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**BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN POLAND:
SALE PROMOTION, ADVERTISING, PUBLIC
RELATIONS AND VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION**

**KOMUNIKACJA BIZNESOWA W POLSCE:
PROMOCJA SPRZEDAŻY, REKLAMOWANIE,
PUBLICZNE RELACJE I WIRTUALNA KOMUNIKACJA**

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Summary: Business communication is a key activity for every business, as every business has to deal with its external and internal environment. It describes many business activities and can be taken under consideration from different perspectives, but still the basic communication activities can consider any company in the world. However, the cultural aspect determines the realization of every activity. In different countries the way a business communicates with customers, or business actors do it within the company, differs respectively to national traditions, values and beliefs. The aim of the following article is to present, analyse and explain the way of business communication in Poland. As every country, it has a specific characteristics that is distinctive only for its own, which deeply affects various aspects of business communication. The typical and mainstream ways of realizing the activities in the country will be presented including advertising practice and media regulations which also affect this area of communication. The article will focus on the external communication in Poland, taking under consideration four areas: sale promotion, advertising, public relations and virtual communication. The analysis will start from short elaboration of what the essence of business communication is and the current country characteristics in terms of economy. The article will form a useful material for foreign studies purposes and may also be helpful in further comparisons with other countries.

Keywords: Poland, communication, business, channels, advertising, public relations, customers, social media.

Streszczenie: Komunikacja biznesowa stanowi kluczową aktywność każdego przedsiębiorstwa, zarówno w ramach otoczenia zewnętrznego, jak i wewnętrznego. Zjawisko komunikacji opisuje wiele działań biznesowych oraz może być analizowane z różnych punktów widzenia, mimo to podstawowe działania związane z komunikacją dotyczą wszystkich przedsiębiorstw na świecie. Jednakże czynniki kulturowe determinują sposób realizacji tych aktywności. Sposób, w jaki przedsiębiorstwa komunikują się z konsumentami oraz w jaki sposób wyglą-

da komunikacja wewnętrzna w ramach przedsiębiorstwa, zależy od wyznawanych wartości i tradycji danego kraju. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie, analiza oraz wyjaśnienie zjawiska komunikacji biznesowej w Polsce. Jak każde państwo Polska posiada swoiste cechy, które wpływają na kształtowanie się komunikacji biznesowej. W artykule przedstawione zostaną typowe sposoby realizacji aktywności biznesowych związanych z komunikacją. Uwzględnione zostaną działalność związana z reklamą oraz uregulowania prawne dotyczące mediów, które również mają wpływ na sferę komunikacji. Artykuł skupiać się będzie na zewnętrznej komunikacji w Polsce, uwzględniając cztery sfery: promocję sprzedażową, reklamę, *public relations* i komunikację wirtualną. Analizę rozpocznie krótkie omówienie istoty komunikacji biznesowej oraz obecnej charakterystyki kraju pod kątem ekonomicznym. Artykuł stanowić będzie przydatny materiał dla możliwych dalszych badań zagranicznych oraz porównań z innymi państwami.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja, biznes, kanały komunikacji, reklama, *public relations*, konsumenci, media społecznościowe.

1. Introduction

Communication is a “two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of ideas towards mutually accepted direction or goal”.¹ Communication, to happen, must consist of its model elements, which are a sender (encoder or speaker), receiver (decoder or listener), message, medium and feedback. A special instance of communication is business communication. It can be also defined as “the process of exchanging information or ideas”.²

A subtype of communication, a corporate communication, also called business or organizational communication, is “the process of providing information about a company for its employees, or for its customers and the public, so that they know what the company is trying to achieve and have a good opinion of the company”.³

Business communication can be seen from two perspectives – internal and external. Internal communication considers sharing information between managers or employees of a company, while “the external communication is used to inform consumers about the company’s products”.⁴ It is a set of information which a company emits to its business actors as customers, suppliers, agents and competitors, as well as the information which a company collects from the market, like customers’ preferences, opinions, market trends and needs.⁵

¹ A. Kaul, *Effective Business Communication*, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2000, p. 2.

² *Business English Dictionary*, Pearson Education Limited, 2007, p. 99.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 99–100.

⁴ O. Vitez, *The Role of Business Communication in Marketing*, Demand Media <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/role-business-communication-marketing-1013.html>, 29.05.15.

⁵ *Kompendium Wiedzy o Marketingu*, eds. B. Pilarczyk and H. Mruk, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 210.

According to B. Pilarczyk and H. Mruk external business communication can be divided into the following activities:

1. Sale promotion
2. Advertising
3. Public Relations
4. Virtual Communication

The following article will focus on the above four areas of external communication considering Poland. The aim will be to present the ways these activities are being realized in this country and interesting or important aspects of it. The analysis will start with a short presentation of the country characteristics in the context of economy.

Poland was the first of ex-communist countries to adopt privatization and economic liberalization. The largest sector of the economy in Poland, which generates 63% of its GDP, is the services sector. The main export partners of Poland are Germany, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and Russia.⁶

2. The country characteristics

The population in Poland on the January the 1st of 2014 equalled approximately 38.53 million people. Since 1997 this number increased by 0.61%. Nevertheless,

Table 1. Historical and forecasted population in Poland

Population (million)	1997	2014	2020*
Poland	38,294	38,526	38,407

*forecast

Source: Euromonitor International 2015; Passport database, 06.06.15.

according to the forecasts, the population until 2020 will decrease by 0.31% to around 38.40 million (Table 1). In 2014 the % growth of GDP is predicted to reach 3.40. This growth is less than in 2003 and for few years was decreasing due to the economic crisis in Europe (Table 2). However, despite the crisis, Polish economy has never stopped and the GDP growth in 2020 is predicted to

reach 3.70% which stands for an increasing tendency (Table 2).

Business communication conditions and possibilities have changed much in the last 11 years. Since 2003 the total number of Internet users has increased from 9 million to over 23 million in the current year and is estimated to reach more than 27 million of users in 2020 (Table 2). 95.5% of businesses in Poland uses Internet and there are predictions that after six years this number will exceed 99% (Figure 2).

79.9% of companies own a local area network. In 2003, which is thirteen years ago, only 44% Polish businesses had it (Table 2). It shows how business communication

⁶ *International Business Culture and Business Etiquette*, 2014 Passport to Trade 2.0, <http://businessculture.org/eastern-europe/poland/>, 10.06.15.

Table 2. Selected data on the economy in Poland

Categories	2003	2012	2013	2014*	2020*
Internet users – .000	9 054.40	22 721.80	22 917.60	23 602.30	27 255.00
GDP Deflator – 1995 = 100	180.10	232.80	234.90	237.10	276.10
Businesses using a computer – % of businesses	91.50	95.10	95.10	95.50	99.30
Businesses using the Internet – % of businesses	79.50	93.80	94.80	95.50	99.30
Businesses with Local Area Network – % of businesses	44.00	76.60	78.30	79.90	86.90
Percentage of population using The Internet – % of population	24.90	62.30	62.80	64.70	74.70
Businesses placing orders over the Internet – % of businesses	8.60	23.70	25.80	27.70	36.30
Businesses receiving orders over the Internet – % of businesses	3.60	20.10	22.10	24.00	32.30
Real GDP growth – % growth	3.90	2.00	1.60	3.40	3.70
Cumulative real GDP growth 2003–2013 – % of growth	44.5			–	
Inflation – % growth	0.70	3.60	1.00	0.20	2.50

* forecast

Source: Euromonitor International 2015, Passport database, 06.06.15.

digital conditions have developed, opening the country to the world of modern communication. However, the conditions of internal business communication in Poland are still better than those necessary for the external communication. Still many people do not have the Internet access. Since 2003 until now, the percent of the population using the Internet has increased from just 24.90% to 64.70% and is expected to exceed 74% in 2020. According to the table, relatively fast progress can be observed. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that it is impossible to reach all customers using channels, which requires Internet connection. To reach some group of clients still more traditional, less technologically advanced forms are required, stopping businesses from switching to digital forms only. That is why nowadays only 24% of businesses in Poland receive orders via the Internet and 27.70% place orders this way (Table 2). It is not supposed to change much in the next 6 years according to the forecast and it is obvious that for customers in Poland a virtual communication is not enough and that there are some areas in businesses where a face to face contact cannot be replaced.

3. Communication in Poland via sale promotion

Sale promotion is a business activity which is based on making use of promotion tools in order to increase profits.⁷ It is also a way how businesses communicate – it concerns data and information exchange between companies and their customers. It can take a form of giving away free samples, decreasing prices, promotion codes, vouchers, loyalty programs and lotteries.⁸ Its main objective is to attract consumers' attention and gain their loyalty.

Loyalty programs in a traditional form, such as collecting stamps by customers on loyalty cards, which still exist in Poland as one of sale promotion channels, have important limitation. It is the impossibility of collecting and therefore analysing customers' data.⁹ Moreover, measuring the results of such a loyalty program directly and adjusting the further business strategy becomes difficult. Gathering data about customers is the main advantage of implementing a loyalty program and it is achieved by adapting more modern solutions, which make use of information technology.

The first mass loyalty programs in Poland were introduced in 1999 by the petrol company Shell and *Polska Telefonía Cyfrowa* (originally "Polish Digital Telephony").¹⁰ Later loyalty programs became more popular, especially in hypermarket shop networks. Nowadays the most popular programs in Poland are based on collecting promotion points, which can be later exchanged into a reward chosen by a customer. They provide advantages both for customers and companies. Customers can plan their activity in the loyalty program, adjusting their shopping plans and results and choose a reward that fits their needs. Businesses can collect and analyse the data about customers and adjust its strategy to its customers' profiles and needs, making its activity more effective. Also most of the programs allow collection of points by a whole family, which on the one hand makes earning a reward easier, on the other means getting new customers for a business.

A multi-partner loyalty program, named 'Payback' became very popular in Poland, gaining more than 7 million customer participants in 2009 being the first year of its activity.¹¹ This program managed to create a cooperation of most popular companies in Poland as Allegro, BP, Orange or BZ WBK. In 2013 the number of Payback's card holders exceed 12 million.¹² After its success it was supposed that multi-partner loyalty programs will monopolize the market in Poland. However, it

⁷ *Kompendium...*, p. 219.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

⁹ E. Waligóra-Borejza, *Rozwój i aktualny stan programów lojalnościowych w Polsce*, <http://www.ireward24.pl/artykuly/122-rozwoj-i-aktualny-stan-programow-lojalnosciowych-w-polsce>, 08.06.15.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Tajemnice sukcesu największych polskich programów lojalnościowych*, <http://nowymarketing.pl/a/2732,tajemnice-sukcesu-najwiekszych-polskich-programow-lojalnosciowych>, 08.06.15.

has not happened and other loyalty programs still exist. Until this day there is no such big cooperation of different businesses like in the Payback's loyalty program.¹³

According to research published in the "Rynek i Opinia" in 2013, 30% of surveyed customers claimed to be encouraged to purchase more products or services from a company because of its loyalty program. However, still 57% of respondents said that loyalty programs did not affect their purchase behaviour (Figure 1). Loyalty programs are said to be too common in Poland nowadays and they no longer are attractive for customers. The programs rather function as a must for almost every company. However, creating some diversity, uniqueness and entertainment has recently become more and more important in business. Making a hybrid of a loyalty program and game is considered as a solution of the future.¹⁴

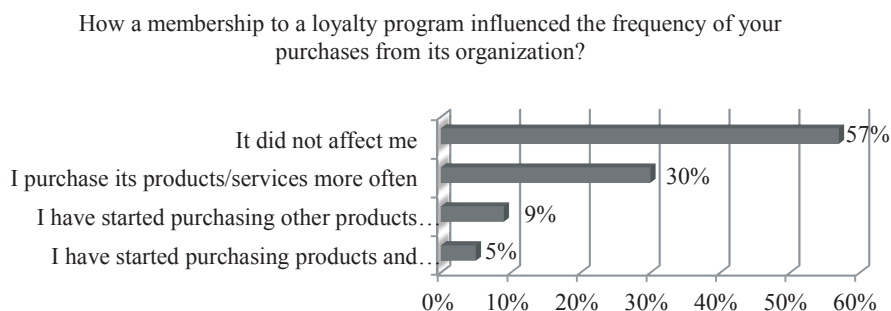


Figure 1. Effectiveness of loyalty programs in Poland in 2011 according to customers

Source: R. Turska, *Monitor Programów Lojalnościowych*, ARC Rynek i Opinia, sierpień 2013, quoted in *Programy Partnerskie & Lojalnościowe*, Media Planet, Luty 2012, p. 3.

Another popular promotion tool in Poland is so called "99 effect" technique. Its idea is based on a psychologically proven effect that customers are more willing to buy a product which price ends with 99. For example, according to French research, changing a label price from 8 to 7.99 increased sales level by 15%. It is supposed that people read prices starting from the left side, finding a price modified in this way as a lower one.¹⁵ It is also a way in which human's brain tries to simplify the reality.¹⁶ Another theory says that it simply brings associations with price promotion on a merchandise.¹⁷ In Poland such a system of price setting is very common and most products have 99 ending.

¹³ E. Waligóra-Borejza, op. cit.

¹⁴ P. Antkowiak, *Programy lojalnościowe 2013*, Marketing w Praktyce, March 2013, p. 2.

¹⁵ P. Miączyński, *Magia cen z końcówką 99 groszy*, http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,100896,13207735,Koniec_cen_z_koncówka_99_Tylko_dla_gotówki_Nadchodzi.html, 08.06.15.

¹⁶ M. Kraus, M. Kroenke, *Magiczne 99 groszy*, Marketing w Praktyce, 11/2011 <http://www.marketing.org.pl/index.php/go=2/act=2/aid=m4eaae32a11411/>, 09.06.15.

¹⁷ P. Miączyński, op. cit.

However, the NBP (the National Bank of Poland) plans to no longer emit 1 gr and 2 gr coins in Poland starting in the coming years. 62% of Poles support this idea, but it brings some controversy among shop owners too. There is a worry that the prices will stop being eye-catching or shops will be forced to decrease the prices to 0.95 gr ending what will naturally lead to profits decline too. On the other hand the annual cost of emitting 1 gr. and 2 gr. coins is 40 million PLN for the National Bank of Poland and that is the reason of introducing these changes.¹⁸

The above idea about price endings pattern is called a communication tool and is used by shopping networks. Moreover, it is said that it could serve as an internal business communication tool. According to the article “Magiczne 99 groszy” by M. Kraus and M. Kroenke published in the “Marketing w Praktyce”, some companies use different price endings as for example 95, 96, 97 for different products in order to designate the groups of products with a particular gross margin level.

According to Gemius’s report, the most appreciated forms of promotion by Polish customers are sale (pointed out by 71% of respondents) and a special offer for buying a set of products (43%). 37% found a 2+1 free promotion attractive. The form of promotion in which a customer gets bonus after registering themselves or recommending a product to a friend are recognized as the least attractive.¹⁹

4. Communication in Poland via advertising

Advertising is a business activity which can be defined as “telling people publicly about a product or service in order to persuade them to buy it”.²⁰ It was estimated that in 2011 the whole net value of the advertising market in Poland amounted to 7.78 billion PLN, what equals to 1.84 billion EUR. There was a 2.3% increase observed in comparison to the previous 2010 year.²¹

According to the data from 2013, the greatest part of this kind of communication occurs through television (49.2% of advertisements, Figure 2). Also Internet is a popular advertising channel in Poland (22.5% of total expenses of media market in Poland). 12.5% of advertising is done via press, of which 7.5% via magazines and 5% via newspapers. Out of home advertising (such as billboards, transits, street furniture and alternatives) constitutes only 6.7% of total expenses. Businesses in Poland also communicate with their customers using advertisements in cinemas. However, it is not as popular as other media channels and constitutes only 1.3%.²²

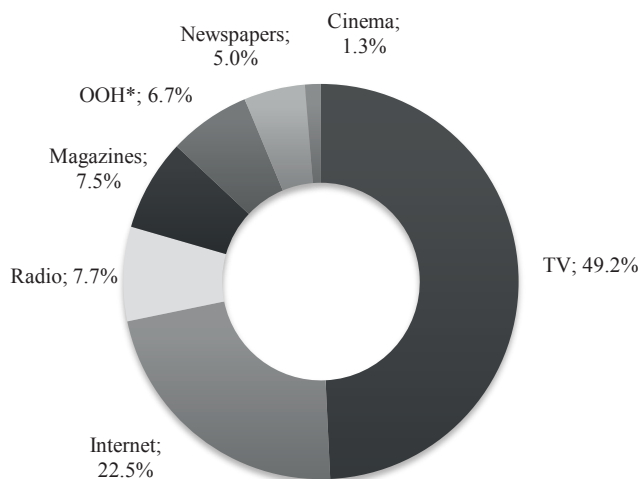
¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ *Programy lojalnościowe bez wpływu na 1/3 e-klientów w Polsce*, raport Gemiusa oraz e-Commerce Polska. <http://www.marketing-news.pl/message.php?art=38549>, 09.06.15.

²⁰ *Business English Dictionary...*, p. 11.

²¹ *Analiza Rynku Reklamy w Polsce*, MPG Media Market Scan 2011, p. 3.

²² *Rynek Reklamy po II Kwartale 2014 r.*, Report, Starlink, <http://www.starlink.pl/Analizy-trendow-mediowych/149/1/all/Po-Trzech-Kwartalach--2013-Roku-Rynek-Reklamy-Skurczy-l-Sie-O-5-7-Proc-.html>, 06.06.15.



*OOH – Out of home advertising

Figure 2. The media class structure in Poland in 2013

Source: *Rynek Reklamy po II Kwartale 2014 r.*, Raport, Starlink, <http://www.starlink.pl/Analizy-trendow-mediowych/149/1/all/Po-Trzech-Kwartalach--2013-Roku-Rynek-Reklamy-Skurczyl-Sie-O-5-7-Proc-.html>, 06.06.15.

When it comes to cultural characteristics, which should be considered in the context of external business communication, the most popular time of watching TV is between 8 and 10 pm. 95% of Poles above the age of 15 claim to watch TV. However, general trends show that small but consequent decrease in the average time of watching TV occurs. Most expenses on advertising in Poland are spent on food products, pharmaceuticals, telecommunication, trade and finances.²³

When it comes to commercial duration time, the most popular opinion in Poland is that they should last longer, but less frequently. 43% of surveyed people supported this opinion (Figure 3). However, 30% would prefer it to be short but more frequent and 27% the same in length and frequency as it is now. Therefore it can be said that there is no preference in this issue. In Poland, the concept of an integrated marketing communication is popular. This idea concerns business communication as a tool used in marketing, which makes use of both advertising and public relations. Advertising is considered as a relatively expensive form of communication with customers. However, it can guarantee reaching clients immediately with a clear and strong message, which can successfully create brand's awareness. On the other hand, its abilities of building a long lasting and credible company's image, in comparison to public relation activities, are limited.²⁴

²³ *Analiza Rynku ...*, p. 4.

²⁴ *Wyrastamy na lidera regionu – wywiad z Pawłem Trochimiukiem*, „Gazeta Finansowa”, 12/2011, Związek Firm Public Relations, <http://www.zfpr.pl/raporty>, 05.06.15.

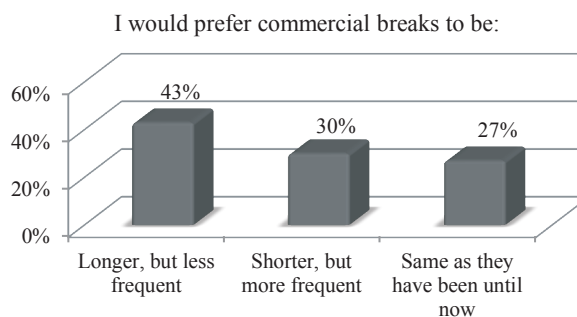


Figure 3. Poles' preferences regarding commercials' duration

Source: *Widzowie wolą dłuższe i rzadsze bloki reklamowe, chcą wybierać najciekawsze spoty*, <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/widzowie-wola-dluzsze-i-rzadsze-bloki-reklamowe-chca-wyberac-najciekawsze-spoty/>, 10.06.15.

A new communication tool called programmatic advertising is still not well known in Poland. Only 16% of surveyed marketers were familiar with this term.²⁵ Usually it is defined as a practice of delivering targeted messages. With the data on users, which marketers nowadays have, starting from “the pages they visit, to the items they search for, to the devices they are using, to the social graphs they share with”²⁶, programmatic advertising gives the possibility to adjust the content of the advertising appearing on a web site to the particular customer's preferences. Polish market is still at the stage of adaptation such solutions. At this moment huge companies are making use of them, noticing the benefits that they bring.

There are some legal rules regarding business communication through advertising in Poland. One of them is a ban on alcohol advertising, excluding beer.²⁷ According to the law, a beer advertisement must satisfy particular set of rules. For example, it cannot be promoted through building associations with relaxation, physical functions improvement, health, work, science, being successful at work or in life. It cannot be promoted i.e. in papers addressed to children, on magazines' covers, advertising banners, unless 20% of surface is covered by clearly visible information about the harmfulness of alcohol intake. Furthermore, beer cannot be advertised on Polish television between 6 am and 8 pm.²⁸ However, regarding

²⁵ Z. Forjasz, *Internet potrzebuje jeszcze 4 lat, by wyprzedzić telewizję*, Raport, Praktycy.com agency, Warszawa, 2014. http://www.press.pl/attachments/www-data/Za-cztery-lata-wydatki-na-reklame-internetowa-wyprzedza-wydatki-na-telewizje_311.pdf, p. 3, 10.06.15.

²⁶ B. Plomion, *Why Programmatic Marketing is the Future*, <http://digiday.com/platforms/why-programmatic-marketing-is-the-future/>, 08.06.15.

²⁷ *Przepisy dotyczące reklamy alkoholu w Europie i w Polsce*, Państwowa Agencja Rozwiązywania Problemów Alkoholowych, http://www.parpa.pl/download/Przepisy_dotyczace_reklamy_alkoholu_w_Europie_i_w_Polsce.pdf, 10.06.15.

²⁸ Ibidem.

other kinds of alcohol, it is allowed to give information about their sponsorship of some event or other issues.²⁹

By the Polish act of the protection of health against the consequences of tobacco and tobacco products use, advertising cigarettes is legally forbidden.³⁰ Another regulations say that it is not allowed to advertise medical products which must be prescribed by doctor to be obtained and some kind of games like card games, dicing, video lotteries and bets.³¹

Furthermore, Polish law forbids i.e. hidden advertisement, all advertisements that persuade underage people to make a purchase and which violate human dignity. There cannot be any content that discriminates people due to their race, gender, religion, political opinion or nationality. An advertisement cannot also promote life, safety or environment threatening activities.³² All of these rules significantly affect business communication with customers in Poland via advertising.

5. The communication in Poland in the context of public relations

Public relation is defined as “the work of explaining to the public what an organization does, so that they will understand it and approve of it”.³³ Another definitions call it “the relationship between an organization and the public”.³⁴

The common actors of PR communications in Poland are PR specialists. They serve a role of an agent between a business and its publicity. They are responsible for providing information to the external business environment and sustaining wanted corporate’s image.

Today’s public relation specialists in Poland also take advantages of the possibilities which social media give. According to the survey conducted by Millward Brown SMG/KRC³⁵ in which public relations specialists were interviewed, social media constitute an effective business communication channel (Figure 4).

75% of the survey participants judged it as at least rather effective. Nevertheless it should be taken under consideration that this evaluation is a subjective PR specialists opinion only, which is not based on measurable variables. However, it emphasizes the role of digital technologies in every aspect of business communication in Poland.

²⁹ M. Ożóg, *Reklama i komunikacja gospodarcza w świetle przepisów prawa polskiego i wspólnotowego*, p. 3, <http://www.emax-service.nazwa.pl/kopipol/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Reklama.pdf>, 10.06.15.

³⁰ Ustawa z dnia 9 listopada 1995 r. o ochronie zdrowia przed następstwami używania tytoniu i wyrobów tytoniowych (Dz. U. z 1996 r. Nr 10, poz. 55, z późn. zm.).

³¹ Ustawa z dnia 29 grudnia 1992 r. o radiofonii i telewizji (tekst jednolity, Dz.U. z 2004 r. Nr 2531).

³² Ibidem.

³³ *Business English Dictionary...*, p. 430.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 430.

³⁵ *Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie PR*, Projekt badawczy Millward Brown SMG/KRC, PRFORUM2010, November 2010, p. 6.

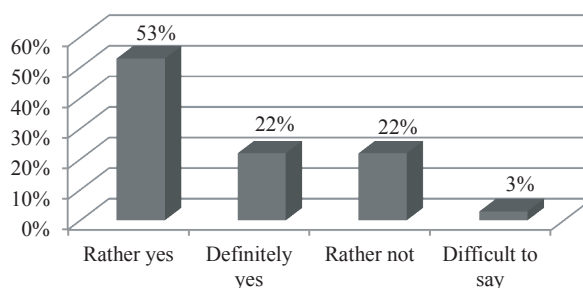


Figure 4. Social media as an effective PR communication channel in Poland

Source: *Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie PR*, Projekt badawczy Millward Brown SMG/KRC, PRFORUM2010, November 2010, p. 6.

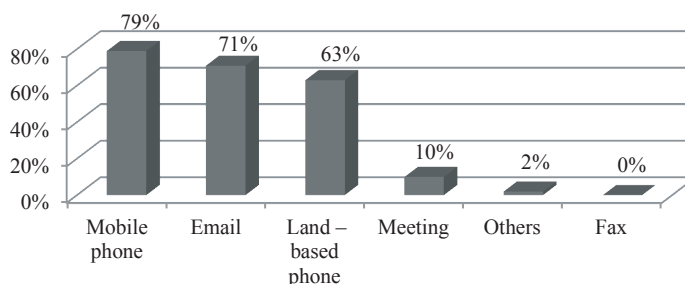


Figure 5. Communication Channels between journalists and PR specialists in Poland in 2006

Source: *Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie PR*, Projekt badawczy Millward Brown SMG/KRC, PRFORUM2010, November 2010, p. 6.

In Poland a lot of journalists contact PR specialists in order to obtain information about the particular business need for their current journal work. This kind of communication allows both businessmen and journalists to either confirm or to disclaim the rumours and opinions regarding the company. The communication occurs via mixed channels: mobile phones, emails and land based phones mostly. 79% of contacts are done using mobile phone, 71% using emails and 63% via land based phones. Only 10% of communication between Polish journalists and PR specialists include face to face meetings. It should be emphasized that this communication does not usually make use of one channel only. That is why almost 80% of contacts used mobile phone conversation (Figure 5).

Public relations activities are considered, for example in comparison to advertising, as a relatively expensive form of a business communication.³⁶ They

³⁶ *Wyrastamy na lidera regionu...*

require a lot of effort and often a personal contact, which require great knowledge of business communication culture when doing a business with foreigners.

When it comes to face-to-face communication, Polish businessmen are considered to be formal, moderately quiet and likely to be reserved especially at the first meeting. Jokes are not well perceived during first contacts and generally are left for more social occasions, rather than at important business meetings. Moreover, Poles are considered to be self-confident and decisive when it comes to business, maintain direct eye contact, get straight to the point and say what they think. However, an arm length of personal space is required for their comfort. Discussing issues personally, frequent visits as well as phone calls make a basis for making a written agreement and establishing a business relationship. Written agreements have priority over verbal agreements.³⁷

Some rules and superstitions, directly connected with culture, are also considered when doing a business. For example, there is a rule of not shaking hands in the doorway, as it is considered to bring bad luck. Also in occasions which include giving flowers to someone, it should be remember that the number of flowers should be odd, because it stands for good luck, and even the number is commonly associated with death and giving such a bunch of flowers may be considered as a faux pas.³⁸

Concerning language in the context of business communication, the most prominent languages spoken, when Polish is not the first language of all of the participants, are Russian, German and English. The first two languages are common languages of business in Poland due to the geographical proximity. However, the most commonly used language is English.³⁹

Addressing people in Poland in formal, therefore in business situations too, requires using individual titles. Women should be addressed as “Pani” (Mrs.) and men as Pan (Mr)⁴⁰ and a surname should followed. Using just a first name (even including the title proceeding it) is considered to be rude when used in a formal situation and without having a close and friendly relation with the person. Addressing someone by their surname only is considered disrespectful, even extremely impolite. “Mr” or “Mrs.” should not be dropped in favour of using a job title either. Academic titles are not commonly used except health care industry and academia.⁴¹ However, this information is valid in business communication in Polish language. If English language is used, therefore the rules typical of business communication in this language apply.

³⁷ *International Business Culture and Business Etiquette*, 2014 Passport to Trade 2.0, <http://businessculture.org/eastern-europe/poland/business-communication/>, 10.06.15.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

6. Virtual communication in Poland – the increasing role of social media

A great part of virtual business communication in Poland occurs via social media portals, like Facebook. According to Deloitte's report on Social Business (originally: "Biznes społecznościowy – nowa era w komunikacji biznesowej") in 2012, 55.4% of Poles were Internet users, which equals to 16,7 million people⁴², 44.4% declared using social media like Facebook, Myspace or Polish 'Nasza Klasa' every day.⁴³ It gives a great opportunity for a business to communicate with its customers, keeping the information relevant and updated easily, at the same time creating space in which the customers can ask their questions and give their feedback about the company, that is an important part of a successful external communication. It also allows to introduce new products and services easily. In 2012 in Poland there were 1.67 million active companies, of which 5% were present on Facebook. It meant that solely 70 thousand Polish companies and brands were present on this social portal.⁴⁴

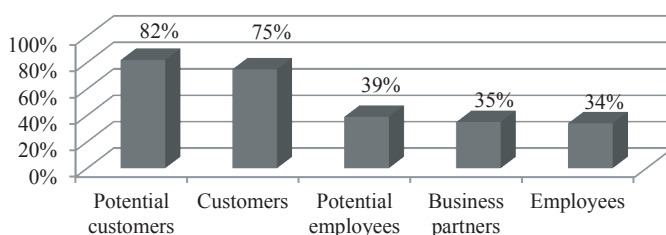


Figure 6. Business actors with who businesses communicate via social media in Poland

Source: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, *Biznes społecznościowy – nowa era w komunikacji biznesowej*, Raport na podstawie badania *Polskie firmy na Facebooku – portale społecznościowe w komunikacji marketingowej polskich przedsiębiorstw* © 2012 Deloitte Polska, Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, p. 12.

It is estimated that Poland earns around 150 – 200 million euros per year due to the Facebook activity.⁴⁵ The increasing role of social media in business shows that one

⁴² Badanie NetTrack, MillwardBrown SMG/KRC, quoted in: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, *Biznes społecznościowy – nowa era w komunikacji biznesowej*, Raport na podstawie badania *Polskie firmy na Facebooku - portale społecznościowe w komunikacji marketingowej polskich przedsiębiorstw*, © 2012 Deloitte Polska, Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, p. 6.

⁴³ D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁴ J. Szejda, O. Tkaczyk, J. Zając, *Polskie marki na Facebooku report*, Social Media 2012, quoted in: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁵ Measuring Facebook's economic impact in Europe report, Deloitte, 2012, quoted in: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, op. cit., p. 6.

way communication in Poland is no longer the best solution.⁴⁶ Speaking, announcing and presenting without any feedback and considering every client individually is not sufficient anymore. Customers' require deeper relation and constant contact, which is the essence of social media. However, it requires constant reaction and involvement from a business, bringing it into a new era where 24/7 activity is required.⁴⁷

In Poland, most businesses communicate with their potential customers (82%) and current customers (75%) via social media (Figure 5). However, 39% and 35% of companies communicate this way with their potential employees and business partners. Social media serve as a tool of internal communication with their employees for 34% businesses in Poland (Figure 5).

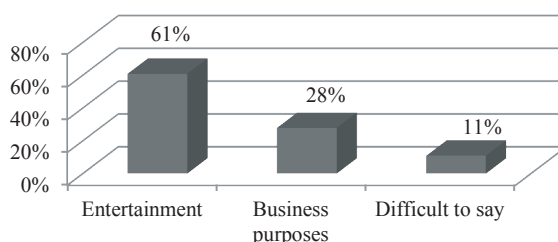


Figure 7. The role of social media in Poland

Source: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, *Biznes społecznościowy – nowa era w komunikacji biznesowej*, Raport na podstawie badania *Polskie firmy na Facebooku – portale społecznościowe w komunikacji marketingowej polskich przedsiębiorstw*, © 2012 Deloitte Polska, Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, p. 12.

The role of social media in Poland is still being considered as an entertainment, rather than a tool of business purposes. 61% of survey respondents claimed that and 28% pointed out the importance of social media for business use (Figure 6). However, it is visible that obviously still in virtual communication more traditional solutions such as a company's website, which are considered directly related to business activities, are more common tools.

According to sector's specialists (Figure 7), there were several barriers of development of communication through social media in Poland. The most often pointed out issues were still too low potential of this communication channel in the country (50% of the respondents agreed with that) and lack of control over customers' publicizing their opinions about a business, which may have led to negative comments on company's website in social media (45%). This naturally imposes a transparency on a business which connects with another business communication issue – CSR.

⁴⁶ D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁷ J. Niemedynski, *Social Media Manual 2010*, Report, Interactive Research Center, quoted in: D. Martyniuk, K. Jar, E. Suszek, op. cit., p. 6.

A business which needs to adjust its actions and activities keeps its positive image. On one hand social media serve as a great channel for a close and bilateral communication between a business and its customers. On the other hand they require a constant attention from a business and may be used in an irrational and unfair way by unsatisfied customers who have failed to get advantage of a business and decided to take a revenge by posting negative opinions. This risk is connected with the fact that not every lack of satisfaction on consumer's side states for businesses fault, especially in service branch.

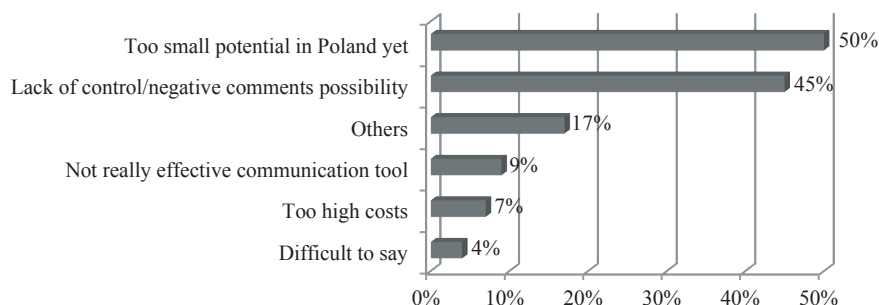


Figure 8. Barriers of the development of business communication through social media in Poland

Source: *Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie PR*, Projekt badawczy Millward Brown SMG/KRC, PRFORUM2010, November 2010, p. 7.

Other issues which may create a barrier for communication development through social media in Poland were, among others, too high costs, low effectiveness, lack of rationality in communication as well as the difficulty of measuring the real impact on sales and the impossibility of reaching some customers, the ones who still do not have Internet access or an account on a particular social media portal or simply do not like social media. According to the data from 2011 78% of people at the age of 50 and above have not been using Internet, which represents a 10 million size group of potential customers.⁴⁸ It has also been pointed out that a portal's persistency is difficult to predict.⁴⁹ Businessmen in Poland may be confused after a sudden decrease of popularity of "Nasza Klasa", a famous social media portal, which for the past few years was the leading one in the country. Even though Facebook was already present in Poland, "Nasza Klasa" was still most popular, but after some privacy change policies most of its users suddenly or gradually moved to Facebook.

The new communication tools and changes in society require a constant trend's prediction and learning how to use these tools efficiently. Today's communication

⁴⁸ G. Cimchowski, G. Hutten-Czapski, M. Rał, W. Sass, *Polska Internetowa. Jak internet dokonuje transformacji polskiej gospodarki*, The Boston Consulting Group, a report for Google, 2011, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *Media społecznościowe...*, p. 7.

concerns in Poland focus on social media. Marketing campaigns which aim is solely publicity, slowly become the relic of the past. Nowadays business activities connected with communication have the realization of concrete goals as a goal, as for example, convincing a particular group of customers to some idea or to create a base for business negotiations.⁵⁰

7. Conclusions

A lot of years ago scientists noticed that an intercultural communication was a subject of importance because of the fact that organizations did not only deal with foreigners.⁵¹ Nowadays it is also due to the fact that “the workforce of the future within their own natural borders is growing more and more diverse, ethnically and culturally”.⁵² Discovering the business communication in the context of culture gains more value because of that. The following article presents four aspects of external business communication, such as sales promotion, public relations, advertising and virtual communication. Each of them has been analysed in the context of Poland and its specifics, which is the aim of the article. Also the economical characteristics of Poland are presented in order to provide better understanding of current conditions of the country for modern business communication.

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⁵⁰ *Wyrastamy na lidera regionu – wywiad z Pawłem Trochimiukiem*, Rynek Public Relations w Polsce, Gazeta Finansowa, 12/2011, Związek Firm Public Relations, <http://www.zfpr.pl/raporty>, 05.06.15.

⁵¹ M. Limaye, D. Victor, *Cross – Cultural Business Communication Research: State of the Art and Hypotheses for the 1990s*, Journal of Business Communication, July 1991, p. 2.

⁵² Ibidem.

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