

MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL MEANS USED BY MODERN COMPANIES IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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Purpose: The purpose of the study is to identify the marketing tools most often used in communication with stakeholders by enterprises located in Poland, with different business profiles, different forms of ownership, differing in ownership capital and number of employees, to show the frequency of their use of modern tools in marketing communication and to determine their position in relation to traditional tools. In addition, to present significant differences between enterprises with the mentioned attributes in the frequency of their use of instruments.

Design/methodology/approach: The survey was conducted on a random sample of 225 enterprises in July-September 2020 throughout Poland (16 provinces). The method used in the study was a diagnostic survey.

Findings: The results of the research prove that an important feature of marketing communications of modern enterprises is the integration of promotional instruments and activities. Tools based on new technologies are gaining popularity, but they are not displacing traditional tools. The frequency with which organizations use selected marketing tools is determined by various attributes of the organization, i.e. the business profile and size of the organization, especially the ownership capital.

Research limitations/implications: The results of the survey prompt a broader and more in-depth analysis of the marketing activities of modern companies in the context of the marketing tools they use. This primarily concerns the determination of the recipients of marketing messages, the frequency of communication with them through selected instruments.

Practical implications: The survey results show that foreign-owned companies are using more traditional and new marketing communication instruments. Therefore, companies with Polish capital need to accelerate the integration of promotional instruments and activities in the activity.

Originality/value: The article is primarily of cognitive value, emphasizing the importance of modern technologies in the marketing activities of enterprises. Consequently, it can be an element that stimulates the management of modern organizations to seek and apply marketing instruments using the latest technological solutions to reach specific groups of stakeholders.

Keywords: marketing communication, marketing communication tools, technological measures.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate with the environment is a factor which very often determines the success of contemporary companies. Thanks to marketing communication, companies have the possibility to conduct a dialogue with their external and internal environment, to encourage customers to buy offered products or services, convince them to the brand, build loyalty or a sense of belonging to the organisation.

The development of modern technologies, especially the Internet, causes significant changes in the marketing communication of companies. These technologies affect the functioning of the market, the relationship between the consumer and the company, and thus the formula of marketing, increase the effectiveness of marketing activities undertaken by companies, but above all allow not only for direct, but also indirect interaction, improve marketing communication. Modern companies increasingly use the Internet to communicate with their potential and existing customers. They use a wide range of marketing instruments of influence, by means of which companies communicate with their environment and ensure the flow of information between companies, intermediaries, and consumers, as well as within the company.

The aim of the study is to present modern technological means most frequently used in marketing communication of companies and to compare them with traditional tools. The study assumes that the frequency of their use by companies located in Poland is determined by the profile of their activity, the form of ownership, the owner's capital, and the number of employees.

2. Marketing communication of companies

In marketing theory and practice, the term marketing communication is sometimes defined and presented differently. The difference in approaches is expressed by two approaches: narrow and broad. In the narrower approach, marketing communication is treated as promotion and means a set of instruments and activities through which the company communicates to the market information characterizing the product or/and the company, shapes the needs of buyers, stimulates, and directs, and reduces its price flexibility (Wiktor, 2016, p. 49). According to this understanding, promotion is only one of the spheres of communication initiated by the company (Kall, 2002, p. 86), expresses the unidirectionality of its influence on the market and transmission of information. On the other hand, in a broader dimension, marketing communication combines promotion with the need and tools necessary to initiate a dialogue between a company and its environment. As emphasised by Ph. Kotler and K.L. Keller (2012,

p. 510), marketing communication is the various ways in which companies try to inform consumers and remind them – directly or indirectly – about the products and brands they have on offer. It is the way in which a company establishes a dialogue and builds relationships with consumers. Thus, marketing communication assumes the need not only to transmit sales information, but also to obtain relevant information, relevant to its objectives, as well as to respond appropriately, in partnership, to the information flowing from the environment (Perenc, 2013, p. 471). Thus, it assumes the presence of a feedback loop, constituting an interactive, two-way flow of information, necessary for a properly understood communication process (Wiktor, 2016, p. 50). Interactivity changes the traditional division of roles in the act of communication, allowing each participant to take on the role of sender and/or receiver of messages, which affects both the content and the way they are received (Nowak, 2020, p. 25). In this sense, marketing communication becomes a real dialogue, an exchange of information between the sender and the receiver. This dialogue involves, on the one hand, the company with its information and promotional activities and, on the other hand, the addressee – with the structure of its needs and preferences. An analogous understanding of marketing communication can be found in other studies (Rossiter and Bellman, 2005; Bruhn, 2013; Bajdak, Spyra, 2021).

As noted by Porcu et al. (2012, pp. 326-329) the interactivity of marketing communication is based on the need to establish a continuous two-way dialogue between the organization and different stakeholder groups, not only customers. The object of influence of the company is not only the potential buyer. It is constituted by a wide audience, as wide and complex as the modern recipient, stakeholder and consumer of social communication media is becoming, both in active and passive forms (Wiktor, 2016, p. 49). Stakeholders of marketing communication include customers, employees, local community, media, consumer groups, public opinion, opinion leaders and unmeasured addressees (Wells et al., 2006, p. 200). The circle of addressees of marketing communication essentially includes all stakeholder groups of a company.

The key purpose of the existence of contemporary marketing communication of companies with the market is to exert influence on the recipients of the message, which determines the effectiveness and efficiency of actions initiated by the sender of the message. Marketing communication of a company is aimed at increasing the degree of its competitiveness on the market through the implementation of the adopted marketing strategies and optimal use of communication instruments with the target client.

3. New technologies in marketing communication

The system of communicating the company with the market must currently consider the latest trends in marketing, which are related to the Internet and the development of digital technologies. These include content marketing, search engine tools, mobile marketing, big data (i.e., analysis and use of data left by users of various devices connected to the Internet), personalisation (better targeting) of marketing messages (prepared with the individual needs of the recipient in mind) (Wallis, 2014, p. 325). Among them, content marketing, which consists in attracting potential customers by publishing and distributing attractive and useful content via the Internet, which includes articles, e-videos, podcasts, graphic forms, etc., addressed to a strictly specified group of recipients, is very popular (Handley, Chapman, 2012). Its goal is to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately stimulate profits from customer actions. The tools most often used by companies for content marketing are social media (Matwiejczyk, 2020, p. 172). They enable networking and communication on an emotional level (Wieczerzycki, 2014, p. 307), and are key to building customer engagement. The definite increase in social media consumption furthermore provides a rationale for intensifying influencer marketing and celebrity endorsement activities, which are currently important marketing communication tools (Sobura, 2021, p. 133). Both are regarded as marketing communication tools that endorse a product, service or social idea with the image of a recognizable person (Shouten, Janssen, Verspaget, 2020, p. 259). It is not uncommon for companies to choose to work with celebrities to make consumers aware of products in a less pushy and more trust-inspiring way (Aw, Labrecque, 2020, p. 895), which translates into brand recognition and awareness, as well as purchase intentions and behavior. There are many types of social media on the Internet, i.e., social networks, microblogs and blogs, communities of professionals, industry communities, social networking sites, discussion forums, opinion and recommendation sites, e-commerce sites (e-commerce platforms) and others (More extensively: Bonek, Smaga, 2013, pp. 14-15). These communication tools are also successfully used by companies to reach their customers. With their help, it is possible to connect with a wide public and thus influence consumers (Łopacińska, 2014, p. 5.). In 2021, more than 40% of companies in Poland used at least one social media. The most popular tool was social networking sites (CSO Report, 2021, p. 85). The main activity of marketing in social networks, is the creation and management of a brand or company fan page, creating a positive brand image (Howaniec, 2014, p. 173). As part of the activities carried out, it is possible to post photos, videos, text messages, or create special applications aimed at activating and engaging fans of the brand (company) promoted in this way. In a study that was conducted for the Social Media Examiner website, 96% of the surveyed companies admitted that they use social media as a tool for marketing and promoting brands online. According to the results, it was also managed to

establish that 84% of the surveyed companies consider Facebook or Twitter as an integral part of the marketing strategy used (Sanak-Kosmowska, 2018, p. 82).

In an era in which it is increasingly important to create real value for the customer to promote the company or its brands, in addition to social networks, content communities (e.g., Wikipedia, YouTube) are commonly used by companies, or – slightly less frequently – virtual social worlds such as Second Life (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010, pp. 59-68). An equally popular tool are newsletters, which serve to keep in touch with the recipients of messages and inform them about news, changes and offers. It is worth noting that social media platforms (e.g., Face-book, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn), as well as blogs or video blogs (e.g., Twitter), are considered by consumers to be the most reliable sources of information about a company's activities (Rogala, 2014, p. 63).

The growing number of mobile devices, i.e., mobile phones (smartphones), laptops, netbooks, PDAs, tablets, etc., means that companies are increasingly opting for marketing communications via them. These devices increase the possibilities of perception, cognition and can provide a variety of values and satisfy many user needs (Drzazga, 2016, p. 91). The message through such devices can be more personalised and reach the right target group, and interaction with the recipient is also possible, which promotes increased customer loyalty and community building around the brand or product (Taranko, 2015, p. 199). Companies increasingly use mobile advertising or prepare websites tailored to the capabilities of different devices, including smartphones. They also create various applications for mobile devices that include display (page view) advertising in the form of banners or text links (Wallis, 2014, p. 328). In addition to text messages and graphics, it is possible to send music files or videos to smartphones, which makes it possible to conduct customised mobile marketing campaigns. In the case of mobile marketing communication, companies can also use instruments such as direct sales, sales promotion, and public relations. These instruments make it possible to optimise the process of marketing communication of companies and allow for cost reduction, facilitate reaching the target audience in real time, can be individually adapted to the location and preferences of customers, and enable direct dialogue with the consumer (Drzazga, 2016, p. 91). Thanks to them, the message and exchange of information are becoming more and more individual, targeting a narrower and more precisely defined audience or even an individual recipient (Budziewicz-Guźlecka, 2011, p. 238). Thanks to mobile technologies, companies can interact with their environment anywhere in the world and at any time.

Finally, mention should be made of the observed development of so-called Big Data and Big Data analytics. The Web provides an opportunity to collect data that users unwittingly leave behind (so-called digital footprints). This creates large data sets, the analytics of which have a significant impact in many areas of life (Rust, Kosinski, Stillwell, 2020, p. 2). When companies conduct online communication activities, thanks to Big Data analysis, the point of interest is no longer the content, but the individual character of the message, e.g., advertisements appearing on users' computer monitors (Drzazga, 2016, pp. 86-99).

The personalised content of advertising is communicated to individual users. In turn, recipients of communication activities can also decide on their own what they want to 'watch'. All this is aimed at providing, important from the user's point of view, advertising content, which should be perceived by the recipient simultaneously as information and additional value.

4. Marketing communication of companies located in Poland in the light of own research

The research on digital competences of companies located in Poland undertaken under the Military University of Technology research grant no. UGB 744 was commissioned to Research Institute IPC in Wrocław and conducted on a random sample of 225 companies in the period July-September 2020 across Poland (16 provinces). The respondents were owners, board members, general managers or managers dealing with IT in the surveyed organisations. The research covered several areas of company operations. One of them was the area of marketing. The aim of the research in this area was to determine the frequency of use of marketing tools by the surveyed companies differing in business profile, form of ownership, ownership capital and the number of employees.

The research sample included 75 (approx. 33%) production, trade and service organisations and the same number (75 – approx. 33% each) of small companies (employing 10-49 people), medium-sized companies (50-249 people) and large companies (250 and more people). 124 companies (approx. 55%) were incorporated companies, 79 (approx. 35%) were partnerships, and only 22 (approx. 10%) were sole proprietorships. 173 companies (about 77%) had predominant or exclusive Polish capital and 52 (about 23%) had predominant or exclusive foreign capital.

The aim of the study was to determine the frequency of use of marketing tools by companies with the above-mentioned attributes. The marketing tools used by the surveyed companies to communicate with stakeholder groups were divided into several groups:

- traditional tools (means of promotion, advertising, and PR in traditional media such as press, radio, television, preparation of promotion and information materials such as leaflets, catalogues, gadgets, business cards etc. as well as outdoor advertising such as billboards, boards etc.);
- social media (maintaining company profiles and websites in social media, advertising in social media, including sponsored posts and other paid forms, cooperation with influencers, bloggers and youtubers);
- search engines and websites (company websites and other company websites, advertising in Google Ads, website positioning in search engines);

- online communication and advertising (applications enabling the sending and receiving of messages in the form of SSM, MMS, coupons, QR codes, mobile advertising; online communicators (Zoom, Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype); online advertising (graphic, text or video), contextual advertising; e-mail marketing (newsletter and e-mail advertising) and marketing automation tools; content marketing – creation of materials in the form of text, graphics and video; (e.g. webinars, podcasts, applications);
- participation and sponsorship of mass events (collective events (events) such as fairs, festivals, reviews, open days, conferences); sponsorship of mass events and charity activities of the organisation;
- communication with stakeholders through sales representatives (promotion of the company's offers by sales representatives and vendors).

Statistical tests consisted of testing the statistical hypothesis of equality of the structure index (frequency) in two populations with tests of compliance (null hypothesis), against the alternative hypothesis (structure index in one population is greater than in the other). The research was conducted with a significance coefficient of $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, companies from three industries were examined in pairs with each other, regarding the size of the company, the form of ownership and the ownership capital. The structure index (frequency) for the given population was the sum of the frequency of using marketing tools at least several times a week and several times a month.

A general summary of the frequency of use of marketing tools by the surveyed companies shows that about 51% of the surveyed companies use them no more than several times a year (several times a year or once a year or less often), about 33% - at least several times a month (several times a week or several times a month), while about 16% do not use them at all.

The aim of the study was to determine whether the company's business profile differentiates it in terms of the frequency of use of marketing tools (Figure 1). The research sample consisted of 75 (about 33%) each of manufacturing, trade and service organisations.

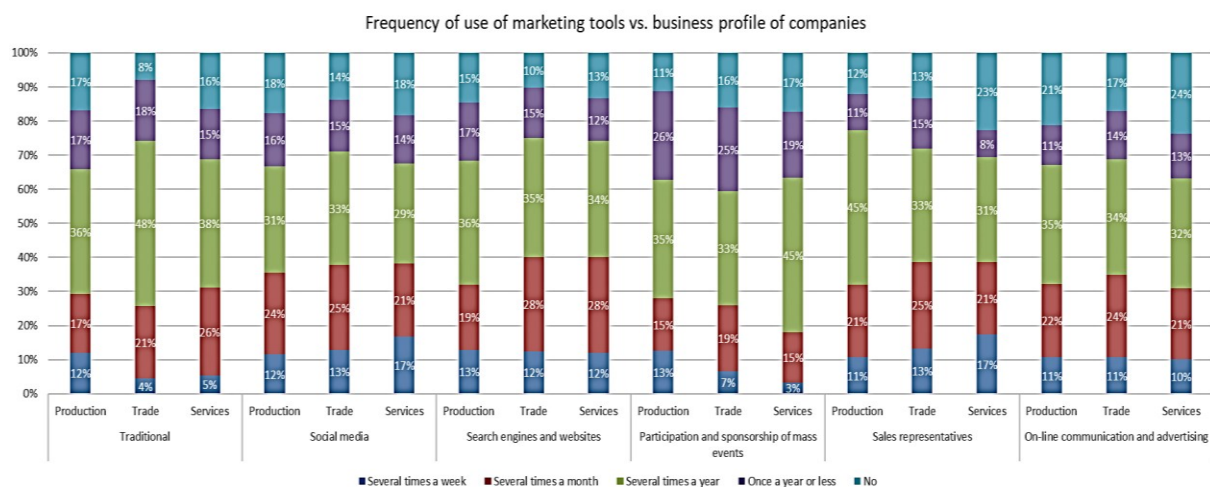


Figure 1. Frequency of use of marketing tools vs. business profile of companies (N = 225). Source: own elaboration.

Statistical studies have confirmed significant differences between manufacturing and trading companies and manufacturing and service companies in the frequency of use of marketing tools. In both cases, production companies use search engines and websites less frequently (about 32%) than trade companies (about 40%) and service companies (about 40%). In the case of participation and sponsoring of mass events, significant statistical differences were found between trading and service and manufacturing and service companies. Service companies use these tools less frequently (about 18%) than trading companies (36%) and manufacturing companies (about 28%). In the case of the use of other marketing tools, no significant statistical differences between the companies of the industries have been shown.

Manufacturing companies (about 16% on average), trade companies (about 13% on average) and service companies (about 16% on average) do not use marketing tools to communicate with stakeholders at all. It is puzzling that service companies do not use online communication and advertising in about 24% and communication through sales representatives in about 23%. It is also worth noting that all the listed groups of companies use social media equally often in their communication with stakeholders (manufacturing – about 36%, trade and services – about 38% each).

The study involved 75 companies classified as small, medium, and large (total companies = 3 x 75 =225). The size of the surveyed organisations also differentiates the frequency of use of selected marketing tools in selected groups of tools (Figure 2).

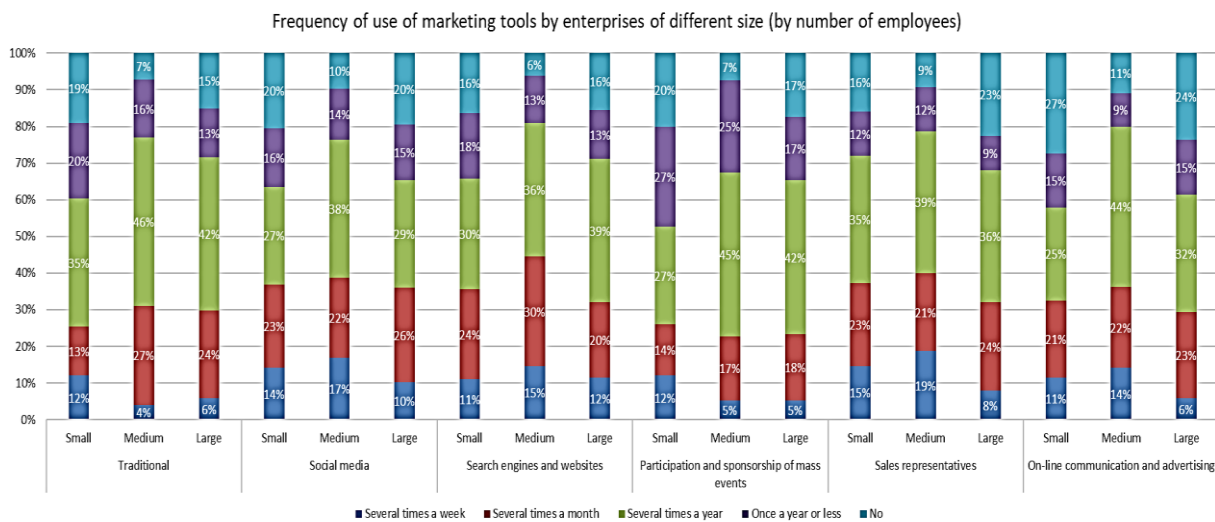


Figure 2. Frequency of use of marketing tools by companies of different size (by number of employees) (N = 225). Source: own elaboration.

Statistically significant differences exist between medium-sized and small companies and medium-sized and large companies in the frequency of use of marketing tools. Medium-sized companies (about 45%) use search engines and websites more often than small companies (about 35%). Surprisingly, a similar relationship exists between medium-sized and large companies. Medium-sized companies use both search engines and websites (about 45%) and online communication and advertising (about 40%) more often than large companies (about

36% and about 29% respectively). In the case of the use of other marketing tools, no significant statistical differences were found between companies of different sizes.

Analysing each of the three groups individually, it should be emphasised that small companies most often use communication via sales representatives (about 38%). This tool was also indicated by approx. 40% of medium-sized companies, and slightly more of them (about 45%) most often use search engines and websites. Large companies use social media most frequently.

Comparing small, medium, and large companies in terms of lack of use of marketing tools, it is worth noticing that on average the percentage of small and large companies is the same (approx. 20%). Medium-sized companies, on the other hand, do not use marketing tools at all in only about 9% of cases.

Companies with different forms of ownership took part in the study. Among them there were 124 (about 55%) capital companies, 79 (about 35%) partnerships and 22 (about 10%) sole proprietorships. The statistical research did not show any significant differences between the ownership form of the companies and the frequency of marketing tools used by them. Analysing each of the three groups of companies, it is worth noting that partnerships most often use social media (about 37%), while capital companies – search engines and websites (about 39%) and communication through sales representatives (about 37%). The latter is also frequently used by organisations running sole proprietorships (about 41%). Apart from that, they use social media just as often (about 40%). The research has also shown that organisations running sole proprietorships are far more likely not to use the indicated marketing tools at all (on average about 29%). Their percentage is definitely higher than that of partnerships (about 15% on average) and companies (about 14% on average).

The surveyed companies were also compared based on owner capital (Figure 3).

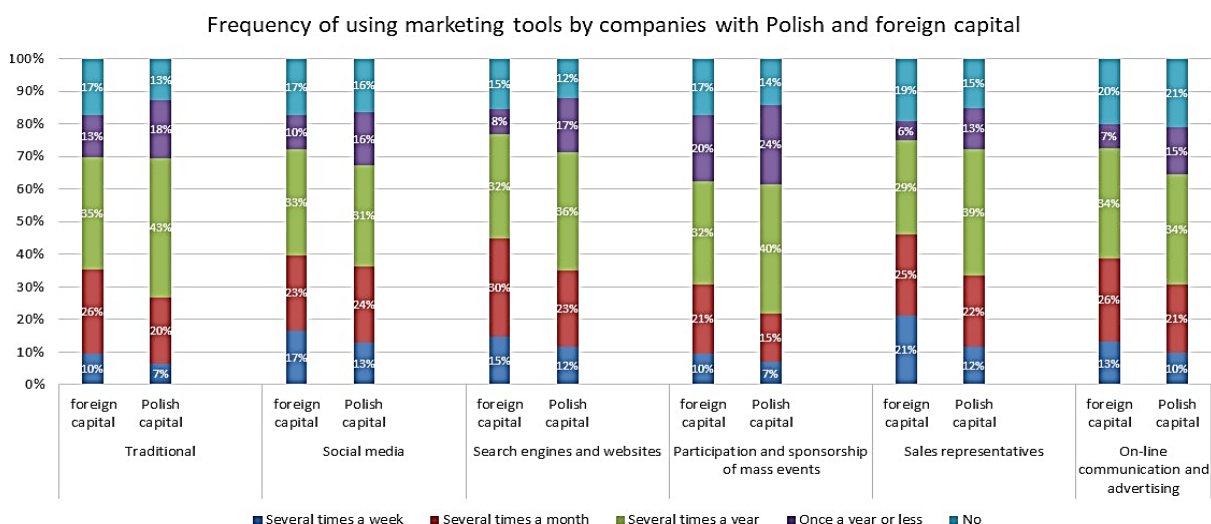


Figure 3. Frequency of using marketing tools by companies with Polish and foreign capital (N = 225). Source: own elaboration.

The study included 173 companies (about 77%) with predominant or exclusive Polish capital and 55 (about 23%) with predominant or exclusive foreign capital. This attribute of the organisation differentiated the organisations to the greatest extent in terms of the most frequently used marketing tools.

Comparing companies with Polish and foreign capital it is worth emphasising that on average about 40% of companies with foreign capital use marketing tools frequently (several times a year and several times a month). Such companies with Polish capital are slightly less (about 31%). The research showed statistically significant differences in the most frequently used marketing tools by both groups of companies. It was found that the companies with foreign capital use more often than the companies with Polish capital both traditional tools (about 36%), search engines and websites (about 45%), participation and sponsoring of mass events (about 31%), communication through sales representatives (about 46%) and communication and advertising online (about 39%). Companies with Polish capital use them much less frequently (about 27%, 35%, 22%, 34% and 31%, respectively, which is less by 9 to 12 p.p.). No statistical difference was found in the case of the two groups of companies' use of social media.

5. Summary

Conducted literature research and the results of own research give grounds to state that differentiation and complexity of marketing communication tools cause that its important feature becomes integration of promotional instruments and activities in the activity of companies located in Poland. New instruments of marketing communication connected with the use of specialised internet marketing tools, including mobile ones, are gaining popularity. This does not mean that contemporary organisations do not use traditional instruments, i.e., promotion and advertising in traditional media, i.e., press, radio, television, leaflets, promotion and advertising during mass events or by sales representatives. However, it should be noted that compared to new technology-based instruments, e.g., social media promotion and advertising, corporate websites and company websites, online advertising, etc., the frequency of their use is somewhat lower. It can be assumed that this is an effect of the increasing degree of computerisation of modern companies.

The assumption made in the study that different organisation attributes determine the frequency of use of specific marketing tools has been confirmed by the research results. Only in relation to the different forms of ownership of the surveyed organisations was no statistically significant difference confirmed between them and the frequency of marketing tools used by them. All other attributes of organisations, i.e., business profile, ownership capital and size, determine the frequency of selected marketing tools used by organisations. Most correlations were confirmed in the case of companies with Polish and foreign capital.

The latter apply more frequently almost all groups of marketing communication instruments included in the study.

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