different contexts. As the citizen finances the public administration, the unjustified or opaque public expenditure may generate conflicts or major tension both among local public representatives and between them and taxpayers. Another serious challenge for the local administration authorities lies in the actual means through which they manage to fundament their decisions. Sometimes deviations or grave infringements of the local community's needs, interests, and desires are observed; the consequences of such situations are usually suffered by the citizen, who has to pay for the incompetence of the authorities by dealing with increased duties and taxes. This is why, when it comes to making any decision that involves public funds one should also take into account the results expected by the citizen (Baciu (Suciu) 2014, 63; Cheben and Hudackova 2010, 5-19).

The recently developed concept of new public management considers that the citizen is no longer an ordinary individual who has to accept anything and to simply obey the local public administration, but rather a buyer, a customer of public services. This approach has also received lots of criticism; it posits that the citizen cannot be considered the local public administration's customer, because there isn't a viable alternative for some basic services (health, culture, education, revenue authority etc.) (da Silva and Batista 2007, 588-607; Wallis and Dollery 2005, 291-306). As the role of the Internet has risen and as there has also been an increase in its level of access or acceptance within the transactions involving authorities and the public administration (Gay et al. 2009; Denhardt and Denhardt 2007) on the one hand, and the citizen, on the other hand, the concept of digital era governance has appeared. It is considered to be a successor of new public management.

This new type of governance encompasses a holistic vision, which integrates components of Information Technology and of the digital data storage in the rapid and efficient fulfilment of specific tasks (Pina et al. 2009, 1137-1168). An extension of the new public management concept refers to new public governance, which presupposes a relative centralization of the public government's power (Ferlie et al. 1996; da Silva and Batista 2007, 588-607; Pina et al. 2009, 1137-1168). The allocation of jobs and positions within the public administration mainly takes place according to political criteria, which leads to a massive if not excessive politicization of the pub-

lic apparatus. Thus, there is a risk of negatively subjecting the public service to the state power. But, in civilized countries, with a long tradition of democracy, with a low level of corruption, and where the transparency of the administrative act is guaranteed, one can observe market-oriented reforms consistently (Williamson 1994; Rodrik 1996, 9-41). The performance of the public administration system can also be enhanced by recurring to the constant evaluation of employees according to clearly established standards, to regular rigorous controls and to upholding commitments (Barzelay 1992; Hood 1991, 3-19; Peters 1996).

3. Image of the Public Administration

FROM THE viewpoint of public administrators it is very important to succeed in engendering in the citizens' minds a coherent and authentic image in what concerns their responsibilities and their manner of organization and functioning, an image that corresponds to reality and which reflects the way they put into practice their tasks (Nedelea 2006, 170-173) in an objective manner. Failure in doing so represents a real danger to them, because fixing an illusion (a false image) in people's minds will lead to an increase in the mistrust citizens have of the public government, which, in its turn, will have a negative effect on the electoral capital (Coman-Kund 2000, 59). An essential role in promoting a favorable image of the central and local public administration workers is played by the mass media, which, depending on the circumstances, can be politically exploited either for or against public employees (Nedelea 2006, 416-419).

The image of a public institution can be regarded as the result of three converging dimensions, each having equal importance: the reference image of the public institution (i.e. the way it wants to be perceived), the image that is conveyed through various means of communication to the target audience and the image perceived by citizens, based on their subjective evaluations (Rădulescu 2013, 50-68). It is considered that the real image or the identity of the central or local public administration is formed by summing up all these three dimensions. Another important aspect is the observance of coherent communication, in the sense that the local public administration should manage to bring the image perceived by citizens as close as possible to the one it wants to render of itself. The major challenge to overcome is the timely overlaying of the two images so that they become synergic and thus fuse harmoniously.

4. Leverage Points of the Local Public Administration for Influencing Citizens

CIVIL SERVANTS. Right from the start, unqualified, unfriendly, cool, distant and impolite personnel, having an inadequate and unworthy behavior, will compromise the public administration's efforts to form a unique, attractive, and favorable image in people's minds (Dabija et al. 2013, 26-49; Dabija and Băbuț 2012). Moreover, the qualification level of the human resources influences the efficiency of the services provided by the local and central public administration to a large extent. Hence it results that the staff involved in carrying out these processes and procedures must be appropriately remunerated (Baciu (Suciu) 2014, 93-109; Fernandez and Smith 2006, 356-381).

Public administration communication. While most organizations communicate only to make their offer known to the public, the public administration bodies usually resort to two ways of communicating, dealt with by two separate departments—the first or the external one con-

tributes to the general promotion of the institution directed at citizens, partners, the press and other organizations etc., whereas the public one addresses the conveyance of messages of general interest regarding various legislative or normative modifications, the institutions' and the public administration representatives' manner of functioning and their attributions, the identification of the population's needs, ideas and desires (for example, publicly posting a legislative or an investment project), gaining public support and/or approval for a certain concrete objective, the presentation of public services to taxpayers, the promotion of local communities, making information of general interest available to citizens etc. (Nedelea 2006, 131; Coman-Kund 2000, 52; Meffert and Bruhn 2013; Miège 2000).

The distribution of public administration services. In the distribution of public services, the central and local administration agencies and authorities meet with a series of challenges and difficulties, which result from the citizens' waiting time or from the fact that, when they have to solve different issues they are confronted with, unfortunately the staff's politeness and competence is not always guaranteed. The same goes for the existence within agencies of a pleasant atmosphere (uncrowded waiting areas, with chairs etc.) and of cleanliness (the lack of unpleasant smells, a clean and tidy floor etc.) or of the possibility of transmitting grievances and complaints, of dialing a special phone number in case of conflict with a civil servant (Kotler and Lee 2008, 99). Without the consistent observance of these measures, the public administration workers won't be able to create a favorable, attractive image of themselves, won't be able to generate contentment and satisfaction and won't have the chance to make citizens aware of the added value of the services they provide (Payne 1993).

E-governance. Using online resources is extremely useful since the public administration bureaucratic apparatus generates high costs due to a rich organizational chart, with a large number of employees. Additionally, the public administration needs to act consistently and to adapt to society's and the market's new opportunities, which are widely made available by the Internet. In fact, the Internet and e-governance offer the possibility of rapid, relatively secure and exact access to information that is pretty complete, up-to-date and adequately structured. This permits the development of the so-called "electronic democracy," which allows citizens to easily connect with the public administration representatives and the public authorities (Nedelea 2006, 285; Androniceanu and Georgescu 2009, 1-25). This two-way interaction brings forth an increase in the public administration's reactivity, leading to a rise in taxpayers' faith in the public system and to governance improvement (Pina et al. 2009, 1137-1168).

Taxation. In order to benefit from public services, citizens have to pay duties and local taxes as covered by the Revenue Code. In accordance with Law 571/2003 (Legea 571/2003; HG 44/2004), the main duties and local taxes are: property taxes; land taxes; taxes on means of transport; taxes on the issuance of certificates, letters of advice and authorizations; taxes on advertising media usage and on advertising; taxes on entertainment events; hotel taxes; special taxes; other local taxes (Cod Fiscal 2014).

Although there is a high number of duties and local taxes, the amount of money collected constantly falls short of the necessary local budget financial resources. This is why the local administration workers are always trying to find the appropriate means through which they can optimize tax collection, or to provide only those public services that are affordable (Nedelea 2006; Suditu et al. 2014, 154-170). Even though this aspect seems to be advantageous for the public administration, it does not necessarily mean that it is also to the citizens' benefit; the latter would prefer to receive maximum utility with the least effort (Munteanu 2003, 213; Zhang and Tang 2013, 46-68).

5. Research Methodology

THE OBJECTIVE of the present analysis is to highlight that the usage of several leverage methods (communication, taxation, e-governance etc.) by the local public administration representatives may influence the image that citizens have of them. Our research was conducted in Transylvanian localities of various sizes. The authors tested several hypotheses:

- H1: The image citizens have of the local public administration differs strongly depending on the size of the analyzed locality;
- H2: The staff of the public administration in the localities under scrutiny contribute differently to the formation of their image in citizens' minds;
- H3: The level of duties and taxes imposed by the local public administration has the highest and most significant impact on the formation of the analyzed local public administration image in citizens' minds;
- H4: The existence of neighborhood city halls in big localities as compared to medium-sized ones has a greater contribution to the formation of the local public administration image in citizens' minds;
- H5: The local public administrations' web presence has a significant impact on the formation of their image in the eyes of citizens from medium-sized, large and very large localities;
- H6: The local public administration efforts of communicating with the help of the mass media influences the image perceived by citizens to a varying degree, depending on the size of the locality.

In conducting their research the authors used the social survey technique and administered a questionnaire. The statements in the questionnaire were designed by using five-point Likert scales, ranging from total agreement to total disagreement. The respondents, who were approached by interviewers in parks, in the street, at home or at work, were asked to evaluate the activity of the local public administration in localities of different sizes: small, medium-sized, large and very large ones. The people interviewed were selected from a total number of over 30 localities, spread across nine Transylvanian counties. In the respondent selection, the quota sampling (on gender and age groups) method was used in compliance with the provisions of the Annual Romanian Statistical Yearbook (Yearbook 2010). Out of the 1,000 collected questionnaires, 718 were validated: more exactly, 201 for localities under 20,000 inhabitants (Acățari, Agnita, Bodești etc.), 192 for localities between 55,000 and 110,000 inhabitants (Turda, Dej, Rodna etc.), 345 for localities with over 150,000 inhabitants (Cluj-Napoca, Satu Mare etc.). The sample is made up of 52.5% females and 47.5% males.

The respondents were asked to name the local administration public services which came to mind spontaneously or to which they had recurred in the last twelve months. Among the answers received the following can be mentioned: local tax and fine collection (30%), filing applications/issuance of documents, authorizations, construction permits etc. (15%), park administration and public domain administration (9%), local public transport (9%), street cleaning (5%), public order and safety (5%), state aid (heating assistance benefits, natural gas benefits, unemployment benefits—3%), parking administration (3%), population register (3%), citizen notification (3%), online or traditional data access (3%), social assistance (2%), land registry (2%), market administration (1%). Some citizens mentioned the existence of neighborhood city halls, street lighting, infrastructure works, construction inspections, environment protection, grant-in-aid access, the registry office, cemetery administration etc. Even if these services are less important, the citizens showed that they are familiar with them and that they can make a correct distinction among them.

The respondents work in public companies (7.8%), in Romanian private companies (23.8%), in foreign private companies (13%), or are self-employed (6.4%). The number of those who work in Romanian or foreign private companies is higher in large and very large localities (125 people) in comparison to medium-sized (71) or small (67) ones, which is a sign that these towns manage to better attract and keep people interested in performing and personal development. The opportunities provided to employees in large towns are much greater than in the other localities.

The theoretical concepts included in the questionnaire in the form of citizen quantifiable statements (civil servants, communication endeavors, neighborhood city halls, web presence, level of taxes, the public administration image) were operationalized in accordance with the guidelines in the technical literature (Keller 1993, 1-22; Chowdhury et al. 1998, 72-86; Martin-Consuegra et al. 2007, 459-468; Arnold et al. 1983, 149-157; Yoo and Donthu 2002, 380-398; Hansen and Deutscher 1977/1978, 59-74; Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002, 15-37; Léo and Philippe 2002, 122-146; Binninger 2008, 94-110). For example, in order to evaluate the location of the public administration bodies under investigation, certain aspects were taken into account, such as accessibility or spatial convenience for citizens (“The X public administration has easily accessible agencies”; “in convenient locations”; “in optimal locations”). In order to evaluate the web presence, the following aspects were taken into consideration: the extent to which the web pages inspire trust, have an attractive design, are user friendly, facilitate online service payments etc. (“The X public administration has an easily accessible web page”; “user friendly”; “trust inspiring”; “with an attractive design”; “which facilitates various payment options”). The citizens were invited to evaluate the level of taxes in comparison with that of other public administrations, to specify what would be their expected level, but also to assess the extent to which the administration staff succeed in managing public money (“The X public administration has lower taxes and fees than other administrations”; “I was expecting”; “it helps me economize”; “it helps me manage my financial obligations appropriately”). In order to evaluate the perception of these local administrations’ image, Keller’s (1993, 1-22) view was taken into account; the respondents had to express their opinion in what concerns the public administrations’ notoriety, their features, the degree to which they believe that the organizations manage to anchor a series of unique and intense associations in people’s minds.

In order to test the internal consistency, validity and reliability of the collected data, the authors resorted to running analyses specific to the entirety of the considered dimensions (Churchill 1991, 64-73; Dabija 2010, 172-180). These were useful for subsequent data processing with the help of structural equation modelling (AMOS 20.0). A first indicator was the Cronbach α (> 0.7) coefficient, which registered values over 0.8 for all dimensions, the lowest value being in the case of the image (0.824) and in the case of the communication (0.867). Another indicator taken into account was the KMO criterion (> 0.7). The resulting values exceed the minimum threshold of exactingness, smaller values being obtained for web presence (0.826), for the image (0.847) and for the taxation level (0.876).

As the reliability indicators for each dimension were determined to exceed the minimum thresholds of exactingness set, the authors resorted to running analyses on the entirety of the analyzed dimensions and to the econometric modelling of the investigated phenomenon with the help of structural equations. The reliability of the model was assessed by calculating various indicators (GFI, AGFI, TLI, NLI etc.), according to the guidelines in the technical literature (Forza and Filippini 1998, 1-20; Ju et al. 2006, 373-393; Jiang and Klein 1999/2000, 219-240; Dabija 2010, 181-183). The indicators are also presented in Table 1. Due to the fact that the reliability indicators show more than satisfying levels, we believe that the interpretation of results must be done accordingly.

6. Results and Discussion on the Model Split into Categories by Type of Locality

THE IMPACT that civil servants' activity has on the definition of the public administration image in citizens' minds is relatively similar in intensity in the case of the three types of localities analyzed here, but it is different in significance. In fact, the activity of public administration workers from small (0.148****), large and very large (0.151****) Transylvanian localities is assessed in a more favorable manner compared to that of medium-sized localities (0.140*). In the case of smaller localities (located in rural areas), this may be a direct result of the fact that the civil servants know the respondents personally, which probably means that they treat their issues with greater consideration. The complexity of demands and the expectations of rural-based taxpayers are more modest. In large and very large localities it is possible that the staff be better qualified. It may also be that the transparency required by the local decision-makers (local councils, councilors, heads of directorates and departments etc.) generates a heightened attention to citizens' problems and careful consideration in keeping the electorate always happy. In medium-sized localities the results show that there is a lower contribution of the staff in shaping a favorable image of the local public administration. This means that in this case there is a high potential for training civil servants in what concerns the attention and consideration they should give to citizens' issues, which refers to the manner they treat and help citizens in solving their problems. Based on these results, we think that *hypothesis H2 (according to which the staff of the local public administration from the localities under scrutiny contribute to the formation of their image in citizens' minds differently) is validated.*

As Table 1 indicates, the proximity of the local public administration to respondents' domicile or workplace adds weight to the image shaped in citizens' minds only in the case of large and very large localities (0.137****). This was somewhat predictable because in small and rural areas there is no justification in having other local agencies besides the city hall itself, considering how small these administrations are, geographically speaking. However, even if such neighborhood city halls would be justifiable in medium-sized localities (with a number of inhabitants ranging between 55,000 and 110,000), the decision-makers prefer to maintain only one location for the local public administration—the reason being probably that they strategize to keep public costs down. In large localities, the need for spatial “closeness” of the local administration to its citizens is no longer just a “whim”—it is actually a reality and a viable way of increasing the degree of citizen contentment and satisfaction, or, more exactly, a way of being “close” to them. In light of these results, we can *partially confirm hypothesis H4. It is only neighborhood city halls from large and very large localities that contribute to the image citizens form of the local public administrations, while those in medium-sized localities do not have a significant impact on creating this image.*

The web presence of the local public administrations has a varying influence on the image perceived by the respondents (table no. 1). While in small localities the impact is pretty intense, but not extremely significant (0.248**), in large and very large localities the intensity is somewhat lower, but highly significant (0.169****), and in medium-sized localities both the intensity and significance are extremely low (0.029*). At first these results seem paradoxical. But we believe they are justified. In recent years, the local public administrations of small localities have been trying to increasingly promote their events, activities and other actions, thus hoping to draw tourists' attention and to raise the locality's attractiveness, maybe even to succeed in making some citizens move to the area. The running of different projects in the local infrastructure was followed by the necessity of creating adequate presentation platforms and of spreading the information by all means possible. Many local administrations, even from certain communes, created

TABLE NO. 1. Reliability indicators of the general model split into categories by type of locality

Size of localities (thousand inhabitants)	Under 20	55-100	Over 100	TLI, GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI > 0.8	χ^2/df	TLI
Personnel → Image	0.148****	0.140*	0.151*** *		2.327	0.902
Media → Image	0.109 ^{n.s.}	0.140 ^{n.s.}	-0.027 ^{n.s.}	RMSEA (≤ 0.08)	GFI	AGFI
Neighborhood city halls → Image	-0.103 ^{n.s.}	0.063 ^{n.s.}	0.137*** *	0.043	0.904	0.871
Web → Image	0.248**	0.029*	0.169*** *	SRMR (≤ 0.08)	NFI	CFI
Tax level → Image	0.218***	0.461****	0.210***	0.0733	0.891	0.876

^{n.s.} – not significant; *p<0.1; ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; ****p<0.001

Source: own research.

their specialized websites and started offering the possibility of online or bank payment of local duties and taxes. The local public administrations of large localities were also forced to come to citizens' assistance; the latter understood the true advantages offered by the online presence of this channel of communication and become more and more interested in making online "transactions." The low intensity and reduced significance of this component in the case of medium-sized localities show that the authorities' efforts are pretty feeble in this case; they prefer not to "trouble" themselves with the online medium, but to interact with the citizens in the traditional manner. We can *validate hypothesis H5 only partially. The web presence of the local public administration has a significant impact on citizens' image formation in small, large and very large localities and a lower intensity in medium-sized localities.*

When splitting results by type of locality we see that the efforts of communicating with the help of the mass media do not have a significant influence on the image anchored in citizens' mind. This goes to *prove the invalidity of hypothesis H6 according to which the local public administration efforts of communicating with the help of the mass media influences the image perceived by citizens from small, medium-sized, large and very large localities to a varying degree.*

When questioned about the level of local taxation, the citizens consider that this is extremely important in the formation of a positive image regarding their local administration body. The most intense and significant impact is registered in the case of citizens from medium-sized localities (0.461****) (see table 1). The influence of this dimension in small (0.218***), large and very large (0.210***) localities is lower in intensity and significance, but still pretty consistent. It is worth mentioning that for citizens from medium-sized localities the most influential factor in the image formation is the low taxation level. Probably here the authorities have tried to keep taxes at acceptable levels, taking into account the population age structure, the somewhat feeble economic development and the limited amount of investments. The lack of jobs, unemployment, the closing down of companies, the lack of consistent economic activity represent determinant factors for maintaining local duties and taxes at a relatively low level. It seems that at least in the case of medium-sized localities, this taxation level is perceived and assessed favorably by respondents. The citizens from small, large and very large localities also believe that the taxation level is acceptable compared to their standard of living. Following these results *we can validate hypothesis H3, according to which the advantageous level of duties and taxes imposed by the local public administration has the highest and most significant impact on the formation of the analyzed local public administration image in citizens' minds.*

We can also *validate hypothesis H1 in the case of all the analyzed localities*. Actually, the image that citizens have of their local public administration varies depending on the size of the locality. We consider that the respondents are fully capable of evaluating the parameters under investigation. Their answers can decisively indicate to what extent the existence of qualified and well-trained staff, of certain zonal city halls etc. may directly contribute to the shaping of the citizens' image of their local public administration body.

7. Conclusions

OUR EMPIRICAL research based on various types of localities points out that a series of dimensions and specific characteristics are instrumental in the way citizens form an image of their local public administration. The most intense and significant impact on the shaping of this image is related to the level of taxation in the investigated localities. The Transylvanian respondents consider that the owed duties and taxes are correct and adapted to their standard of living, that they are more advantageous in comparison with other Romanian localities, and that because of this they can make substantial economies and thus cover other needs.

The staff employed in city halls and in other subordinated structures represents another factor that has bearing on the image people form of the local public administration. The respondents appreciate their role in the public administration's advancement, considering that they fully succeed in contributing to the creation of a positive image of the institution. One can notice a low intensity, but still significant influence insofar as the administrations' web presence is concerned. The citizens have positive views with respect to the fact that the authorities are also trying to make themselves available online, by putting various forms and documents at their disposal, by bringing news, information, investment or infrastructure projects to their knowledge this way, as well. Another relevant dimension is exemplified by the proximity of agencies to the respondents' domicile or workplace—"the neighborhood city halls." When questioned about the mass media's role, the respondents answered that it has no relevance to the subject at hand.

In the case of medium-sized localities, it is recommended to train the local public administration personnel with a view to increasing the transparency of the decisional act. The civil servants could improve their communication abilities, could be more correct and show a higher degree of availability towards the citizens. Additionally, a better web presence is recommended, in the sense that its performance should be improved. It is also advisable to better inform citizens in what concerns the benefits of e-governance and to educate them to use various electronic applications in order to access and pay local duties and taxes.



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Abstract

The Image of Local Public Administrations in Transylvania among Citizens: A Comparative Empirical Study by Locality Size

Due to the European integration and to the need of making the entire decisional process more transparent at local and central level, several aspects are becoming imperative in what concerns the public administration bodies, such as the necessity of making a good impression on citizens, raising their interest, increasing notoriety, developing a mutually advantageous relationship and practically gaining people's trust. Developing a positive image is all the more important as, regularly, by voting, people can sanction the behavior of the public administration representatives. This is why, by facilitating the free and unimpeded access of citizens to various public services and by supporting them any time they need it, the public administrators lay the foundations for a long-term relationship with the former. Starting from an empirical research conducted using the social survey technique and with a questionnaire administered by operators as a working tool, the authors point out some major flaws that the public administration authorities in Transylvanian localities of various sizes face in their effort to build a trustworthy relationship with their citizens. The conclusions are meant to allow the management of these public administrations to find and adopt the most appropriate strategies that can help develop and consolidate citizens' trust in the local administration and which can help improve the administration-citizen relationship.

Keywords

public administration, image, citizens, Transylvania, empirical research, small, medium, large localities