



TENANT PROFILE OF HOUSING STOCK IN CZESTOCHOWA COMMUNE

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Abstract: Residential real estate management is a public task that forces the housing stock management staff to establish and maintain relationships with the environment. The quality of these relations is conditioned by the attitude of both parties, which are represented by the staff and the tenant community. The quality of customer service methodology is widely described in the literature. This is accompanied by the attitudes and behaviors of consumers of a market focused on generating profit. The purpose of the article is to characterize the tenant's profile as a client of a municipal housing stock manager. This goal was achieved based on literature studies in the field of broadly understood customer service and surveys conducted among employees of a selected entity managing housing stock. As a result of the analyses, the tenant's behavior was identified, which forms the basis for choosing the model of service for the tenant community.

Keywords: tenant, housing stock, customer service, Czestochowa

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Introduction

The specificity of housing stock management is conditioned by the legal form of premises, which can be treated as a social resource. Thus, meeting the housing needs of the commune's inhabitants takes on a social function, which is to provide premises for the most economically disadvantaged group of city residents, including social and temporary housing (O'Sullivan, Gibb 2003, p. 138). Effective property management therefore requires appropriate social competences from the property manager (Dessoulavy-Śliwińska 2013), which are used in the process of serving the tenant. The new service model enforces the necessity to treat the tenant not as an applicant, but as a customer who is a service recipient of the entity and co-creates its offer.

An important aspect of efficient service is building a customer relationship based on the development of communication and interpersonal skills. What is more, improving the quality of service requires observation of the attitudes and motives of customer behavior. According to M. Bugdol (2008, pp. 8-10), it is human behavior and its variability that have the greatest impact on the quality of the service provided and affect the feedback of the relationship (Sztompka 2007, p. 77).

Assumptions of the contemporary customer service model

The new model of customer service in public administration units, which can include those managing social and municipal housing stocks, requires from employees the ability to accurately diagnose the essence of the client's motivation, who is reporting a particular case (Serafin 2013, p. 146). An approach in line with the client's expectations allows the employee to control the case, increasing the chance of his satisfaction (Kott 2009, pp. 248-249). Proper customer service requires proper preparation based on the characteristic features of the client (Nowakowska-Grunt, Nowakowska 2007, pp. 138-140).

The base of the values presented by the client also enables one to establish a positive long-term relationship, as well as to cope more effectively with more difficult matters. It is also important to retain objectivity towards the served tenant by (Belgrave 1995, pp. 310-315; Bajdor, Lis 2015, p. 137):

1. limiting interpersonal relationships, for example through the use of IT solutions;
2. delegating certain matters and decision-making powers;
3. creating databases to ensure more efficient service;
4. limiting the variability of proceedings by creating internal procedures and standards.

The report developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation identifies contemporary types of tenant communities resulting from a combination of various factors (*Mixed Communities...* 2010, pp. 8-10):

- Housing communities inhabited mainly by young families. This type of housing related to the educational infrastructure is the right place for young people and is based on the so-called social mix.
- People living in communities under the so-called income mix, which do not reveal negative behaviors characteristic of low-income groups. This type of community allows one to create safe and friendly places to live and work. A social mix comprising different types of rental and income levels, which does not cause additional problems. The community treats people threatened with exclusion as "ordinary people", these relations are friendly.

The concept of a tenant mix is aimed at providing a diverse housing offer, which is focused on the needs and expectations of various groups of tenants: families, seniors, people with disabilities, lonely or impoverished people who are threatened by social exclusion. Furthermore, it should be noted that properly managed housing stock should create the conditions to counteract social exclusion and homelessness of the most economically vulnerable group of inhabitants, which together with their co-existing poverty, crime and addictions, are strongly connected with the security of tenants' premises (Fehér, Teller 2016, p. 69).

Expanding the possible goals set for social housing, Milligan, Phibbs, Gurran and Fagan indicate that apart from the minimal goal of providing affordable housing, the entity creating the housing stock should set additional goals such as:

- creating an environment for participation in housing stock management by tenants,

- directing the rental and debt collection policy to strengthen the economic position of the weakest group of tenants,
- shaping lease relations in a way to strengthening the competences and social ties of tenants, in particular by moderating participation in the labor market, supporting the family in terms of its safety and well-being,
- help in health care, sense of contentment and help in the education of people living in the housing stock,
- support for seniors by preventing their exclusion,
- development of local communities (Milligan et al. 2007, p. 36).

To adjusting the indicated goals to Polish possibilities, the need becomes obvious to create an efficient entity (for example, a single-person municipal company) that, using available tools, will actively shape municipal housing policy as well as the social ties between tenants and apartment owners, thanks to the management of housing communities (Dziadkiewicz, Pabian 2017, p. 38).

Typology of employees' and clients' behavior

M. Huczek's research (2013, pp. 12-15) convinces readers that customer orientation counteracts crises. Meanwhile, the previous attitude of employees of public units was focused on a quick settlement of the matter, without involvement in the relationship with the tenant. *Table 1* presents the basic differences in the approach to the customer.

Table 1. Differences in the employee's approach to the customer

An employee's approach to servicing a tenant	
Service orientation	Customer orientation
Focus on the time and not quality of tenant service Focus on creating tenant satisfaction	Orientation for working out the tenant's satisfaction
Developing only one-sided benefit	Developing mutual benefits
Settling the issue depends on the employee	Common problem solving
Handling the case is equivalent to getting rid of the tenant	Handling the case is equivalent to solving the tenant's problem

Source: Author's own elaboration based on (Hejda 2009, p. 25; Ratajski 2007, pp. 62-63)

While the key motivation of the employees is to efficiently handle the tenant's case, the main motivation of the tenants' attitudes comes from the willingness to satisfy their needs. According to A. Maslow's pyramid, the most important of them are physiological needs (Kaur 2013, p. 1062), security and belonging, which can also be applied to the needs of the tenant community. Among the motivations to establish a tenant relationship with the manager of the housing stock, there is a need for comfort, peace, security or a clear legal and financial status.

In the literature on the subject, specific consumer behavior models can be found that, to some extent, reflect the behavior of tenants (*Table 2*).

Table 2. Psychological division of clients allows reference to certain models in relation to tenants

Type 1	
Me	Others
Characterized by the willingness to make decisions independently, expects the possibility of choosing a solution to the matter.	Needs help to solve the case, has difficulties in making decisions.
Type 2	
Compatible	Negating
Agrees with every solution, rarely criticizing the service. Satisfied despite the fact that he did not satisfy his needs.	Perceives the issue negatively, is critical, sometimes aggressive.
Type 3	
Goals	Problems
Focused on achieving a specific goal.	Distrustful and suspicious of the employee dealing with his case.
Type 4	
Systematic	Chaotic
Able to clearly explain the matter and related needs.	Cannot accurately describe the problem or the expectations in connection with it.
Type 5	
Personal	Material
Strengthens the relationship with the employee, willingly talks with him, can manipulate.	Specifically and objectively presents the problem.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on (Tomaszkiewicz 2010, pp. 36-39)

Proper identification of attitudes, behaviors and values expressed by the tenant community is an important element of effective customer service.

Identification of the tenant's attitude on the example of the ZGM TBS residents in Czestochowa

Scope and methodology of research

According to the data of ZGM TBS, the housing stock of the commune comprises a total of 9,020 residential premises with a total area of 393,995.52 m², located in 660 buildings. Of this number, 190 buildings belong 100% to the commune – all the apartments located there are its property (2,263 dwellings so approximately 1/4 of the commune housing stock).

The largest group of buildings are those which, due to the sale of part of the premises to tenants, have evolved into housing communities and the commune is only the owner of a part of the flats there, and the remaining owners are individuals. Czestochowa also has 597 social premises (*Table 3*).

Table 3. Share of flats and buildings in entire Czestochowa housing stock

Housing stock	Flats	Buildings
buildings 100% of commune's property	25.1%	28.8%
buildings of communities managed by ZGM, in which commune has flats	60.4%	53.8%
community buildings in foreign board, in which the commune has flats	5.6%	7.0%
private buildings owned by commune	7.6%	9.1%
buildings in co-owned by commune	1.3%	1.4%

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ZGM TBS data

Management of the commune housing stock has been entrusted to the appointed Zakład Gospodarki Mieszkaniowej "Towarzystwo Budownictwa Społecznego" (Department of Housing Management, Social Housing Association in Czestochowa LLC) in Czestochowa. The management activities entrusted to the company are in the field of (Polityka Mieszkaniowa... 2015, p. 34-35):

1. managing the housing stock of the commune and non-residential real estate;
2. performing the function of a substitute investor in the area of municipal housing investment in the commune;
3. management of real estate with an unsettled legal status being in possession of and managed by the commune;
4. management of property shares belonging to the commune.

Managing a large housing stock means contact with a large tenant community, whose service is complex and time-consuming. In order to improve the tenant service, a study was conducted in which the characteristics of the company's typical tenant were determined. The obtained image will serve to develop a model for serving tenants.

Therefore the aim of the study was to create the tenant portrait through the eyes of an employee. The subject of the research was a group of employees of Zakład Gospodarki Mieszkaniowej Towarzystwo Budownictwa Społecznego in Czestochowa Sp. z o.o. (ZGM TBS Czestochowa).

This goal was achieved by means of a questionnaire survey. According to the received data, the group of surveyed employees occupied the lowest-level positions and is in direct contact with the tenants. The questionnaires were supplemented with short interviews with employees. The research sample was the employees of the company, specifically, 55 people participated in the study (over 80% of the whole population) (*Figure 1*). The obtained results made it possible to describe a typical tenant, who is client of ZGM TBS Czestochowa.

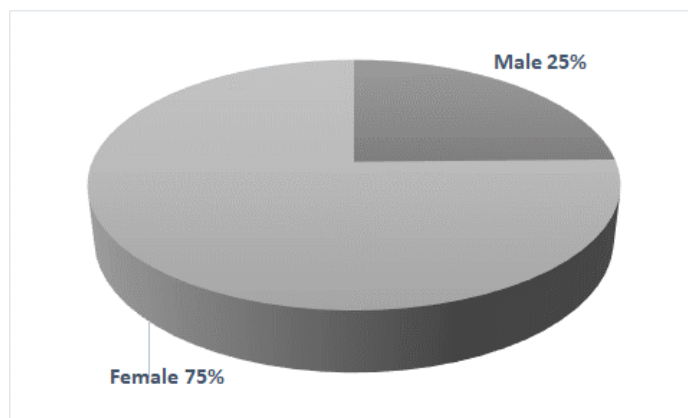


Figure 1. Structure of surveyed employees by gender

Source: Authors' own compilation

The task of the company's employees is to handle tenant matters and be in direct contact with the tenant. The condominium environment, which the study indirectly concerns, occupies both ordinary dwellings and municipal premises. The structure of the occupied premises and the number of tenants is shown in *Figure 2* and *Figure 3*.

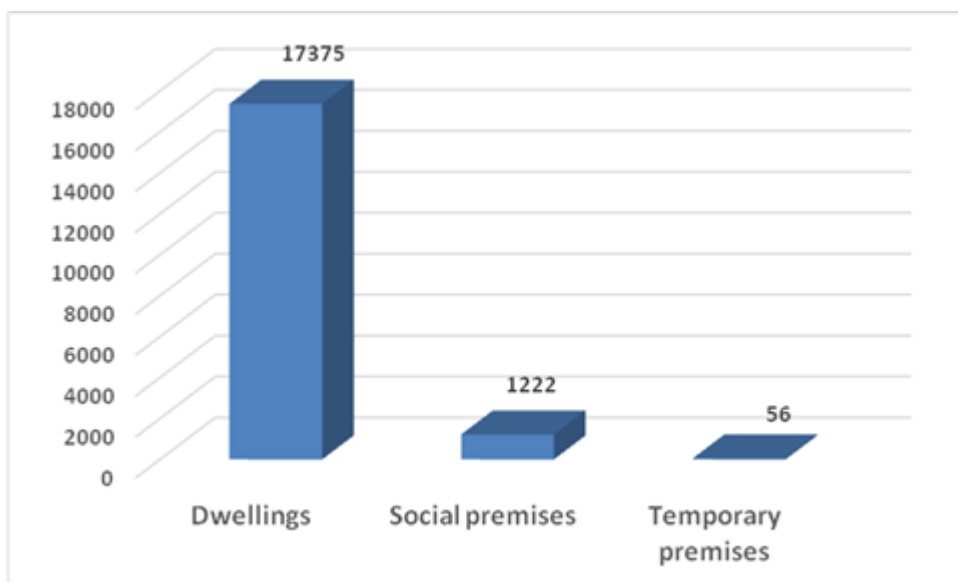


Figure 2. Number of tenants in municipal flats according to type of premises

Source: Authors' own compilation

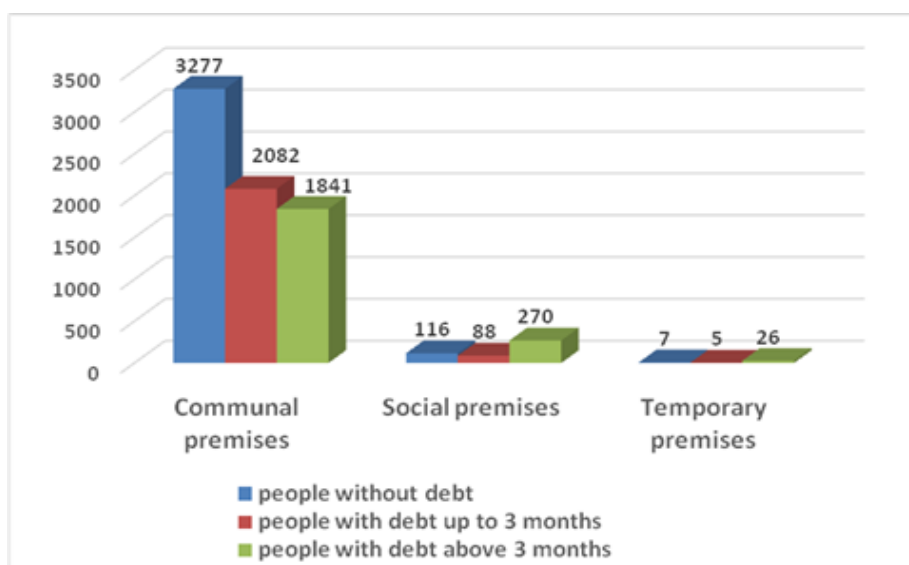


Figure 3. Level of tenant debt divided into type of premises

Source: Authors' own compilation

The company has a total of over 18.6 thousand premises intended mainly for housing purposes. The highest level and duration of indebtedness in comparison to the absence of indebtedness is observed among social premises, which are usually occupied by people affected by social exclusion and impoverishment.

Initial characterization of a typical tenant of ZGM TBS Czestochowa

The company serves various social groups, whose origin and financial condition determine certain behaviors and attitudes of employees towards the tenants.

According to the surveyed employees, a typical customer who is served on a daily basis is usually polite, cultivated, forgiving, determined, without the knowledge needed, expecting help, consistent and inquisitive (over 70% of positive traits). At the same time, he can be impatient, demanding, unhappy, anxious, demanding, nagging and throw unfounded accusations. Among the company's tenants, a significant place is occupied by older people, in retirement age, in need of assistance in clarifying and making payments.

According to the surveyed employees, almost half of all the tenants are so-called difficult customers. Thus, a significant number of cases is complex and complicated, which translates into both the customer service and time spent on them.

According to employees, it means a tenant with a claim making pretences or demands without showing intent to reach an the agreement. This is usually a person who cannot assimilate the acquired information, who does not agree with the information provided, makes irrational accusations and blames not only the employees, but also the entire company. It usually requires repeating the same information several times, and yet the client does not accept any arguments.

A difficult customer is characterized by arrogance, malice and a negative attitude. A difficult tenant, according to the employees' opinion, is under the influence of alcohol, is quarrelsome, loud and clamorous.

Handling a case with this type of client requires a greater effort and commitment to the problem. At the same time, practice indicates that the more appropriate concept in such a situation will be to use the concept of "difficult matter", which allows one to pay attention to the type of problem and not to the client, and more effectively seek the solution. The basis of the new model is the approach to a difficult customer, whose behavior was determined by a specific situation, which is why the problem should be identified with the tenant's case and indirectly with him, i.e. behavior, appearance or mental state (Berry 2015, pp. 46-47).

Identifying the tenant's features present in the process of serving him

Assessing the importance of the tenant's individual features in the process of serving him was also a significant step. A total of seven features were identified that were important from the point of view of establishing a positive relationship with the employee (*Table 4*). The grading was made on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 meant great importance, and 4 - very little significance.

The average level of the assessment was also calculated as the arithmetic average of the ratings for individual attributes of tenant characteristics observed while serving him.

Table 4. Tenant features observed while serving him

Statements	Definitely important	Rather very important	Rather small importance	Definitely little importance	Average rating
Data in %					
The way the customer refers to me.	54.0	32.7	10.9	1.8	1.60
Aesthetic appearance of the client.	40.0	30.0	20.0	9.1	1.98
Help in completing and / or writing documents.	47.3	47.3	5.5	0	1.58
Client's readiness to understand.	41.8	54.5	3.6	0	1.62
Friendly atmosphere.	54.5	41.8	3.6	0	1.49
Customer's competences.	49.1	36.4	9.1	5.5	1.71
Customer's mood.	45.5	29.1	18.2	7.3	1.87

Source: Authors' own compilation

All average assessments of statements regarding the importance of individual customer characteristics are in the range of 1.6 - 2. The employees assigned all the traits a high importance in the process of efficient and positive service. According to the respondents, the most important way of establishing customer relations is the

manner of referring to the employee and the friendly atmosphere of the meeting (over 50% of all indications). No less important is also the client's knowledge and competence (49% of responses). Employees attach slightly less importance to customer readiness to understand the situation or the information he is given. At the same time, an aesthetic appearance and the tenant's mood play the least role (about 20% of negative indications).

Conclusions

An important feature affecting communication barriers in the customer service process is the attitude of the tenant towards the employee. The employee devotes more than half of his / her working time to direct contact with the tenant. According to the conducted research, the way of referring to the employee and a friendly atmosphere of the meeting affect a positive and effective settlement of the matter.

A typical client served by an employee exhibits mostly positive attributes and is usually an elderly person who expects help in settling housing matters. However, an important problem was identified during the research and requiring further analysis is the so-called difficult client who makes up almost half of all the served tenants. It is usually associated with a difficult situation, which is accompanied by aggression, hostility, strong dissatisfaction and the tenant's demanding attitude.

Thus, a significant number of cases is complex and complicated, which translates into both the customer service and time spent on them. It also affects the performance of other professional duties and daily work. Serving "difficult clients" leads to conflicts, whose sources lie in communication barriers. Such situations generate mutual aversion and lack of mutual understanding of the matter. All customer service activities in the audited company should be focused on developing interpersonal and technical solutions that will improve the handling of difficult matters.

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SYLWETKA LOKATORA ZASOBU MIESZKANIOWEGO GMINY CZĘSTOCHOWA

Streszczenie: Zarządzanie zasobem nieruchomości gmin to zadanie o charakterze publicznym, które wymusza nawiązywanie i utrzymanie relacji z otoczeniem. Jakość tych relacji warunkowana jest postawą obu stron, które reprezentowane są przez kadrę oraz społeczność lokatorską. W literaturze bardzo szeroko opisywana jest metodyka jakości obsługi klienta. Towarzyszy temu tematyka postaw i zachowań konsumentów rynku ukierunkowanego na generowanie zysku. Celem artykułu jest charakterystyka sylwetki lokatora jako klienta gminnego zarządcy nieruchomości. Cel ten zrealizowano w oparciu o studia literaturowe z zakresu szeroko pojętej obsługi klienta oraz badania ankietowe przeprowadzone wśród pracowników wybranego podmiotu zarządzającego zasobem mieszkaniowym. Na skutek dokonanych analiz zidentyfikowano zachowania lokatora, które stanowią podstawę wyboru modelu obsługi społeczności lokatorskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: lokator, zasób mieszkaniowy, obsługa klienta, Częstochowa