

# Consumer attitudes as a basis for developing new directions in marketing communications in Poland

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## Abstract

To meet the increasing activity of consumers, companies in their market activities seek new solutions in the use of (traditional and non-standard) marketing communication instruments.

The study identifies and describes the selected directions of modern marketing communications of companies in Poland through the prism of the attitudes of the Polish consumer – the recipient of these activities. The emergence of new types of consumers contributes to the development of new trends in marketing communications, such as, buzzmarketing, viral marketing, guerrilla marketing, customer publishing, ambush marketing and ambient media.

**Paper type:** review article

**Keywords:** marketing communications, new communication tools, prosumer

## Introduction

In the current conditions of market economy development, all companies are forced to apply the principles and instruments of the marketing mix (Poth & Poth, 1998; Altkorn, 2002). However, what has always been the most visible among all the marketing activities of companies is promotion that aims to inform about the products and/or services and create a positive image of the company. Development and dynamic changes on the market – including at the side of consumer behaviour – made

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it necessary for the views on the role and the importance of promoting to be quickly changed. This situation is reflected by replacing word “promotion” with “marketing communications” which attempts to identify the promotion understood as marketing communications with the “whole” marketing<sup>2</sup> (for more cf. Rydel, 2001).

From the aforementioned perspective, it seems appropriate to say that at present each market exchange transaction of the company is closely linked to the process of marketing communications previously called promotion. The contemporary direction in defining promotion is, therefore, a wide presentation in which promotion is considered synonymous with terms “marketing communications” or “market communication policy of company.” In accordance with this approach, marketing not only becomes a special management function, but – in a broader sense – modern form of the functioning of the enterprise on a competitive and open market under varying and complex conditions. It can also be seen as an extended form of market (marketing) communications (Mynarski, 1992; Wiktor, 2001), and the most important function of any modern enterprise. Marketing communications is referred to as “communicating all the goodwill (strengths, competitive advantages) of the company to the market environment using coordinated marketing activities” (Rydel, 2001, p. 20). The so-conceived marketing communications includes formal communication tools (promotion) and informal communication, which directly or indirectly communicates marketing messages to the market environment. It is a system of interconnected instruments operating based on the synergy effect. The essence of marketing communication system comes down to the process of transmission of information (symbolic content) between the company (sender) and the environment (recipients, stakeholders) through a specific channel and means of communication.

This study identifies and describes the selected directions of modern marketing communications of companies in Poland through the prism of the attitudes of the Polish consumer – the recipient of these activities. It is based on secondary sources, which were the basis for: systematic presentation of key concepts and research findings on the attitudes of Poles towards promotion instruments, in particular advertising. What is key for the study are the selected results of primary research on promotional activities in Polish enterprises gathered in the framework of a wider project implemented by the Department of Marketing at the Cracow University of Economics, in which the author of *Marketing of Polish companies in the 25 years of market economy* participated.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Terms “marketing communications,” “market communication” or “company market communication policy” now combine elements of the so-called sales activation and promotion (advertising, sales promotion and public relations) with marketing research, product components packed as an example etc. aimed at the collection and transmission of information coming from the market and ensuring the implementation of feedback in this regard.

<sup>3</sup> Statutory research UEK, 7/Kmark/1/2012/S/007, *Directions of development of modern marketing* – Phase II/KMark/ under prof. assoc. A. Czubała. The main objective of the research project car-

## 1. Non-standard forms of marketing communication – an attempt to systematize

McKenna (2002) suggests that advertising as a traditional instrument for communication – due to the lack of feedback – is an “aging” activity whose major drawback is the unidirectional flow of information. Marketing communication initially included the management of traditional instruments of promotion and direct marketing so that they constituted coordinated (integrated) messages sent to the market. The competitive situation on the market in the twenty-first century requires the extension of marketing communications into other types of action, which were called informal messages (Pickton & Broderick, 2001). Such a broadened approach can be found in different authors, including in Schultz, according to who marketing communication is the process of management of all sources of information about the product/service that reach the customer or potential customer, and urge them to buy and maintain his or her loyalty (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, 2015a).

All important (marketing) messages – formal and informal – that enter the market should create an integrated system so as to form a synergistic flow contributing to building a positive image of the company and its offer on the market – the company’s marketing communications strategy. The natural result of changes in the business environment (e.g. the development of media and new technologies) and changes in behaviours and attitudes of consumers is the metamorphosis of marketing communication messages both when it comes to the form of media used and their content.

The current changes in marketing communications strive to ensure (Pabian, 2009):

- interactive nature of the marketing communication channel (the Internet, the new TV generation) which allows for shortening the distance between the sender and the recipient of the message and to build the structure of the message which is open and allows the recipient to actively participate and gain information from different perspectives. Most often it manifests itself in the form of quizzes, mysterious diagrams or contests. In the case of the advantages posed by the acquisition of the product or the brand itself, they are apparently a hidden message that needs to be decoded by oneself,
- selectivity and individualization of the channel, which is associated with the formation of a close relationship with the brand, targeting marketing communications messages to a specific group of people, personalization, possi-

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ried out in 2013 was to examine the extent to which, after 25 years of developing market economy in Poland, marketing ideas and rules of conduct on the market became rooted in Polish enterprises. As part of the project, the author has sought to answer the question how position of promotion within the marketing mix after 25 years of marketing activities of companies has changed and what it is now.

bility of interfering with the nature and offer of the brand. The most popular techniques of mobile marketing and social marketing which are targeted to a specific profile of the customer,

- integrity of the marketing communication channel or combining the influence on different levels, with the use of various stimuli (e.g. sensory marketing). The aim of integrity is to make sure the information is received by multiple senses simultaneously. It is used for direct sales by influencing the recipient with smell and sound. Attempts have been made to produce modern advertising materials, such as, paper, which not only could be used for printing but also for the emission of sound.

More and more often in the marketing practice you can meet with forms of advertising that are largely different from those to which the consumers are accustomed. Marketing messages of this type work on customers with added force because innovations are easily memorised by consumers and as they do not follow standard formats they seem to be less annoying and intrusive for the recipient. To meet the increasing customer activity in the promotional activities of companies, there appear new ideas in the use of traditional and entirely new ways of acting through marketing communication: formal and informal (Table 1).

Table 1 *Modern techniques and trends of marketing communication*

Type	Characteristics
Product placement	It involves placing the product of the sponsoring company in a feature film or video. The product usually appears on the screen only for a few seconds and the manufacturer's logo is accentuated (Dołhasz, 2010 a)
A feature-advertising film or advertising video	It takes the form of a long TV spot. It is about creating the whole concept/ script of the film or video around the product and the brand
Interactive advertising	It is an extension of traditional television advertising, currently only certain TV stations can afford to broadcast such forms of advertising because it requires the reverse link so that the recipient can interact with the ad or submit his or her opinion
3D Ad, i.e. the ad in 3D	It can take both the form of audiovisual advertising or only visual, for example, in the magazine. Proponents claim that such ads "popping-up" from magazines are easily memorized by recipients and attract their attention to the product and brand
Audio advertising in the press	An idea taken from postcards, it is about combining the typical small advertising text with an electronic device emitting sounds
Scented press advertising (means of fragrance marketing)	On the surface it looks like a typical press advertising, but the pages are impregnated with scent. They are most often found in the promotion of perfume in magazines, but not only because more and more often you can meet with eg. a car-ad which upon rubbing emits the smell of leather upholstery of the car. It has to make sure that the information is received by multiple senses, for example in direct sales

Sponsored article (a modern form)	Currently, attempts are made to manufacture modern ad materials such as paper, which not only could be used for printing but also the emission of sound and would look like an ordinary article in the journal which has an attractive headline, interesting pictures and demonstrates the advantages of the product acquisition
Customer publishing	Unique publications such as magazines, newspapers, newsletters, emails, etc. ordered by a specific company. Publications of the cp sector should implement specific marketing goals, commercial and PR-related (cf. Dołhasz, 2010c)
Ambient advertising	Any form of non-standard advertising. Advertising on means of public transportation (taxis, buses, trams, underground), bus stops, car with banner on the roof, outdoor and indoor (e.g. advertising on the premises, advertising in fitness clubs, schools) (read more: Burtenshaw, Mahon, & Barfoot, 2007; Paluchowski & Marciniak, 2005; Dołhasz, 2010b)
Others	WOM and eWOM, advergaming, etc. (see more: Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, 2015a, 2015b)

## 2. Changes in attitudes of the Polish consumer in the context of marketing communications

In Poland – as on many developed markets – one can observe is a phenomenon of a growing volume of marketing/promotion messages, which the customer receives. Despite the well established position of traditional promotional tools, one can notice a material change in consumer attitudes towards this area of entrepreneurial activity, i.e. increasing discouragement, especially with advertising.

The confirmation of this state of things are the results of research on attitudes of the Polish towards advertising carried out by many research centres, including Pentor, CBOS etc. On the basis of the Pentor research, in recent years – since 1992 – three different attitudes towards advertising have been identified (Wiktor, 2001; Pentor, 2006):

- initial enthusiasm (1992),
- a steady decline (1992–1998),
- stabilization (1998–2004).

According to these studies, 1/3 of respondents negatively assessed advertising, and this assessment translates into other instruments of marketing communications (Nowacki & Strużycki, 2002). Further research by Pentor shows that over the next six years until 2010 there were no significant changes in attitudes towards advertising, but it should be noted that every year from 2004 maintained the same trend.

CBOS survey also confirms the fact that Poles manifest a negative attitude to ads that are broadcast: in television, radio, newspapers, etc. The research conducted

by that company in 2001 shows that 86% of respondents do not like ads, and positive attitude towards advertising is only among 13% of them (CBOS, 2001). Comparing the most current results with those from 20 years ago, one can notice significant changes in consumer behaviour. A recent survey by CBOS from year 2011 further confirms this attitude. Poles generally do not like ads as 86% of respondents declared this, 80% claimed that they are bored by advertising, 73% felt discouraged, and 63% accuses them of disinformation (Stróżyk, 2011). Such a trend remains to the present.

This trend was also confirmed by media agency OMD which since 2009 has been conducting regular testing, analysing Advertising Irritation Factor (AIF) (Bandera-Sikorska, n.d.). Every week a sample of 340 Poles are asked the same question: *To what extent does the advertising you encountered in various media in the last week attracts you?* For the period of more than four years until 2013 of the implementation of the research, we could notice a steady upward trend of the AIF indicator, which continues to grow, albeit at a relatively slow pace (an average of 0.01 points per month in the 10-grade scale). The largest discrepancy in the evaluation of advertising irritation occurs in the youngest and oldest respondents. AIF hovers around 5.2 points among those aged 15–24 years and increases gradually with age so that among respondents aged 50–59 years it achieves an average level of 6.3 points.

To sum up, the attitude of Poles to advertising in 2015 differs significantly from the initial boom in the 1990s when it was associated by everyone with the transformation and modern market principles and as a marketing activity it was assessed very positively by all buyers. Currently, buyers manifest a negative attitude towards it. The results confirm that, by analogy to other countries, Polish consumers stop responding to the existing instruments, including advertising. What changed and will continue to change in the future is the attitude of the individual Polish consumer to traditional forms and instruments of promotion.

It should be noted that this increase in aversion to advertising coincides with the professionalization of the advertising market in Poland and at the same time very aggressive development of advertising and other marketing communication tools. A greater role is now played by advertising that appears outside of traditional media: newspapers, radio and television and other instruments of promotion, for example, promotion on social networking sites using word of mouth marketing become more important. In a situation of growing irritation with advertising, who will be successful are the companies which will use the new tools of marketing communication and at the same time more precisely reach their identified segment (target audience), a specific buyer.

The Polish buyer is now not only the global consumer, but more often he or she is referred to as a “prosumer” who requires a different approach that underlies the creation of new, effective marketing tools, worth applying in particular in the context of building consumer loyalty. The essence of the term “prosumer” comes down

to approaching the product and idea in an interactive way. They arise as a result of an interactive process in which the recipient, the consumer, becomes the co-creator (“prosumer” was created from the combination of words professional/producer with word consumer) (Wierzchoń & Orzechowski, 2010). When defining, you can specify them as a pro-active, demanding and intelligent consumer, with access to a variety of easily accessible information on a variety of topics that interest them. A consumer who is curious about everything connected with the product and the company (Dołhasz, 2010c). He expects that he will have the opportunity to influence the chosen product – its characteristics, the way of creation or use (Staniszewski, 2005). Therefore, it seems that you can assign the following characteristics to them: global, active, interactive, creative, well-informed, aware of their own needs and expectations, individualized, demanding, influential, innovative. It is becoming more influential not only as a consultant but also as the creator in relation to the company and its offer.

In marketing practice you can talk about prosumerism, or a set of marketing tools used to achieve a particular purpose, approach to the client as a person co-creating, creating: product, brand, communication or dialogue, exchange of ideas, the relationship between the consumer and the producer based on co-creation. According to Wierzchoń and Orzechowski (2010), prosumer marketing strategy should be based on four elements:

- co-creation (joint work on the project),
- creating a community around the brand (use of blogs, forums, etc. amplifying – elements of social marketing),
- building communication platforms (portal, website, event, workshops, group meetings, etc.),
- creation of offers – choices in, for example, creating ads by prosumers.

A key instrument in the prosumer approach are the new tools of marketing communications, more and more often created by the prosumers themselves. On the contrary, you can put here the idea that they themselves are a kind of marketing communication channel (an example here might be the development of buzzmarketing or viral marketing). However, apart from prosumers, still most of the customers are consumers in the traditional sense. Therefore, it is not the end of the era of traditional thinking about the consumer, but an indication that consumer attitudes and behaviour are subject to evolution.

### 3. The new marketing communication tools used by enterprises on the Polish market

In a situation of increasingly growing consumer annoyance with promotional messages, in particular advertising, companies must take concrete actions related to the use of their promotional activities of new instruments of marketing communication. Modern marketing communication strategies of enterprises require deliberate use of a combination of all promotion instruments – classic ones but, most of all, the new ones and continual development of other tools and ways of influencing the changing consumers (prosumers).

Do companies use new tools of marketing communication in the context of the change of attitude of the Polish consumers to promotional activities/advertising? The answer to this question was looked for when conducting research on the importance of marketing activities – including within the promotion – as factors of the success of companies and their significance and changes in contemporary marketing companies in the framework of project *Marketing of Polish companies in the 25 years of the market economy*. The study was conducted using an online survey placed on the website in subdomains of domain [uek.krakow.pl](http://uek.krakow.pl), belonging to the University of Economics in Kraków. The study consisted of two phases and multiple stages. The hybrid method was used to recruit respondents (mixed-mode), combining telephone and Internet invitations to participate in the study. The questionnaire contained 52 questions (including responder's particulars) and over 200 variables.

From the set of all the answers obtained, 422 questionnaires which formed the basis of the study were distinguished. The studied sample of enterprises was strongly dominated by medium-sized entities (76.5%), employing between 50 and 100 people (46.2%) or from 250 people (30.3%). The rest were large enterprises (23.5%), employing from 251 to 1,000 people (19.4%) or more than 1,000 people (4%). All the companies participating in the survey conducted extensive and geographically diverse business activity – 47.8% of companies surveyed conducted their business on international markets, while 52.2% of entities operate exclusively on the local, regional and national market (Niestrój & Hadrian, 2014, pp. 23–25).

The study determined the degree of promotional activities as a factor for success in a modern company.<sup>4</sup> Among the sixteen success factors assumed in the

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<sup>4</sup> In order to identify the general orientation of enterprises, according to the methodological assumptions of the study, respondents were presented with a list of hypothetical factors for success, and asked the following question: *What is the significance of these factors in your company's pursuit of success?* Attractive prices and discounts, care for satisfaction of end users of our products (services), good relations with our customers and market partners, intensive and effective advertising and sales promotion, consolidation and specialization of our business, favourable export (presence on foreign markets), positive company image and brand of our products (services), modernization and rationalization of the product range, low own costs, larger and/or modernization of productive capacity



questionnaire, promotional activities were identified as “intense and effective advertising and additional promotion.”<sup>5</sup> This factor, in accordance with the opinions of a group of small business owners surveyed was the sixteenth, the last of the list of key factors of success of the company (according to the number of responses); moved up two places lower in comparison with the ranking of the same factors examined in the group of medium and large companies (14<sup>th</sup> place according to the number of responses).

Despite the currently low position of promotion as a key factor for success in both groups of companies, it is still an important success factor (Table 2). It should be noted that this factor of success was declared as very important by nearly 1/5 of the surveyed small businesses and a quarter (almost 24%) of medium-sized and large enterprises. For 44% of small businesses it is an important success factor. Unfortunately, a small percentage of respondents – only 7% identified this factor as a key market success in their business. When compared with medium-sized and large companies it is 1% more. More than a quarter of respondents currently ignores this success factor defining it as irrelevant in the activities of a small business.

Table 2 *Importance of promotion as a success factor in small, medium-sized and large companies (in %)*

Importance of factor: “advertising and additional promotion”	Small companies		Medium and large companies	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Key and very important	90	27.5%	106	29.5%
Relevant	143	43.7%	159	44.3%
Irrelevant (marginal)	87	26.6%	89	24.8%
Total	327	100%	354	100%

Comparing the results of small businesses with those obtained by medium and large companies, one can notice that the distribution illustrating the importance of promotion as a factor in ensuring the market success is slightly different, i.e. there is approx. 2% of difference in favour of medium and large enterprises.

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(service), rationalization of employment, wage policies, training, social issues, uniqueness (originality) of our products (services), improvement and expansion of distribution channels, products and customer service, knowledge about the needs of customers, competitors and its own market position, high quality of products (services), high performance, others.

<sup>5</sup> Success factor defined as: “Intense and effective advertising and additional promotion” contained all the traditional instruments of promotion like advertising, PR, additional promotion, personal sales and, for example, website promotion, ambient advertising, sensory advertising, event marketing, etc.

Evaluation of intensity and “the effectiveness of advertising and sales promotion” as a key factor of success was similar for small businesses, regardless of their characteristics. There is only a slight difference in its assessment depending on the scope of business activity of the company. It concerned companies on the market of production of intermediate goods in both groups studied. This shows that both small businesses as well as medium and large ones very similarly define the importance of promotional activities on their list of success factors.

Companies use a wide range of marketing communications measures both individually as well as in certain configurations, achieving the synergy effect. In the cited studies the questions were asked about the use of promotion instruments, taking into account their division into classical (traditional) and new instruments of marketing communication.

In the opinion of representatives of small, medium and large businesses, the importance of advertising as the main instrument for the promotion of traditional products was diminished in favour of personal promotion, sales promotions and the widely-understood public relations.

In the case of medium-sized and large companies, the assessment of traditional instruments is differentiated depending on the financial condition (in relation to sponsorship and the system of visual identification of the company) and geographical coverage (personal promotion, cinema, radio and external advertising). There was no such correlation in small companies.

Representatives of companies participating in the survey assessed the importance of new instruments and forms of promotion (Table 3 and Table 4). Promotion on the Internet was the most popular and most often used. For 8.3% of responders, it is crucial, and for 47.5% very important and relevant. The second major instrument used in the promotion are newsletters and customer publishing which have been recognized as key by 15%, and as very important and relevant by 37.5%.

Table 3 *Importance of new instruments and forms of promotion for medium and large companies (in %)*

Instruments and ways of promotion (medium and large companies)	Key	Very important	Relevant	Marginal	Irrelevant	Does not apply
Customer publishing	8.3	19.4	18.1	17.4	10.3	26.4
Product placement	2.4	9.2	14.4	18.8	15.4	39.8
Viral marketing	0.8	5.5	9.5	18.7	17.9	47.6
Promotion on the Internet	15.1	21.6	26.3	18.6	5.7	12.7
Ambient media	0.5	4.3	7.5	17.3	17.6	52.8
Fragrance marketing	0.3	0.6	2.4	8.8	18.7	69.3

Other promotion instruments are irrelevant for the surveyed companies or they are even not used by them (approx. 40% – product placement, viral marketing – nearly 48%, ambient advertising and fragrance advertising – approx. 53%). This may result from price levels for the formation of these messages and also from the economic crisis, generalizing the lack of funds for this type of enterprise innovation in the marketing communications.

New instruments of promotion were analysed, for example, from the point of view of the scope and profile of the business, the number of people employed etc. The differentiation concerning the use of all new instruments of promotion appeared only depending on the scope of the business, in the case of customer publishing also the degree of diversification of customer needs (e.g. of higher importance – products satisfying this type of needs require more detailed information), and the use of fragrance advertising depends on the type of the final purchaser (e.g. the segment of women is more sensitive to fragrance advertising). The same results were observed in both groups of companies, i.e. large, medium and small enterprises.

Table 4 *Importance of new instruments and forms of promotion for small companies (in %)*

Instruments and forms of promotion (small companies)	Key	Very important	Relevant	Marginal	Irrelevant	Does not apply
Customer publishing	8.6	12.8	13.9	18.4	10.7	35.6
Product placement	2.3	5.9	13.6	15.0	11.6	51.7
Viral marketing	3.7	2.6	6.6	14.8	12.5	60.0
Promotion on the Internet	22.0	23.4	24.7	11.5	2.9	15.5
Ambient media	0.3	1.5	5.8	11.4	13.1	67.9
Fragrance advertising	0.3	0.3	0.9	6.8	15.1	77.0

The results show that new tools and forms of promotion are currently often used by small businesses, medium and large companies operating in Poland. Out of new instruments, promotion on the Internet turned out to be the most popular and most often used. For 22% of responders, it is crucial, and for 51.1% very important and relevant. Another important instrument used are newspapers and customer publishing, which have been recognized as crucial by 8.6%, and very important and relevant by 26.7% and for 19.5% the activities regarding product placement are very important and relevant. It seems that the last instrument becomes increasingly popular and relatively cheaper than advertising when it comes to reaching the recipient using the local media, i.e. radio and television stations.

What is irrelevant or not at all used by small businesses is: fragrance advertising, ambient advertising and viral marketing (respectively, 92%, 81% and 73%). It seems that this situation should be sought, inter alia, in the price level for the creation of this type of innovative marketing communications messages in the context of the budgets for the promotion of small businesses and their effectiveness in relation to the final recipient.

## Conclusions

Although there have been significant changes in the attitudes of Polish consumers towards traditional Polish promotional activities, this does not imply a significant change in the use of new communication tools of marketing even though they are within the range of today's businesses. The market of marketing communication services in Poland is growing. There has been a continuous growth of the entities on the supply side, providing new services in this area, for example, fragrance marketing, ambient marketing, etc. Unfortunately, in the case of new promotion instruments it should be noted that the diversity of their use is low and this applies to small companies as well as medium-sized and large companies.

A group of small companies as well as medium and large enterprises do not yet fully use new instruments of marketing communications apart from the promotion on the Internet, which is the most popular in both groups and to a limited extent product placement and any publications sent to the customer and promotional publications. However, in the future, taking into account changes in the behaviour of consumers, businesses wishing to compete for the loyalty of their consumers will be forced to make greater use of new instruments and ways of influencing marketing communications.

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