

# Empirical aspects of visual communication in SME sector

*Komunikaty wizualne – specyfika komunikacji marketingowej w sektorze MŚP*

*Jolanta Staszewska, Piotr Skorus, Politechnika Opolska*

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the topic of visual communication in the SME sector. Authors present results of a study on this issue in the Silesia Voivodship in Poland. The results can be the basis for further discussion on the issue of visual communication management in the SME sector.

**Keywords:** visual communication, management, SME sector.

Artykuł dotyczy tematu komunikacji wizualnej w sektorze MŚP. Autorzy przedstawiają wyniki badań nad tą kwestią w województwie śląskim w Polsce. Badania te mogą być podstawą do dalszego rozważania problemu zarządzania komunikacją wizualną w sektorze MŚP.

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja wizualna, zarządzanie, sektor MŚP.

STRESZCZENIE

## Introduction

The system and structure changes of the Polish economy that started at the turn of the eighties and nineties resulted in extremely dynamic development of small and medium business sector. This sector serves very important functions influencing both the economic and social areas of the country. Taking into account previous achievements of small and medium business and its further prospects for development, it constitutes a significant opportunity for economic competition in the European as well as the World market, which is a result of globalization. At the same time, small and medium businesses face multiple pre-requisites, which result in a limitation of their further development and sometimes they constitute a significant stimulant. Visual communication is one of these pre-requisites that is of basic importance for operation of SME sector. Skilful use of visual communication tools creates favourable conditions for successful existence of the businesses in the market and it can become an important element of setting its competitive position and the desired market image. The main issue of this work is an indication of the visual communication management model using the SME sector entities. The observation of the market leads to the conclusion that small and medium businesses while undertaking visual communication follow stereotypes and randomness in the choice of communication means; projects are not planned and their organization depends only on the budget, without considering the actual market requirements. Skills and capabilities of consumers' perception abilities are not taken into account, basing mostly upon the application of the cheaply performed messages. While solving the issue of the visual communication management in small and medium businesses, the author will use the knowledge of economics and art, including his own interests. Basing on the market analysis and the practical experience, the author concludes that visual communication management is a problem for many businesses that would like to gain or improve their market position. This is why the creation of the thesis defining the process of the visual

communication management in SME sector, which is very sensitive to the market changes, seems very necessary. The practical side of the thesis will be based upon pointing out the directions and tools of visual communication management, which will make the market competition more effective, also in the international market, especially between Poland and Slovakia. The theory included in the thesis will base upon systematizing the knowledge linked to visual communication and its management as well as pointing the rules of its application, also considering the international standards. Visual communication carried out by the SME will be the subject of the research in this thesis, in order to define the model of the management linked to planning, organizing and controlling. The effective visual communication management is defined by achievement of the objective of the communication understood as minimizing the gap between the received transmission and the broadcast transmission. Visual communication uses communication tools, which are based on a systematic mix promotion, maintaining the integration of the system elements. In such communication, the transmission must be prepared in accordance with the synergy principles and all elements shall form a whole of actions encouraging the consumer to undertake some steps, such as making a purchase, a repetitive purchase, a delay or cancellation of purchase, which is also a possible consumer reaction. Visual communication in terms of the marketing is based upon integrated, systematic and synergic promotion, i.e. advertising, public relations, complementary promotion, personal sale and direct marketing. Apart from marketing, visual communication is linked to the type and quality of hyper-media transmission, interior arrangement and decor or the urban surroundings. In the aforementioned forms, one may use the tools which – in order to achieve efficient transmission – must take into account an image with its colour palette, its narration, its typographic and sound elements, its printing, profile, the text integration with the image and the creator's creativity. It is a part of visual communication level and it affects the contact with the customer. The proper preparation and implementation of visual communication in business faces many

obstacles in the Polish market reality. Dealing with them is very hard especially for small and medium businesses that would like to possess adequate market position, and thus satisfied customers who are not disappointed with promises of visual messages after the purchase of goods. The authors wish to make an attempt to present the way of the visual communication management in order to help the entrepreneur of SME sector to achieve customer and self-satisfaction. Research will be carried out on the SME in Silesia. In Silesia, the number of SME is the second highest number in Poland, right after Masovia. That is why the choice seems reasonable. The choice was also based on the number of the enterprises and their diversity resulting from their location in the most populated and industrially developed region of Poland. Silesia creates difficult competitive conditions for the SME sector, which is a consequence of a high number of such enterprises located in this region, possible repetitions of offers, high requirements of the customers, who due to their life style have higher expectations in comparison to other regions. Other very important factors include availability of the same media as competitors have, consumer tiredness of commonly used means of communication, consumers' habits, higher than in other regions consumers propensity to pioneer purchases and other elements which are the result of life in the urban-industrial agglomeration. The author reckons that due to the aforementioned factors, it is indispensable to define the visual communication management for SME as it will be very useful for the functioning of the enterprises on the researched area as well as for enterprises from other areas.

### **Tools of the visual communication**

The basic tools of visual communication include all aspects linked to production activities within promotion (including the visual aspects of merchandising); the factors linked to creation of the company image and brand; selected visual aspects linked to interior design, flora and urban surroundings; visual aspects facilitating production activities (Visual Management); other elements important while establishing a business, such as the manager image creation, autopresentation and visual means of non-verbal communication. Regardless of where the tools were used, they can be defined as image, colour, text and typography. While constructing visual communication, one should be aware that the image should express some story. One should define context or a point of reference for a situation, an event or other images. Also, dramaturgy of the image should be constructed in order to more effectively attract recipients' attention and induce their emotions. The plane of action and narration is also needed. Action refers to non-static elements (e.g. running man) and narration refers to the possibility of the viewers' engagement (dramatic narration) or the possibility of free interpretation (non-dramatic narration), both techniques of communication can be combined with the use of computer, where basic linear and network structures are used (Bergstrom 2003: 76). The colour is supposed to attract, create mood, inform, put to order and teach. One should know that colourful elements attract recipients' attention in the similar way as vivid contrasting colours and they should be aware of colour codes so that the combinations would not be wrongly decoded (e.g. white in our culture symbolizes innocence

and in other culture it symbolizes mourning) and create appropriate mood. The colours also transfer information or put to order the structure of documents for example; bright colours support studying (Berger 2007: 85). The text is also important as far as visual side is concerned, and the text composition is essential, especially in case of advertisements. Experts suggest (Bergstrom, Hseuh-Ming, Woods 2012: 128) that text should be composed in such way that it would fit into some sector of reception or be personal. The editing must be started from the header, which should be written using the minimum of adjectives. In the web pages, text should be composed in such a way to minimize the number of columns, hide side headers and the links should emphasize place, not activity. In the text, also colour is defined, but its role has been already defined (Bergstrom, Hseuh-Ming, Woods 2012: 120). As far as typography is concerned, which is based on the implementation of specific font and rules of its implementation, it can be visible, what is based on the letters structure, their number and shape. Also, the typography can be non-visible – based on the composition of whole text, e.g. by proper design of the book page. Letters types, fonts, readability, alignments should be taken into account. In typography, it is essential to implement symmetric, asymmetry and contrast, however, its role in the visual communication shouldn't be overrated (Baer 2008: 49-50). The visual communication is most essential in the case of marketing messages, when it is linked to promotion that uses visualization elements. The promotional mix includes advertising, additional promotion, PR, direct sale, direct marketing (Porter 2005: 12-330). The aspects of communication include as follows: in case of direct sale – images linked to the package or logo, websites and banners; in case of direct promotion – visual advantages of samples, designs, exhibition visualisation; in case of internal marketing – proper arrangement of sale places and merchandising; in case of direct marketing – supporting role of multimedia presentation; in case of advertising – publishing forms (guides, catalogues, brochures – graphical elements, television images, posters); in case of Public Relations – materials defining the company's identity (the company's documents, business cards, gadgets) (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, Wong 2002: 189-234). The promotion forms of the visual communication should ensure with the use of logo that the idea and the company will be remembered. It is also achieved through attracting the attention and excitation of specified person with the use of graphical form. Logo should include the letter stylization and the graphical form or it should combine both these elements. The logo should be primarily clear and easily recognizable; therefore, it should not have too complicated a shape and number of colours. Apart from its basic version, logo should also have other versions: vertical (or horizontal), contour, monochromatic (for halftones of single paint printing) and full-tone (Bergstrom 2003: 68-100). The package, apart from protective function, should also fulfil marketing and aesthetic functions (Kress 2007: 117-120), which will encourage purchase of merchandising. Web pages and banners should fulfil few conditions that will make them more often visited and will generate positive feedback. The website should be clear and lucid; it should offer intuitive navigation, contain actual and only useful data, be visually attractive, be focused on the content, and have an appropriate domain. The visual issues of the website can be solved with the use of: colour systems, shape and size of printing, IT pro-

grams as Adobe Photoshop CS4, Adobe Illustrator CS4, Adobe InDesign CS4, Adobe Flash CS4, Sony Vegas Pro 9, Corel Draw X4 and others (Wawrzak-Chodaczek 2008: 59-90). The arrangement of workplaces is linked to the visual merchandising (Sztucki and others 1999: 120), which provides a set of useful tools affecting the type of products and the way they are purchased. A strategic move is to place articles attracting the customer's eyesight to newly introduced products, exhibition shelves, promotion points and cash desks; for instance, on the main alley, there should be placed promotional products and ready to use samples, encouraging fast purchasing of the product. Products should be arranged in the way making it easy to find them. The major role is played by well visible information boards, that is why it is very important to properly design them visually. The exhibition designer arranges the presence of customer in the exhibition area, he guides the customer, creates narration and the situation of the contact of the viewer with presented values. The designer gives additional meaning, puts in order, explains, sanctifies and provokes to the interpretation and reception. The exhibition designer uses the artistic resources like light, colour, plane, dimensional elements, photography, film, sound, multimedia and the setting of the elements in space. The designer acts in accordance with the exhibition curator's scenario (a person who professionally organizes exhibitions), or he acts in accordance with the product list, in particular technical conditions and possibilities. The interactive exhibition is possible and it is based on the interaction with the viewer. The recipient has a possibility to directly interact with exhibit through the sense of touch, sight, hearing and smell. First exhibitions of this type were linked to the natural science. The next stage of interactive exhibitions is a construction of science centres (Sztucki and others 1999: 120). All multimedia presentations shall be in accordance with the rules of the visual creation. The adequate structure and elements: – **text** – size of font, its colour, shape, quantity of text should attract the listener attention in the way they would focus on the content but not on the structure of writing; – **graphics** – slide background and colour should be unified in order to achieve homogeneity and cohesion of the presentation, increase the positive effect, do not distract the attention; if the basic factor of the message is its content, one should not use too much of graphic embellishments. The enhancements of the presentation are photos, schemes, charts and tables, which are medium of information and at the same time they increase the level of readability of the data; – **sound** – sound shall be only an addition to the performance and shouldn't be a basic element that distracts viewer's attention; – **special effects** – only should exist as addition. In case of advertising images, posters following rules of the visual communication are important: – **directness** – the best way is to directly address the recipient: "Switch off", "Call"; – **easy and lucid transmission** – without useless embellishments, excessive number of elements, complicated verbal transmissions; – **one major motive** – picture, photo, inscription; – **clear, big inscriptions** – so they would be seen from the distance of tens of meters; – **limited number of words** – short words and sentences determine the effectiveness of the poster; – **contrast** – clear, contrasting colours will attract the viewer's attention; – **exposition of the logo** – logo on the poster should be visible in such extent that the recipient would associate the transmission with particular organization, action; – **layout**–

beginning with the upper left corner and ending on the right bottom corner (it is in accordance with the way people read posters, etc.) (Francuz 2012: 171). In case of PR visual elements that determine the company's identity, they include company's uniforms, gadgets and souvenirs, marking of company's documents. In this case, the identification system should possess its own unique character; it should be complete (all elements of the company's actions should be marked); it should be adjusted to the subject of the company's operation and to the elements that take part in the brand identification. In case of PR, similarly to additional promotion which uses designs, samples, exhibitions, advertising of the last minute and first minute offers, etc., the aforementioned rules of the visual composition should be respected. The goal of such a composition is to achieve intended artistic effect through skilful selection of colours, shapes, proportions, textures and location of elements; it is achieved through sorting out similar elements or by sorting out contrasting elements. In the composition also some geometrical constructions, such as symmetry or golden ratio, are used. The proper use of these tools results in appearance of many moods or feelings that the viewer is able to experience; it is possible to achieve the feeling of immobility, order, balance, harmony or dynamics, chaos or imbalance. In the process of interior designing, especially when it is for customers or staff, the insightful analysis of existing communication systems and the actual state of them (logotypes, objects, interior elements, architectural elements and objects, urban space) is required. Photographic documentation and designs of visual information systems are required as well, including the designs of space identification of institutions, companies, communication paths in the specified area (Jodido 1993: 16) and skilful use of rules of symmetry and asymmetry among the organic and urban forms. In the area of the Visual Management, which was already described by the author, one should pay attention to tools that define, guide, inform (Rich, Bateman, Esain and others 2006: 31). The visual methods may be all kinds of arrows descriptions, symbols, the Andon system (shining light), information tables, instructions or Kanban cards. The sound examples could be all kinds of alarm signals, the signal of withdrawing forklift, signal that informs about the end of operation or work. The places where it is said that Visual Management is on high level will be characterized by the ease of process stages recognition by external viewer and the ease of alert situation recognition (Takashi 1991: 98). The aforementioned issues result in conclusion that to execute visual communication, many tools are necessary but their importance depends on the goal, the required tasks of the visual communication and the one that broadcasts and receives the visual message.

### Objectives, materials and research methods

The theoretical aims of the project include deepening the problem analysis concerning visual communication and functioning of the SME section in Poland and Slovakia in the selected region; indicating that visual communication management in the SME section requires the specific attitude; preparing the theoretical model of visual communication management. The practical aims of the project comprise conducting the assessment of visual communication in the companies in the SME sector in Silesia, in Poland; the problematic

aspect of the research defined for the primary research includes as follows: – the aim analysis and its scope of use in visual communication in the SME; – the scope of using the management of visual communication by indicating the planning application, organizing, motivating and controlling in visual communication used by the companies of the SME sector; – defining the structure and the use scope of visual communication tools in the SME; – the assessment of the use of visual communication tools. The kinds of the primary research – the primary research are the public opinion survey and the participle observation of the market. The passive observation of the market constitutes the supplementation of the public opinion survey. The author decided on the passive observation of the market because being a graphic designer allows her to have constant contact with the companies from the SME sector, which order visual communication. The public opinion survey was completed through e-mails. The structure of the questionnaire was based on the open and closed questions, multiple choice questions and scale questions. In the final part of the questionnaire, the certificate of origin was included, which allowed obtaining the information about the company, its legal form and the subject of operation. Selection of the research sample was based on the statistical calculation of the sample's size (n), i.e. 357 subjects in Silesia, in Poland.

Table 1. The researched enterprises in the public opinion survey

Enterprises	Number of the enterprises where the questionnaire was conducted	Questionnaire returns (quantitative)	Questionnaire returns (percentage)
Micro	164	164	100
Small	88	79	90
Medium	104	31	30
<b>Σ</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>77</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

The study sample (n) based on population N = 221,200 of active companies of the SME sector in Silesia was defined with the estimated error e = 5% and the level of trust 95%, where z = 1,96, and P – percentage share in the population P = 50%. Selection of the indicated spatial area has the deliberate character – Silesia is the best developed industrial region. It is ranked second in Poland (right after Masovia) with regard to the number of companies belonging to the SME sector. Silesia, as the geographical research area, guarantees vast number of businesses,

their diversity in the structural groups and in the scope of using visual communication. Therefore, Silesia is believed to be accurately chosen geographical research area for the evaluation of visual communication in the companies from the SME sector. The research analysis the public opinion survey. In the public opinion survey in the Silesia, 357 enterprises of the SME sector took part, which was statistically calculated (methodology of research), similarly like in case of the quantitative indicators of the enterprises from the micro, small and medium sized companies (compare – Takashi 1991: 98 and table 1). The questionnaire returns at the level of 77% (compare table 1) allowed conducting the survey in 164 micro-sized enterprises, 79 small-sized enterprises and 31 medium-sized enterprises.

The analysis of the survey indicates that most of the companies from the service sector filled up the questionnaires, i.e. 49%. Only 39% of trade companies filled up the questionnaires and the industry companies constituted even less, i.e. 12%. Among the respondents, the highest diversity in the scope of the questionnaires returns appeared among the service companies (V = 40%), which equals the average of the phenomenon variability, i.e. the variability in the scope of the questionnaires returns proved to be average – compare table 2.

Deciding on the evaluation of visual communication management in the SME sector, the author included the following problems which constitute the research issues and found their reflexion in the questionnaire of the public opinion survey, i.e. planning of visual communication; organizing of visual communication; managing the activities in the scope of visual communication and engaging in the range of their completion controlling of visual communication process; the aims of visual communication; the scope of the aims achievement of visual communication by the enterprises; budget of visual communication; knowledge about the addressee of visual communication; the tools of visual communication; the influence of the management on the effectiveness of visual communication. To analyze the particular problems, the author used the tabulation of the results and to achieve the final results to ease the interpretation, the percentages were applied. With regard to the evaluation of visual communication planning in the SME sector, the author states that the decisive declaration of visual communication planning was stated mostly by the medium-sized enterprises. The answers stating that visual communication is not planned concerned mostly the micro-sized enterprises, and the selection of the average option claiming that visual communication is sometimes

Table 2. The researched enterprises according to the sectors

Enterprises	Industry		Trade		Services	
	Quantitatively	Percentage	Quantitatively	Percentage	Quantitatively	Percentage
Micro	10	28	25	25	75	68
Small	11	31	39	38	19	14
Medium	15	41	38	37	25	18
<b>Σ</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>V(%)</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>40</b>	

Source: own study on basis of own research.

Table 3. Planning of visual communication (percentage)

Enterprises	Trade			Industry			Services			V(%)
	Yes	No	Sometimes	Yes	No	Sometimes	Yes	No	Sometimes	
Micro	11	80	9	24	40	36	20	10	70	115
Small	15	40	45	30	37	33	35	26	49	105
Medium	45	9	46	46	20	34	53	14	33	119
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>113</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

Table 4. Organizing visual communication

Enterprises	Trade (%)			Industry (%)			Services (%)		
	Separately	Out-side	Sometimes	Separately	Out-side	Sometimes	Separately	Out-side	Sometimes
Micro	5	85	10	10	69	21	5	85	10
Small	8	72	20	13	44	43	7	87	5
Medium	10	60	30	15	53	32	14	40	46
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>20</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

planned concerns the small-sized enterprises. The reluctance to the planned visual communication dominates in the trade sector and concerns the micro-sized enterprises. The option ‘sometimes’ was chosen mostly by the micro-sized trade enterprises. Among the trade enterprises, visual communication planning is applied mainly by the medium-sized companies (compare table 3). In the industry sector, the decisions linked to planning of visual communication, marked by the option ‘sometimes’, were chosen mostly by the medium-sized companies. Comparing, this option was often selected by the enterprises from the whole SME sector. In the services sector, the ‘sometimes’ option concerning visual communication planning was mostly chosen by the micro-sized enterprises. The medium-sized enterprises claim decisively that they plan visual communication. In all sectors, i.e. the micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, the very big diversity of the chosen variants appeared which is proved by the variability factor  $V$  ( $100\% < V_d < 150\%$  – very big variability) – compare table 3. Analyzing visual communication planning in the ‘trade’, ‘industry’ and ‘service’ groups, it can be easily noticed that the highest level of the answers stating that the enterprises plan this communication is in the services sector and in case of almost half of the medium-sized enterprises. Planning does not constitute the matter of interest in case of the majority of the micro-sized enterprises, although in the service sector this factor is relatively low (10%).

The analysis of the problems concerning the organization in scope of visual communication is led mainly to the separate decisions taken by the enterprise in regard to its instructing to the outside subjects and options in which the enterprise sometimes decides on the individual activities and sometimes instructs the organization on visual communication. It appeared that the trade enterprises in all sectors (micro-, small- and medium-sized) most

eagerly outsource visual communication services. It is the most common in trade and then in services, while the industry is at the end. It eventuates from the analysis that the companies from the SME sector in the industrial sphere are the most self-reliant when it comes to visual communication. The absolutely inverse situation concerns the trade and services enterprises (compare table 4).

Analyzing the issue of motivating employees, it assumed that motivating can or cannot be fulfilled; therefore, the author offered the respondents only two options ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the questionnaire. Among those who deal with visual communication, it is clearly visible that lack of motivation in the SME sector dominates. Only in small scope, it appears in case of the medium-sized enterprises, especially in trade. On average 5% of the small-sized enterprises grants that they motivate the employees who undertake the actions within visual communication. To conclude, motivating within visual communication has the quibbling character for the enterprises from the SME sector (compare table 5).

Defining the following function of visual communication management, i.e. controlling, it must be stated that in the small scope (on average at the level of 9%), it appears among the services enterprises and at the level of 7% – among the trade companies. The slightly higher level, which is quibbling for the scale of the action, is represented by the industrial companies – at the average level of 8%. Among the enterprises which use controlling of visual communication actions are medium-sized enterprises, but for micro-sized ones, this phenomenon is almost invisible, while the small-sized companies are the most active in controlling of visual communication. Anyway, the evaluated situation states about the incidental use of the control in visual communication from the SME sector (compare table 6).

Table 5. Motivating the employees in scope of visual communication activities (percentage)

Enterprises		Motivated	Unmotivated
Micro	industry	1	99
	trade	1	99
	services	0	100
Small	industry	5	95
	trade	6	94
	services	4	96
Medium	industry	10	90
	trade	15	85
	services	12	88

Source: own study based on own research.

Table 6. Controlling of the activities in scope of visual communication (percentage)

Enterprises	Industry		Trade		Services	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Micro	2	98	1	99	1	99
Small	8	92	8	92	15	85
Medium	15	85	12	88	13	87
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>90</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

Evaluating the state of the budget allocated to visual communication, it is stated that most often this budget appears in the services enterprises, especially medium-sized ones (87%).

Similarly, the medium-sized industry companies allocate their budget to this communication (80%). The analysis proved that the worst situation appears to be in the trade enterprises (73%). On the other hand, in the group of the trade enterprises the declared level of the budget is relatively high (40%). In general, the industrial companies allocate the budget in the smallest range in reference to visual communication, but the final results prove that most of the SME companies does not obtain the separate budget for visual communication (compare table 7).

Table 7. Budget to visual communication

Enterprises	Industry		Trade		Services	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Micro	10	90	12	88	18	82
Small	20	80	35	65	29	71
Medium	80	20	73	17	87	13
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

Assessing the companies which declare obtaining the budget for visual communication, the high variety of the answers appeared in reference to the questions if the budget was demarcated on the activity-bases, according to the turnovers/profits or defined annually. Most of the companies, i.e. 97%, among those which answered positively to the question about the budget of visual communication, state that their budget derives from the turnovers and profits. Subsequently, 79% of the enterprises claim to determine the activity-based budget. The budget, which is the most rarely used, is the annual budget planned in advance. In the budget planning, the dominant companies are those medium-sized and small-sized. The micro-sized enterprises situate the worst in scope of 'allocating the annual budget' (compare table 8).

Table 8. Kinds of budgets of companies

Enterprises	Micro	Small	Medium	The arithmetic mean
The activity-based budget	90	75	72	<b>79</b>
Annual budget	2	33	80	<b>38</b>
Budget – estreat of the profit/turnover	95	38	99	<b>97</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

Analyzing the issues concerning the purposes of visual communication, it was stated that the enterprises from the SME sector, independently from the group (industry, trade, services) define the aims of the communication. It refers in the vast majority to the medium-sized enterprises, then the small-sized and the micro-sized, which constitute in average 90% of all researched companies (compare table 9).

Table 9. Determining the purposes of visual communication (percentage)

Enterprises	Yes	No
Micro	80	20
Small	89	11
Medium	99	1

Source: own study based on own research.

Analyzing the significance of visual communication purpose for the company, it was stated that among the aims, depending on rising the turnovers, profits from the created project, created company, increasing the competitiveness, the enterprises determined the aim concerning the diversification of promotion and broadening the communication. The presented aims were scored according to the following system: 2pt mean scant meaning, 3pt – sufficient meaning, 4pt – important, 5pt – very important. On basis of the conducted research, it was also stated that the micro-sized and medium-sized enterprises draw the most attention to the purpose concerning the increase of the turnovers and profits (5pt). For the small-sized and medium-sized enterprises, the most important role

Table 10. The significance of visual communication purpose for the enterprise

Enterprises	Micro				Small				Medium			
	2	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	2	3	4	5
Increase the turnovers and profits				X				X			X	
Creating the product			X					X				X
Creating the company		X						X				X
Increasing the competitiveness		X				X						X
Other aims indicated by the company: the diversification of the promotion	X					X					X	
Other aims indicated by the company: broadening the communication	X					X					X	

Source: own study based on own research.

is to create the product and the company, which is less significant (4pt) among the micro-sized companies. Increasing the competitiveness is very important for medium-sized enterprises, but for the micro- and small-sized companies the role of this factor is not meaningful (3pt). Diversification of the promotion and broadening of the communication is essential first of all for the medium-sized enterprises and for the small-sized companies this purpose does not state the matter of importance (compare table 10). The effect of the conducted research contains also the answers concerning other aims which are fulfilled with visual communication and were enumerated individually by particular enterprises. These aims depend on improvement of the basic activities, keep up the changes and broadening the distribution channels. It eventuates from this analysis that the enterprises in the SME sector are concentrated mainly on the kind of visual communication which will increase turnovers, profits and allows creating the product and the company.

Evaluating the level of the achieved aim by visual communication, it was stated that visual communication mostly accomplishes its purposes at the level of 25% in all groups of the enterprises. Other indications concerning the aim accomplishment of visual communication concern the level of 50% and are applied in all enterprises from the micro-, small- and medium-sized groups. Full completion of the purpose at the level which is lower than 25% is reached by around 6% of the enterprises. To conclude, the effectiveness of visual communication in the SME sector is low (compare table 11).

Table 11. The level of the accomplished aim by visual communication (percentage)

The accomplishment of the purpose	Micro	Small	Medium	The arithmetic mean
100%	5	5	5	5
75%	23	7	10	13
50%	25	30	35	30
25%	40	60	40	46
Less than 25%	7	1	10	6

Source: own study based on own research.

Evaluating the influence of managing visual communication on the market position of the enterprise, it was stated that the biggest number of the companies which agree with existence of such influence derives from the service sector (58%), then from trade sector (51%). The industrial enterprises experience this influence at a lower level (19%), but independently from the sector, the biggest number of the enterprises confirming the influence is stated by the medium-sized enterprises. The lowest level of influence in reference to the management of visual communication on the market position is observed in the small-sized enterprises. The difficulty in expressing the opinion in this topic is shown mainly by the industrial enterprises (average 62%) – compare table 12.

Table 12. The influence of visual communication management on the market position (percentage)

Enterprises	Industry			Trade			Services		
	Yes	No	Hard to say	Yes	No	Hard to say	Yes	No	Hard to say
micro	10	30	60	19	5	85	20	23	57
small	23	17	60	63	20	17	73	10	17
medium	25	10	65	80	6	14	80	10	10
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>

Source: own study based on own research.

Another research problem is stated by the implements of visual communication and their assessment made by the enterprises from the SME sector in industry, trade and services.

It was shown in the results of the conducted research that the most effective implementation in visual communication, according to the respondents i.e. the companies, is the online advertising scored with 5 points by the researched. The online selling, the meaning of logo, packages, WWW websites were similarly scored (on average 4.9pt). In reference to the advertising, apart from the online form, highly scored was also outdoor (on average 4.3pt), and in the other ways of visual communication were mentioned

Table 13. The evaluation of the implementations used in visual communication (scoring)

Tools of visual communication		Micro			Small			Medium			The arithmetic mean
		p	h	u	p	h	u	p	h	u	
Advertising	TV	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	4	<b>1.2</b>
	Cinema	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0.0</b>
	Outdoor	3	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	<b>4.3</b>
	Publications: folders, leaflets, brochures, ect.	3	5	5	3	4	5	3	3	4	<b>3.9</b>
	Internet advertisement	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	<b>5.0</b>
Supplementary Promotion	Visual samples	3	2	2	3	5	2	4	4	2	<b>3.0</b>
	Contests	0	3	0	0	3	3	0	4	5	<b>2.0</b>
	Fairs, exhibitions	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	<b>3.7</b>
Public Relations	Gadgets	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	4	4	<b>3.6</b>
	Business cards	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	<b>3.7</b>
	Logos on company documents	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	<b>3.4</b>
Personal sale (including on-line)	Package	3	4	2	3	5	5	3	5	2	<b>3.6</b>
	Logo	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	<b>5.0</b>
	Banners	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	<b>5.0</b>
	WWW	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	<b>4.9</b>
Other means of visual communication	Organisation of the selling places	2	3	5	2	5	5	4	5	5	<b>4.0</b>
	Multimedia presentations	0	0	0	0	5	5	3	4	4	<b>2.3</b>
	Spatial identification and visualisation of the company	3	4	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	<b>4.1</b>
<b>The arithmetic mean</b>		<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>

p – industrial enterprises; h – trade enterprises u – service enterprises; scoring: 0 – not applied, 2 – scant, 3 – sufficient, 4 – good, 5 – very good

Source: own study based on own research.

also: spatial identification of the company, i.e. all markings linked to the company, which facilitates the transfer to the company and identifies it in the territory were claimed to be important (average 4.1pt). The organization of selling places was considered significant from the communicative point of view (circa 4pt). The evaluation of the publishing advertisement was scored on average at 3.9pt. It is worth noticing that the respondents did not apply any forms of visual communication through cinema, and the role of television in visualizing was noted only by the medium-sized companies, scoring it slightly lower, i.e. 1.2pt. When analyzing the structure of the SME enterprises evaluating the proposed implements used in visual communication, it is visible that the forms of visual communication have essential meaning for all types of the companies. With regard to the outdoor advertising, its use increases simultaneously with the development of the company. The publishing advertisement is more important for the smaller enterprises, especially trade and services companies. The significance of the samples of visualization is relevant for the medium-sized enterprises, mainly in industry. Fairs and

exhibitions become more and more important during the process of development of the company, being simultaneously significant for trade, industry and services. The competitions are not applied in the industry, no matter what size of the company is, but they are sufficiently significant for the medium-sized trade and services enterprises. All gadgets are essential for the medium-sized companies and for small-sized services companies, while all materials building the identity of the company, i.e. business cards, are significant for the small- and medium-sized companies with the good score concerning the communication. In micro-sized companies, they have only sufficient meaning. Marking the documents is important for the micro-sized companies, but their role decreases in small- and medium-sized companies, especially in services sector, where it was assessed as sufficient. The package does not have any importance for the services sector, but its role was scored with 5pt by the trade small- and medium-sized companies. In the micro-sized companies, the importance of this element equals 4pt. The significance of logo, websites and banners is unprecedented for all enterprises and it

was scored 5pt (except the micro-sized industrial companies – 4pt). The role of organization and arrangement of the selling places, i.e. merchandising aspects, are important for the trade and services companies, while the multimedia presentations are evaluated on the medium level, but the small-sized companies and the medium-sized ones, especially in service (small-sized) and industry (medium-sized). The spatial identification of the company is important (average 4.1pt) for all enterprises because it allows easier transferring to the company. Evaluating the implements of visual communication in the general sense; it can be said that by their scoring (the final average score was 3.4pt) it is seen how weak its influence is – above the sufficient level (3,4) – compare table 13.

The certificate of origin included the information concerning the size of the company according to the following groups: micro-, small-, medium-sized and their dependence on the national economy sectors, like trade, industry and service, as well as required defining the type of ownership. Considering the last feature, it revealed that 100% of all researched companies are the private enterprises. When analyzing the results of the chi-square test, the level of dependencies between the features, their dependence on the size, economy sectors and features determining visual communication management were taken into account, which were the subject of the public opinion survey (compare table 14).

Table 14. The dependencies between the features on basis of the chi-square test

The features determining visual communication management	The size of the enterprise	Dependence from the branch
Planning of visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.30	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.36
Organizing of visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.46	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.39
Motivating by visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.29	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.31
Controlling of the activities in visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.22	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.34
The budget allocated to visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.82	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.51
Defining the purposes of visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.68	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.72
The selection of the implements of visual communication	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.91	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.78
The influence of visual communication management on the market position	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.91	$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$ R=0.92

$\chi^2 < \chi^2_{\alpha}$  – dependency between the features

$\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha}$  – lack of dependency between the features

R – Czaprow's modulus,  $R \in [0,1]$ ,

Source: own study based on own research.

In result of the research concerning the relation between the indicated features, it is clearly visible that in all cases, such a relation exists but with various strength. In the scope of planning visual communication and its organizing, motivating and controlling,

the relations appear in reference to the size of the company and their dependence from the economy sectors but these relations are weak because of the Czaprow's modulus  $R \in (0, 0.5)$ . In other cases, i.e. in the scope of the relations between the budget allocation for visual communication, defining the purposes, implementation of visual communication and influence of visual communication management on the market position (i.e. the dependence from the national economy), there is the strong relation and  $R \in (0.5, 1)$ . Generally, such a situation means the state of relation between the activities of visual communication in the range of its management and dependence from the SME sector and the enterprises activities in the industry, trade and services.

## The research results

The research results are determined on the grounds of the conducted survey and lead to the following conclusions:

- The return of the questionnaires was at the level of 77%, thus the research was conducted among 164 micro-sized enterprises, 79 small-sized enterprises and 31 medium-sized companies; the total number of the researched companies in Silesia was 234; the companies were surveyed according to the affiliation to the economy sectors – industry, trade and services;
- Mainly the services providers and the medium-sized companies plan their visualization. Planning does not state the matter of interest for the rest, especially for the micro-sized enterprises. Planning of visual communication is undertaken more often in the medium-sized companies than in the small-sized and the small-sized enterprises decide on it more often than the micro-sized ones. The visual communication is most often planned in industry and then in services and trade;
- Companies from the SME industrial sector are the most independent concerning the organization of visual communication. The completely opposite situation concerns the trade and services providers which outsource these services;
- Motivating within visual communication is of unimportant character for the SME and it slightly occurs only in the case of the middle-sized companies, especially in trade;
- The situation proclaims the incidental use of the activities' control within visual communication among the SME;
- Having a budget for visual communication is not common but mainly the medium-sized companies are among those which allocate such budgets. Generally speaking, the smaller the enterprise, the higher the tendency to operate without a budget for visual communication;
- Companies allocating their budgets to visual communication determine it on basis of turnovers and the profits. The medium-sized enterprises are dominant in budget planning and then the small-sized companies. Micro-sized companies are situated as the weakest in terms of 'annual budget planning';
- Companies from the SME sector, which are independent from the groups (industry, trade or services) determine

the visualization purposes and it concerns circa 90% of all the researched enterprises. The highest rate is constituted by the medium-sized and then the small-sized companies, while the micro-sized enterprises are at the end of the ranking;

- Companies in the SME sector are concentrated mainly on the kind of visual communication which increases the profits and turnovers and allows creating the product and company. The micro- and medium-sized companies pay more attention to the purpose depending on increasing the turnovers and profits. Creating the product and company is the most important aspect for the small and medium-sized companies, which role decreases in case of the micro-sized companies. Enhancement of the competitiveness is essential for the medium-sized companies; however, for the small- and micro-sized enterprises, the role of this aim is averagely germane;
- Visual communication accomplishes its aims at the level of 25% in all groups of enterprises and it can be claimed that the effectiveness of visual communication in the SME sector is low;
- The influence of visual communication management on the market position of the enterprise, according to the respondents' opinion, i.e. the companies, has rather an average meaning. The biggest number of the companies which agree with this influence derive from the services sector and then from the trade sector. Only a small fraction of industrial enterprises consider such an influence as important;
- The most efficient implementation of visual communication according to the responding companies is the online advertising and online selling. The logo and website preparation is very significant. The outdoor and the spatial identification of the company are also important. The organization of the selling places is considered as notable. The publishing forms of visual communication are more important for the micro- and small-sized companies, but for the medium-sized the hypermedia implementations are more significant. The intermediate level of the influence of visual communication's implementations is sufficient, which in reality means it is low;
- The dependency of all enumerated activities within visual communication of the SME sector and the activity of the enterprises in industry, trade and services occurs. The functions describing the management have weaker connection with the SME sector than the features of the marketing aspects.

The conclusion of the research is defined on the grounds that it is difficult to discuss visual communication management in the SME sector, but the need of its use is strongly felt because execution of the purposes established within visual communication concentrates mainly on planning and its effectiveness is low. The use of visualization implementations are scored low, at the sufficient level. It allows the author to verify the main thesis and the supportive theses.

## Conclusion

In the process of dynamic development of the market environment, successful companies become more influential and significant. It is especially essential in the SME sector, which is truly sensitive for the environment and puts vast effort to survive and achieve the success on the market. One of the elements influencing on the position of the enterprises from the SME sector is visual communication. The activities linked to visual communication should be carefully managed because the preparation of such communication by the planning process, is execution through organizing and subsequently motivating and controlling allows the implementation of the process and achieving success.

*The sources of research and article are external resources.*

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