

Difficult words in the communication of family businesses

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Abstract

This study of family business communication was conducted using excerpts of texts taken from the websites of the five companies ranked highest in “Forbes” magazine’s list of the most valuable Polish family businesses.

The ranking of the most valuable family-owned businesses was compiled by Dun & Bradstreet in collaboration with “Forbes Polska”. The list includes companies that have been in existence for at least eight years, in which at least two shareholders are related by family ties and which hold a minimum of 50% plus one share. The companies have diverse business profiles, but they share the fact that in 2021 they had net revenue of no less than PLN 10 million and have consistently reported positive financial results in recent years.

This study forms part of a wider project analysing the communication strategies of family businesses in the context of the concept known as *familiness*. This represents a unique opportunity that family businesses can capitalise on in their communications, conveying the positive associations resulting from the meaning of the lexeme: *family*. Does a company’s “family-oriented” nature translate into a more approachable and familiar style of communication?

The research material included excerpts of five types of text: (1) company information, company history; (2) work, career – a general, introductory text; (3) frequently asked questions (FAQ) – three questions and their accompanying answers; (4) news, advice – three texts; (5) slogans – 10 texts.

The study was conducted with regard to the plain language methodology used in the Logios IT tool (logios.dev). ‘Difficult words’ is one of the parameters of the plain language strategy, relating to the level of text readability. The aim of this presentation is to discuss the occurrence of vocabulary defined in this method as ‘difficult’: terminology, long words (more than 3 syllables) or superlative forms. An accumulation of this type of vocabulary reduces the text’s readability.

Family businesses featured at the top of the “Forbes” magazine rankings do not always build their corporate identity around their status as a family business. Research into the identification of family brand identity, conducted for 48 companies from the Forbes ranking, shows that despite fairly broad criteria regarding the manifestations of this identity, only 66% of them demonstrate an identity associated with their status as a family business. The presented study has allowed us to broaden the scope of reflection to include the company’s communication style.