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## Gamification and Contests as Marketing Communication Tools of Confectionary Brands

### Summary

The Polish confectionary market is estimated to be worth 13 billion zlotys. Over 90 percent of Poles admit to buying sweets. For most consumers, they are a constant element of their diet. The confectionary market in Poland is characterised by fragmentation. In the face of such strong competition and the number of consumers, the owners of confectionary brands are forced to seek clients. At the same time, consumers are growing bored with traditional forms of marketing communication. This is counteracted with innovative forms of communication, which engage the consumer in a covert way, such as gamification and competitions. The aim of the article is to present various forms of using games and consumer contests in marketing communication with consumers of confectionery brands. The theoretical considerations were based on the subject literature. The empirical part presents examples of practical implementations of the discussed tools. The main part is a case study describing a gamification project implemented for the purposes of promoting the Milka brand.

**Key words:** gamification, contest, confectionary brands, sales promotion.

**JEL codes:** M31, M37

### Introduction

In 2017, global spending on sweets reached almost 180 billion dollars. Stable growth in sales (1.5% compared to 2016) will be due primarily to the markets of Asia, Western Europe and the USA. The Polish market is worth about USD 3.2 billion and in the next years, it will grow more dynamically than the global one (3-5%). The Polish confectionery market has a large development potential because, despite a systematic increase in value, Poles continue to consume 3 times fewer sweets (3 kg per year, half of which is chocolate products) than e.g. an average German (9-10 kg per year). It is estimated that the target value of the Polish market will reach 4.4 billion dollars within 2-4 years (Bochner 2017).

The confectionery market is divided into 5 segments: chocolate products, sweet and salty snacks (including dried tropical fruit, crisps), biscuits and cakes, confectionery (including pastilles, e.g. Mentos, soluble gums, jellies), chewing gums. The confectionery market in Poland is characterized by fragmentation (KPMG 2014). Several hundred important entities operate on it. In the face of such a high competition and the number of consumers, the owners of sweets brands have to intensify their efforts to woo customers through numerous promotional campaigns. At the same time, consumers are growing bored with traditional forms

of marketing communication. This is counteracted with innovative forms of communication, which engage the consumer in a covert way, such as gamification and interactive competitions. The number of people who mention on-line gaming as one of their most frequent activities on the Internet is increasing worldwide. The companies are using this trend to include projects of broadly-understood gamification and interactive competitions employing new technologies into their communication campaigns. However, in order to be effective, a company needs to understand gamers and offer them something new. A successful gamification project or competition must seek unconventional ideas to engage the consumer. The gamer must not realise they are gamers while continuing to interact with a given brand or product.

The aim of the article is to present various forms of using games and consumer contests as well as the main assumptions regarding building projects based on these two tools in marketing communication with consumers of confectionery brands. The theoretical considerations were based on the subject literature. The empirical part presents examples of practical implementations of the discussed tools. The main part is a case study describing a gamification project implemented for the purposes of promoting the Milka brand.

### Contests as an element of sales support

The contest next to the lottery is one of the ways to increase sales by the brand. The lottery is an action based on randomness. One buy a product, submit a code, and register via SMS or a website. The lottery has a simple and understandable mechanism and a low barrier to entry - to participate in the game, you do not need to demonstrate specific knowledge, skills or prepare a creative application. The result is determined by the draw system. In the contests, the randomness system is replaced by a rating (Popielarczyk 2017; Wołek 2016). In the case of contests, the most important is the goal - clear and specific. Among them one can distinguish (Wołek 2016):

- Communication of information - transmission of a specific message through the involvement of consumers in communication with the brand, e.g. informing about new flavours of chocolate;
- Sales - increased sales by the brand, e.g. Milka's contest in Carrefour, organized on the occasion of the Mother's Day holiday in 2016. The customer was required to buy any 2 of Milka products, register a receipt on [podziekujmamie.pl](http://podziekujmamie.pl) and write what they would like to thank their mother for. The quality of the answers was evaluated by the jury, and there were 3 weekend trips to the SPA for two people to win;
- User-Generated Content - creating content that is valuable to the brand by customers. For example, the use of the wish wizard for the mother's day by Rafaello (implementation in 2016). The recipients were encouraged to create and send via the application placed on the contest website a video, in which there is an answer to the question: "What do you love your mom for most?". The films could be sent to their mothers or published on Facebook. Thanks to this, the brand gets content and the user has a chance to win prizes - branded jewellery and sweets for the mother.

- Acquiring leads, e.g. creating a landing page on the culinary website where, in addition to providing information about products, you are encouraged to complete a questionnaire, which allows for collecting information from participants, in particular, if an incentive type is used: take part in the test of new tastes of cookies, and their sets will be sent to the first 200 people ;
- Acquiring subscribers to the newsletter - for example, in order to participate in the contest users must subscribe to the newsletter, that is, enter their email address, name and surname and agree to the processing of personal data. Everyone who completes the form receives a link to the landing page with a unique code, where some form of reward awaits. It is good to give users the ability to recommend subscribing to a newsletter to friends, for which he would gain additional points. This form of accomplishing the goal can be combined with acquiring content;
- Increasing the number of followers - acquiring fans for the brand on social networking sites. For example, “Verbena Candy Mail”. On the brand’s Facebook page, an application was launched, through which you could send your loved ones the selected flavour of Verbena candies. It referred to the popularity of the floral post. The idea was born from the premise that Verbena’s candies are a nice and tasty gift, which thanks to the application has a chance to reach a much larger number of people.

The above list certainly does not exhaust all possibilities of using contests. It should be noted here that the level of consumer involvement is relatively small compared to the one required for gamification projects.

## Games in promotional activities of confectionery manufacturers

The widespread involvement of people in games was noticed as early as in the 1940s, when J. Huizinga pointed out that the importance of the game for social development is much greater than one can suppose, although the need to play does not appeal to instinct or reason. The game can be in principle considered to be a non-material total quality in the nature of things (Huizinga 1949). This phenomenon has intensified with technological development and for over a dozen years it has started to be perceived as an important component of social, economic, cultural and artistic life (Kania, Smolarek 2017).

The use of games in promotional activities over recent years has evolved significantly. It started from the placement of static advertising billboards or directly the products themselves in existing games, through advergaming entirely devoted to the promotion of a given brand or product, up to gamification. The following is a brief description of the various forms of using games in marketing communication.

The simplest is product placement, which consists in placing the product directly in the game so that it reaches the recipient’s subconscious in a minimally invasive, non-intrusive way. In turn, static advertising in games is a one-off advertisement of a given brand in the game, e.g. in the form of a logo on the wall, a poster on the street, a banner on the pitch, etc. The difference between product placement and static advertising lies in the form of in-

teraction on the line: brand - player. Everything that can be used, utilized or touched in the game to carry out subsequent missions is product placement and what can only be seen is static advertising. For example, product placement would be to place chocolate products of a specific brand, which can be eaten by an avatar in a game such as *The Sims*, while a static advertisement of the same manufacturer's logo would be advertising banners around the football pitch in the game of the FIFA series (Szczęsny 2012).

The next form is dynamic advertising, which in its form is similar to the typical internet advertising (except for the lack of the possibility of clicking), which means that it can reach only to the player who is online. Depending on the type of game, it can take various forms. Most often it is a billboard placed directly in the game, which can change dynamically depending on the advertisers' requirements. Such a billboard can be described as a virtual equivalent of classic outdoor advertising, e.g. a billboard placed on the street, a poster at the bus stop, a banner on the band of the pitch, etc. Dynamic advertising allows for precisely determining the duration of the campaign, capping per user or selecting a specific game category. Its broadcast takes place from an ad server (external server), and the game itself is specially prepared for the possibility of broadcasting dynamic ads in it (Semik 2012; Woźniakowski 2016).

Another way to use games in promotional activities is advertising in social games, which combines the advantages of the aforementioned solutions. Social games, similarly to the box games, allow for placing and promoting a specific product in the form of, for example, an existing online version. In their case, for example, a virtual object can be created offering specific bonuses in a given game, moreover with the help of referral mechanisms players can show off their achievements to other players, invite them to cooperate, co-perform or similar activities, and receive for everything, proportional to the commitment, profits in game. It can be considered to be a self-propelling promotional mechanism that works perfectly well on social networking sites such as Facebook. Another advantage of such activities is coverage. The mentioned games have many regular players - fans, often counted in millions, so the range of the promotional campaign can potentially be extremely large in relation to traditional activities, e.g. advertising on the same social network. Thanks to accurate data about the profile of the user of the social network site, it is possible to target the advertisement deeply based on its demographic profile. In the case of social games, it is also worth paying attention to their virality and the time in which they become popular (Semik 2012).

An even more advanced form of using games in the promotion is advergaming. The game in this dimension can also perform additional tasks such as the implementation of competitions with prizes, gathering fans or members of groups on social networking sites, collecting e-mail addresses of players for later communication, education, etc. It is assumed that in advergaming the most important thing is the game itself and the advertisement is only in second place. Advertisers noticed that it is more profitable to provide an attractive game with interesting gameplay, graphics, mechanics and scenario, rather than force the player to play with the product or brand themselves (Jankowski 2012). A good example here can be a game prepared for the Wedel brand. In the new image campaign for the new flavours of stuffed chocolate "Fruit duets", the element involving the Internet users was a simple game,

the aim of which was to find as soon as possible a pair of the same fruits hidden under the cubes in a chocolate bar. The game was broadcast on the largest Polish portals (directly on advertising formats - the most frequently unfolded banner), on the Wedel website and the brand's fan page on Facebook (where participants could share their results with friends) (Woźniakowski 2016).

The most advanced form of using games in marketing is the gamification mentioned above. It is based on the use of stimuli and reflexes that each person trains (usually unconsciously) in the time intended for entertainment. The main assumption of gamification is the conviction that the mechanisms related to games, and therefore the pleasure, curiosity about what will happen next and the reward for the task, can be transferred to the areas of life, which for most people are boring, monotonous (Chou 2015; Huotari, Hamari 2016; Matallaoui, Hanner, Zarnekow 2017; Zichermann, Linder 2013; www1). In other words, gamification is the injection of fun elements into activities that usually do not provide it to us (Szymczyk 2012).

Important elements that distinguish gamification from other projects using game mechanics are long duration and plot. Gamification is focused on long-term commitment, and the plot allows for engaging people through internal motivators, as opposed to points and rewards that are external motivators. According to these criteria, a regular loyalty program, competition or lottery is not a gamification (Czerska 2016; Robra-Bissantz, Lattemann 2017).

## Gamification – Milka case study

An interesting example of gamification activities was the project “Milka. Moje miasto sie przytula” (My city hugs). The idea to encourage people to open themselves to brand values was to engage them in an activity that is important from their perspective, one that will not only enable them to have great fun but will also provide the reason why they should do so. The pretext for switching to the “bright” side was the first in the history plebiscite for the nicest city in Poland. The nicest means inhabited by friendly, smiling, nice and open people. The residents and the relations between them were the most important in the action.

The action “Milka. My city hugs” took off on April 22 and ended in mid-July 2013 with the implementation of the promotional campaign organized by Milka for the winning city. 700 of the 908 cities in Poland took part in it, for which approximately 8 million virtual votes were cast in total. The action went through four phases, which in effect led to the choice of the nicest city in Poland.

In the first phase, there was a nationwide vote conducted via [www.fioletowastrona.pl](http://www.fioletowastrona.pl) and Milka's profile on Facebook (Facebook.com/Milka). Votes were sent in the form of hugs - 1 hug sent from a given city meant 1 vote for it. At this stage, a radio contest was also held for participants of the campaign who could thus gain bonus points for their city. After three weeks of voting, we got to know three cities, from which most of the hugs were sent and

which passed to the strict finals of the action. They were: Bytom, Ostrów Wielkopolski and Rawa Mazowiecka.

In the second phase of the action, the city-finalists could present themselves to Poland in exciting provocations and thus had a chance to convince the whole of Poland that it was them who deserved the title of the nicest city. Ideas for funny provocations, thanks to which it was possible to check whether the inhabitants of the finalist cities are nice to each other every day, were sent by radio RMF FM listeners, which was one of the media partners of the campaign.

In the third phase, the voting for three finalist cities started from the beginning and lasted until 30 June. This time, however, 1 dedicated vote, or 1 virtual hug, was 1 point for the city, which, according to the participant of the game should win. This time, also through participation in radio contests, participants could earn bonus points for their cities, and in addition, in 3 cities-finalists, there were weekend special events with surprising flash mobs.

On the day of the final, on June 30, 2013, great outdoor events were organized in the cities - finalists with a series of attractions for entire families and concerts of stars from the Polish music scene: Budka Suflera, Bajm and Maryla Rodowicz. Over 60,000 people took part in them. On that day, the last point competition took place, the course of which was broadcast live in a special antenna input on TVN, which was the second media partner of the campaign.

The title of the nicest city in Poland was won by Bytom, which won a total of 1.5 million votes in the online voting. At each stage of the action, the city could count on the huge commitment of hundreds, thousands of people voting on them every day and taking part in many additional events.

As a reward, the winning city received from the organizer of the action, the Milka brand, a promotional campaign worth half a million PLN, which covered the press, radio, television, Internet and guaranteed access to millions of Poles. It started the day after the end of the entire campaign. As part of the promotional activities, an advertising spot was created about Bytom, in which its residents were shown and the nicest reasons why it is worth visiting this city. The campaign included such media as TVN, TVN Player, RMF FM, RMF Maxxx Gazeta Wyborcza, Forbes, Viva!, [www.gazeta.pl](http://www.gazeta.pl), [www.onet.pl](http://www.onet.pl) and local press. The materials also appeared on the action website [www.fioletowastrona.pl](http://www.fioletowastrona.pl), the official profile of Milka on Facebook and the YouTube portal.

The campaign's success was largely determined by the very strong involvement of local media, which not only reported its course but also strongly supported their cities. Communication with them was conducted on a huge scale. The database of all media comprised nearly 4,000 records.

The project has been noticed and appreciated by both consumers and cities authorities who have been heavily involved in their promotion. In social media, participants created and published 3,600 new threads about the campaign, which were displayed over 600,000 times.

A total of 7 394 996 virtual hugs were sent via [www.fioletowastrona.pl](http://www.fioletowastrona.pl), and Milka's fans on Facebook increased by 80,000 (fans' involvement at the level of 23%). Film materials on the official channel "Milka. My city hugs" on YouTube have been played over 674,000 times and have been broadcast for more than 1,100,000 minutes. The action website had over 8,350,000 page views and over 865,000 unique user entrances.

Consumer research carried out by Milka shows that the campaign has reached high awareness among respondents. 72% of the target group of the brand heard about it, and 92% of them mention Milka as its sponsor. 37% of respondents were strongly involved in the campaign, and over 60% of them sent more than one virtual hug. The campaign raised spontaneous awareness of the brand and its products in all segments of chocolate sweets, and strengthened its image as a delicate, close and friendly brand, encouraging to be nice and to share positive emotions with others. It also strengthened the sales of the brand by 33.4% compared to the same period of the previous year and increased the market shares to 9.3% (+ 2.2pp, period V-VI'13).

The synergy of media and internet activities in the form of cooperation with media partners and the digital campaign, public affairs activities and strong PR support, built awareness of the campaign and effectively gathered people around it.

The campaign was typical of a gamification project based on the mechanics known from role-playing games and computer games. The most important elements include (Balcerak 2015; Blohm, Leimester 2013; Seaborn, Fels 2015; Tkaczyk 2012; Woźniakowski 2016; Zimmermann, Cunningham 2011):

- Measurable tasks (e.g. sending hugs) and real challenges to be achieved by the average player.
- A progress bar or other form of presentation of how close a player is to completing a task, moving to the next level or ending the game - voting results.
- Difficulty/development levels- the four stages of the project described above.
- Rankings, tables of results - the position of the city in the ranking during the voting.
- Individual competition (the cities) and group competition (their residents).
- Cooperation of participants to achieve a common goal in many gamification projects is an element that builds interpersonal relations - joint actions of residents for a common goal.
- Points awarded for completing the desired tasks - the number of hugs, votes of the participants of the game, bonuses from radio contests.
- Reward system - the title of the nicest city in Poland and a promotional campaign.
- Communication system between participants - forums, profiles on social media, etc.

The above-mentioned elements of game mechanics do not exhaust the entire list. However, they give a certain view of the mechanisms that affect the world of players on the one hand and the authors of gamification projects on the other hand for the case study under consideration.

## Conclusions

The most common forms of using games in marketing communication presented in the article (with particular emphasis on gamification as the most advanced tool based on game

mechanics), supported by examples of successful implementation confirm the effectiveness of their application in marketing activities of enterprises, including those representing the FMCG industry, like producers of sweets. Above all, they are a very useful tool for engaging the customer. By using the natural need for competition, curiosity, fun, proving oneself and comparing oneself with others, they are able to attract the attention of the customer and keep it for longer. They are also helpful in using social engagement of contemporary consumers who are willing to devote their time, to involve in relations with others and to co-create the content (Radziszewska 2017).

However, the effective use of games in promotional activities depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions. The most important thing is to adjust the game and its plot and difficulty level to the individual preferences of the potential player. It is also necessary to develop mechanisms to monitor players' behaviour on an ongoing basis and to react efficiently to their changes. An effective game in the marketing dimension should be attractive to the recipient, allow for establishing social relations and competition, and contain elements conducive to the spread of promotional content in a viral way. In the context of the case study of the Milka brand described in the text, one can use the statement that all the above-mentioned assumptions have been met, and the project itself can be considered as a model due to the achieved results.

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## Grywalizacja i konkursy jako innowacyjne narzędzia komunikacji marketingowej marek producentów słodczy

### Streszczenie

Polski rynek słodczy wart jest 13 mld złotych. Ponad 90% Polaków przyznaje, że kupuje słodcze. Dla większości konsumentów są one stałym elementem diety. Sam rynek słodczy w Polsce charakteryzuje się rozdrobnieniem. Wobec tak dużej konkurencji oraz liczby konsumentów, właściciele marek słodczy muszą coraz intensywniej zabiegać o względy klientów. Z drugiej strony, konsumenci są coraz bardziej znudzeni tradycyjnymi formami komunikacji marketingowej. Naprzeciw temu zjawisku wychodzą formy komunikacji, angażujące konsumenta w sposób nieinacjonalny, jak grywalizacja i konkursy. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie różnych form wykorzystania gier oraz konkursów konsumenckich w komunikacji marketingowej z konsumentami marek słodczy. Rozważania teoretyczne oparto na literaturze przedmiotu. W części empirycznej przedstawiono przykłady praktycznych wdrożeń omawianych narzędzi. Część zasadniczą stanowi studium przypadku opisujące projekt grywalizacyjny zrealizowany dla potrzeb promocji marki Milka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** grywalizacja, konkurs, promocja sprzedaży.

**Kody JEL:** M31, M37

## **Геймификация и конкурсы как инновационные инструменты маркетинговой коммуникации торговых марок производителей кондитерских продуктов**

### **Резюме**

Польский рынок кондитерских продуктов стоит 13 млрд. злотых. Свыше 90% поляков заявляют, что они покупают кондитерские изделия. Для большинства потребителей – они постоянный элемент диеты. Сам рынок кондитерских продуктов в Польше характеризуется атомизацией. Ввиду столь большой конкуренции и количества потребителей, собственники марок кондитерских продуктов должны все интенсивнее ходатайствовать о предрасположении клиентов. С другой стороны, потребители все более изнуряются традиционными формами маркетинговой коммуникации. Напротив этому явлению выходят формы коммуникации, вовлекающие потребителя ненавязчивым образом, как то геймификация и конкурсы. Цель статьи – представить разные формы использования игр и потребительских конкурсов в маркетинговой коммуникации торговых марок кондитерских изделий. Теоретические рассуждения основаны на литературе по предмету. В эмпирической части представили примеры практических внедрений рассматриваемых инструментов. Основную часть составляет анализ конкретного случая, описывающий геймификационный проект, осуществленный для нужд продвижения марки Milka.

**Ключевые слова:** геймификация, конкурс, поощрение продаж.

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