

# A TYPOLOGY OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY EMPLOYED BY PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS ON THE POLISH MARKET – AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EXAMPLES AND THEIR MARKET CONDITIONING

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## ABSTRACT

From the viewpoint of pharmaceutical companies, the employed tools of communication in the realm of public relations is a very important element of communication with many groups of their milieu, internal as well as external. Especially in the example of the second category, PR activity is often the only available means of communication of these organizations and their milieu, as the existing legal regulations essentially limit the possibility of realizing their communications activities, including those linked with the promotion of their own products, and especially advertising of these products. The goal of this article is to analyze selected communication strategies executed by pharmaceutical companies on the Polish market over the last two decades, and their market conditioning, as well as delineating their basic typologies.

**Key words:** public relations, public relations strategy, pharmaceutical public relations

## *1. Introduction*

From the viewpoint of pharmaceutical companies, the communication tools employed in the sphere of public relations, are a very important element of commu-

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nication with many groups in their milieu, both internal and external. Especially with regards to the latter category, public relations activity is often the only available channel of these organizations with their milieu, as existing legal restriction, essentially, limit the possibility of realizing other communication activities, including those linked with the promoting of their own products, and especially the advertising of these products.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, these organizations, in a similar manner to other commercial entities, are obliged to function in a market atmosphere, which is marked by a high level of competition. They cannot afford then, in such a situation, to neglect their own communication needs, resulting from their market position; they have to modify their manner of communicating to those limitations established by legal regulations.

Amongst the recipients of public relations activities conducted by producers of medicine, there is a broad spectrum of people, whose consciousness and knowledge on the subject of sphere of activity of these organizations, and also their favorability and eventual confidence to their competence and professionalism, will be of key significance for the efficacy of the functioning of these organizations in a market environment. The goal of this article is to analyze selected public relations strategies, executed by pharmaceutical companies on the Polish market, over the course of the last twenty years, and their market conditioning. Based on an analysis of their activities, an initial typology of the public relations strategy employed on the Polish market regarding the pharmaceutical industry will be created.

## 2. A Definition of a Public Relations Strategy

Public relations professionals, as well as those who research this phenomenon, have become accustomed to the lack of one, universally accepted definition of *public relations*.<sup>2</sup> In professional literature on the subject, there is a similar difficulty in relation to the term *public relations strategy*. Many authors of textbooks and other works dealing with public relations, when using this term, oftentimes refrain from providing a precise delineation of its meaning. One of these works, which has taken up the challenge of defining an operational concept of *public relations strategy*, is authored by Sandra Oliver and is entitled „The Strategy of Public Relations”, where she cites and reviews a whole series of definitions by

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the list of commercials of pharmaceuticals which have been suspended by way of the decision of the Main Pharmaceutical Inspector: <https://www.gif.gov.pl/pl/decyzje-i-komunikaty/decyzje/archiwum/wstrzymanie-reklam> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>2</sup> A whole series of factors influence this situation, amongst the most important are the varied and dynamically evolving set of instruments, that is the activities employed in PR tech size of the function, the public relations fulfill in a contemporary organization, and finally the quite varied approach to this phenomenon characterized by specialists in various fields, including management, sociology, journalism, or communications studies. For more on this subject see: Szymańska 2007, pp. 114–115.

other authors, at the same time pointing out the rather varied manners in which this concept is understood.<sup>3</sup>

Public relations strategy is defined as, amongst others, as the means *assisting one to reach a goal* (J.L. Thompson), *the direction which an organization chooses to complete its mission* (R. Benett), or also (in H. Mintzberg's opinion) there are five different manners of obtaining this goal: the *plan* we understand to be a conscious, desired action, *ploy* that is a specific activity aimed at outwitting a rival or competitor, *pattern* that is a specific, unique model of action, *position* serving to locate an organization in a given environment, as well as *perspective*, in other words, the complex manner in which the world is perceived.<sup>4</sup> Oliver also uses five other terms used by researchers and managers, including the definition of *vision*, understood as being the registration of a general thought, leading to the realization of the demands of an organization, relevant to its *mission*, understood as being the basic desire/goal of an organization, relative to its mission, understood as being the basic desire/goal of an organization, which constitutes the foundation of its objectives, *strategy* in other words the means or process, by which an organization completes its mission, *policy*, that is main formal and informal principles or criteria employed when undertaking a decision, *objective*, defining that which must be obtained in the long run, the *goal*, understood as being specific intentions in the short term the *aim* which is a combination of long and short term plans, and finally *tactics*, understood as being planned decisions and activities for the obtaining of short-term goals.<sup>5</sup> As may be seen, even a cursory examination of the content of these concepts lead to the conclusion that they shouldn't be employed interchangeably nor as synonymously with the term *PR strategy*. This is due to the fact that the *PR strategy* should take into consideration *vision*, as well as reflect in its content the *mission* of the organization, which should also be compatible with its *policy* and include an indication of its short and long term *objectives*.<sup>6</sup> Barbara Rozwadowska has also called attention to this fact, which would indicate the PR strategy is first of all, secondary to the strategy of the organization as a whole, and second, harkens back to the mission of the organization and, as opposed to its vision, must be realistic and specific, and at the same time, flexible.<sup>7</sup> In this manner Barbara Rozwadowska, who does not herself define what the term PR strategy means, clearly differentiates it from terms such as mission and vision of an organization. In such a situation, the acceptance of a definition that is perhaps broad, general, which includes all the essential components and areas of PR strategy in accordance with the strategy of public relations, is a whole of assumptions as well as of a program of activities of a given organization, spread over (a period

<sup>3</sup> Oliver 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Oliver 2005, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> For more on what the scope of the term PR strategy means see *Strategia PR in: Szymańska 2011*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rozwadowska 2002, p. 87.

of) time, timing to obtain its goals through the aid communication tools, is justified. The zones of communication strategy will be equally internal communication within an organization (the so-called internal PR), external communications (addressed to any and all groups outsider of the organizational structure of the sender), as well as marketing communication, whose recipients will be clients (in the instance of pharmaceutical companies its patients), as well as those people and groups which, whose suggestions or recommendations will be effective regarding the use of a given type of medicine.

### *3. The Typology of the Public Relations Strategy Used in the Pharmaceutical Industry*

Some of the basic criteria which could be used to differentiate and identify the diverse types of PR communications strategy, could be the goal which it hopes to obtain, and the target group, to which this strategy is directed. This is because the goal of these activities, as well as the appropriately “under” of its selected recipients, will continue to influence, in an essential manner, the choice of tools, which in a specific strategy will be employed.

Therefore, those groups which are especially important among the targets of the communications activity conducted by the producers of medicine, include patients, doctor, pharmacists, the media, governmental authorities, both legislative and executive, recipients of internal public relations, public opinion as a whole, and also – especially in the context lobbying activities – other entities operating in the sphere of pharmaceuticals, as they can, in certain aspects, possess convergent goals and needs related to the influence of communications on the aforementioned groups of receivers.

An example of just such activity, reported in the media over the last several months,<sup>8</sup> is a project being implemented by the Związek Pracodawców Innowacyjnych Firm Farmaceutycznych INFARMA (Union of Innovative Employers of Pharmaceutical Companies).<sup>9</sup> INFARMA’s project is geared equally to patients, as well as to doctor. Its goal is to build up confidence which patients have to their pharmacists, which is to based on the introduction of transparency in the cooperation doctor have with pharmaceutical companies, so that the patient would have the certainty, that the medicine which was prescribed to him, is essential for the restoration of his health, and not because his doctor has some kind of

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<sup>8</sup> Cichočka: 2014.

<sup>9</sup> The INFARMA firm includes 30 pharmaceutical companies operating in Poland, which perform research and development, but also produce medicine, including biotechnology. It is a member of the European Federation of the Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations EFPIA (Europejska Federacja Przemysłu i Stowarzyszeń Farmaceutycznych EFPIA). On its web page it says that its goal is to undertake initiatives influencing system solutions in the field of health care. See: <http://www.infarma.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

agreement with company producing this medicine. With this goal in mind, the initiators of this project have worked out a Code of Transparency of Principles, as well as guidelines for members of the union for formulating individual tri-lateral agreements, that is between the researcher (the doctor conducting the tests of the medicine, the pharmaceutical company (producing the medicine) as well as the hospital where the medicine is being tested. Ultimately, the doctors also have to freely agree to publish the information regarding the level and manner of their remuneration for their cooperation with the pharmaceutical companies. (the Code takes into consideration various forms of remuneration: for example invitations to appear at prestigious conferences without charge, etc.).<sup>10</sup> In this context, the most important challenge for the initiators of this action will be, as they themselves indicate, gaining the acceptance of doctor for this type of enterprise, because their agreement to reveal the aforementioned data, is essential for the success of this project as a whole.<sup>11</sup> A specially prepared Internet portal, [badaniaklinicznepolsce.pl](http://badaniaklinicznepolsce.pl) for patients and for the public in general, where patients could obtain information concerning their rights and the rules applicable to them after joining the program for the research of clinical medicine. This type of PR strategy, may be therefore named in a double manner. From the viewpoint of the criteria of the recipient (and sender) it is the **strategy of common industry initiative**, in that this project links many different producers, and in addition includes various categories of entities within this industry (medicine producers, clinical hospitals, and individual doctors). Within the context of communications-related activities, one could also call it a **confidence building strategy**, because the need for building confidence in the doctor-patient relationship is the main goal of this activity. Without a doubt, this type of communication is essential in this industry.

**Chart 1. Patient-Doctor Confidence in Poland on the Basis of Research Results from European Trusted Brands 2011–2013**

	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Respondents Who Said They Had Confidence in Their Doctor	73%	64%	57%

Source: author on the basis of European Trusted Brands 2011–2013, <http://dermatologia.mp.pl/aktualnosci/show.html?id=87630> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>10</sup> The Polish market is also subject to the Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Ethics of Prescription Only Drugs which was adopted on 28 February 2006 in Warsaw by the “POLISH PHARMACEUTICS” Economic Chamber, the Polish Chamber of the Pharmaceutical Industry and Medical Devices “POLFARMED”, and the Polish Association of Pharmaceutical Industry Employers, [www.farmacja-polska.org.pl](http://www.farmacja-polska.org.pl) (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>11</sup> Cichocka 2014.

As research results from the European Trusted Brands (chart 1) indicate, patient-doctor confidence has been falling in Poland, systematically, for years. At the same time, controversy is constantly aroused in the public debate by the manner and methodology of placing certain pharmaceuticals on the list medicines which are to be reimbursed, as well as the manner of filling prescriptions and the level of medical services.<sup>12</sup> In this context, this subject is regularly taken up in the media,<sup>13</sup> controversies revolving around the type and character of relations between doctors and pharmaceutical firms, are also significant for the media image of this problem as well.<sup>14</sup> All of this together with a lot of other factors, has contributed to the fact that patient-doctor confidence in Poland today, is amongst the lowest in Europe.<sup>15</sup> As the aforementioned results from European Trusted Brands indicate,<sup>16</sup> only 57% of respondents in Poland declared confidence in their doctors, (the European average was 76%), and in our continent as a whole, only the Russians had a lower level of confidence in their doctors (47%). The results obtained indicated that those countries in Europe with the highest level of patient-doctor confidence Finland 89%, Holland 87%, Switzerland 86%, Belgium 84%, and Slovenia 84%. The research also had questionnaires asking respondents to give their opinions regarding their nurses and pharmacists. The results show that 76% of Poles have confidence in their nurses (the European average was 82%), while 78% had confidence in their pharmacists, which was the category of health care professionals, which enjoyed a level of confidence closes to the European average, which was 80%.<sup>17</sup> As may be seen, the Polish market absolutely needs communications strategies which have the goal of correcting and increasing the level of confidence which patients have in their health care professionals.

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<sup>12</sup> See i.a: „Protest pieczętkowy”, czyli wokół ustawy refundacyjnej, komunikat z badań BS/28/2012, CBOS, Warszawa, February 2012, [www.cbos.pl](http://www.cbos.pl) (access: 14.03.2014).

<sup>13</sup> Waszkielewicz 2014.

<sup>14</sup> See: GlaxoSmithKline płaciło polskim lekarzom za recepty, *Rzeczpospolita*, 14.04.2014, [www.ekonomia.rp.pl](http://www.ekonomia.rp.pl) (access: 10.07.2014), and also: Druś 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Zaufanie Polaków do lekarzy, pielęgniarek i farmaceutów niższe niż średnia europejska, informacja PAP, Rynek Zdrowia, [www.rynekzdrowia.pl](http://www.rynekzdrowia.pl) (access: 10.07.2014), and also: 43% Polaków nie ma zaufania do lekarzy, <http://dermatologia.mp.pl/aktualnosci/show.html?id=87630> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>16</sup> European Trusted Brands is one of the greatest, with the widest scope of activities, researchers of consumer issues in Europe. Its organizer is the monthly Reader's Digest. In addition to marketing, it has annual research on social subjects. These allow a knowledge of the dominant moods in the inhabitants of Europe, and the values which shape our opinions and decisions, and also confidence in various aspects of life. European Trusted Brands was introduced in 2001. It operates in over a dozen European countries. This years 13th edition was based on research conducted in 12 countries: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Holland, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Slovenia, and Switzerland. Some 18, 314 respondents participated. *Ibidem*.

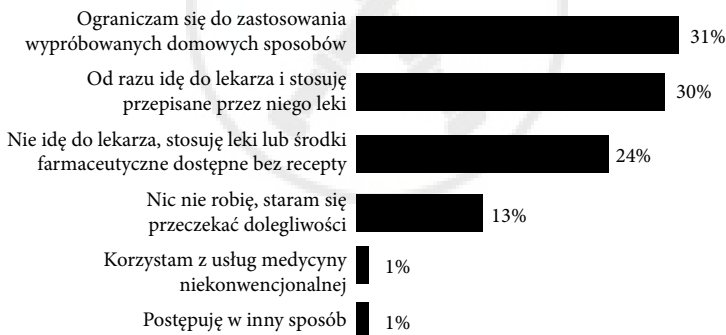
<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

**Chart 2. Seeking Sources of Information on OTC Medicine**

Did you ever seek an opinion on OTC medicine at your:	Czech Rep.	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Region
Doctor	32%	33%	40%	45%	38%
Pharmacist	49%	38%	55%	58%	50%

Source: Rady z za lady – mieszkańcy Europy Środkowej wolą farmaceutów od lekarzy (Advice from the Other Side of the Counter – the Inhabitants of East-Central Europe Prefer Pharmacists to Doctor), raport TNS OBOP, September 2002, [msglobal.pl/archiw\\_files/IP25-02.doc](http://msglobal.pl/archiw_files/IP25-02.doc) (access: 10.07.2014).

What's interesting is that already in 2002, research results from the TNS OBOP<sup>18</sup> indicated that patients in Poland (as well as in other countries in Central Europe) more often consult their pharmacists, than their doctors, concerning non-prescription medicine (see Chart 2). Although it is true in light of the results of this same research, doctors were in 2002 (for Poles as well as for other inhabitants of Central Europe) the most reliable source of information concerning OTC medicine, patients were, nevertheless, more inclined in the end, to turn to their pharmacists for advice, than to their doctors.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 1. Seeking Sources of Information on OTC Medicine**

Source: Stosowanie leków dostępnych bez recepty, komunikat z badań BS/143/2010, CBOS, Warszawa, October 2010, [www.cbos.pl](http://www.cbos.pl) (access: 14.03.2014). The question asked was "Please tell us, what do you usually do when you feel ill, feel pain, or have some kind of ailment?"

<sup>18</sup> Rady z za lady – mieszkańcy Europy Środkowej wolą farmaceutów od lekarzy, raport TNS OBOP, September 2002, [msglobal.pl/archiw\\_files/IP25-02.doc](http://msglobal.pl/archiw_files/IP25-02.doc) (access: 10.07.2014), and also: Rady z za lady – Leki OTC 2002, <http://mediweb.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>19</sup> Rady z za lady – mieszkańcy Europy Środkowej wolą farmaceutów..., *op. cit.*

Naturally the cause for this state of affairs should not be sought solely in the patient-doctor relation of confidence, in our part of Europe. There is no doubt that other factors also play an essential role, such as for instance, the real access to health care or for example, the situation on the labor market, where many patients are obliged to refrain from obtaining sick leave, and therefore have a tendency to self-treatment, and oftentimes abuse otc medicine.<sup>20</sup> In light of the CBOS research from 2010, 2/3 of Poles either limit themselves to home remedies (31%) or use OTC medicine without consulting a physician (24%), or they simply attempt to wait-out an illness (13%). Any type of communications strategy of an educational character, that is addressed to patients themselves, or to professional pharmacists, who in the situation described above often are the most important link in the process of the flow of information on the subject of medicine and its use, between the producer and the patient, has an exceptional significance in this context.

Therefore, among PR educational strategies, employed on the Polish market by producers of medicine, one may distinguish two main types. The first of these will be an **educational strategy**, directed to patients as well as to pharmacists, doctor, or nurses, which, since they present their organization as unique type of expert in a given field, we may call this the **expert strategy**. The second type of strategy will deal with above all an educational campaign, addressed to the group of professional pharmacists (as well as to pharmacy owners), and with attention to the primary goal, which is to construct good relations with the pharmacist by supporting his education, we will refer to this strategy in this work as the **distribution strategy**.

The first of these types, that is the **strategy of the expert**, is employed by numerous entities in this industry. Some good examples of this strategy are educational programs dealing with diabetes and hemophilia. (Let's Change Diabetes Together or Let's Change Life With Hemophilia Together) conducted of the Polish market by the Danish company, NOVO Nordisk, or by the Polish National Program for Sexual Health conducted by the Grupa Polpharma.

The Polish national educational campaign for diabetes and methods for treating it by the NOVO NORDISK company<sup>21</sup> has been conducted since the company entered the Polish market. Among the classic activities in this campaign, we could include, amongst others, training for medical personnel, especially for district and maternity nurses,<sup>22</sup> medical busses, where diagnostic research for Polish residents were conducted in 2008 and 2009 and education activities dealing with diabetes,

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<sup>20</sup> CF. Stosowanie leków dostępnych bez recepty, komunikat z badań BS/143/2010, CBOS, Warszawa, October 2010, [www.cbos.pl](http://www.cbos.pl) (access: 14.03.2014).

<sup>21</sup> Novo Nordisk is a Danish company that was founded in 1923 whose products (insulin) were known in Poland before W.W. II. Currently Novo Nordisk offers a wide range of medicine and materials used in healing diabetes, hemophilia, alternative hormonal therapy, and also growth hormones. The company operates in 74 countries in the world and offers its products on 179 markets. It has been present in Poland since 1991. See: <http://www.novonordisk.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>22</sup> In 2011 the "Sedno" Novo Nordisk Diabetes Educational Center received the Sukces Roku 2011 research-training activity.



the annual Polish National Literary and Plastic Arts Contest *Paint Life Again* the goal of which is to integrate sick people with their environment and correct the state of awareness of Polish society concerning diabetes, as well as issuing several times a year the “Diabetes Newspaper” (a quarterly that is also distributed in a version for the blind), while special attention should also be focused on their communication activity for those who are caretakers of the sick.

What is innovative about these educational activities conducted by Novo Nordisk is that they expand the target group to include new categories of recipients. In addition to the sick and health care Professional, Novo Nordisk’s educational activities also include parents caring for children with diabetes, children and young adults with various afflictions, and the media. Novo Nordisk has initiated and co-organized the Polish National Educational Program for Children and Young Adults With Diabetes (DCEP) as well as for their parents. Within this program, Novo Nordisk has prepared a series of informative material for the parents of children with diabetes, in various ages, from 2 years old, 2–4 years old, 5–7 years old, 8–12 years old, and from 13–17 years old.<sup>23</sup> This program was designed by Polish and Danish specialists, as well as by the Novo Nordisk company with financial assistance from the Danish government. In addition to a rich assortment of methodological material entitled “A Child with Diabetes” designer for teachers, as well as a brochure containing advice for parents and children in various age groups, the program also includes a cycle of training for doctor regarding modern methods of diabetes education for young patients. The scale of the program enables it to reach, with materials and knowledge, to doctors as a well as to all children with diabetes in Poland.<sup>24</sup> Novo Nordisk Polska received from the Association of Journalists for Health the “Great Educator Award” in 2009 for its commitment to provide education on diabetes to doctor, patients, and journalists.<sup>25</sup>

Another example of the expert PR educational strategy in the Polish National Sexual Health Program (OPZS), which was initiated in 2008 by the Grupa Polpharma.<sup>26</sup> It’s goal is to educate and makes Poles aware of the possibilities, and finally to encourage them to treat their sexual diseases. In cooperation with the Foundation of Active Rehabilitation (FAR), during the camping they took up the subject of the sex life of handicapped people and senior citizens.<sup>27</sup> Their commu-

<sup>23</sup> Each brochure was composed of two parts. The first dealt with the child’s behavior at a given age, and the second with how he should be fed at this period of his life. The information was supposed to aid the parents overcoming the daily difficulties linked with diabetes. See: <http://www.novonordisk.pl> (access: 17.01.2006).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> See: <http://www.novonordisk.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>26</sup> Polpharma is the largest Polish producer of drugs and the leader of the Polish pharmaceutical market. It employs more than 7,000 people in Poland and abroad. The company has seven production plants in Poland, Russia and Kazakhstan, and six R&D centres. Polpharma Group is the manufacturer of approximately 600 products, with another 400 being in the development stage. As cited in: <http://www.polpharma.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>27</sup> See: <http://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/dobre-praktyki/ogolnopolski-program-zdrowia-seksualnego-opzs-polpharma/> (access: 10.07.2014).

nications strategy also includes: a cycle of workshops which last several days, in which education regarding sexual rehabilitation is taught, education workshops for the University of the Third Age (Seniors) on the subject of sexual health, four Polish National Debates on Sexual Health, whose participants included researchers, and representatives from cultural milieus, politicians, the clergy, doctor as well as the most prominent researcher of the sexuality of the Poles (Prof. Zbigniew Izdebski and Polpharma “The Sexuality of the Poles 2011”).<sup>28</sup> In addition there were contests for the plastic arts and photography. Numerous activities were also conducted using the Internet. These included, amongst others: an educational Internet service, whose content was linked with the subject of sexual health ([www.opzs.pl](http://www.opzs.pl)) and also there was expert advice given on forum on [gazeta.pl](http://gazeta.pl) and [senior.pl](http://senior.pl). Social media was also used in this campaign, there was a portal created on Facebook, which exists until today, entitled “Sex to zdrowie” (“Sex is Health”) which (as of March 2013) has accumulated 360 thousand fans.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this last activity, a dictionary of sex “Polaków rozmowy o seksie” (“Conversations of the Poles about Sex”) which contains vocabulary linked with the sphere of intimacy, used by Poles.<sup>30</sup> In 2012, the OPZS won the “International Business AwardSM” in the category of “Communications or PR Campaign of the Year – Issues Management”.<sup>31</sup>

The examples of the two aforementioned campaigns illustrate, how skillfully employed communication instruments of the PR variety, in the so-called **expert strategy**, may consolidate the position of an organization as a group of specialists/leaders in a given field, and thereby significantly enforce its market position.

Another type of educational campaign, used on the Polish market by producers of medicine, is the previously mentioned **distribution strategy**. It is based on constructing positive relations between pharmaceutical companies and professional pharmacists, by supporting their education or by taking advantage of an element of this education, as a plane of interaction. Activities conducted by pharmaceutical companies in this sphere may be limited only to product training (or some other type of communications activity, the goal of which is to augment the knowledge of pharmacists with regards to the assortment of products of a given company), or to cross these boundaries, and (although in general not omitting the previously mentioned element) and accept a formula of education in a broader sense, in which the pharmaceutical company becomes a partner supporting the pharmacist in his day-to-day work. An example of the first activity could be the “Pharmacist of the XXI Century” campaign conducted by the Polfa Kutno SA Grupa IVAX, which has been conducted since 2005. An example of activities in

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<sup>28</sup> See: <http://www.proto.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.polpharma.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>30</sup> Vocabulary in the Glossary is divided into three categories: for doctors, in the bedroom, for friends, <http://www.proto.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>31</sup> See: <http://www.proto.pl> (access: 10.07.2014), cf. also: [http://www.stevieawards.com/pubs/iba/awards/408\\_2659\\_22129.cfm](http://www.stevieawards.com/pubs/iba/awards/408_2659_22129.cfm) (access: 10.07.2014).

the sphere of education in the broad sense, as part of distribution strategy, could be the Polish version of the PharmAssist program, conducted on the Polish market since the mid-1990s by the GlaxoSmithKline company.

The PharmAssist Program is an educational venue, addressed to professional pharmacists and pharmaceutical technicians. This program has been carried out by GlaxoSmithKline<sup>32</sup> in many countries in Europe, and has been present in Poland since 1994. Its goal is to disseminate knowledge and assistance to pharmacists, in obtaining new abilities in therapeutic and self-healing categories,<sup>33</sup> pharmaceutical marketing, as well as managing a pharmacy as an MSP, to construct relations with patients, and with the products of GlaxoSmithKline. Starting in 2005, the program was realized in close cooperation with the Supreme Society of Pharmacists and the District Society of Pharmacists, thanks to which GSK lectures and workshops are also a part of the itemized educational meeting organized by these two organizations (the GSK training workshops are awarded points, thanks to which pharmacists – who have an obligation since 2003 to constantly update and expand their knowledge – may obtain in this manner a certificate, attesting to their raising their qualifications). Access to training organized by GlaxoSmithKline is free of charge.<sup>34</sup> An important element of the program is the constantly changing formula of educational meetings. The authors and organizers of the GlaxoSmithKline program, systematically perfect the training program, so that what they offer would be adequate for the ever changing requirements and challenges of the market. Specially organized meetings (so-called pharmaceutical panels) help to serve this purpose<sup>35</sup> during which conversations are conducted with pharmacists, concerning their current needs of information. As a result, of these meetings, is the spectrum of essential content, which includes the subject of the training, constantly expanded, but also the formula of these meetings, which over the years has been enriched to include several types of interactive classes, carried out in small groups, the form of which is conducive to activate the participants and facilitate their acquiring of new abilities.<sup>36</sup> In 2006, the program was honored with the with the Pharmaceutical Laurel from the District Pharmaceutical Association in Krakow.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> GlaxoSmithKline is one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in the world. It has been in Poland since 1978. It currently has 5.6% of the market in Poland (IMS Health, 2012). It is also the greatest foreign investor on the market in Poland, in the pharmaceutical industry. It offers over 300 products and conducts over 40 types of clinical research annually, and employs of 1500 people. GSK – Raport Społeczny 2011–2012, <http://raportcsr.gsk.com.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>33</sup> M.in. samoleczenia bólu, przeziębien i grypy, jak również nikotynowej terapii zastępczej, <http://www.nu.fob.org.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>34</sup> Odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce. Dobre praktyki. Raport 2006, Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, p. 28, <http://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/dobre-praktyki/pharmassist-program-edukacyjny-dla-magistrow-i-technikow-farmacji-glaxosmithkline/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>35</sup> The author of this study had an opportunity to prepare and conduct a pharmaceutical panel devoted to the opportunities and risks of a pharmacist profession after the accession of Poland to the EU, upon the commission of GSK.

<sup>36</sup> Odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce. Dobre praktyki..., *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> See: <http://www.nu.fob.org.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

The PharmAssist training program constitutes a classic example of cyclical educational activities, (though in no way does that mean it is less effective), based on a rather traditional model of education – that means based on a situation of direct contact and interaction between the trainer and the trainee – with expanded, new, innovative forms of workshops in this method. Polfa Kutno IVAX's strategy of the "Pharmacist of the XXI Century" is however an example of a one-time campaign and limited to consolidating the knowledge of pharmacists, with regards to their product line, but nevertheless, it is decidedly innovative and atypical, using communication with a target group, and also employing the new media then tools it makes available, and in addition it possesses an original leitmotiv.

The "Pharmacist of the XXI Century", realized by the Polfa Kutno SA Grupa IVAX<sup>38</sup> has been conducted since August till October 2005; its target group was composed of pharmacists, including employees, directors, and owners of pharmacies. The formula of communication, elaborated on the basis of a well conducted analysis of the profile of the target group, foresaw the creation of an interactive (that means the participation of those people to whom it was directed) novel based on the lives of pharmacists. A screenplay writer from the television soap opera "M jak miłość" ("M as in Love") was employed to write the script. Excerpts from the novel entitled "The Pharmacy Under the White Dove" (two chapters monthly) reached the pharmacists through two means of communication: via mail addressed to their pharmacies or homes, as well as via a special web page. In order to entourage the pharmacists to participate, the program took on the form of fan interactive game, in which each of the participants, could every two weeks – choose one of three proposed further developments of the plot – and thereby decide the fate of the characters of the novel also via two means, that is by SMS or via the web page. In order to take part, the participant had to first log onto the system, and answer the questions which dealt with – in addition to the fate of the characters – also the products offered by Polfa Kutno IV AX. Those who participated in the voting received awards, and at the end of the campaign, those who were the most active, special commemorative editions of "Pharmacy Under the White Dove".<sup>39</sup> The campaign elicited a response rate of 90%, and the sales goal set by the marketer was exceeded by 400%.<sup>40</sup> The strategy of the "Pharmacist of the XXI Century" in which the aforementioned action was conducted, received the Grand Prix I edition award of the "Golden Arrow" Direct Marketing Contest of 2006.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Polfa Kutno is a pharmaceutical firm which has existed in Poland for over 70 years (since 1935). Since 2004 it has been owned by the IVAX Corporation from the USA. Since 2006 it has been part of a merger with Grupa Teva in Poland. See: <http://www.teva.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>39</sup> See: <http://www.marketing-news.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/nagrody-golden-arrow-pryznane> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>41</sup> See: <http://www.goldenarrow.pl/zwyciezcy-2006.html> (access: 10.07.2014).

Similar non-standard activities equally portable as far as communications go, could be found in pharmaceuticals also with regards to PR strategy, whose goal was to promote the launching on the Polish market of new products or the promotion of pharmaceuticals already present on the market, that is the **product strategy**. An interesting example of this type of activity was the lifestyle campaign entitled „Contraception in Fashion” carried out in 2004 on the Polish market by the Janssen-Cilag company.

The object of the campaign was the adhesive contraceptive plaster of the Janssen-Cilag company<sup>42</sup> introduced on the Polish market through the use of a non-standard series of activities, using a trendsetting mechanism. The main message of the campaign was to show these plasters as being not only a comfortable form of contraception for women, but also as being something which reflects their fashion and lifestyle. They used the so-called ambassadors of the company (models),<sup>43</sup> who openly wore these plasters in public places; the authors of this strategy wanted to break through to the image of lifestyles in the media, and also to the world of fashion and the so-called trend setters and in this manner promote the fashion in contraception, and thereby the Evra plasters as a fashionable gadget, meant to be show off.<sup>44</sup> In December 2004 the “Contraception in Fashion” campaign received the Złoty Spinacz (Golden Stapler) award in the category of product strategy.<sup>45</sup>

The last type of strategy which should be mentioned in the **good employer strategy**. In the pharmaceutical branch, which employees people who are highly qualified, this takes on a special significance. For entities of this type, it is extremely important to recruit the best candidates, and keep these trained employees, who have come to know the ropes and are familiar with the specifics of working in a given pharmacy. Hence any type of communication activity in the realm of the good employer strategy, which results in the creation of an image of the ideal employer<sup>46</sup> as well as provide a positive motivation for the employees, should be an important element of the communication strategy of a pharmaceutical firm. One of the examples of a company which is heavily engaged in activities

<sup>42</sup> Janssen is group of pharmaceutical companies operating in the whole world. It has 40 thousand employees on five continents, of which 14 thousand are in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. It has 8 research-development centers and 10 production facilities. See: <http://www.janssen.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>43</sup> Katarzyna Skrzynecka, Reni Jusis and Joanna Horodyńska were brand ambassadors in the “Contraceptives in Fashion” campaign in 2004. Another version of the campaign was organised in 2006 under the slogan “Would you rather take contraceptives every day or once a week? I have already made my choice”. It was supposed to present women who used contraceptives in different periods of their lives. Brand ambassadors were, for example, Ilona Felicjańska, Maria Góralczyk and Maria Sadowska. See: <http://kobieta.wp.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014). Cf. also: <http://vipnews.pl/2004/04/20/archiwum-vipnews-antykoncepcja-w-modzie-20-04-2004/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>44</sup> See: <http://www.marketing-news.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> Enterprises in this branch really do try to be appreciated employers. In 2013 theNovoartis company a was also added to the list of the most highly valued companies. For more see: <http://kariera.forbes.pl/ranking-najbardziejziej-pozadani-pracodawcy-2013,artykuly,167365,1,1.html> (access: 10.06.2014).

for good internal public relations is ICN Polfa Rzeszów SA<sup>47</sup> whose performance in this sphere in literature on the subject has been described in a detailed manner by Dariusz Tworzydło.<sup>48</sup> In the instance of activities of this type, attention was focused on only two of its elements. Amongst the many elements conducted by this firm within its internal communications strategy, which could be called the good employer strategy, what especially deserves recognition, is first of all, the scholarship program for the children of employees who are studying at university, as well as, second, activity addressed to – often neglected in the Polish reality – former employees.<sup>49</sup> It is often forgotten in Poland, than former employees, especially those who have been employed for many years at a given workplace, and currently on a well-deserved retirement, are in their local milieus, are exceptionally trustworthy multipliers of information on their former place of employment.

Another example of the good employer strategy are activities conducted within internal public relations by the Grupa Adamed, with special emphasis on the Adamed University Project. The Adamed company<sup>50</sup> painstakingly goes through the process of recruiting employees, who as a result of many years of experience, is composed of many stages. As a result, it is accepted that an employee will be covered by the Adaption of a Newly Employed Coworkers program, which has as its goal the facilitation of the acclimatization of new employees in the workplace, and thereby raising the level of his commitment and feeling of loyalty towards the company.<sup>51</sup> In 2013 the company introduced the Adamed University program, which supports employees in the constant raising of their qualifications, and sharing their knowledge with their fellow workers. This enables their employees to take part in training and workshops, and thus create an atmosphere which is amenable to the development of their professional careers.<sup>52</sup> The participants of courses organized by Adamed University develop their skills in one of four training programs: the Academy of Leadership, the Academy of Managerial Abilities, the Academy of Project Manager, and the Academy of Product Manager. During training, employees of the Adamed Group become acquainted with new trends in

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<sup>47</sup> **ICN Polfa Rzeszów S.A.** is a component of the Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. It is one of the leading producers in Poland. Its history goes back to 1951. Since 1971 it has functioned as the **Rzeszowskie Zakłady Farmaceutyczne “Polfa”**, which was a state-run company. In the 1990s it decided to build a new plant from the ground up, which was the largest investment in pharmaceutical in Poland. ICN Pharmaceuticals took it over in 1997, which is currently known as **Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc.** See: <http://www.icnpolfa.pl> (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>48</sup> Tworzydło 2004, pp. 165–172.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 170–171.

<sup>50</sup> Grupa Adamed is a Polish company created in 1986. Since 2010 it includes Adamed, Polfa Pabianice, and Adamed Consumer Health Care. It is a leader on the Polish market of new medicines. It provides medicine for cardiology, pulmonology, gynecology, and curing diseases of the urinary tract. It has representatives in Spain, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine and currently its products are sold in over 40 countries (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>51</sup> Adamed Solidnym Pracodawcą Branży Farmaceutycznej 2014, [http://rzeczobiznesie.eu/06\\_adamet.html](http://rzeczobiznesie.eu/06_adamet.html) (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>52</sup> See: <http://www.adamed.com.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

management, and the knowledge imparted to them, links a profound theoretical knowledge with the development of practical skills. The program also includes classes in the so-called e-schooling, as well as practical workshops competently enabling a mutual Exchange of knowledge and experience. Each of the participants of the course obtains a diploma upon finishing, Adamed University.<sup>53</sup> Their colleagues at the Adamed company may also obtain successive academic degrees based on the research they perform every day, on the innovative therapies which are carried out in the Grupa Adamed's own research-development center.<sup>54</sup> With this goal in mind, they may take advantage of the world class experts and specialists. Adamed employees also obtain support from their employer in the form of financial help, to aid them in learning foreign languages, taking up post-graduate studies, specialized courses and apprenticeship. In 2014 the Grupa Adamed was awarded once again the title of Dependable Employer in the Pharmaceutical Industry.<sup>55</sup> The Adamed company received an award in 2009 when it also obtained the title of Dependable Employer.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The proposed typology of PR strategy is of course only a narrow slice of the reality of the Polish market in the pharmaceutical branch. In reality, activities of this type are exceptionally varied, and quite disseminated by entities operating in this sector of the market. Hence, as in the example of other branches, it would certainly be possible to point to many other types of communication strategy, carried out in this sector. Public relations activities are employed in this sector universally and intensively. They are also indispensable, as this is a market which is unusually difficult and demanding. It cannot be otherwise. The products available on the market, which these communication activities deal with, influence the most essential sphere of man's existence, that is, on his health. This fact, linked with the challenge of the contemporary market, to which belong the postulates of social responsibility of business (and in this branch, the ethics of market activities as well), ecology, consumerism, and also a constant development of the modern tools of communication and the incessant expansion of available means, enabling access to target groups, render it impossible to write an abbreviated and ultimately exhaustive classification of the communication strategy employed in this sector. The assortment of available communication activity, and the technical possibilities of implementing them, are expanding literally from day to day. Hence the task

<sup>53</sup> Grupa Adamed dba o rozwój swoich menedżerów, Kwartalnik Portalu Internetowego Biotechnologia.pl, no. 1/2014, p. 33, [http://www.selvita.com/pl/images/media/kwartalnik\\_biotechnologia\\_pl\\_1\\_2014.pdf](http://www.selvita.com/pl/images/media/kwartalnik_biotechnologia_pl_1_2014.pdf) (access: 10.07.2014).

<sup>54</sup> Adamed Solidnym Pracodawcą..., *op. cit.* In this way, employees obtained five PhD degrees and four other doctorate titles are pending.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>56</sup> See: <http://www.adamed.com.pl/> (access: 10.07.2014).

of the paper above was to delineate the **strategy of the common initiatives** in this branch, the **strategy of confidence building**, the **education strategy**, the **expert strategy**, the **distribution strategy**, the **product strategy**, and the **strategy of the good employer**, are the most basic, if not elementary types of communication strategy, employed on the Polish market in this sector.

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### STRESZCZENIE

Z punktu widzenia producentów farmaceutyków stosowanie narzędzi komunikacyjnych z zakresu *public relations* jest bardzo ważnym elementem komunikacji z wieloma grupami otoczenia, zarówno wewnętrznego, jak i zewnętrznego. Zwłaszcza w przypadku tej drugiej kategorii działania piarowskie są często jedynym dostępnym kanałem komunikacji tych organizacji z ich otoczeniem, jako że istniejące przepisy prawa w istotny sposób ograniczają możliwość realizacji innych działań komunikacyjnych, w tym związanych z promocją własnych produktów, a w szczególności ich reklamą. Celem tego artykułu jest analiza wybranych strategii komunikacyjnych (zrealizowanych przez koncerny farmaceutyczne na polskim rynku w okresie ostatnich dekad i ich uwarunkowań rynkowych oraz wyróżnienie ich podstawowej typologii.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *public relations*, *public relations strategy*, PR farmaceutyczny