

## **INNOVATIVENESS OF ADVERTISING ACTIVITIES IN THE POLISH MARKET – ADVERTISERS’ ABILITIES AND RECIPIENTS’ PERCEPTION**

Robert Nowacki

University of Finance and Management in Warsaw

**Abstract.** The development of advertising competition forces to undertake measures aimed at increasing effectiveness of the process of influencing potential customers. Advertisers more and more often reach for non-conventional and innovative solutions that are a part of innovativeness in a broad sense. This is facilitated by the development of modern mass media. The article touches the problem of the possibility to implement innovative solutions in advertising and perception thereof among consumers. The grounds for considerations are quantitative research surveys carried out among enterprises conducting their active advertising as well as recipients of those activities.

**Key words:** advertising, advertising innovativeness, advertising perception, advertising services, innovativeness

### **INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary market realities pose new challenges to enterprises. Intensification of the competition processes forces undertaking actions allowing for creating a competitive advantage. Of the key importance is in this process the ability to compete in the market, described as competitiveness. It can be considered in various plains and its level is decided by many factors. Striving to cope with the ever growing competition, expressing in a greater and greater number of entities operating in the market, a growing number of products and brands, evolving ways of distribution and sale as well as in altering forms of marketing communication, enterprises are looking for new concepts of operation, reaching for the solutions not applied so far and impelling higher flexibility in all areas of management. Innovativeness is considered as one of the most important factors conducive to growth of competitiveness. Innovative processes are today the main direction of changes

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Corresponding author: Robert Nowacki, Department of Marketing, University of Finance and Management in Warsaw, Pawia 55, 01-030 Warsaw, Poland, e-mail: nowacki@vizja.pl

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taking place at enterprises thus determining their present and future ability to effectively compete in the market. The innovative activity also concerns marketing as that function of management, which is intrinsically very susceptible to creating new concepts approaching towards the purchasers' expectations and to the observed market trends [Nowacki 2010a]. In the context of marketing activities, being characterised by high innovativeness and creativeness, the role of advertising processes deserves emphasising.

Having so defined the assumptions, an aim of the study is an attempt to determine the opportunities and scale of the use of innovative solutions in advertising activity as well as their importance for raising noticeability of advertising messages among recipients.

## INNOVATIONS IN ADVERTISING – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The notions of innovation and innovativeness belong to the fundamental terms appearing in the theory of enterprise management, originating from the Schumpeter's concept [1960] who identified innovations with the introduction to production of new or with improvement of the existing products, introduction of a new or improved production method, opening a new sales market, application of a new manner of sales or purchases, application of new raw materials or half-products, or introduction of a new production organisation. Therefore, this is the translation of invention into the material reality [Bogdanienko et al. 2004]. The development of the enterprise management concept has led to the emergence of many alternative definitions of innovations, which differ from one another with plains of approach and the referred features [Nowacki 2010b].

For example, Damanpour [1991] has defined innovation as a product, service, process, programme or device which is new for the organisation adopting or implementing it. In turn, Amabile [Amabile et al. 1996] defines innovation from the organisational perspective, describing it as a successful implementation of creative ideas at the enterprise. DeCenzo and Robbins [2002], on the other hand, understand innovation as a process of transformation of the creative idea in a useful product, service or *modus operandi*. Considering the marketing context of innovation, one should also refer to the formulation proposed by Burnett [1953], according to which innovation is every idea or thing that is new as it is completely different from the already existing, well-known forms.

Irrespective the way of formulation, innovation is perceived as a strategic instrument which serves building and extending enterprises' competitive abilities [Farazmand 2004]. It is a key to progress and development, it is also a source of inventions in all spheres of life, community, technology and administration. Innovation refers to novelties in the area of ideas, approaches, methods, processes, structures, behaviours, attitudes and cultures, as well as technologies and abilities. It also refers to knowledge which is used for manufacturing new products and services, for communities governing and administering and managing organisations of different types [Nowacki, Staniewski 2012].

Individual and group creativeness is an indispensable though insufficient basis for innovativeness. Hence, as innovativeness there should be considered the propensity and ability to create new and to improve the existing products, technologies and organisations as well as systems of management and motivation [Kotowicz-Jawor 1997]. Innovation is an effect of combination or synthesis of knowledge into original, important, valuable new

products, processes or services. So that innovativeness could have yielded effects it must, first of all, result in a significant change, not necessarily connected with emergence of something completely new, but it may have the form of a number of important improvements (of the product, process or service) vis-à-vis the earlier achievements.

From the objective point of view, innovative solutions can be divided into four categories: product, process (technological), organisational and marketing innovations [Niedzielski et al. 2007]. The traditionally treated marketing innovations are understood as the introduction in marketing activities of new or improved solutions (changes) as regards the product, its equipment, brand, packaging, positioning, pricing policy, promotional activity or business model [Nowacki 2010b]. The broad formulation of innovativeness and innovations, however, makes us look at marketing as a potential area of implementation of innovative solutions, both of the product nature (creating new and improving the existing products), process (concerning organisation's functioning and, in particular, improving the manufacturing methods), organisational (connected with the organisational structure of marketing services of the enterprise and their ties with business partners), and the typically marketing nature (as regards application of other than the product marketing instruments and activities).

Advertising innovations must be perceived in the latter context. Advertising as an area of enterprises' activities related to influencing the market seems to be particularly susceptible to implementation of innovative solutions. This is issuing from a few factors. The first one is the dynamics of the advertising market, being considered from the point of view of growing outlays on advertising activities and the related to it growth of the number of messages released and, thus, the growing advertising competition. The second is changes taking place in the sphere of recipients of advertising actions, their relation to advertising, perception of messages and susceptibility to their impact. They are mainly expressed in aggravation of the attitude towards advertising and dilution of its effectiveness.

As regards advertising, innovativeness may concern each of its elements, both creating directly the advertising strategy and connected with the activities determining and accompanying implementation thereof. Assuming the earlier cited broad understanding of innovation as an action connected with implementation of new and creative ideas, symptoms of innovativeness can be seen at each of the six fundamental stages of advertising strategy formation: determination of the advertising objectives (mission), identification of recipients and their purchase motives (market), determination of the advertising budget (money), choice of the advertising media and vehicles (media), determination of the advertising message contents (message), and assessment of effectiveness and efficiency (measurement) [Nowacki 2011].

The plain for implementing innovative solutions may be the whole, comprehensively formulated advertising strategy. Innovativeness of programming thereof comprises primarily all the initial stages connected with defining and modifying the advertising objectives, identifying the audience and looking for new target groups as well as with decisions on the volume and ways of budgeting and the processes of controlling and monitoring effects of advertising activities owing to making use of more and more sophisticated research tools and methods offered by specialised agencies. As Lane and Russell write [1996], this is connected with evolution of the entire marketing system which, evolving in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the era of mass information, has appeared in

the era of research. It is characterised by the permanent improvement of the research methods being used which help to recognise advertising recipients, their needs, motivations, expectations, attitudes, preferences as well as market behaviours. It is easier and easier for advertisers to identify narrow groups of recipients and, at the same time, to monitor effects of advertising campaigns impact. The improvement of research methods is connected with the use of modern technical solutions enabling faster and more precise data mining as well as contributing to development of new measurement methods, e.g. neuroresearch.

The high susceptibility to implementation of innovative solutions is specific to the remaining stages of the advertising strategy directly connected with influencing recipients, hence the measures related to the used advertising media and vehicles and with the advertising message creation.

In case of the media strategy, these abilities are connected with the dynamic development of the communications channels and the media infrastructure. This concerns not only the media being described as modern (e.g. Internet) but also those with the long tradition (e.g. the press or outdoor). The media markets are characterised by a high variability of the advertising means appearing there, stemming directly from changes in media consumption, diversification of recipients' interests, technical changes as regards accessibility and impact. The contemporary media offer advertisers an ever growing number of the impact measures differing with the degree of modernity and attractiveness. Also the rules of their use are changing. In effect, we deal with the evolution of old and the development of new advertising media, vehicles and carriers. This is manifested with continuous changes of the media structure of outlays on advertising or changes in the shares of individual means in advertising spending. Some of them are of the nature of permanent trends (as, for instance, the growth of importance of the Internet which for a few years has gained the second, after TV, position among media, at the expense of the press and radio); some acquire the form of multidirectional and ephemeral phenomena. There is commonly observed the appearance of new forms of advertising impact – this concerns, in particular, the most flexible and dynamic Internet, in which case there are still emerging and developing new vehicles, but also the media considered as traditional such as the press or outdoor, within the framework of which it is possible to meet more and more often unconventional carriers, breaking down from the schemes of formalised announcement modules or notice boards. The abundance of the contemporarily accessible carriers is so big that a considerable part of them is yet beyond the area of interest of most advertisers. Not all are sufficiently promoted, some are characterised by too high costs and still others seem to be doubtful as to efficacy of impact.

Of a similar nature are the changes taking place in the creative strategy plain. Its level, determined, *i.a.* by the scope of use of original and innovative contents, decides success or failure of the advertising campaign [Belch, Belch 2009]. This is an outcome of saturation of the advertising market with a vast number of various messages, what has led to reduction of effectiveness of impact, measured with noticeability (as there are too many of them recipients could be able to notice them), recognisability (as too often they are so similar that in result it is difficult to remind oneself what the brand it is about), acceptance (as it is more and more difficult for recipients to accept what they see another time), motivation to buy (as how many time one may fall for the same arguments). Coming up

to meet these difficulties, advertisers are running a race in pursuit advertising content creativity. It comes more and more difficult to create fully original messages; therefore, their creators more and more often reach for innovative, frequently unconventional ideas whose usage was unimaginable a few or several years ago. In effect of exhaustion of ideas, they use controversial motives, balancing on the edge of binding regulations or unwritten albeit commonly respectable ethical norms.

Planning the schedule of advertising activities is another area susceptible to the introduction of changes. Most often changes in this respect concern modification of frequency of running the campaign, alteration in its periodicalness or taking in the schedules into account specific circumstances inducing to intensify advertising such as holiday seasons, jubilees, the seasonality related to changeability of the four seasons of the year etc.

The last area of advertising activity, where there may appear innovative solutions, is cooperation with agencies providing advertising services. This may concern both the change of partner and the principles of cooperation with them concerning the range of cooperation, forms of financing, and the existing ties between entities. It is proper to pay here attention not only to the changes taking part in relations between customers and service providers, but also to the nature of the offer of advertising industry which itself may display high innovativeness.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

To carry out an analysis of the use of innovative solutions in advertising activities and the way of perception thereof among advertising recipients there were used two sources of empirical materials. The first is findings of research carried out within the implementation of author's own project entitled Impact of the use of innovative solutions in some areas of management on enterprise's competitiveness. The research was conducted in 2009 on the non-probability, nation-wide sample of 608 enterprises operating in Poland. In the sample, there prevailed micro firms with employment from 5 to 9 persons (29%), 25% shares were specific to small and medium-sized enterprises, and the per cent of large enterprises, employing more than 249 people, accounted for 21%. Half of the firms surveyed were of the production nature; the other half was comprised in equal parts by service and commercial enterprises. Seventy eight percent were entities operating exclusively in the Polish market (of which 24% covered by their activity the whole country and 54% operated in the regional scale as maximum); the remaining were of the international character. In the research, there was applied the method of questionnaire-based face-to-face interview carried out with representatives of top management responsible for marketing activity. This part of the research concerned the use of innovative solutions in formation of the enterprise's advertising strategy.

The research findings were compared with results of surveys conducted among advertising recipients. Such surveys were carried out in 2013 within the project devoted to the use of various forms of argumentation in creating the advertising message. The research was implemented by the method of face-to-face interview on the nation-wide, stratified sample of 504 advertising recipients aged 15+. As the criteria for stratification there were adopted sex, age and place of residence (province and the class of locality). In result,

among respondents there were 52% of women and 48% of men. Among the whole body of respondents, 18% were individuals aged 15–24, 21% were aged from 25 to 34, 16% were at the age of 35–44 years, 18% belonged to the age interval of 45–54, 17% of respondents represented the group of 55–64 years old individuals, while the remaining 10% were of the age of more than 64. The research carried out among advertising recipients concerned their perception of the advertising activities carried out in the mass media, and their attitude towards various ways of advertising argumentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Surveys among advertisers – use of innovative solutions

The surveys carried out among advertisers show that from among various activities related to marketing it is advertising activity that was spontaneously indicated by entrepreneurs as the area where innovations can be applied mostly. Such an opinion was uttered by almost 30% of managers. Most often they were managers of small enterprises carrying out activities in the service sector. On the one hand, it may evidence their greater flexibility in programming advertising activities and susceptibility to implementation in this area of various innovative solutions, but also, on the other hand, the lack of explicit and long-run policy, what forces them to a relatively often reach for new solutions. In turn, larger enterprises more rigorously observe the standards worked out in this area, focusing on the proven procedures and thus minimising the risk of failure in result of application of new ideas, greater due to the scale of advertising activities than in the case of small entities.

However, these statements were merely of the declarative nature as they did not mean the actual scope of implementation of innovations in advertising activity. In the reality, the per cent of enterprises applying innovative solutions in their advertising activity was clearly lower, and the relations between individual categories of enterprises were also formed differently.

Taking into account the real application of innovative solutions in the period of two years prior to the research, most often innovative solutions were implemented in case of the used channels for advertising contents conveyance, i.e. advertising media, vehicles and carriers. Such activities were undertaken by 13.7% of the enterprises surveyed. Every tenth entity made at that time changes in the comprehensively formulated advertising strategy, every fifteenth altered the schedule of campaign run and every twentieth modified the concept and idea of advertising message. The definitely lowest per cent – less than 3% – introduced new solutions in the field of cooperation with advertising agencies (Table 1).

The level of innovativeness of the surveyed enterprises in the sphere of advertising should be considered as low. When analysing the diversification of statements in individual categories of enterprises, one can notice interesting trends. The first is the relationship between the scope of use of innovative solutions in advertising and capital of the enterprise – in all the areas, the entities with foreign or mixed capital demonstrated a significantly higher innovative activity. The most visible it was in the area of

Table 1. Areas of advertising activity where enterprises implemented or plan to implement innovative solutions

Enterprises' features	Used advertising media, vehicles and carriers		Comprehensive advertising strategy		Schedule of carrying out advertising activities		Ideas/concepts of advertising messages		Scope of use of advertising agencies' services	
	innovation implemented	innovation planned	innovation implemented	innovation planned	innovation implemented	innovation planned	innovation implemented	innovation planned	innovation implemented	innovation planned
	In per cent of indications									
Total	13.7	5.6	9.9	6.9	6.6	4.1	4.8	3.3	2.6	2.6
	Type of activity of the enterprise									
Production	12.6	5.6	9.3	10.7	4.4	3.0	5.9	3.0	2.6	1.9
Trade	18.7	5.4	12.8	5.9	8.9	5.4	5.9	3.0	3.9	2.5
Services	9.6	6.6	8.6	7.6	5.6	5.1	2.5	4.6	1.0	4.1
	Size of the enterprise measured with the number of employees									
5–9 people	6.3	5.1	6.3	5.1	4.0	2.3	4.0	3.4	1.1	1.1
10–49 people	13.2	4.6	9.9	6.6	8.6	4.6	2.6	2.0	2.0	2.0
50–249 people	13.6	4.5	10.4	9.7	7.8	4.5	4.5	5.2	5.2	3.2
250 people and more	24.6	8.7	14.3	6.3	6.3	5.6	8.7	2.4	2.4	4.8
	Enterprise's capital origin									
Exclusively Polish	11.9	4.9	9.2	6.5	5.9	4.3	3.3	3.5	2.2	2.0
Foreign and mixed	22.7	9.3	13.4	9.3	10.3	3.1	12.4	2.1	5.2	6.2

Source: Author's own research carried out in 2009.

creative strategy – the per cent of entities with the share of foreign capital introducing innovative solutions in this field was almost four times higher than in case of Polish firms. One must also pay attention to the fact that the most open to changes as regards advertising activities were trade enterprises – their pro-innovative stance mostly concerned the use of new channels of advertising communications. Small enterprises displayed a low activity in the process of application of innovations. While earlier their representatives declared high flexibility in the possibilities to introduce innovative solutions but, in practice, they implemented it more seldom than in the case of large organisations. Probably the barrier in this respect was limited financial opportunities. There can also be noticed a clearly greater interest in implementation of innovations in

the sphere of mass media, advertising vehicles and carriers among large enterprises and those making use of foreign capital.

The characteristic phenomenon is also the declining propensity to innovations in advertising. In the four out of the five analysed dimensions of advertising activity (apart from the use of services provided by advertising agencies), the per cents of managers declaring their readiness to introduce new solutions in the future were lower than the indicators illustrating their real use. This indicator to the highest degree – by more than half – lowered in case of the application of new communication channels. The greatest propensity to reduce innovative activities was displayed by large enterprises and those with foreign capital, therefore, those which so far have been leaders in implementation of changes in advertising activities.

This very cautious approach to introduce advertising innovations may be determined by the market situation. The period of economic slowdown and slack felt by many entities may induce managers to minimise advertising spending in general, and to reduce outlays on new, yet not proven and, therefore, encumbered by greater risk, activities.

### **Surveys among advertising recipients – perception of innovation in advertising**

Looking at the phenomenon of advertising innovativeness from the point of view of its recipients, we should focus on the two aspects. The first concerns the use of advertising communication channels, while the second is linked to the application of innovations in the creative strategy.

The carried out surveys show that 63% of respondents see the use by advertisers of new solutions in the area of advertising messages emission. This more often concerns men than women and younger people (up to 35 years of age). This is not a surprise as the highest dynamics of development is specific to the Internet, i.e. the medium for young people. In case of online advertising, there can be observed great changes as regards the applied forms of advertising, their volume, form, animation etc., what makes the Internet advertising more noticeable and attractive. The changes in Internet advertising carriers are noticed by 76% of respondents (from among those declaring perception of the changes in the advertising media and vehicles). Significantly more seldom innovative solutions are noticed in case of the press advertising – they are declared by 44% of respondents. The changes concern mainly formats and shapes of press announcements, their position as well as the ways in which they are attached to the issue. Departure from the standards to the benefit of non-standard forms is today specific for the majority of press titles. Thirty six percent of respondents pay attention to the evolution of forms of outdoor advertising. There are more and more frequently observed changes in the size and shape of billboards, the way of their exposition, use of new solutions of the LED screen type, boards enabling the rotate-form presentation of posters as well as placement of advertising means not only in the open space but also inside transportation vehicles or facilities of public services. Against the background of those three media, of a significantly more conservative nature are TV and radio. The changes therein are perceived by less than every tenth person (7% – TV, 6% – radio) and they most often concern the way of advertising contents emission. On the other hand, quite frequently innovations take



place in case of other media (e.g. intrashop advertising, advertising gadgets, advertising in publications of the form of books and leaflets, direct mail), what is an effect of their great diversity, lack of standardisation and susceptibility to new solutions. Innovativeness of these forms is noticed by 28% of respondents.

The innovations concerning the sphere of creative advertising are of another nature. They are connected with modifications of advertising messages. It is difficult for advertising recipients to refer to changes of the whole idea or concept of the message; however, they can see and assess the elements appeared therein. Of a particular importance is in this context the use by advertisers of the arguments referring to the notions “innovation” or “innovative”, or the related to them and often perceived as the synonym of the terms “modernity” or “modern”.

The surveys show that these notions belong to the ones that attract attention in the advertising messages. Both are along the five – besides the humorous contents, information on the price and scenery of the message – elements of the greatest noticeability. The arguments and notions related to modernity were indicated by 21%, and innovativeness – by 16% of the respondents.

These notions may appear in all elements of the message. To the highest degree, they attract attention in the context of the cited results of surveys and tests (more than 40% of indications). Somehow more seldom they are noticed in the headlines and the main body of the advertising content, and, in the least degree, they attract attention in the situation of placement in the advertisement illustration. Differences between the uses of both notions are minor – innovativeness is a little bit more often observed in surveys and tests findings, while modernity – in the main body of message contents (Fig. 1).

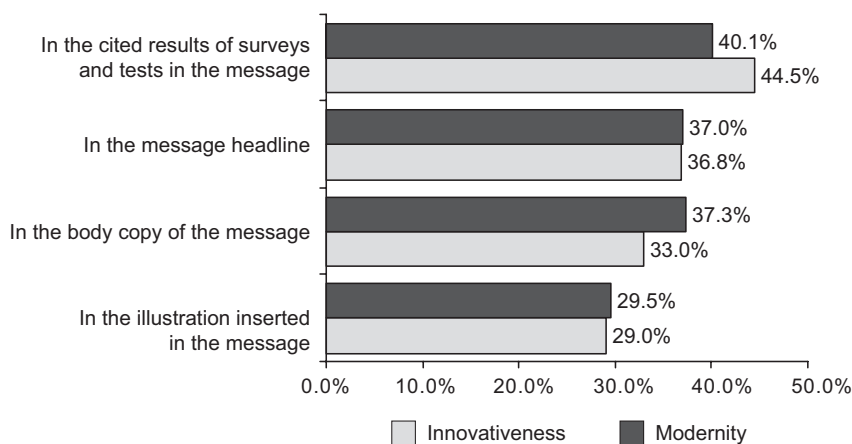


Fig. 1. Identification of location of the terms “innovativeness” and “modernity” in advertising messages

Source: Author’s own research carried out in 2013.

Advertisers use the arguments of innovativeness most often in the context of informing of the product composition. Such a manner of use of this notion is noticed by 35.5% of the people surveyed (Fig. 2). Somehow more seldom the recipients encoun-

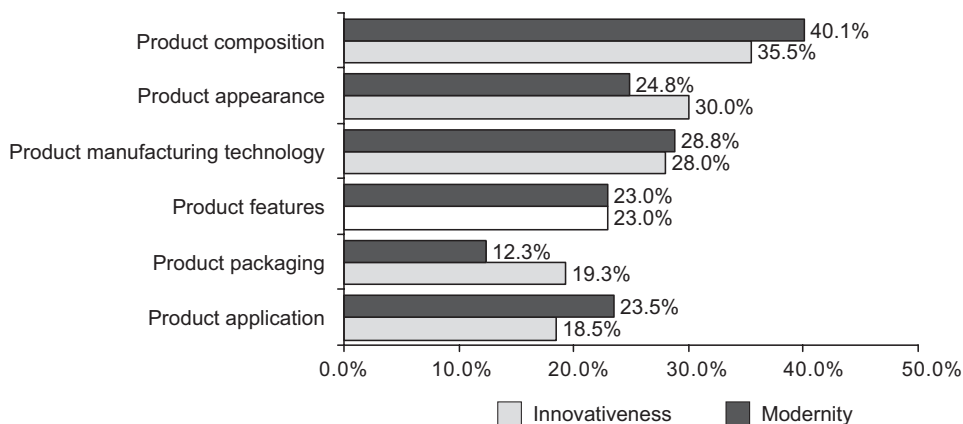


Fig. 2. Elements to which there refer the terms “innovativeness” and “modernity” in advertising messages

Source: Author’s own research carried out in 2013.

ter in messages references to the innovative appearance of the product and innovative production technologies (around 30%) as well as the product’s innovative features and applications and packaging thereof (about 20%). Modernity most often appears in the message content as regards the advertised product’s composition (such perception of this argument is declared by more than 40% of respondents). Approximately 1/4 of the individuals surveyed encounter the term “modernity” in the context of manufacturing technology, appearance, application, and product’s features. On the other hand, to a minor degree this notion is used in relation to packaging of the products being advertised (only 12.3% of indications).

## CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the presented considerations concerning the opportunity to implement innovations in the sphere of advertising activity and the way of perception thereof by recipients, one may try to attempt to assess this phenomenon, indicating, at the same time, its importance in the process of formation of purchasers’ behaviours.

There must be emphasised the quite a high level of managers’ awareness as regards the role of both advertising activity and innovative solutions in raising competitiveness. Advertising is also perceived as that area of marketing where possibilities to implement innovations are very high. Its essence is high flexibility and susceptibility to creative solutions. Also the civilisation and technical development provides an enormous spectrum of modern impact measures. These are just the aspects where potential opportunities to implement innovations can be seen.

Against this background, however, there can be seen low innovativeness of enterprises as regards advertising. Only a small part of them implement innovative solutions; the majority reaches for the proven, often cliché-type measures. The reason for this is the

felt by managers lack of confidence in what is innovative. In their pursuit to minimise the risk, especially in the context of potential harm to the organisation's image, they are reluctant to reach for innovative solutions. Thus, however, they resign from the opportunity to exist in purchasers' awareness as original and creative entities.

This caution seems to be not fully justified. Advertising innovations do not, in principle, generate higher costs. Utterances of the representatives of enterprises, which are, in the plain of implementation of innovations in marketing in a broad sense, therefore, also in advertising [Nowacki 2010b], characterised by great activity, indicating benefits both considered in financial terms (growth of sales and profits) and in market terms (gaining new markets, winning new customers, image improvement). A specific effect of the application of innovations is also competitiveness rising – more than half of entities explicitly declare the high growth of competitiveness under the impact of marketing innovations.

The source of this is the recipients' positive attitude towards innovative solutions. In the epoch of oversaturation of the advertising market and fatigue with advertising, there are also noticeable and acceptable such actions for which specific are manifestations of originality. Everything what is new or promises novelty attracts attention and inspires recipients to get interested in the message contents.

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### **INNOWACYJNOŚĆ DZIAŁAŃ REKLAMOWYCH NA RYNKU POLSKIM – MOŻLIWOŚCI REKLAMODAWCÓW A PERCEPCJA ODBIORCÓW**

**Streszczenie.** Rozwój konkurencji reklamowej wymusza podejmowanie działań zmierzających do zwiększenia efektywności procesu oddziaływania na potencjalnych nabywców. Reklamodawcy coraz częściej sięgają po rozwiązania niekonwencjonalne i nowatorskie, które wpisują się w szeroko pojmowaną innowacyjność. Sprzyja temu rozwój nowoczesnych środków przekazu. Artykuł porusza problem możliwości wdrażania rozwiązań innowacyjnych w reklamie i ich percepcję wśród konsumentów. Podstawą rozważań są badania ilościowe prowadzone wśród przedsiębiorstw prowadzących aktywną działalność reklamową oraz odbiorców tych działań.

**Słowa kluczowe:** reklama, innowacyjność reklamy, percepcja reklamy, usługi reklamowe, innowacyjność

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