

Bribery for News Coverage: Research in Poland

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Commissioned by the Polish Public Relations Consultancies Association
The Institute for Public Relations
and the International Public Relations Association

Executive Summary

This paper starts with an overview of the development of Polish media and public relations that established a ground for current practice. The paper then reports the results of a study conducted among the Polish communication leaders on credibility and media bribery practices of Polish media. The total of 287 communication leaders (99 journalists, 90 marketing specialists, and 98 PR practitioners) were asked to provide their opinions and perceptions on the number of issues related to media bribery. The research was commissioned by the Polish Public Relations Consultancies Association and the survey instrument was created by the Institute for Public Relations (USA) with support from the International Public Relations Association. The data were collected and initially analyzed by an independent research agency, the Millward Brown SMG/KRC Poland Company.

The results of the study showed that the Polish communication leaders, especially PR practitioners, often face media bribery at the workplace. Two types of media bribery, indirect and direct, were identified and studied. The results showed that communication leaders were more concerned with indirect cases of media bribery, such as publishing publicity materials in exchange for advertising in the same media, putting financial pressure on media outlets to present information that comes from news sources, specifically, companies and PR agencies. The direct form of media bribery – actual payments for coverage – happened less frequently. A vast majority of respondents (72%) strongly agreed that the media bribery practice is unacceptable.

Almost a half of PR professionals but only a third of journalists reported they agree PR is practiced in ethical manner. At the same time, about a quarter of PR professionals, 40% of journalists, and almost half of the marketing specialists disagreed with this statement. The study demonstrated the dispersion among PR professionals and more importantly among

communication leaders of perceptions of ethicality of PR practices in Poland. The study also demonstrated that marketing specialists characterized Polish media and public relations practices as problematic.

Journalists and PR professionals in Poland need to unite their forces to successfully communicate the nature and importance of ethical publicity. PR professionals have a responsibility to demonstrate to their organizations and clients, as well as to the media representatives, how media relations work and what can and cannot be done if one wants to practice public relations ethically.

Literature Review

Polish journalism

The history of Polish journalism is closely connected with the history of the Poland state. Several key points can help one to understand how modern journalism in Poland had developed and how challenges and opportunities of the Polish journalism have been formed. First, Poland has a long history of a country that for many years either did not have sovereignty at all or was independent for a very short period of time. Second, Poland has been a part of the Soviet Bloc for several decades, which resulted in very limited political and economic freedoms. As a result, for many years, social areas have been developing under the influence of empires that had control over Polish lands. Scattered and inconsistent developments of journalism in Poland up until the 20th century are also a result of the political and socio-economic history of this state.

The first Polish newspaper published in 1661 is traditionally considered a starting point in the history of Polish journalism even though the newspaper had only few issues and was not published periodically until 1729 (Cassara, Gross, Kruckeberg, Palmer, & Tsetsura, 2004). The late 17th and early 18th centuries had brought a relative freedom of state to Poland, along with a relative freedom of press, but soon after Polish territories have been divided among several nations, and the Polish journalism has disappeared.

After regaining sovereignty in 1918, Poland created yet another opportunity for journalism development. This time, the press was highly diverse and commercialized. Sensationalism was dominant in commercial newspapers of that time.

During the Soviet era, the rigid government control and censorship eliminated any possibility for the development of an official unique, independent Polish journalism. However,

the samizdat, a form of self-published periodicals, so popular in the former USSR, had its readers and writers in Poland and embraced anti-Soviet propaganda.

After the fall of the Soviet Bloc, Polish journalism has finally gained a life-time opportunity for its own development based on principles of freedom of information. With this freedom came responsibility and a problem of media control in a free market. Now Poles enjoy 5,500 periodicals, which include 16 dailies (Gross et al., 2004). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, one of the most widely read and well-respected daily newspaper which was established in 1989, is now partly owned by U.S.-based Cox Communications. The newspaper's circulation is about 500,000, and it holds about 19 percent of the readership market. Among other newspapers are *Rzeczpospolita* (circulation about 260,000 and 7 % of the market) and the tabloid *Fakt* (600,000 and 23 % of the market). Most of the regional newspapers and magazines published in Poland are owned by foreign companies and mega-publishing houses (Czarnowski, 2003). It is not uncommon to see *Cosmopolitan and Vogue*, among others, in Polish. Local and regional publications are also popular in the remote areas in the country, where a local newspaper used to publish local news for many years. Today those newspapers more often than ever experience a strong economic pressure from national and regional publications and from foreign publishing houses. As a result, few of them enjoy true political and economic independence.

Polish PR

Since the early 1990s, the PR market has been rapidly developing, with an annual growth rate of 12% (Lawniczak, Rydzak, & Trebecki, 2003). Many agencies started to ride on a wave of public relations popularity offering so-called PR services. Most of the first clients were large multinational corporations whose managers were somewhat familiar with goals and long-term effects of public relations. Many other companies saw public relations as a subcategory of

advertising and placed it under the marketing function (Laszyn, 2001). As a result, only few companies and very few agencies actually practiced true and ethical PR (Czarnowski, 2003).

PR practice has seen a slow down in the late 1990s. This was associated with a general slowdown in Polish economy (Laszyn, 2001). With a steadily growing market in 2001, Polish PR industry's volume was estimated at about US \$100 million. Of course, the recent acceptance of Poland to the European Union expects to generate economic growth and market expansion along with investment opportunities, which some see as a boost for Polish PR practice (Czarnowski, 2003).

The growing interest in public relations practice and services, however, does not necessarily mean the growing professionalism. According to some experts, strategic understanding of public relations goals and functions hardly finds place in the minds of many professionals who call themselves PR practitioners. Today, there are about 500 companies in Poland that claim to practice public relations, but in reality, only about 70-100 of them actually do offer services that can be called public relations (Czarnowski, 2003; Laszyn, 2001; Szymczak, personal communication, January 28, 2005).. The majority of those full-service PR agencies offer primitive advertising and event planning services. . Leading PR agencies and PR practitioners who have well established, recognized, and respected practices, decided to unite to combat unethical and unprofessional public relations. The Association of Public Relations Firms, established in 2001, has been very active in voicing ethical concerns. The Association created its own Statement of Professional Public Relations Practices, detailing ethical standards for its members.

The lack of ethical guidelines is among main problems of Polish PR practice. Experts identified several problems of modern Polish PR and journalism, which had to be discussed

publicly. Corruption was probably the biggest of all. They referred to the corruption of journalists and well as political decision makers (Lawniczak, Rydzak, & Trebecki, 2003). Czarnowski (2003) thinks that both media and PR professionals are responsible for the corruption of media relations, “I do not share the common opinion that all media and agencies are corrupt but I believe, based on my knowledge of the market, that corruption is a solid barrier to further development of media and has become a powerful substitute to ethical PR.”

Among other problems that slow down the development of free and independent media in Poland are the political dependence of the media, lack of specialization of journalists, and, most importantly, misunderstanding and lack of knowledge among reporters and editors of what public relations, specifically media relations, is (Czarnowski, 2003; Gross, et al., 2004). Possibly, communication between PR practitioners and media professionals is limited because of the lack of understanding how PR practice contributes to information exchange. Education of journalists often becomes a primary task of PR practitioners. This is a common practice for many countries in which modern PR is considered a young field (Tsetsura, 2003). Practitioners in those countries spend most of their time educating clients and media people about the basics of public relations (Tsetsura, 2004).

Overall goal of the study

The overall goal of this study was to collect the first-hand data on the status of the media bribery, or media corruption, in modern Poland. The study aimed to gather information on the existence of the phenomenon in different areas of Polish journalism and tried to identify the factors that might influence its existence in Polish PR practice. This was the first study to collect primary information on the subject of media bribery, specifically, cash for news coverage,

through the method of surveys, which was originally conceptualized in the International Index of Bribery for News Coverage in 66 Countries (Kruckeberg, & Tsetsura, 2003). Together with the Institute for Public Relations and the International Public Relations Association, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura created the first index of bribery, based on the secondary data sources. The index has generated great interest in the media as well as in professional public relations and journalistic circles (Ovatt, 2004).

Research Questions

The current study researched opinions of communication leaders about the problem of corruption in media and public relations. Specifically, the study wanted to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Are Polish media, national, regional, and local, considered credible in the eyes of communication leaders of this country?

RQ2: Do any direct or indirect forms of media bribery exist in Poland? If indirect forms of media bribery exist, what are they?

RQ3: Does a phenomenon of direct media bribery, such as cash for news coverage, exist in Polish media?

RQ4: If any forms of the media bribery exist in Poland, are they viewed as acceptable by communication leaders?

Methodology

Population and Sampling

The study population for this project was identified as communication leaders of Poland. For the purposes of this project, communication leaders were defined as communication professionals in the leader-oriented positions in Poland, specifically media representatives,

editors and journalists, of national, regional, and local media (later referred to as journalists); PR practitioners; and marketing specialists. Although population was generally defined by the Polish Public Relations Consultancies Association and Institute for Public Relations in the USA, the independent contractor, the SMG/KRC Millward Brown Company, identified the target groups and created and performed all sampling procedures. The company employed a purposive nonprobability sampling to identify three target groups. Each group had a sampling frame from which equal numbers of respondents were drawn. A simple random sampling was used to select the total of 287 participants (N = 287) from three groups: journalists (N = 99), marketing specialists (N = 90), and PR practitioners (N = 98).

The survey instrument construction

A quantitative survey method was used to collect the data for this study. The survey instrument was first designed in English by the researchers of the Institute for Public Relations in the United States. Then, Polish researchers contributed to editing the survey questions. The first version of the survey was translated into Polish and then back translated and checked for accuracy. Pre-test of the survey was done by the Millward Brown SMG/KRC Poland Company in the fall of 2004. The results of the pre-test were evaluated, and necessary changes were made before the final version of the survey was back translated.

Data collection and data analysis

The report shows results of the research conducted with assistance of a phone survey CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview). The sample was identified and data were gathered by Millward Brown Company. The phone survey CATI uses survey questions in a form of a phone interview, just as a standard computer questionnaire. The study was conducted

between October 13th and November 16th in 2004. Polish Public Relations Consultancies Association paid the Millward Brown Company to perform this research.

Primary data reporting was also performed by the Millward Brown Company. The author of this paper performed further analysis of the gathered data. Descriptive statistic methods were used to analyze the data and produce the results. The following section provides an overview of demographic characteristics of the respondents and reports answers to the survey questions about the credibility of Polish media and media bribery practices in the country.

Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents

The sample had a total of 287 leaders (PR people=98, Marketing specialists=90, Journalists=99). Public relations people were employed with either a company (N=49, or 50%) or an advertising/PR agency (N=49, 50%). Journalists' sample included chiefs of the department of editor chief at a national media (N=24, 23.76%), chief of the department of editor chief at a local media (N=25, 24.75%), or journalists at local (N=25, 24.75%) or national (N=25, 24.75%) media. The overall experience of the respondents in their respective fields was less than five years (N=79, 27.5%), between five and 10 years (N= 112, 39%), or more than 10 years (N=94, 32.8%). Two respondents refused to answer this question. The sex was almost equally represented (135 women, or 47%, and 152 men, 52.96%). There are no data whether this sample reflects a true sex distribution among the Polish PR, marketing, and journalism professional population. Age of the respondents also varied. Sixty-one (21.2%) were less than 30, 148 were between 30 and 39 years old (51.6%), 54 were 40-49 years of age (18.8%), and 24 indicated their age as more than 50 years old (8.4%).

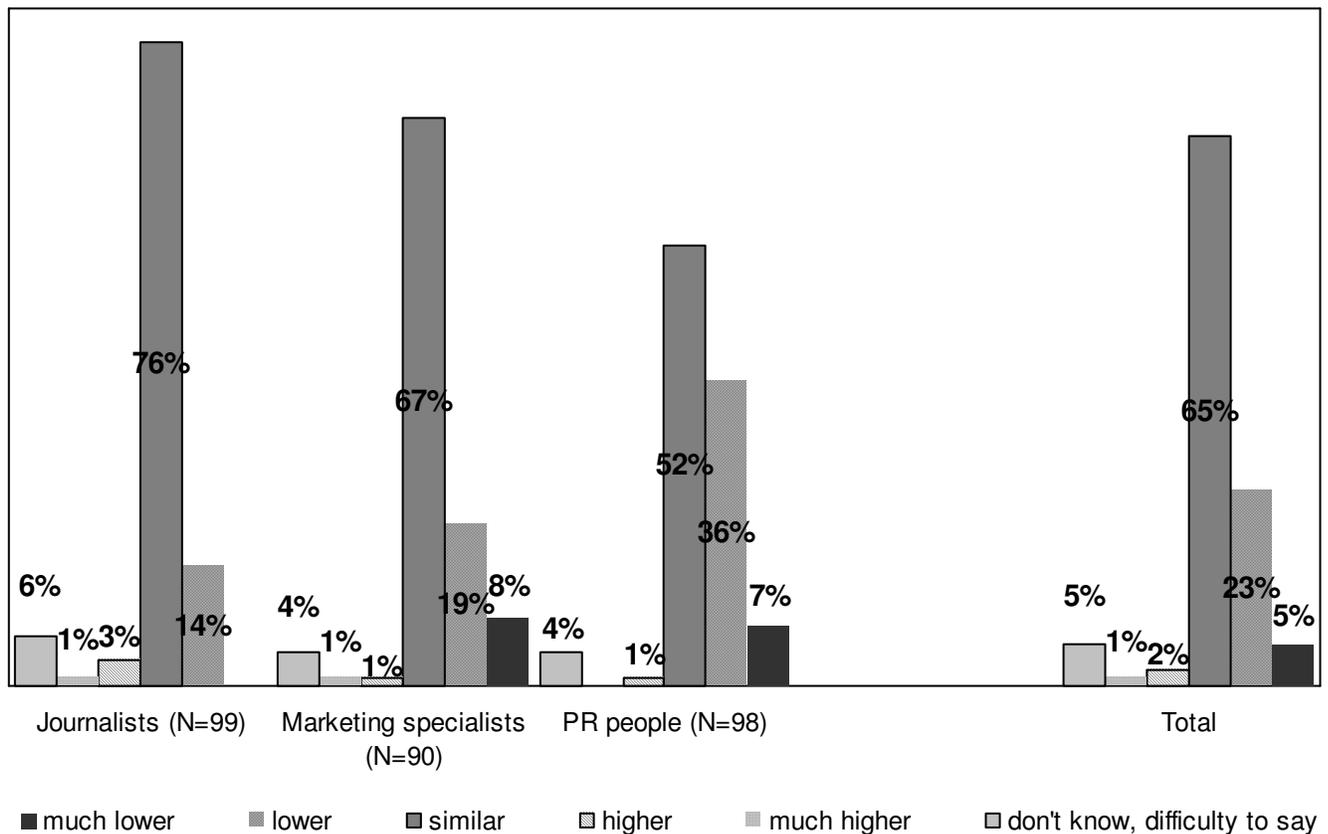
Answers to research questions

RQ1: Are Polish media, national, regional, and local, considered credible in the eyes of communication leaders of this country?

The survey showed that on average 65% of all Polish communication leaders think the credibility of Polish media is similar to the media credibility in other countries (M=2.69 on the 5-point scale, SD=0.63). Significant differences, however, were detected between perceptions of media credibility among PR practitioners and journalists: 43% of PR practitioners, in contrast with only 14% of journalists, evaluated the credibility of Polish media as being lower or much lower. At the same time, 76% of journalists and 67% of marketing specialists evaluated the media credibility as similar to other countries, comparing to only 52% of PR practitioners (see table 1).

All respondents agreed that the media outlets are not credible first and foremost when they are controlled by the government (74%) and by advertisers and editors with low integrity (for 53% each). Some interesting results were discovered from analysis of separate groups of respondents. Only 24% of journalists and 23% of marketing specialists said media are not credible if their information policy is controlled by news sources, such as PR people. Given the result, one can conclude that journalists and marketing professionals do not see PR people as a powerful source for information control. Journalists, in other words, are sure that the control of information policy lies within the media themselves, not outside of the newsroom and editors' offices. As a result, the responsibilities for guarding media outlets are still in hands of editors and journalists, and they make ultimate decisions about releasing information to the public.

Table 1: In comparison with major media in other countries, how do you see the credibility of Polish media?



RQ2: Do any direct or indirect forms of media bribery exist in Poland? If indirect forms of media bribery exist, what are they?

To answer this question, two factors were taken into consideration: first, the type of media outlet and its geographical outreach of the media, and second, the type of media bribery. The study identified six different types of media outlets: public national television and radio, private national television and radio, national dailies, regional dailies, color weekly and monthly published outlets, and the Internet media. Respondents agreed that most often materials, which are a result of direct or indirect payments but are not clearly marked as advertising and disguised as editorial, appear in color weekly and monthly publications (48% of respondents answered this

practice always or frequently happens, see table 2) followed by regional dailies (39%, see table 3). PR professionals reported a higher level of concern of the problem in the private media with 32% of them (including 37% of PR specialists who employed with companies) indicating that this practice happens frequently or always in private national television and radio media outlets.

These materials rarely appear in the national dailies (14%; PR professionals reported 15%) and public national television and radio (18% of all respondents; PR professionals reported 19%). However, there were no significant differences in responses depending on the type of respondents' professional group: about 16% of journalists and 19% of both, PR practitioners and marketing specialists, say on average this practice happens frequently or always across all types of media. Forty-five percent of PR practitioners, however, strongly felt that such practice is frequently or always happens in regional dailies ($M=3.36$, $SD=0.77$) comparing to only 35% of journalists ($M=3.27$, $SD=0.86$).

Based on the results of this study, one can conclude that PR professionals, journalists, and marketing specialists perceive that publication of editorial-like materials for indirect or direct payments is a large problem first and foremost for print media, specifically, regional daily media and color-printed weekly and monthly media. In addition, PR professionals, in comparison with other communication leaders, indicated that they see the problem as quite serious for all types of media. The fact can probably be explained by the practical situations in which PR professionals frequently find themselves: they are the ones who directly encounter the problem and deal with it.

Table 2: The material appears in color weeklies and monthlies as a result of direct or indirect payment, is not clearly identified as advertising or paid-for-promotion, and is disguised as editorial.

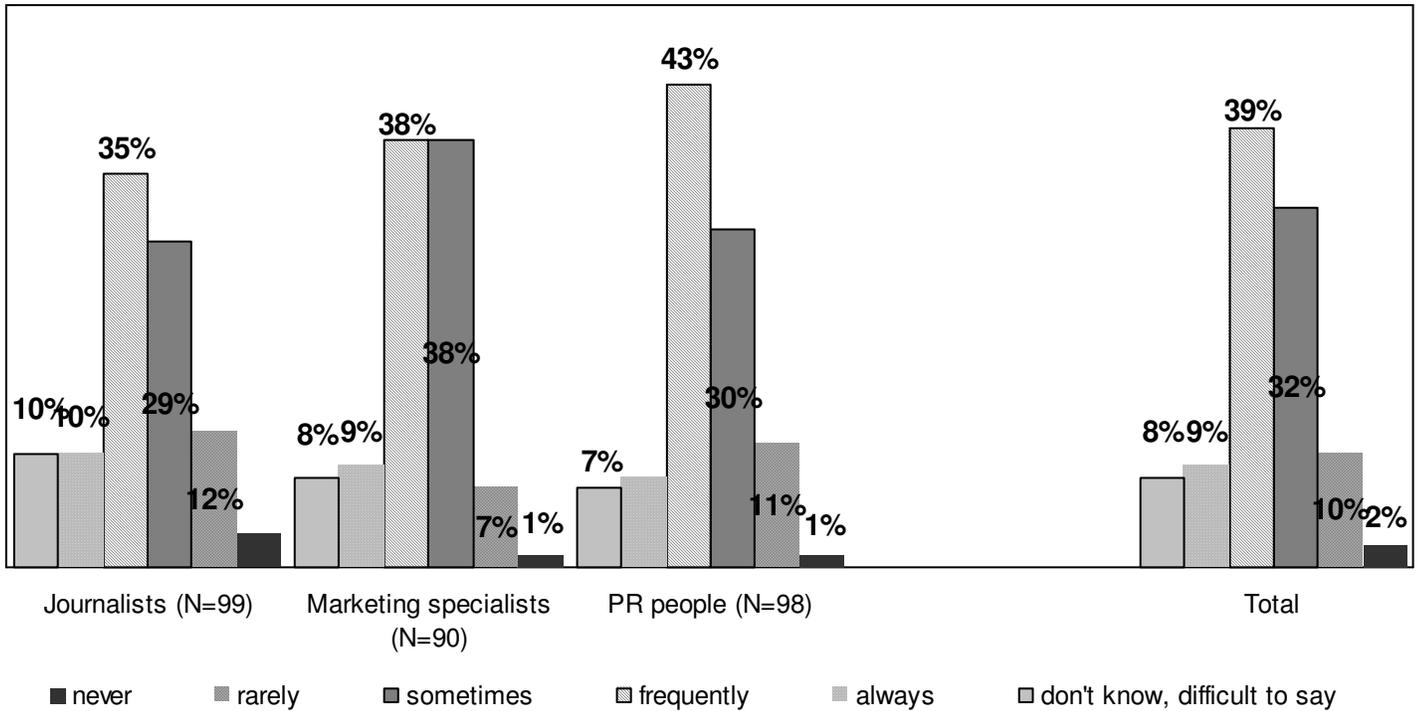
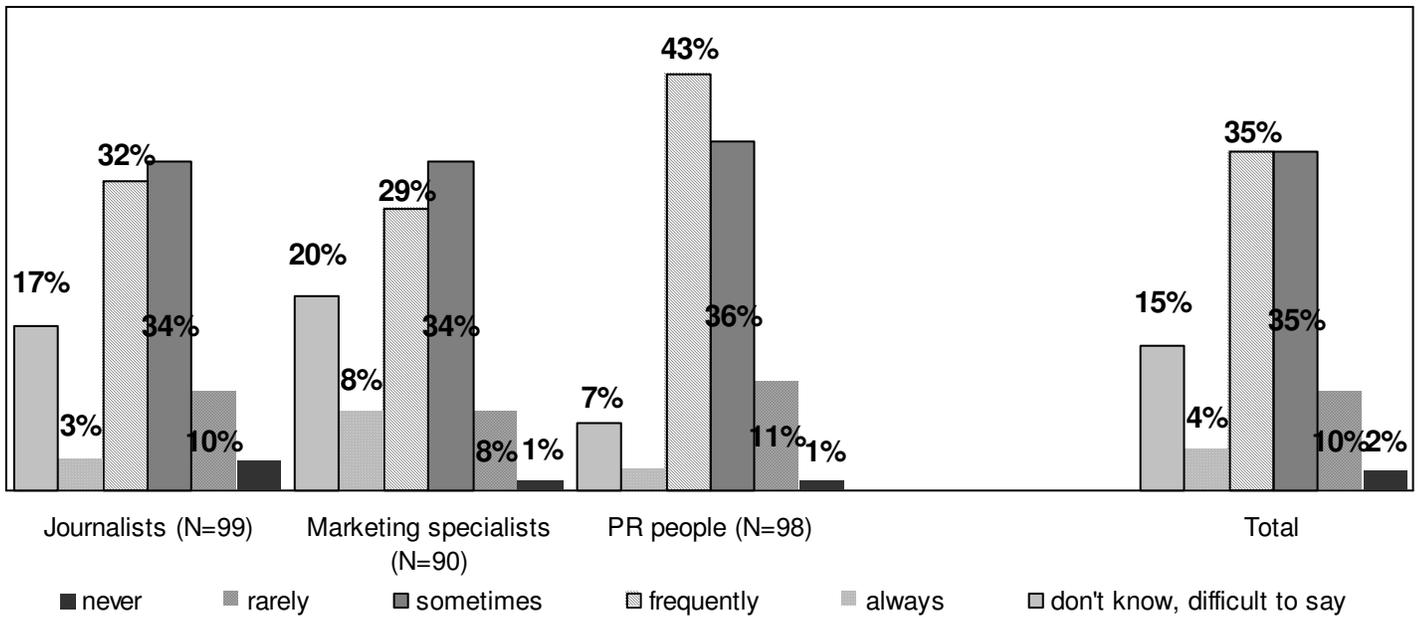


Table 3: The material appears in regional daily print media as a result of direct or indirect payment and is not clearly identified as advertising or paid-for-promotion, and is disguised as editorial?



In this study, types of media bribery were largely divided on direct and indirect payments to the media. *Direct payments* were defined as cash or other monetary payments paid specifically for material to appear in the media. Direct payments are discussed in the next section of the results. *Indirect payments* were defined as any type of non-monetary reward to a journalist, editor, or media outlet or the existence of a media policy which dictates, encourages indirect payments or influences the financial success and independence of the media outlet or its employees. The study identified several types of indirect payments and influences:

- 1) publication or production of materials in exchange for paid advertising;
- 2) written media rules of conduct that allow the receipt of samples, free gifts or attractively discounted items from third parties to national media representatives;
- 3) shared employment by journalists with national media and company, institution, government, or PR agency;
- 4) pressure from the advertising departments of national media on editors in terms of which news from which sources to cover;
- 5) financial pressure from news sources, companies, and public relations agencies on the national media to present information which comes from them.

1) One of the forms of indirect payments received by the media was a paid advertisement in exchange for publishing materials about a company or product/service elsewhere in the same medium. The practice happens always or frequently, according to 59% of marketing specialists and 58% of PR professionals. Results from both professionals in reporting this practice are quite accurate (M=3.50 with SD=0.75 for PR practitioners and M=3.51 with SD=0.71 for marketing professionals). On the other hand, many journalists deny the practice, with only 38% admitting that this practice always or frequently happens.

Interestingly enough, only 40% of all communication leaders who have more than 10 years of work experience, versus 57% of those who have less than 5 years of experience, report that this is a regular or frequently happening practice. This may indicate that recently the practice has become more popular and thus wider recognized by younger professionals than older ones. The difference can also be explained by the fact that young professionals are usually the ones who execute tactics of PR campaigns or actual journalistic writings and are responsible for gaining publicity or filling the media content. As a result, they are the ones (on each side of the fence, journalism or public relations) who see the practice first-hand. It is also possible that older practitioners use this practice for many years and either do not want to admit it or do not see this practice as unethical.

2) Written media rules of conduct allowing the receipt of samples, free gifts or attractively discounted items from third parties to national media representatives are considered to provide another type of indirect payment in this study. About a half of all communication leaders (51%) agreed that only some of the media have these rules written ($M=2.49$, $SD=0.97$). It is important to point out that PR practitioners perceived that national media have these rules written more often than journalists actually report: 22% of PR practitioners said they believe these written rules exist in all or almost all national media ($M=2.68$, $SD=0.98$), but only 12% of journalists reported that all or almost all national media have these rules ($M=2.38$, $SD=0.88$).

3) Respondents differ in their perceptions of whether journalists of national media are also employed by a company, institution, government, or PR agency. Twelve percent of marketing professionals perceived that this happens frequently ($M=2.54$, $SD=0.90$), whereas only 8% of PR practitioners thought it frequently happens, with only 6% of those who had a difficult answering the question ($M=2.50$, $SD=0.76$). Only 5% of journalists answered that this

happens frequently and 23% reported it never happens ($M=2.13$, $SD=0.85$). Interestingly enough, 28% of regional media journalists reported this practice never happens with only 4% of those were not sure. None of the communication leaders' groups indicated that this is something that always happens (0% responses). It seems that the problem of being employed by a company and by a media outlet either does not exist in Poland or is not known to the communication leaders. One can assume that if the problem exists, journalists make every effort not to disclose their professional conflict of interests.

4) Does pressure from the advertising departments of national media on editors exist in terms of which news from which sources to cover? Less than a third of respondents in this study seem to think it happens frequently or always (28%), but about a half of them (48%) agreed it can happen sometimes ($M=2.98$, $SD=0.90$). PR professionals are more inclined to think so (35%, $M=3.23$, $SD=0.74$) than journalists (19%, $M=2.69$, $SD=0.96$). Journalists' responses were less grouped, which means that journalists in this sample had less agreement on whether the practice exists. Different number of PR practitioners (32%) and journalists (18%) said that editors always or frequently give in to such pressures.

5) News sources, companies, and PR agencies put financial pressure on the national media to present information which comes from them is the last type of influence considered in the study. Half of the marketing specialists in this sample (51%) indicated that they believe it happens always or frequently ($M=3.47$, $SD=0.71$). In contrast, only 20% of PR practitioners ($M=3.03$, $SD=0.67$) and 26% of journalists ($M=3.00$, $SD=0.78$) agreed with them. The majority of PR practitioners, however, indicated that this practice happens sometimes (58%). Twenty-three percent of journalists thought it never or rarely happens, versus 15% of PR professionals and only 7% of marketing specialists (see table 5).

It is harder to resist this pressure than any other: about 27% of marketing specialists (M=3.02, SD=0.79) and 19% of PR professionals (M=2.99, SD=0.74) think the media give in to such pressure frequently or always. Only 11% of journalists (M=2.59, SD=0.82) said the media frequently give in to this pressure (with 0% of “always happens” answers chosen). At the same time, more than half of all PR respondents (55%) and almost half of marketing specialists (48%) and journalists (44%) said this is a practice that sometimes takes place.

Therefore, the problem of financial pressure from organizations seems to be an important factor in deciding which information will make it to the media, according to business communication leaders. PR practitioners and marketing specialists seem to put much more weight on the fact that sponsors can pressure and control the placement of information in the media whereas journalists either successfully communicate this message to marketing and PR professionals without actually delivering the result, or unaware or do not want to admit that such pressure does actually exist.

RQ3: Does a phenomenon of direct media bribery, such as cash for news coverage, exist in Polish media?

Again, for the purpose of this study, direct payments were defined as cash or other monetary payments paid specifically for placing a material or getting publicity in the media. Direct payments in the print media were defined as paid print advertisements, which are not disclosed as such. Direct payments in the broadcasting media were defined as a TV news or commentary program that concentrated on a product, company, or service in exchange for payment but did nothing to inform the viewer that this is a paid-for-promotion.

Table 4: National media publish materials about a company or a product in exchange for a paid advertisement appearing elsewhere in the same medium.

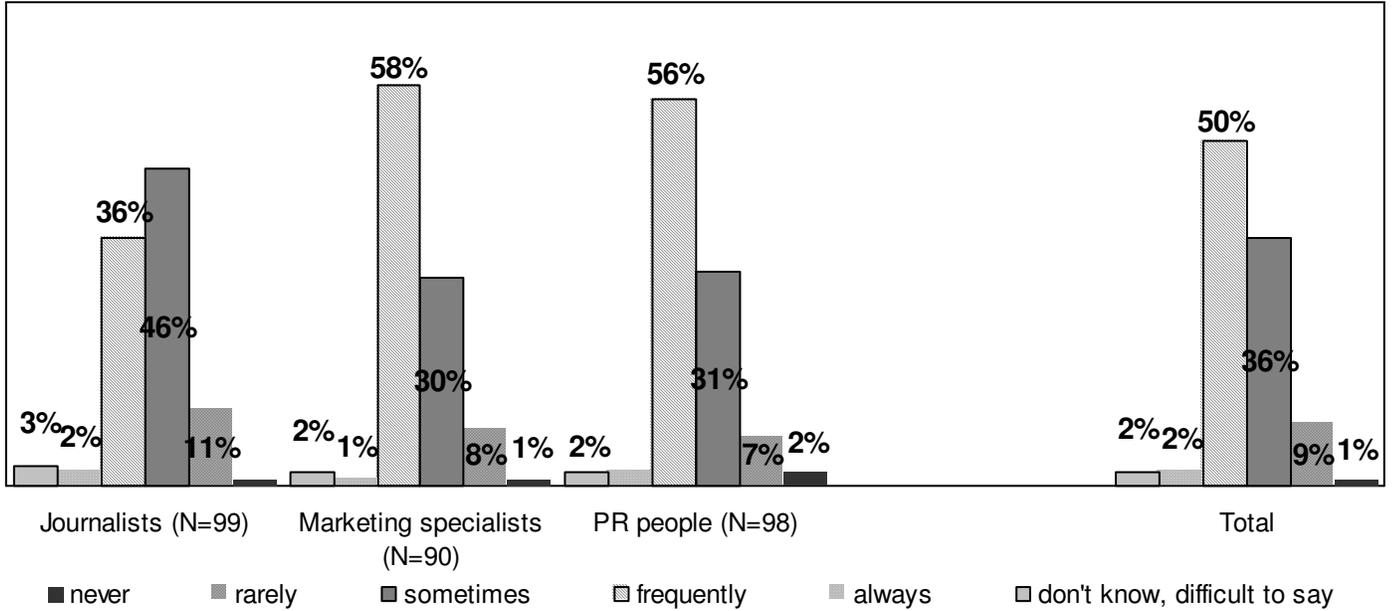
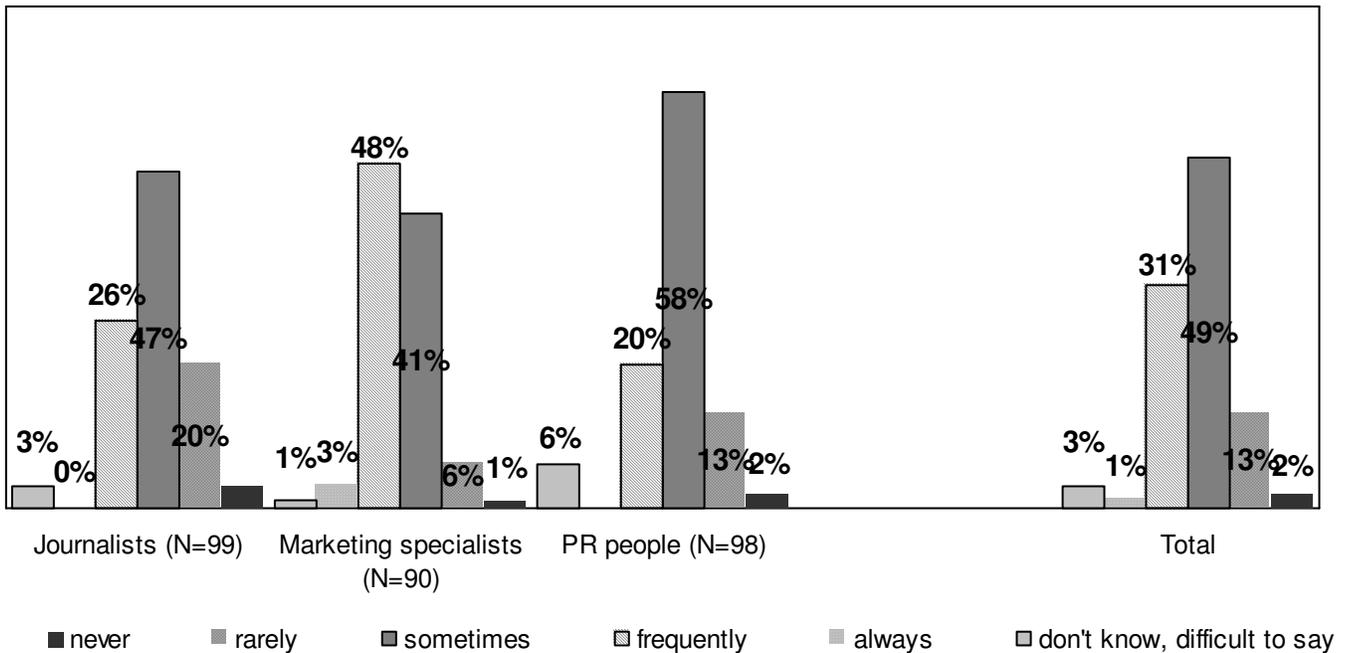


Table 5: News sources, companies, PR agencies put financial pressure on the national media to present information which comes from them.



A paid print advertisement that is produced to look like a regular editorial in the national medium is seen frequently or always, according to 35% of PR professionals (M=3.16, SD=0.83), 40% of marketing specialists (M=3.19, SD=0.79), and only 24% of journalists (M=2.81, SD=0.90, see table 6). Again, PR employees of companies reported a higher number of encounters with this practice: 45% of company employees said it happens frequently or always (M=3.33, SD=0.83) versus only 24% agency employees (M=3.00, SD=0.82). Thus, PR professionals employed with a company possibly face more pressure from the media outlets and encounter this practice more often than PR professionals working for agencies.

According to the respondents, the problem of direct payments for news coverage on TV is less of a problem (see table 7). Only 8% of journalists (M=2.43, SD=0.83) perceived that a TV news or commentary program, which concentrates on a product, company, or service in exchange for payment but does not inform the viewer that this is a paid-for-promotion, appears frequently or always. At the same time, about 15% of journalists found it difficult to answer this question and about third of them said it sometimes happens (30%). Fifteen percent of PR professionals, on the other hand, think this is a frequently or always existing practice, and 23% think it happens sometimes. Significant differences were reported between the journalists of national and regional media, with only 4% of national media journalists saying this is a regular practice (happens frequently and always) versus 12% of journalists from the regional media. It seems that either regional media face this problem more often, or regional journalists are more aware of this practice and more open to talk about it.

Table 6: How often does a paid print advertisement that is produced to look like a regular editorial material appear in the national media?

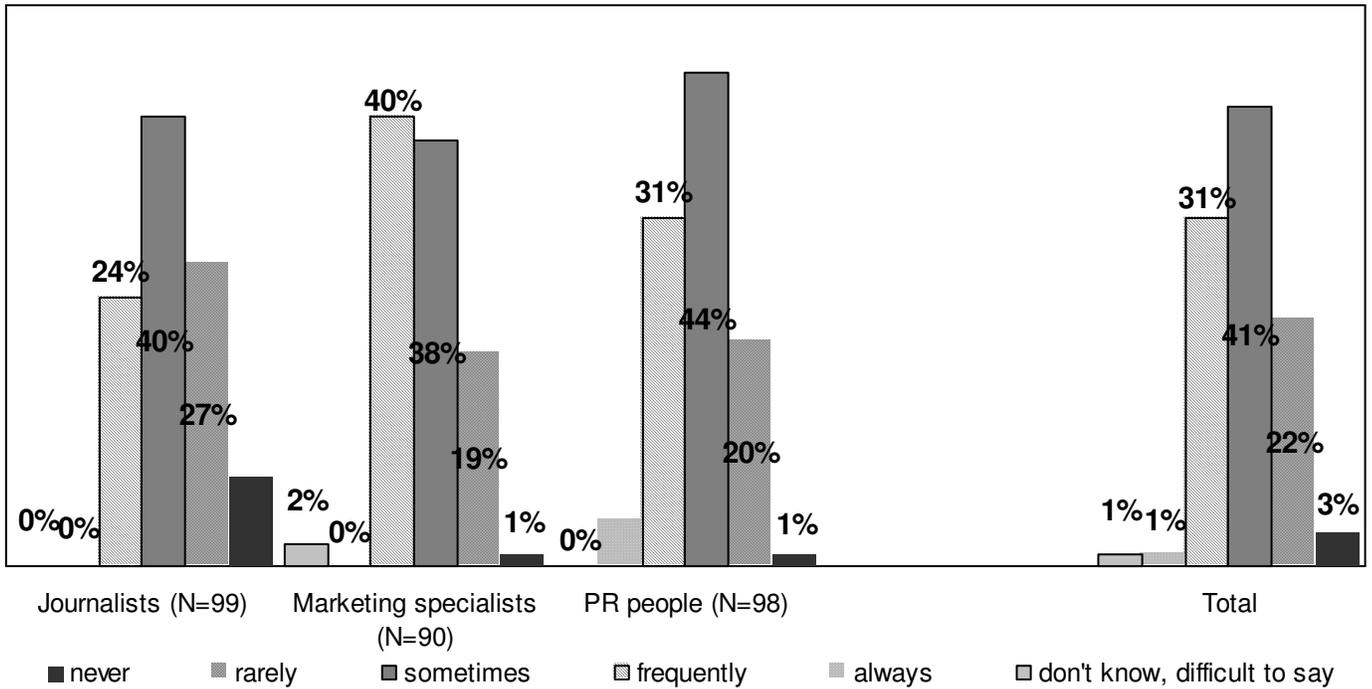
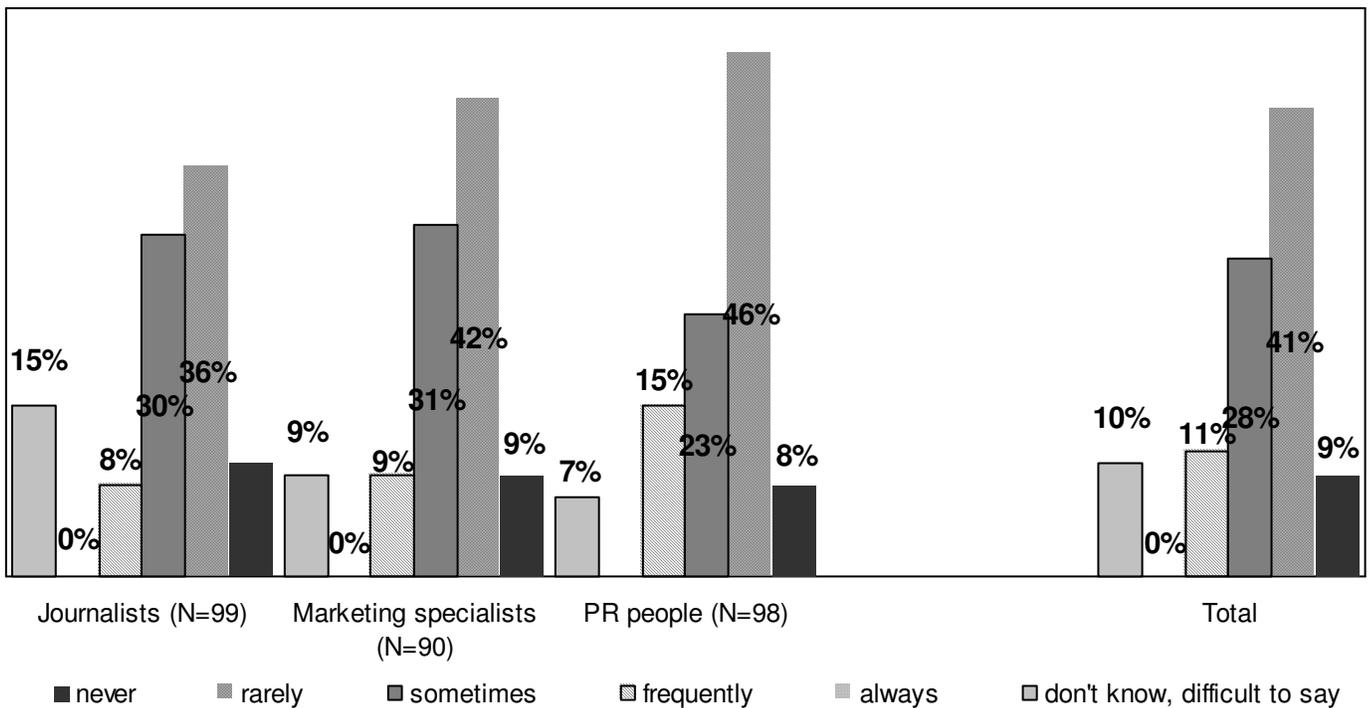


Table 7: A TV news or commentary program in national media concentrates on discussing a product, service, or a company in exchange for payment, and there is nothing to inform the viewer that this is paid-for promotion.



RQ4: If any forms of the media bribery exist in Poland, are they viewed as acceptable by communication leaders?

The results of this study show that Polish communication leaders do not see any forms of media bribery as ethical and acceptable. In general, only 25% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the practice, which involves payments from news sources for media coverage, was perceived as commonly accepted in the national media. Although the reported results of the sample were not as accurate (range of responses was higher than for other questions), about 52% of PR professionals ($M=2.58$, $SD=1.15$), 54% of marketing specialists ($M=2.78$, $SD=1.21$), and 64% of journalists ($M=2.23$, $SD=1.05$) disagreed or strongly disagreed that this practice is perceived as commonly accepted (see table 8). A difference was detected in the tendency to agree with this practice being commonly accepted between journalists (only 12%) and PR professionals (27%).

However, all communication leaders have agreed that this practice is perceived as more accepted at the level of regional and local media in Poland (see table 9). Significantly more marketing specialists (62%) than journalists (25%) consider this a commonly accepted practice in regional and local media, and significantly more PR practitioners (46%) than journalists (21%) tend to agree with this statement. This means that the practice is perceived as less serious matter on the regional and local level. It can partially be due to the lack of knowledge about public relations and publicity practices or desire of communication leaders to shift the problem from national media to regional and local media. There might be some other reasons for a wider acceptance at a regional and local level.

One of the factors that influenced that range of responses was the number of years of work experience among the communication leaders: those who had between 5 and 10 years of

experience reported higher tendency to agree or strongly agree with the statement (57%) than those who had more than 10 years of experience (34%). The age group between 30 and 39 has also reported a significant tendency to agree or strongly agree comparing with other age groups (51%). This can indicate that younger communication professionals with some experience perceive this practice as more commonly acceptable than those who have been working in the industry much longer or those who just entered the profession. This result can be explained by the unique publicity practice in regional and local media on early stages of public relations development in 1990s. It seems that a growing number of qualified and educated professionals now see some past practices as less acceptable. An increasing number of conferences, seminars, and public forums can partially contribute to lower perceptions of this practice among younger professionals. However, this fact needs to be scientifically supported.

Although communication leaders tend to agree or strongly agree that such practice is commonly acceptable among national (25 % of all respondents) and regional and local media (46% of all respondents), only 5% (with 0% of those who strongly agree and 1% of those who do not know) reported that they personally tend to agree this practice is acceptable ($M=1.41$, $SD=0.80$). Specifically, 69% of PR practitioners ($M=1.46$, $SD=0.87$), 69% of marketing specialists ($M=1.48$, $SD=0.88$), and 79% of journalists ($M=1.28$, $SD=0.62$) strongly disagree with the practice (see table 10). There were, however, 5% of PR professionals, 8% of marketing specialists, and 2% of journalists who tend to personally agree this practice is acceptable, and 1% of PR professionals who strongly agreed. At the same time, it is safe to conclude that this practice is considered not acceptable by the vast majority of communication leaders in Poland. This means that even though such practice may exist, there is a consensus among PR practitioners, marketing specialists, and journalists that it is unethical.

The question of media bribery directly relates to the question of media integrity and ethical PR practice. Overall, journalists reported a high integrity of Polish media (49% strongly agree or agree, $M=3.32$, $SD=0.95$); however, only 23% of marketing specialists ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.00$) and 36% of PR professionals ($M=3.10$, $SD=0.88$) also think so (see table 11). About 33% of PR professionals and 28% of journalists said they are neither agree nor disagree with the statement, which probably indicates the complexity of the concept of high integrity in light of media bribery instances discussed in the survey.

Most of the respondents, at the same time, felt strongly about the ethical PR practice in Poland (see table 12): 42% of PR professionals ($M=3.26$, $SD=0.94$), not surprisingly, reported that they are strongly agree or agree that PR is practiced in an ethical manner, comparing to significantly lower 24% of marketing specialists ($M=2.74$, $SD=0.92$). At the same time, about 34% of journalists consider that PR practice ethical, but the results from this sample are not as reliable ($M=2.90$, $SD=1.00$). Five percent of journalists found it difficult to answer this question. About 23% of PR professionals and 35% of journalists tended to disagree that PR is practiced ethically in Poland. This result demonstrates the dispersion among PR professionals and more importantly among communication leaders of perceptions of ethicality of PR practices in Poland.

Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrated that the Polish communication leaders, particularly PR practitioners, often face media bribery at the workplace. Communication leaders were especially concerned with indirect cases of media bribery, such as publishing publicity materials in exchange for advertising in the same media, putting financial pressure on media outlets to present information that comes from news sources, specifically, companies and PR agencies. The results showed that a direct form of media bribery happened less frequently.

A vast majority of communication leaders (72%) strongly agreed that the media bribery practice is unacceptable. Almost a half of PR professionals and a third of journalists reported they agree PR is practiced in ethical manner. At the same time, about a quarter of PR professionals, 40% of journalists, and almost half of the marketing specialists disagreed with the current public relations practices are ethical. This suggests that public relations practitioners still need to watch the practices very closely, reinforce their codes of ethics, and reach out and explain other communication leaders about modern ethical public relations practices. The dispersion among PR professionals and more importantly among communication leaders of perceptions of ethicality of PR practices still exist in Poland. The study also demonstrated that marketing specialists characterized Polish media and public relations practices as problematic.

The number of factors may influence the respondents' decision to call the public relations practice ethical or unethical. Direct or indirect media bribery can only be one of the many factors and is not necessarily the leading factor in deciding whether this practice follows ethical standards. But one can also note that the level of media integrity can possibly contribute to the media bribery and the lower overall perception of ethical PR practice. Results showed that marketing specialists, who are least likely to deal with media directly, perceived both, media and PR practices, problematic.

This means that journalists and PR professionals need to unite their forces in successfully communicating to business people the importance of ethical publicity. PR professionals have a special responsibility to educate their organizations and clients, as well as to the media professionals, how media relations work and what can and cannot be done if one wants to practice public relations ethically.

Table 8: In general, a practice which involves payments from news sources for media coverage, is commonly acceptable in the national media in Poland.

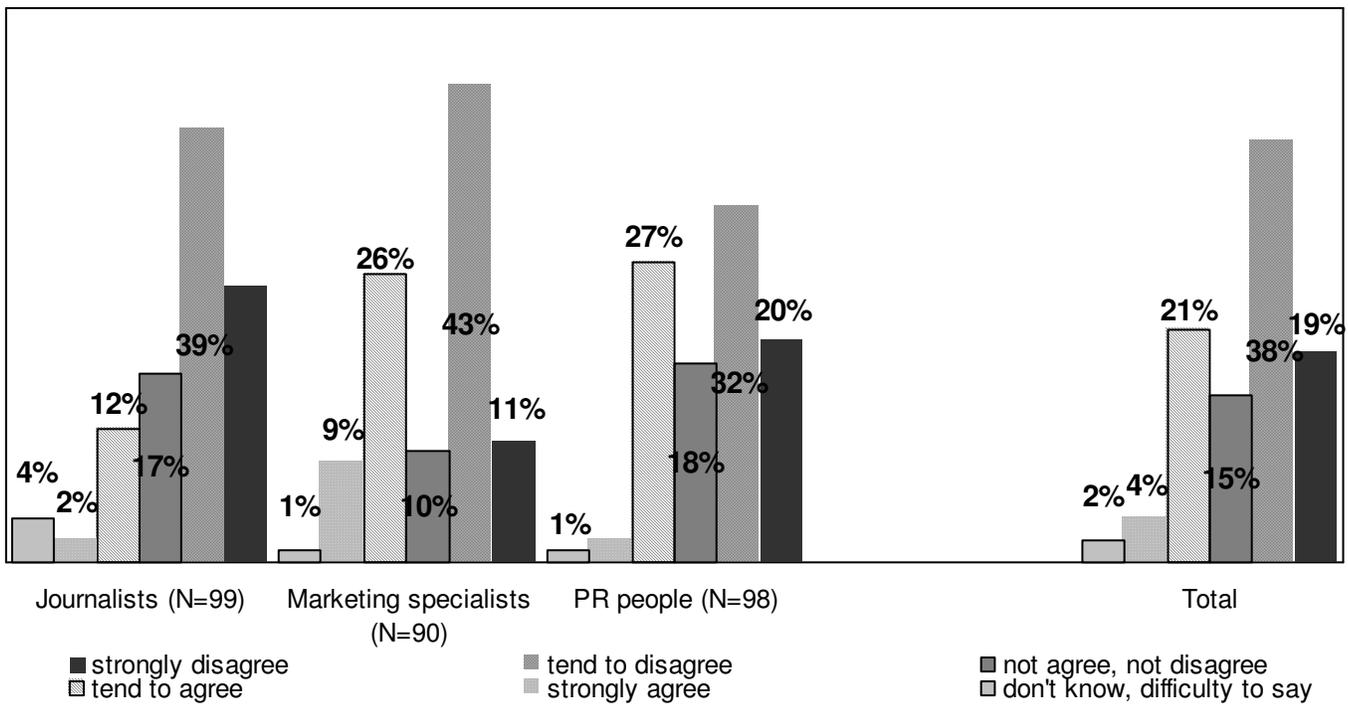


Table 9: In general, a practice which involves payments from news sources for media coverage is commonly acceptable in the local and regional media in Poland.

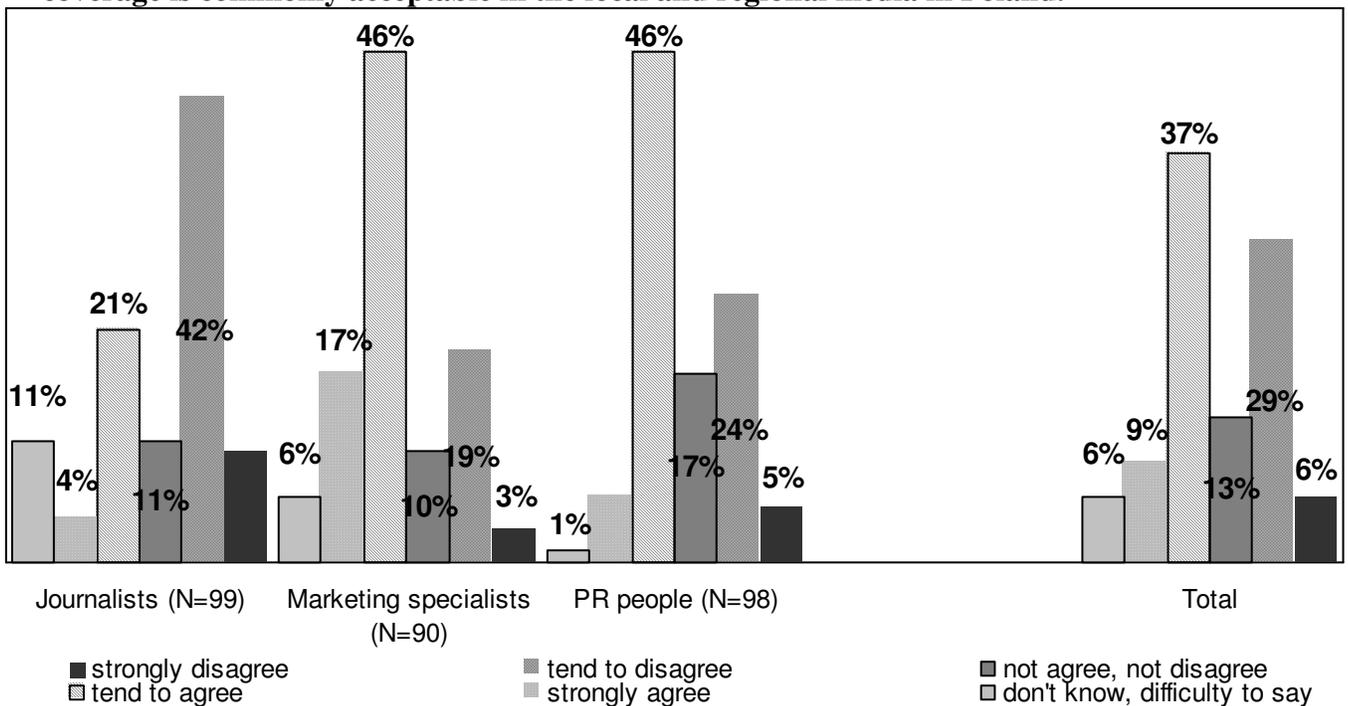


Table 10: Do you personally agree that this kind of practice is acceptable?

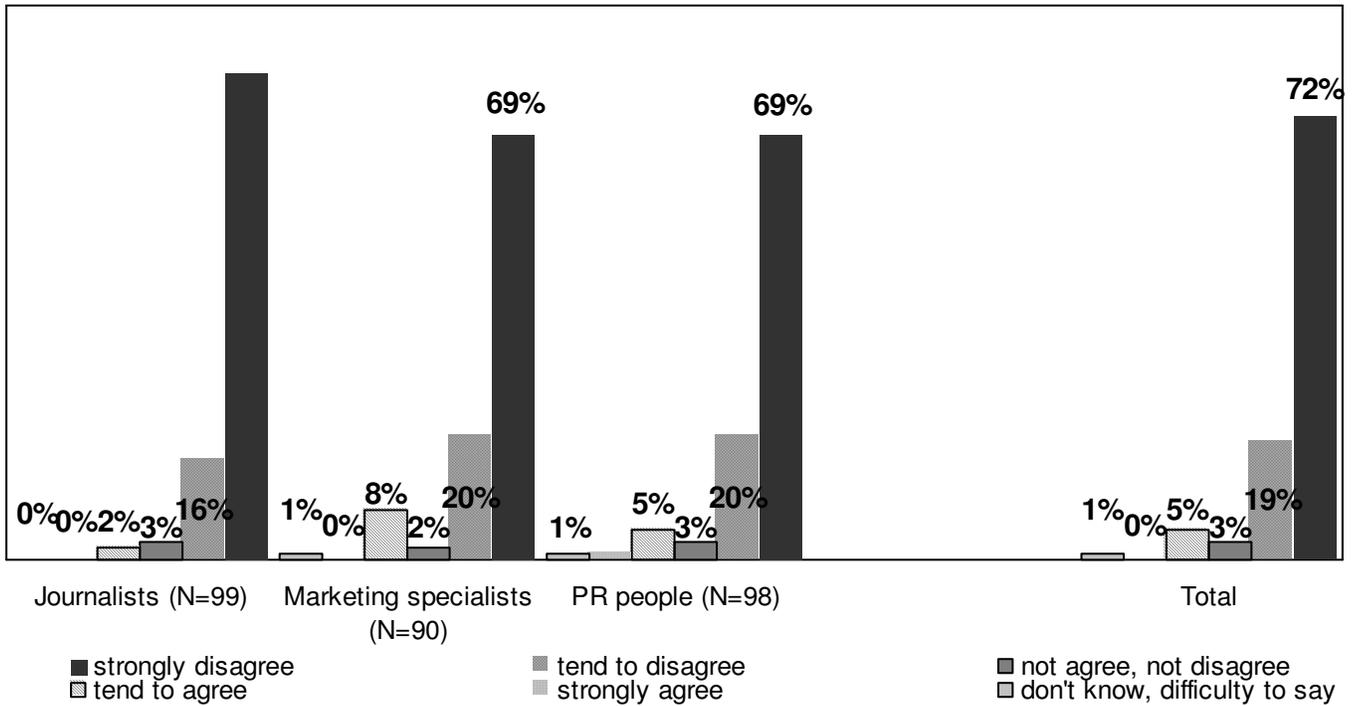


Table 11: Do you agree that journalists and editors of Polish media generally have high integrity?

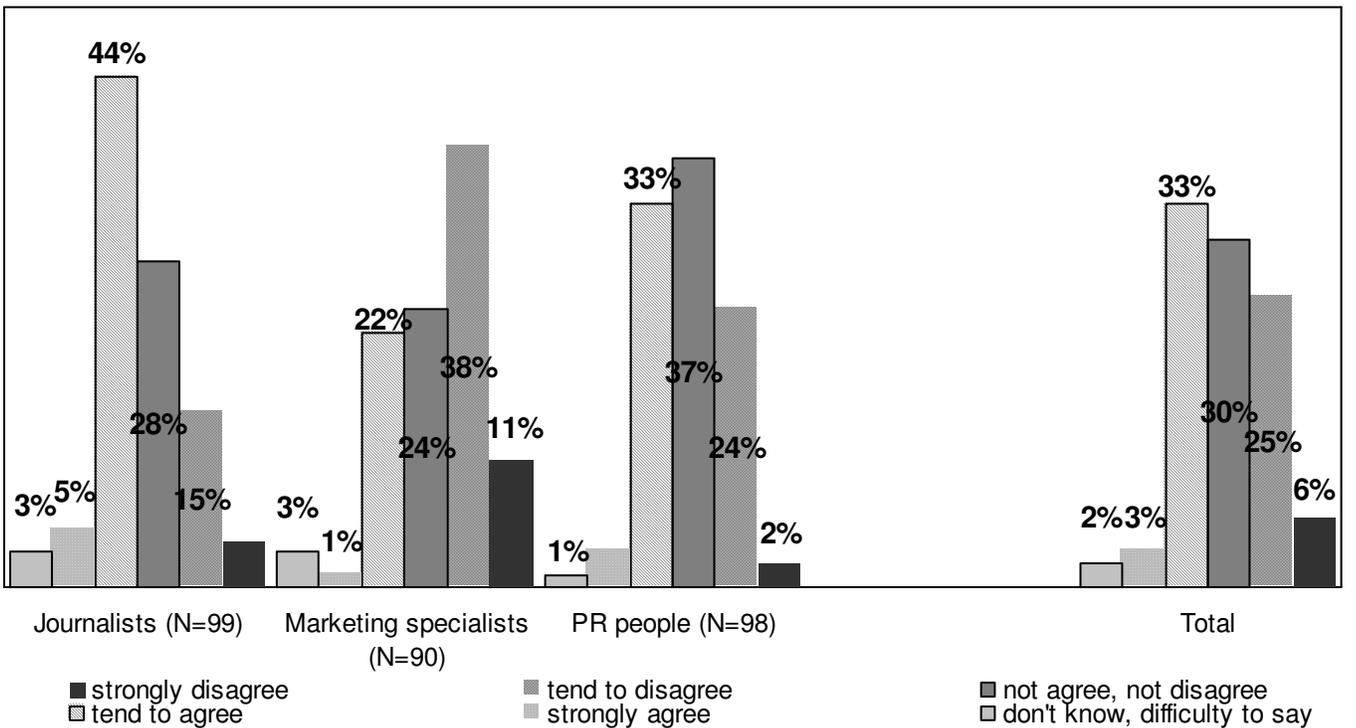
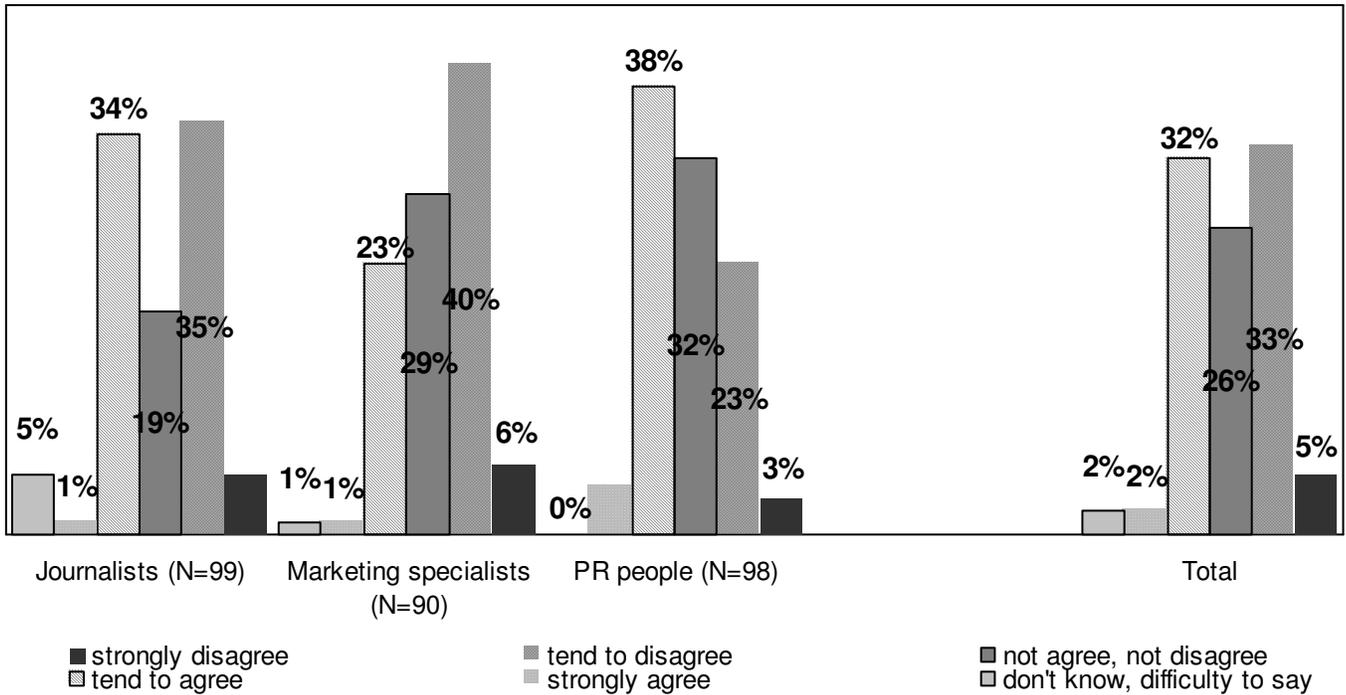


Table 12: Do you agree that public relations practices in Poland are conducted in an ethical manner?



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