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Familiness in Building the Brand Image of Family Businesses through Social Media

ABSTRACT

Objective: The subject of this article is the marketing aspect of familiness related to building the image of a family business brand. The aim of the article is to analyze the impact of familiness in the activities connected with building the brand image of small and medium-sized family businesses.

Methodology: Qualitative and quantitative methods have been included in the conducted research.

Findings: The research has shown that Facebook is used by the vast majority of companies. This research has also demonstrated that a large percentage of companies do not emphasize the familiness of their company in their activities on social media. This is surprising because the analysis of the literature shows that emphasizing the family character brings definitely more benefits than risks.

Value Added: This article presents a research of how family-owned companies use familiness in the brand image. The results of the research can be used to guide companies on how to use familiness in their social media marketing campaigns.

Recommendations: It is recommended that family businesses make greater use of the potential of their family strengths. It would be advisable to conduct research explaining why the family nature of companies is so rarely emphasized in social media activities. We also suggest conducting similar research in other countries, which would allow for more general conclusions and capture cross-cultural differences.

Key words: family business, social media, familiness, brand image

JEL codes: M31, M37

Introduction

In the literature on the subject, “familiness” is the key distinguishing feature of family businesses. Familiness has a role from both a strategic point of view as well as human resource management and marketing. In strategic terms, familiness is treated as a unique resource package that the company has due to the interaction of the family system, its members and business (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Frank et al., 2016). The specificity of the acts of communication taking place in family businesses influencing decisions in these companies is important from the strategic perspective (Frank et al., 2016). Equally important in the study of familiness is its inclusion in activities in the field of human resource management, where the result is dealing with the issues of succession and nepotism in the literature (Padgett et al., 2005, 2015, 2019; Lin & Hu, 2007; Bertrand & Schoar, 2006).

The issue of branding of family firms is also the subject discussed by many authors. Some examine the possibility of using the specificity of family businesses to build a brand (Astrachan et al., 2018; Astrachan et al., 2019; Barroso et al., 2019). Others raise the issue of promoting the image of family businesses on social media (Zanon et al., 2019).

The issue of the ways of using social media in building the company’s brand image is quite commonly discussed in the literature (e.g., Gensler et al., 2013; Swani et al., 2021; Lund et al., 2018; Hübner et al., 2019; Lin & Hu, 2007; Carlson et al., 2019b; Shanahan et al., 2019; Algharabat et al., 2020; Seo et al., 2018; Gomez et al., 2019; Bento et al., 2018). The authors emphasize the importance of social media in building relationships with Internet users (Piskorski, 2011; Vernuccio, 2014; Bianchia et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2021). Another aspect cited in the literature is the possibility of using social media to learn more about the attitudes and opinions of Internet users (Barwise & Meehan, 2010; Geurin & Burch, 2017). A separate area that the authors deal with is the possibility of using social media to create and stimulate communities around the brand (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013; Kamboj et al., 2018) and to include them in the co-creation of the value (Lusch et al., 2007; Carlson et al., 2019a; Kamboj et al., 2018; Kohli et al., 2015). All of the above activities on social media can be used to

strengthen the brand image. At the same time, the subject of the use of social media in family businesses is relatively rarely discussed.

The subject of this article is the marketing aspect of familiness related to building the image of a family business brand. This problem is discussed in the literature on the subject and in the research, but there is an evident cognitive gap in building the image of a family business brand on social media. The aim of the article is to assess the use of social media to emphasize family character in building the brand image of family businesses in Poland and Great Britain.

It was possible to realize the goal set in this article through the research program, which was based on a comparison of the activities of Polish and British small and medium-sized family businesses in the area of using social media to build a brand by emphasizing their familiness. This program consisted of a qualitative part in which in-depth individual interviews was conducted with the owners of family businesses and experts dealing with the subject of family businesses and social media. In the quantitative part, the content of fanpages and websites of family firms was analyzed in terms of content referring to their familiness. In the second stage, a questionnaire survey was carried out to determine the importance of familiness from the point of view of the respondents' choice of company offer and the frequency of encountering this expression in the content provided by family businesses.

The research results and their analysis also have a practical value. They can be used by owners of small and medium-sized family businesses to make rational decisions related to the use of familiness when building a brand, as well as operating in the area of social media.

Literature review

Characteristics of family businesses

Enterprises owned and managed by family members are the most common form of running a business these days. Businesses of this type constitute a valuable

element of the economy, and significantly influence the stability of the economic development of a given country and region. Most generally, it is defined as an enterprise in which the family has a dominant role in terms of owning and managing a business (Efferin & Hartona, 2015). Other definitions say that we can talk about a family business when family members own the majority of shares, participate in management, are members of the supervisory board, and want to pass the business on to future generations (Hernández-Trasobares & Galve-Górriz, 2017). In this work, we have adopted the definition that a family business is an enterprise that is based on family bonds and ties that have a decisive impact on the business. The influence of the family is based on the family's majority share in the ownership of the enterprise, management, and taking responsibility for its performance with the intention of passing it on to the next generations. The familiness of a given company is clearly visible in the succession process. It is a four-stage process, which consists of: the need for succession, the development of succession criteria, the appointment of candidates for successors, and the final selection of specific persons (Wang et al., 2019).

A family business is a social system that joins two connected systems (family and business) (Frank et al., 2016). Thus, the functioning of each family business is based on two logics – emotional, based on the need to care for loved ones, and business, based on economic rationality (Sułkowski et al., 2018). Family businesses have a number of features that distinguish them from other entities and determine their specificity (Hoy, 2014). One of such features is responsibility for the family, which has a decisive impact on the functioning of the entire company. The key to gaining an advantage in a competitive job market is building an authentic brand. The positive attitude of customers toward the brand influences the decisions made not only by customers but also cooperators. We even encounter opinions that brand authenticity is a benchmark against which all brands are now assessed (Eggers et al., 2013).

Family businesses share two identities, namely corporate identity and family identity. Therefore, the family, being the owner of the company, influences its identity, transferring the values and beliefs of the company's owners. At the same time, as identity theory suggests that identity formation is a dynamic process in which individual elements interact, the company can also influence

family identity. Importantly, this influence is not always beneficial to the family (Wielsma & Brunninge, 2019).

A family business can also be defined as a communication system involving decision-making units shaped by a family consisting of at least two family members actively involved in the organization to enable business operations (Fran, 2016). Family businesses are then systems composed of decisions and capable of executing decisions that make them through the decisions that create them (Luhmann, 2000). This makes decision making in family businesses more efficient and offers them an advantage over other social systems as it creates a network of decisions that are mutually significant and mutually confirmatory.

Social media and their use in communication and branding of family businesses

Social media are applications available in the Internet environment, thanks to which users can create content and exchange it with each other. This feature is the fundamental and ideological basis of Internet 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). They are used not only to transmit information from the sender, but also to connect people with each other. They are characterized by four properties: they have a digital profile, relational linkages, network transparency, privacy and the ability to search for information. These four features are not available to the traditional Internet or offline communities. It is largely because of them that the new possibilities can be offered by social media in the organization's communication policy (Kane & Alavi, 2014). The most important of them is the ability to create content posted on them. This content is shared, co-created, and edited by users. Thanks to them, it is possible for social media users to interact, cooperate, and relate (Mount & Martinez, 2014).

Nowadays, social media perform an increasingly important role in corporate communication, but is still an addition to the communication policy. In a study by Webb and Roberts (2016), the most important channels of communication with stakeholders and clients of small and medium-sized enterprises were: e-mail (89%), telephone (75%), face-to-face (64%), company website (57%), and business meetings (52%). Other communication channels, including social media, were less used (46%). The importance of social media grows as the age of internet

users decreases. Their influence is greatest among people aged 16–25 (Vejačka, 2017; Bento et al., 2018).

Research on Czech family businesses shows that for entrepreneurs, social media is primarily used to build brand awareness (Ungerma, 2015). Communication on social media results in consumer involvement, which can be used in building brand capital (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013; Lund et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Kohli et al., 2015; Carlson et al., 2019a; Kamboj et al., 2018; Yoshida et al., 2018). At the same time, the involvement of employees on social media can also be a support in building brand capital (Pitt et al., 2018). Focusing on the image is covered by the involvement of Internet users. A study of 40 Turkish SMEs found that posts related to Public Relations activities resulted in their definitely highest involvement (Batum & Ersoy, 2016). Another of the strategic uses of social media is the active involvement of consumers in product development, branding, pricing, and continuous performance improvement. This is done through ongoing analysis of comments on social media (both positive and negative) (Zhao et al., 2013; Geurin & Burch, 2017; Kohli et al., 2015). Activity on social media allows getting acquainted with the lives and opinions of users without the need to conduct expensive research (Barwise & Meehan, 2010). This allows for faster response to signals from the environment, as well as better adjustment of the organization's activities to market expectations. Educational and cognitive aspects for employees are also important (Dunn, 2010). Knowledge obtained through social media could provide SMEs with a chance to find resources thanks to which companies better adapt to the needs of customers and thus they can implement marketing activities that are more suited to the market (Atanassova & Clark, 2015).

Social media as a channel is not limited only to communication produced only by the brand, but also to communication co-production related to services by consumers, which may generate positive or negative signals for other consumers (Bacile et al., 2014; Kohli et al., 2015). At the same time, they are at the heart of the company's unconventional communication model. Due to their specificity, they are the best tool to support guerrilla and viral marketing activities and events-based marketing (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Competent use of social media, which translates into the involvement of Internet users, allows

limiting the loss of control (consumers familiar and connected to a brand are more resistant to potentially false negative information), which is unfavorable for the organization (Pitta et al., 2016). At the same time, the use of consumer-generated content, including brand history, may be an important factor contributing to the success of a brand on the market (Gensler et al., 2013).

Thinking about lasting existence on a competitive market, the need to establish stable relationships with the client, creating a loyal group of recipients of the products you manufacture or services you provide, you absolutely should strive to build your own brand. This is the key to gaining an advantage on a competitive market. This is especially true when we encounter an erosion of confidence in the activities of companies (Abimbola & Kocak, 2007; Ballantyne et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2003). A positive attitude of customers toward the brand allows it to influence the decisions made by customers (Gupta et al., 2010). Research confirms that brand authenticity positively contributes to the development of SMEs. Brands that inspire greater trust are sought after (Eggers et al., 2013).

The unique story of the owner of the company and the identity of the family should help in creating a brand (Gallucci et al., 2015). One of the most important components of the brand is its name and the product itself. Carcano et al. (2011) state that the trust, reputation, and brand of a company are important elements of the value of a given company. It can be positively enhanced when the brand of a given company is associated with the name of the founder.

In the process of building one's own and unique brand, it is helpful to use the name of the business owner. It is this name that should ensure the uniqueness of a given brand to the highest degree. The names of family businesses often refer to the industry in which they operate. This is clear information for the customer who is looking for a specific product or service. But what happens when the name of the owner appears in the name of the company. It should be said that the consequences of such a situation can be of two types – positive and negative. On the one hand, the name of the owner in the company's name helps to build a unique identity of the brand. When creating your own brand, you must strive to emphasize specific features that will distinguish a given product or service. A brand is used to identify products or services with a given company

and distinguish it from competing companies. It also helps in acquiring new customers, gaining their trust, and maintaining loyalty. When a given customer sees a name in a company name, they perceive a certain personal approach to a given product (Presas et al., 2011).

Familiness in building a brand image

From a resource point of view, familiness can be defined as a unique set of resources that a given company has due to the interaction between the family, its individual members, and the business (Habbershon & Williams, 1999). Another definition, also based on the resource approach, defines familiness as a set of idiosyncratic resources along with the influence of the family on their implementation and management. This impact may be both positive, contributing to the improvement of the competitiveness of a family business, and unfavorable, adversely affecting the company's growth (Irava & Moores, 2010).

Defining familiness from the perspective of social capital focuses on the transformation of family social capital into organizational social capital. Thanks to this transformation, it is possible to lend the social capital of a family engaged in business activity in order to obtain the required resources for the functioning of a family business. In this approach, the combination of family and business results in the creation of an interactive network of relationships that includes both the family and the company, and the family itself is the "heart of family firm's social capital" which builds synergy between the social and behavioral resources of a family business (Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013).

The basic elements of the social system are acts of communication. The social system itself is formed during communication, it develops thanks to communication (Luhmann). Familiness means communication and communicated decisions in the form of decision-making premises (Frank et al., 2016). Thus, organizations can be treated as a decision-making system. Family businesses are communication systems where decision-making processes are shaped by family members involved in running the business. In such a case, familiness is understood as a factor facilitating decision making in these systems, thanks to the trust and mutual support resulting from the family (Frank et al., 2016).

According to the systems theory perspective, familiness has three dimensions (Frank et al., 2016; Zellweger et al., 2010): family involvement in company property, its management and control; the influence of the family leading to certain behaviors in the organization; company identity. The first of these dimensions is the most common and the most obvious. However, family ownership and control of the company do not always mean a big impact on the company, so the other two are used to fill this gap.

To sum up, the individual definitions of familiness are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected definitions of familiness

Author	Definition
Habbershon & Williams	familiness is a unique bundle of resources of a particular firm that results from the interaction of systems between the family, its individual members, and the business
Irava & Moores	familiness is a set of idiosyncratic resources along with the influence of the family on their implementation and management. This impact may be both positive, contributing to the improvement of the competitiveness of a family business, and unfavorable, adversely affecting the company's growth
van Wyk	familiness is a special capacity of family firms to perform competently. The construct familiness refers to strategic processes in family firms, based on the unique capabilities and involvement of the family firm owners that enhance business performance.
Weismeier-Sammer et al.	familiness is a function of the observable family-based decision premises (both decidable and non-decidable) along the dimensions of components of involvement, essence of family influence, and organizational identity
Frank Kessler, Rusch, Suess-Reyes, Weismeier-Sammer	The familiness is a bundle of decision premises that expresses the influence of the business family on its business

Source: (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Irava & Moores, 2010; van Wyk, 2012; Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2016).

The great influence of the family results in the shaping of the organization's vision and organizational behavior by the family. So, the formal influence is joined by the informal influence. It may result in the development of unique processes and synergistic resources and opportunities resulting from family values introduced by the family. Finally, when the family itself becomes an essential part of the company, and not merely a symbolic element outside the organizational structure, it becomes part of the company's identity. In such a situation, the social system, consisting of an organization and a family, generates common points of reference which are the premises for decision making (Frank et al., 2016).

Thus, the dimension of the family's organizational identity reflects the way in which the family defines and perceives the company (Zellweger et al., 2010). Managers operating in family businesses make every effort to create and maintain a positive organizational identity. They require it both from themselves and from the family, thanks to which the organizational identities of the family and the company overlap. These intertwined identities create a common ground and a non-monetary incentive for individual action and ensure an increase in the company's efficiency (Zellweger et al., 2010).

With reference to the above dimensions, from the perspective of a new systems theory, familiness is defined as the function of the observable family-based decision premises (both decidable and non-decidable) along the dimensions of components of involvement, essence of family influence, and organizational identity (Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013).

Despite the fact that the familiness is one of the important elements determining the functioning of family businesses, they communicate with the environment in various ways and to a different extent. Some provide general information about their own family (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011). We encounter information that the company is run or managed by the family. Generations that are responsible for managing the business are sometimes indicated. Some companies promote their own, most valuable features, share fragments of family history (Astrachan & Astrachan, 2015; Botero et al., 2013; Zanon et al., 2019). It is important to recognize which aspects of business activities constitute a positive message

for a given environment, which are worth displaying, and which are irrelevant. It happens that exposing certain values may be perceived negatively (Astrachan et al., 2019).

The extent to which companies promote their family character depends on many factors. What matters is the organizational context, the adopted business model, affiliation to a given industry, as well as such features of the company as its size or period of existence on the market. It is not without significance to what extent the company belongs to the family and whether it carries the surname of the owner's family in its name (Astrachan et al., 2019). There are several dimensions of promoting a family brand (Astrachan et al., 2018):

- family promotion level – how important the family is as part of the brand identity for the company and family;
- characteristics of the family – its role in the brand;
- owner family representation – how the family is communicated in corporate communication;
- communication channels used – promotional activities;
- stakeholders – which stakeholders are presented with family guidance;
- brand architecture;
- unpremeditated image – what are the other behavior-inducing messages that family or members of the company carry out on behalf of the company.

A clear reputation of a company as a family business may be associated with a positive perception of its stakeholders, which translates into better financial results (Santiago et al., 2019).

Being a family firm influences decision-making processes and thus strategic brand management decisions as well as the owning family itself which becomes part of the branding strategy (Beck, 2016). Building a brand allows family businesses to use a valuable idiosyncratic resource: their family nature (we are a family business). Family firm status (FFS) is hard to imitate, relevant, and a rare resource that can be used to build a competitive advantage (Beck, 2016). Family brands are also perceived as those that display stronger CSR behaviors, which

makes their perception more positive (Schellong et al., 2018). A known, positively associated family name is a strong brand that can communicate strong values such as trust, honesty, and integrity toward consumers (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008). But this is only possible if the owning family decides to reveal the image of a family business (we want others to know that we are a family business). This is not always the case. Family businesses differ greatly in this regard: while some strongly emphasize the image of the family business, others do so at a lower level or not at all. This is influenced by various factors. One of them is the participation of the family in the ownership of the company, where the higher it is, the more it stimulates the willingness to promote its family character (Barroso et al., 2019). Also, the traditional orientation of an entrepreneurial family or the number of main business partners being family businesses increases the willingness to reveal their nature. On the other hand, the intensity of innovation in the industry or the degree of internationalization of a family business shows a negative relationship with the disclosure of being a family business (Beck et al., 2020).

Materials and methods

The aim of the study was to assess the use of social media to emphasize family character in building the brand image of family businesses in Poland and Great Britain. Based on the indicated research goal, the research hypotheses were formulated. The first two relate to familiness. As previously written, familiness is accentuated to a different extent by family businesses, and at the same time, the degree of family emphasis in the brand depends on specific cultural contexts, where the concept of family and its meaning are perceived in various ways (Astrachan & Astrachan, 2015), the following two research hypotheses were formulated:

- familiness is emphasized in a small percentage of family businesses in brand communication;
- the importance of familiness in SME companies differs from country to country.

The next hypothesis relates to social media and how companies use them. Their popularity and specificity indicate that they should be included in the communication policy. At the same time, research shows that this occurs to a small extent and that they are treated as an addition, not one of the main communication channels (Webb & Roberts, 2016). Therefore, the hypothesis is as follows:

- Social media are used to promote the familiness of the brand.

In order to verify the above research hypotheses, both qualitative and quantitative methods were included in this study. As part of the qualitative method, an individual in-depth interview was used. Its main goal was to identify the ways in which representatives of family businesses communicate with the socio-economic environment. The research also tried to determine the extent to which owners managing small and medium-sized family enterprises emphasize the elements of familiness when creating their own enterprise brand through social media.

The interviews were conducted in the period from September 2020 to October 2020 with seven owners managing small and medium-sized family enterprises from Poland and Great Britain. The choice of these two countries was dictated by the desire to explore the issue and compare the pro-EU, culturally quite homogeneous, traditional Polish society with the multicultural society of Great Britain, which has recently left the European Union. At this stage of the research, the choice made it possible to reach specific cases and to understand the specificity of the surveyed enterprises (Fendt & Sachs, 2007; Sułkowski, 2009; Toften & Hammervoll, 2010). Individual in-depth interviews were based on a repeatable research scenario, which provide the respondents with the opportunity to ask additional questions, thanks to which it was possible to detail the research issues. Before the research, the scenario was consulted with external experts dealing with family businesses. Three experts came from academia, and two from a non-governmental organization dealing with family entrepreneurship. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and subjected to qualitative analysis.

The selection of the respondents was deliberate. The survey covered owners of small and medium-sized enterprises who considered their enterprise to

be a family enterprise and meeting the conditions resulting from the adopted definition of a family enterprise. It is treated as an economic entity based on family ties and dependencies, which seeks to sustain in the future a decisive influence on the family business through participation in ownership, management, and responsibility with the intention of passing it on to the next generation. In the case of Polish companies, these were two companies that provide accounting services and operate in a city with over 750,000 inhabitants. Two other companies are based in a town not exceeding 5,000 inhabitants and operating in the construction industry. Three British companies were also included in the research. Namely, a company that conducts hairdressing and beauty activities located in a city of 43.5 thousand inhabitants. The situation is similar for a company operating in the catering industry. The third one is located in a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants and deals with renovation and construction services. The selection of respondents in qualitative research is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Businesses participating in the qualitative research

Respondent number	Industry	Location
PF1	Accounting services	City over 750,000
PF2	Accounting services	City over 750,000
PF3	Construction services	Town below 5,000
PF4	Construction services	Town below 5,000
EF1	Hairdressing and beauty services	City of 43,000
EF2	Catering services	City of 43,000
EF3	Renovation and constructions services	City over 100,000

Source: Authors' own study.

In the next stage of the research, quantitative method was used. In the first stage, as part of the quantitative method, the exploration of websites and profiles on Facebook fanpages of 100 Polish family businesses and 80 British ones was used. As part of 100 family businesses, 20 of the most recognizable brands of family businesses in Poland were selected and 80 randomly selected from the list

of companies available on the website of the Family Business Foundation. Out of 80 UK businesses, 10 have been named “Britain’s top 10 private family businesses 2019” by the Institute for Family Business. Another 10 were selected from the list of partners of the International Center for Family Businesses. The remaining 60 were randomly selected from Cumbria Businesses Growth Hub. By selecting the sample in this way, the authors wanted both the best known and the smallest companies among the selected ones. The sample was not representative. The survey was conducted in September 2020.

The study analyzed the content of fanpages in terms of the frequency of using the words family and derivatives in the content of the researched pages and profiles. At the same time, for the purpose of a comparative analysis, the websites of the surveyed companies were examined in terms of content related to familiness. The purpose is to answer the question of whether familiness is more often emphasized on websites or on fanpages of the organization. NVivo software was used to analyze the content of the posts and websites. Both websites and fanpages of the surveyed companies were analyzed. The content was analyzed in terms of the occurrence of the words family, familiness and their derivatives. If it was possible to identify the name of the owner of the company, also in terms of appearing in the content of the researched websites and fanpages of that name, it was also analyzed.

In the second stage of quantitative research, a questionnaire survey was carried out. This study was conducted in November and December 2020 on a group of 498 students, 250 of whom lived in Poland and 248 in the United Kingdom. The sample was not representative. They were mostly working students. For epidemiological reasons, the questionnaire was in the form of an internet survey. The questionnaire with three extended basic questions and five specific questions was used for the study. All questions were closed and complex measuring scales were used. The structure of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table 3. Structure of the respondents of the research

Age	Poland		Great Britain	
	number	%	number	%
15–29	164	65.6	138	55.6
30–39	57	22.8	85	34.3
40–59	29	11.6	25	10.1
Total	250	100.0	248	100.0
Total	Poland		Great Britain	
	number	%	number	%
Male	76	69.6	132	53.2
Female	174	30.4	116	46.8
Total	250	100.0	248	100.0
Company size	Poland		Great Britain	
	number	%	number	%
Not working	48	19.2	18	7.3
Micro	37	14.8	76	30.6
Small	42	16.8	64	25.8
Medium	47	18.8	65	26.2
Large	76	30.4	25	10.1
Total	250	100.0	248	100.0
Professional situation	Poland		Great Britain	
	number	%	number	%
Working in a family business	28	11.2	35	14.1
Working in a non-family business	105	42.0	93	37.5
State administration or state enterprise	48	19.2	29	11.7
Running one's own business	8	3.2	28	11.3
Not working	50	20.0	45	18.1
Odd jobs	11	4.4	18	7.3
Total	250	100.0	248	100.0

Source: Authors' own study.

The choice of students for the sample resulted from the desire to study a group that is better informed about social media and uses them more often than older people in active employment. At the same time, as a group that expands its competencies in higher education, it should have an important role in society in the future. It is also important to have a fresh mind, which at the stage of acquiring knowledge and competence is more open to the world and the changes that occur in it, and has a better understanding of the functioning of social media.

Results

Qualitative research results

The research has confirmed that most companies use social media. Only one of the companies operating in Poland does not use such media at all. However, it uses LinkedIn to a limited extent, i.e., an international service specializing in professional business contacts. The website is not intended for contact with customers (PF1). The situation is similar for the second Polish company that has regular customers. Its owners believe that the most important source of information about their activities is the company's website (PF2). The third Polish company has an account on Facebook and its own website (PF3). The fourth one has a Facebook account (PF4). All UK businesses use social media. They use both Facebook and Twitter. They are interested in Instagram and Reddit. However, the owner of the first one (hairdressing and beauty) and the second one (catering) stated directly that they use not only social media, but also: "local radio, newspapers, local stall holder events, and word of mouth" for advertising purposes (EF5 and EF6).

Subsequent questions confirmed that some Polish companies still remain distanced from social media. It is manifested by the fact that they do not encourage their own employees as well as other family members to use social media. They also do not analyze the activity of their competitors on

social media. The company that only has a website admits that although it does not encourage such activity, it does not forbid it (PF2). The owner of the third business indicates that only the websites of partners with whom there is a permanent cooperation (PF1) are analyzed. As for British companies, they encourage their employees to follow social media and analyze their posts themselves. The analysis concerns mainly the price of the products sold or to what extent the product sold by the company is unique. The third company's family analyzes the posts of foreign companies (EF3). The scope of the company's competitiveness in relation to the offer of its competitors is analyzed. The representative of the family of the second company believes that looking at foreign companies allows the owner to improve his own business. He notices that others are doing the same and have access to his clients. He complains that they were trying to reach his customers in this way and offer them their own products at a reduced price. He emphasizes that the use of social media carries the risk that dishonest owners of competing companies will steal his customers (EF2).

The research has shown that interviewed owners generally recognize that emphasizing the elements of familiness is important in creating their own brand. The owners from Great Britain were the most convincing in their statements. The British owner of a company dealing with beauty and hairdressing services stressed that emphasizing the elements of family nature allows for being perceived as a close company, providing personal and professional service. He added it was "as if people were buying people". He admitted that since he indicates elements of familiness, customers feel that the company is run in a more personal way, that it develops and gains new customers (EF1). It is interesting that all Polish family businesses, including those that keep a certain distance from social media, are convinced that the elements of family character have a significant role in promoting their own brand. Accounting firms believe that it all depends on the owners of the business. They have to decide which values are important to them and how they will be perceived by current and future owners and customers (PF1 and PF2). The owner of the first one added that promoting one's own brand also depends on customers. Therefore, if familiness is important, then such elements should be used. The brand creation process should

take into account the development vision, mission, values, and the concept of brand positioning (PF1).

The research has confirmed that appreciating familiness in promoting one's own company does not automatically mean that it is currently being used. Both Polish accounting companies do not use any elements of familiness (PF1 and PF2). The first one states that this aspect is sometimes noticed during initial talks, when decisions related to establishing cooperation are made (PF1). The third admits that there is no such need, as 90% of the companies with which it cooperates are family businesses. Emphasizing familiness helps to be recognized among other companies with a similar profile, it provides an advantage on the market. It even makes customers accept the higher price proposed by the company (PF3). The second business, dealing with accounting services, believed that the use of family elements depends on how clients approach the issue. He claims that qualifications, belonging to a large network of companies providing services, certificates, and experience (PF2) are more important. English companies emphasize that they hire family members in production and marketing, which helps them promote their services effectively. The first admits that it is particularly important in this context that they have been on the market for thirty-four years (EF1). For the other company, showing familiness is important for other employees. Emphasizing the family nature of your own company on Facebook allows emphasizing the reliability of the products offered and the safety of its customers' lives (EF2). The family of the third company stresses that thanks to the emphasis on family character, they feel responsible for the work they perform. By pointing to the family character, customers are assured that the money earned is not spent only on the development of the company but also on educating children or paying for their hobbies (EF3).

Results of quantitative research

Of the Polish companies surveyed, 92% of them had a website. There were slight differences between the companies operating in the industrial and consumer goods market. In the case of companies from the industrial goods market,

the percentage of companies having websites was slightly higher (Table 3). All Polish companies with the most recognizable brands had a website.

The factor that can distinguish a family business from the others is having the name of the owner or founder in the name. Nearly half (43.3%) of the Polish companies surveyed had such. This name was noticeably more common among companies with a well-known brand. At the same time, only less than one third (29.5%) of the owner's name appeared in the content on the website. However, there is a noticeable difference between well-known companies, companies operating in the consumer goods market and the industrial goods market. The name of the owner in the content of the website was definitely the most common (nearly 60% of companies) among the most famous companies, and very rarely (17.14%) among companies operating on the industrial goods market (Table 4).

Since the word familiness appeared only once on the websites examined, the authors analyzed them for the occurrence of the word family. The word family appeared in about one third of all surveyed websites of Polish family businesses (32.61%). There was no significant difference between the industrial and consumer goods markets. At the same time, this word appeared slightly more often among more known companies (nearly 41%) (Table 3). This word is compared to other words (e.g., company brand, words related to the description of the offer, etc.). It was usually used as a definition of a business as a family business, most often in the tab describing the business itself. The word familiness appeared only on the website of the Mokate company (a coffee producer known in Poland), emphasizing the family character of the company in its description.

Table 4. The results of the website analysis of Polish and British family businesses

	The percentage of companies that have a website	The percentage of companies that have the owner's name in the company name	The percentage of companies in which the word family and derivatives of this word appeared in the content of the website	The percentage of companies in which the content of the website contains the name of the owner
Polish businesses	92.00%	43.43%	32.61%	29.35%
Industrial goods market	94.73%	42.10%	31.42%	17.14%
Consumer goods market	91.80%	45.90%	33.93%	37.50%
Group of well-known family businesses	100.00%	54.55%	40.91%	59.09%
English businesses	97.52%	35.37%	35.80%	37.04%
Industrial goods market	100.00%	37.50%	25.00%	43.75%
Consumer goods market	98.10%	33.96%	42.31%	34.62%
Group of well-known family businesses	100.00%	5.56%	33.33%	5.56%

Source: Authors' own study.

In the case of English companies, almost all of them had a website (97.5%). The name of the owner appeared less frequently in the name of the company, in about one third of the companies. Contrary to Polish well-known family businesses, the name of the owner was almost absent among the largest British family businesses. At the same time, in the content itself, the name of the owner appeared only slightly more often than among Polish companies (37%). The largest companies, where the name appeared only on the website of one company, were an exception. The second difference from Polish companies is that

the owner's name appeared more often on the websites of companies operating on the investment goods market.

The word family has appeared in just over a third of companies. Contrary to Polish companies, in British companies this word appeared more often on the websites of companies operating on the consumer goods market. However, it resulted more from the specificity of the offer addressed to families (an amusement park, small hotels focused on families as customers) than emphasizing the family nature of the company. The word family, as in the case of Polish companies, if it appeared, it was usually quite sporadic, definitely less frequently than, for example, the company's brand or words describing the company's offer or product. The word familiness did not occur even once. These results are quite comparable to similar studies carried out by Botero et al. (2013), where family businesses were also reluctant to inform that they were family businesses.

Three-fourths of the Polish family businesses surveyed had a profile on Facebook. However, only half of the companies with the profile were active in the seven days preceding the survey. The remaining ones, as a rule, limited their activity to having a fanpage where posts were published sporadically or not at all. Thus, Facebook was actually used by approximately 43% of Polish family businesses to communicate with the environment. At the same time, it was noticed that the Facebook profile was more often used by companies operating in the consumer goods market. Companies with a well-known brand had significantly higher activity on Facebook. Regardless of the size and market, companies active on Facebook posted an average of several posts a week. Such results suggest that Facebook was not treated by the surveyed companies as one of the most important elements of the company's communication policy, but rather as an addition, which is consistent with the research conducted by Webb and Roberts (2016).

Table 5. Activity of family businesses on Facebook

	The percentage of companies with a profile on Facebook	The percentage of companies with a profile on Facebook that posted at least one post within 7 days from the survey date	Average number of posts in the last 7 days before the survey (for companies with at least one post)
Polish businesses	75.76%	56.76%	4.5
Industrial goods market	63.16%	54.55%	6.8
Consumer goods market	83.60%	57.69%	3.6
Group of well-known family businesses	100.00%	86.36%	4.1
English businesses	79.01%	53.13%	5.1
Industrial goods market	77.42%	54.17%	3.3
Consumer goods market	81.13%	50.00%	6.0
Group of well-known family businesses	72.22%	61.54%	4.1

Source: Authors' own study.

Among British companies, the share of companies with a Facebook fanpage and their activity was similar to Polish companies. At the same time, as in the case of Polish companies, there was no noticeably higher activity among the largest companies. The activity itself, as in the case of Polish companies, fluctuated on the level of several posts a week.

When analyzing the content in terms of the presence of the word family and the name of the owner, it was noticed that, similarly to websites, in the case of Polish companies, only 37.84% of them included the word family. The differences between the companies themselves are bigger. Among large companies, the word family and derivatives appeared noticeably more often, it was the least common in companies operating on the investment goods market. In British companies, the word family appeared in half of the surveyed ones. There was

no clear difference in how often this word appears depending on the size of the company and the market in which it operates.

Table 6. Share of fanpages with the word family and surname of the owner

	The percentage of companies where the word family and derivatives of this word appeared in the content on the Facebook profile	The percentage of companies where the name of the owner appeared in the content on the Facebook profile
Polish businesses	37.84%	32.43%
Industrial goods market	26.09%	30.43%
Consumer goods market	41.17%	35.29%
Group of well-known family businesses	59.09%	63.64%
English businesses	50.00%	31.25%
Industrial goods market	50.00%	37.50%
Consumer goods market	48.84%	27.91%
Group of well-known family businesses	53.85%	7.69%

Source: Authors' own study.

The name of the owner appeared in the content posted on Facebook in less than one third of the surveyed companies. It is worth noting here that it appeared slightly more often in Polish companies operating on the consumer goods market, and clearly more often in companies with a recognized brand. In the case of British companies, the opposite was true. Most often, the surname appeared in companies operating on the investment goods market, while in the largest companies, it was absent, with one exception.

The survey shows that respondents from Poland and Great Britain differ significantly in terms of the frequency of searching for various (mentioned) information on the Facebook profiles of enterprises. Detailed data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Statistical analysis of the frequency of searching for selected information on the profiles of Polish and British companies depending on the country

How often is the information sought	Poland				Great Britain				Significance chi ² / p
	Never No.(%)	Sometimes No.(%)	Often No.(%)	Almost always No.(%)	Never No.(%)	Sometimes No.(%)	Often No.(%)	Almost always No.(%)	
Information about the company's products	16 (6.4)	73 (29.2)	90 (36.0)	71 (28.4)	7 (2.8)	72 (29.0)	149(60.1)	20 (8.1)	46.669; p=0.0000
Company's history information	55 (23.2)	118(47.2)	58 (23.2)	19 (7.6)	13 (5.2)	31 (12.5)	179(72.2)	25 (10.1)	139.329; p=0.0000
Opinions of other users about the company's products	8 (3.2)	54 (21.6)	79 (31.6)	109 (43.6)	8 (3.2)	18 (7.3)	102 (41.1)	120 (48.4)	21.443; p=0.0000
Information about the company's connections with the owners' family	133 (53.2)	73 (29.2)	28 (11.2)	16 (6.4)	19 (7.7)	19 (7.7)	100 (40.3)	110 (44.3)	227.818; p=0.0000
Information about events in the life of the company	43 (17.2)	112 (44.8)	70 (28.0)	25 (10.0)	13 (5.2)	26 (10.5)	147 (59.3)	62 (25.0)	112.718; p=0.0000
Information about special offers	11 (4.4)	59 (23.6)	107 (42.8)	73 (29.2)	5 (2.0)	29 (11.7)	147 (59.3)	67 (27.0)	19.026; p=0.0003
Information about the brand's connections with the owners' family	128 (51.2)	81 (32.4)	28 (11.2)	13 (5.2)	17 (6.9)	24 (9.7)	127 (51.2)	80 (32.3)	227.412; p=0.0000

Source: Authors' own study.

When asked about searching for information about the company's products, Polish students most often chose the answer "often" (36%) or the answer "sometimes" (29.2%), the answer "often" was given by British students much more frequently (60.1%), and the answer "sometimes" with a very similar frequency (29.0%). On the other hand, the answer "almost always" was chosen by Polish students significantly more often than British students: 28.4% vs 8.1%, respectively. The difference turned out to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). At the same time, summing up the answers, the difference between students is often and almost always blurred, 64.4% of Polish students often or almost always search for information about products and 68.2% of British do the same.

British students search for information about the company's history significantly more often than Polish students ($p < 0.001$). It turned out that the answer "often" was chosen many times more frequently: 72.2% vs 23.2%, respectively. On the other hand, Polish students search for such information much less frequently, as almost half of them chose the answer "sometimes", and among students from Great Britain the percentage of such answers was much lower: 47.2% vs 12.5%, respectively. Among students from Great Britain, only 5.2% of the respondents never look for such information, while in the group of Polish students the corresponding percentage is 23.2%.

The opinions of other users about the company's products are sought by students from both countries very often, but the percentage of answers "often" and "almost always" turned out to be significantly higher in the group of students from Great Britain than from Poland ($p < 0.001$). The percentages of such responses in the group of British and Polish students were, respectively: 41.1% vs 31.6% and 48.4% vs 43.6%. The answer "never" was chosen with a similar frequency, and the answer "sometimes" was indicated more often by Polish students. The answer "never" at 3.2%, and "sometimes": 21.6% vs. 7.3%, respectively.

A very large part of Polish students do not look for information about the company's connections with the owners' family or do it only "sometimes", the respective percentages are 53.2% and 29.2%. Only 11.2% do it often, and even less often chosen answer was "almost always" – only 6.4% do that. The situation is completely different in the case of British students, where as many

as 40.3% chose the answer “often” and 44.3% the answer “almost always”. The answers “never” and “sometimes” were chosen very rarely, i.e., 7.7%. This difference between students from both countries is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Polish and British students differed the least (although the difference was also statistically significant) in terms of searching for information about special offers. Quite often, because 4.4% of students from Poland and 2% of students from Great Britain are never interested in it. On the other hand, the answer “sometimes” was chosen by British students significantly less often than by Polish students: 11.7% vs 23.6%, respectively. British students showed frequent interest in special offers significantly more often than Polish students: 59.3% vs 42.8%, respectively. On the other hand, with a fairly similar frequency, students from both studied groups search for information about promotions: 27.0% of British students and 29.2% of Polish students.

Students from both studied groups differed greatly in terms of searching for information about the brand’s relations with the owners’ family ($p < 0.001$). It turned out that more than half of Polish students (51.2%) and only 6.9% of students from Great Britain have never been interested in it. Also, the interest was sometimes indicated significantly less often by Polish than British students: 32.4% vs 9.7%, respectively. On the other hand, British students significantly more often than Polish students indicated the answers “often” and “almost always”. The respective percentages are: 51.2% vs. 11.2% and 32.3% vs. 5.2%.

Students from Poland and Great Britain differ significantly in terms of the importance of the fact that it is a family business, the history of the company, and information about the company’s owners on the website or Facebook ($p < 0.001$) when choosing the offer of a given company. Details are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Statistical analysis of the significance of selected information on the profiles of Polish and British companies depending on the country

When choosing the offer of a given company, what is the significance of the following?	The fact that the company offering the product is a family business	History of the family of company's owners	Information on the website or Facebook about the family of the company's owners
Poland			
No significance No.(%)	99 (39.6)	111 (44.4)	113 (45.2)
Minimum significance No.(%)	64 (25.6)	68 (27.2)	64 (25.6)
Moderate significance No.(%)	59 (23.6)	46 (18.4)	47 (18.8)
Large significance No.(%)	20 (8.0)	19 (7.6)	18 (7.2)
Very large significance No.(%)	8 (3.2)	6 (2.4)	8 (3.2)
No significance No.(%)	8 (3.2)	10 (4.0)	10 (4.0)
Minimum significance No.(%)	8 (3.2)	12 (4.8)	14 (5.7)
Moderate significance No.(%)	25 (10.1)	42 (16.9)	57 (23.0)
Large significance No.(%)	145 (58.5)	145 (58.5)	127 (51.2)
Very large significance No.(%)	62 (25.0)	39 (15.7)	40 (16.1)
Great Britain			
Significance chi2/ p	271.060; p=0.0000	244.688; p=0.0000	222.532; p=0.0000

Source: Authors' own study.

The fact that the company offering the product is a family business is significantly more important to British than Polish students. It turns out that it is of a greater significance to British students considerably more often than for Polish students: 58.5% vs 8.0%, respectively, or that it even has a very great significance to them: 25.0% vs 3.2%, respectively. On the other hand, for Polish students this fact is not significant at all: 39.6% vs 3.2%, it has minimum significance: 25.6% vs 3.2% or moderate significance: 23.6% vs 10.1%, respectively.

Also, the knowledge of the family history of the company's owners is of no significance for Polish students remarkably more often than for British students: 44.4% vs 4.0% or it is of minimal importance: 27.2% vs 4.8%, respectively. On the other hand, for Polish and British students, the knowledge of the history of the company's owners is similarly of moderate significance: 18.4% and 16.9%, respectively. On the other hand, for British students, the knowledge of the company's history is remarkably more significant than for Polish students: 58.5% vs 7.6%, and even very significant: 15.7% vs 2.4%, respectively.

Similarly, information on the website or Facebook about the family of the company's owners is remarkably more often without significance for Polish than British students: 45.2% vs 4.0% or only of minimum significance: 25.6% vs 5.7%, respectively. On the other hand, for British students remarkably more often than for Polish students, information about the family of the company's owners on the website or Facebook is of at least moderate significance: 23.0% vs 18.8%, more often it is of large significance: 51.2% vs 7.2%, and even very large significance: 16.1% vs 3.2%, respectively.

Polish and British students answered the question "How often have you encountered activities in the social media of family businesses" in a completely different way. In terms of each question, the differences turned out to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 9. Statistical analysis of the frequency of selected activities on the profiles of Polish and British companies depending on the country

How often have you encountered activities in the social media of family businesses?	Poland				Great Britain				Significance chi ² / p
	Never No.(%)	Sometimes No.(%)	Often No.(%)	Almost always No.(%)	Never No.(%)	Sometimes No.(%)	Often No.(%)	Almost always No.(%)	
Informing about the company's history	42 (16.8)	140 (56.0)	51 (20.4)	17 (6.8)	7 (2.8)	31 (12.5)	130 (52.4)	80 (32.3)	169.872; p=0.0000
Emphasizing the familiness of the company	45 (18.0)	132 (52.8)	61 (24.4)	12 (4.8)	10 (4.0)	29 (11.7)	151 (60.9)	58 (23.4)	156.598; p=0.0000
Informing about events in the life of the company's owners' family	89 (35.6)	121 (48.4)	31 (12.4)	9 (3.6)	11 (4.4)	28 (11.3)	152 (61.3)	57 (23.0)	233.797; p=0.0000
Promoting the company's brand as a family brand	27 (10.8)	106 (42.4)	90 (36.0)	27 (10.8)	5 (2.0)	33 (13.3)	130 (52.4)	80 (32.3)	227.818; p=0.0000
Informing about the family atmosphere in the company	42 (16.8)	96 (38.4)	66 (26.4)	46 (18.4)	6 (2.4)	39 (15.7)	134 (54.1)	69 (27.8)	78.780; p=0.0000

Source: Authors' own study.

British students encountered information about the company's history significantly more often than Polish students, because the percentages of "often" and "almost always" answers were remarkably higher in the group of British students. It was respectively for the answer "often": 52.4% vs 20.4%, and for the answer "almost always": 32.3% vs 6.8%. On the other hand, Polish students remarkably more often gave the answer "never": 16.8% vs 2.8% or the answer "sometimes": 56.0% vs 12.5%, respectively.

British students were also remarkably more likely to find emphasis on the family character of the company. The percentages of "often" and "almost always" answers were remarkably higher in the group of British students. Compared to Polish students, it was, respectively, for the answer "often": 60.9% vs 24.4%, and for the answer "almost always": 23.4% vs 4.8%. On the other hand, Polish students remarkably more often answered "never: 18.0% vs 4.0% or provided the answer "sometimes": 52.8% vs 11.7%, respectively.

A similar situation occurs in the case of encountering information about events in the life of the company's owners' families on their social media. British students also encountered this significantly more often than Polish students. The percentages of "often" and "almost always" answers turned out to be significantly higher in the group of British students. Compared to Polish students, it was, respectively, 61.3% vs 12.4% for the answer "often" and 23.0% vs 12.4% for the answer "almost always". On the other hand, Polish students significantly more often provided the answer "never": 35.6% vs 4.4% or the answer "sometimes": 48.4% vs 11.3%, respectively.

British students were also significantly more likely to encounter promoting the company's brand as a family brand than Polish students. Again, the percentages of "often" and "almost always" answers turned out to be significantly higher in the group of British students. Compared to Polish students, it was, respectively, 52.4% vs 36.0% for the answer "often" and 32.3% vs 10.8% for the answer "almost always". On the other hand, Polish students significantly more often provided the answer "never": 16.8% vs 2.4% or the answer "sometimes": 42.4% vs 13.3%, respectively.

British students were also significantly more likely than Polish students to encounter activities on the social media of family businesses that involve

informing about the family atmosphere in the company. Also in this case, the percentages of answers “often” and “almost always” turned out to be significantly higher in the group of British students. Compared to Polish students, it was, respectively, 54.1% vs 26.4% for the answer “often” and 27.8% vs 18.4% for the answer “almost always”. On the other hand, in the group of Polish students the answer “never” was significantly more frequent: 10.8% vs 2.0% and the answer “sometimes”: 38.4% vs 15.7%, respectively.

Conclusions

While qualitative research has shown that at least in British companies, family character is important when building a brand and allows it to be distinguished from other companies, the research on websites and fanpages clearly showed that family character does not matter for these companies in building a brand. Out of all the companies, only one Polish company, Mokate, emphasized its family nature in the content of the website. About a third of Facebook’s websites and profiles used the word family, but in most cases very sporadically, most often as information that the company is a family business. Thus, the first hypothesis which stated that ‘Familianness is emphasized in a small percentage of family businesses in brand communication’ was confirmed.

The research on websites and fanpages revealed some differences between the two countries. On Facebook, the word family appeared more often on English websites, while Polish well-known companies definitely more often put the surnames of business owners. In the qualitative research, the information obtained was that it was British companies for whom familiness is important and emphasized by people running the business. At the same time, there were large differences in the responses to the survey. British respondents much more often searched for information on Facebook profiles linking the company and brand with the owners’ family. Also, British respondents much more often indicated that it is important that the company is a family business as well as its history and information about the family. Also, British respondents met with family related issues much

more often. Thus, these are the results that confirm the hypothesis saying that “The importance of familiness in SME companies differs from country to country”.

Only one company on Facebook emphasized its familiness (Mokate), and only one third of them featured the word “family” (among British companies, it was half of the companies) or the name of the company owner, but only occasionally in connection with the company’s brand. On the other hand, the vast majority of British respondents often encountered emphasis on familiness or promoting the company’s brand as a family business. Familiness is also important for most of them. Thus, the hypothesis that “Social media are used to promote the familiness of the brand” was partially confirmed. In the case of British companies, social media are used to promote family life, since British respondents often encountered such activities and considered them important. In the case of Polish companies, these media are not used.

It is advisable for family businesses to make greater use of familiness in building the brand image. Qualitative research has shown that emphasizing familiness can bring benefits to the company and result in a better perception. Including familiness in the brand results in the improvement of its authenticity (Eggers et al., 2013). The history of the family and the owner can also be an element facilitating the creation of a strong brand on the market (Gallucci et al., 2015). Not only the family nature of the company but also the name of the owner can be helpful in building the brand (Minichilli, 2011; Presas et al., 2011). The company’s reputation as a family business may be positively perceived by stakeholders. These are all benefits that family businesses voluntarily give up when they do not emphasize family character or use it insufficiently placing only minimal emphasis on the familiness through the information on the website that the company is a family business.

There were no significant differences in emphasizing the familiness between Facebook and websites. The frequency of the appearance of the word “family” was similar, on websites most often in the information about the company, it was reported that the company was family-owned, but usually without clearly emphasizing the familiness of the company itself. There was no significant emphasis on familiness in the content of the posts on social media.

The involvement of the surveyed companies on social media should also increase. These media are particularly useful in building relationships with

customers (Piskorski, 2011; Vernuccio, 2014). Communicating through social media, including Facebook, results in consumer engagement, which can be used in building brand capital (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013; Lund et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Kohli et al., 2015; Carlson et al., 2019a; Kamboj et al., 2018; Yoshida et al., 2018). Thanks to real-time analysis of comments on social media (both positive and negative), information collected in this way can be used to build a brand (Zhao et al., 2013; Geurin & Burch, 2017; Kohli et al., 2015). But these comments will be made only if the company actively and systematically operates on these media. The use of consumer-generated content is another element that can be used in building a brand on the market (Gensler et al., 2013). These are all actions, which every company should implement, remembering at the same time that social media is not another communication channel for promotion, but a specific tool primarily used to build relationships with the environment.

It would be advisable to conduct research explaining why such a large percentage of companies do not emphasize the familiness of their company in their activities on social media. The analysis of the literature shows that emphasizing the family character offers definitely more benefits than risks. At the same time, familiness can be a source of competitive advantage for companies. In spite of this, most of the surveyed companies, especially the smaller ones, hid their family nature.

At the same time, a more detailed analysis of the content on social networking sites should be carried out, which would not be limited to determining whether the word 'family' appears on these sites and how often, but examining the context in which it appears. The sample in such a case could be limited to the largest companies or the best known ones. Especially considering the frequency of the word 'family' on social media is a rather superficial study and does not allow drawing conclusions about the actual role "familiness in building the brand image". This would allow answering the question not only whether companies use familiness in building a brand, but also what is the importance of familiness in the communication policy of these companies.

Carrying out similar studies in other countries would be worthwhile, which would allow drawing more general conclusions and capturing intercultural differences.

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