

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING ON THE EXAMPLE OF FOOD AND CLOTHING COMPANIES

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is no longer simply a tool, and have become a mechanism which has operations in more and broader action on the Internet and beyond. Just a few years ago, social media associated humanity with young people's entertainment for communication. Currently, Facebook has 1.65 billion Internet users [WWW 1], which statistically shows that every 4th person on earth is a user of the portal and has an account on it. Today, each major and valued company promotes itself on social networks, thereby gaining new recipients who could become potential customers in the future. The constant growth of the popularity of social networking sites created a branch of marketing focused exclusively on its use – called “social media marketing”. Therefore, numerous companies decide to employ additional staff or external companies that provide comprehensive support for the company's websites. Smart promotion of the company in social media can provide a lot of benefits, such as improving sales, attracting new customers, gaining knowledge about the market or promoting the company at a relatively low cost. The term “social media” refers, in particular, to mobile technologies and online media. Social media, unlike traditional ones, allow unlimited interaction. A customer is no longer a passive recipient: he may co-create the media or even create them independently [Kaznowski 2008].

An extremely characteristic feature of social media is the “ability” to reach both a small and a larger number of recipients because they are available to everyone and are not limited by the range of the message. All information can be provided right away, according to a consumer's preferences. Social media also create a lot of opportunities for entrepreneurs and distributors, who use them mostly to promote their businesses. There are some varieties of social media. First of all, there are sites such as Facebook (social website), YouTube (content community), GoldenLine (social website) and Wykop.pl (content website). The basic feature that differentiates these media from conventional media and

earlier types of communication in the area of their prosperity - the web [Gustowski 2012]. It can be concluded that social media is a form of free exchange of information on various topics. The social media are characterized by very high interactivity and they focus on creating networks of contacts and relationships as well as the proper video, audio and photo materials to make them available to other users. Therefore, the social media are described as means allowing users to create and to use posted photos or content, to interact with other users and recipients of their entries [Halligan and Shah 2010]. Currently, social networking sites have functionalities such as user profiles, business cards of private users' websites, basic (or detailed) data on users, photos, videos and music that users publish, user-friend lists, user activity boards on which they publish written content, photos and videos or music [Sadowski 2013]. Social networks are also all types of fan pages, which are founded by various types of companies and organizations as well as other groups with a pool of information unavailable to conventional users. Blogs are another type of social media that are determined by a rather specific arrangement of entries. They are unique diaries where users present their own opinions and experiences as well as other content that they want to share publicly with other users. The chronologically ordered perspective of the blog presents a way of describing events and is a feature that distinguishes it from other types of websites [WWW 2]. Blogs that are run by companies and on the initiative of politicians or specialists became extremely popular. There is also a significant increase in the number of specialist blogs, i.e. travel or culinary. It should be emphasized that modern blogs are not only those that take the form of text entries but also video blogs and photoblogs. The basic functionalities and essential elements of blogs, however, are to create and publish entries, as well as to guarantee the option of commenting under published entries [Treadway and Smith 2010]. Another type of social media is a microblog, used mainly for marketing and image purposes. Microblogs are usually published on specific websites and, in addition to the information provided, contain audio, video or photo recordings. They are available to every registered user. Currently, Twitter is one of the most popular microblogs. Nowadays, almost every topic is addressed on microblogs, so entries relate to the current events, e.g. weather, politics, existing websites, interests or issues related to a healthy lifestyle.

AIM AND METHOD

The main goal of the study is to discuss a phenomenon known as "social media". The evolution of social media as well as the use of them by both Polish and foreign companies were described. The analysis includes the data from following institutions:

- Chamber of Electronic Economy (August 2016),
- IAB Poland Internet Industry Employers' Association (June 2012).

THE ORIGINS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has emerged as a result of Internet evolution. The first premise for their introduction was the creation of a higher-speed Internet connection. These connections made it possible to share larger files, such as movies, photos, and audio. The

second reason was that social media enabled easy editing and were easy to use. Another reason is that the Internet was increasingly accessible and the demographic structure of its users was becoming diverse. In 1978 the CBBS program [WWW 3] was created by Ward Christensen and appeared on the market. It enabled fast and efficient exchange of information by computer. This program could be called a predecessor of social forums. However, Classmates.com is more often listed as the first social networking site. It was created by Randy Codras in 1995 [WWW 4]. It was similar to the modern nk.pl. The purpose of its creation was to enable contact between people who made acquaintance at school, as well as those who wanted to meet new people. According to data, the site has 40 million users in the United States and Canada [WWW 4]. As another example it is also worth mentioning the SixDegrees.com portal, which operated in the years 1991–2001 [WWW 5] and had as many as one million users. The program allowed creating your profile, as well as keep lists of friends. In 1998 a new function was added – the ability to surf around it. It was the first website that focused on all the features of such a platform in one place. In 1999, a free blog site was published, which was created by Pyra Labs [WWW 6]. The brand was acquired in 2003 by Google and has been integrated with Picasa later on.

The beginning of the 21st century brought great development of existing websites, as well as creation of new ones, including LinkedIn, which was founded in December 2002. It specializes mainly in professional and business contacts. Thanks to that, people no longer have to share business cards. It's enough that they create their profile on LinkedIn and can establish contacts with people they met during their professional careers. Jeff Weiner was the originator of the solution that thanks to LinkedIn corporations can find their dream employees via LinkedIn. A year after the creation of LinkedIn, a new MySpace program began to operate, which allowed you to create your page with the user description, as well as your photo galleries and music profiles.

The year 2004 brought the creation of the most popular website in the world – Facebook. Initially, the project was targeted at the high school and college students and was called TheFacebook, whose main creator was Mark Zuckerberg. Polish language version of this platform started operating in May 2009. At present, many websites allow users to connect via Facebook by using their login details for new accounts created there. At the beginning of 2005, YouTube [WWW 3] was founded. It allowed users to share videos with other people through the web. A year later, Tumblr was created – a microblogging platform that allows you to observe other users' pages. In the same year, Twitter went online, which is equally popular today as it was back then. This site allows you to send short messages, so-called Tweets containing up to 140 characters. The founders of this portal were Jack Dorsey, Ev Williams, and Biz Stone. Instagram was another very important player that appeared on the social media market. In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for around 1 billion USD. In mid-2011, Google+ began functioning. It was to collect information resources and make them available to the public. This program has not gained much popularity and sympathy from Internet users. In the same year, the Snapchat application was created, which became a revolution in social media. It is an application that allows the user to send short videos as well as photos that would self-destruct after a short period and, more recently, to archive them. Snapchat is currently the fastest-growing application.

COMPANIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Nowadays, social media play a significant role in the use of Internet in the field of marketing communication. Entries, posts, and photos that are added by people responsible for maintaining company accounts in social media very often determine the image of the organization. They also often allow earning more revenue. Four main categories of social networking services should be distinguished: horizontal – allowing creating your profile and communicating with other users, vertical, which brings people with similar interests together, local – unifying people from the same area, and professional – focusing on maintaining business contacts and serving for professional purposes. Social media provide the companies with a range of different applications than just publishing content. There are such functions as [Rak 2012]: inviting people to organized events, providing exclusive materials to users, inviting fans to tag on the photos inserted by the company, organizing various types of external competitions, using advertisement on a social website, or using promotional coupons and integration with other channels or services. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest are the most popular in Poland. The average number of users of individual platforms in Poland ranges from several million, e.g. Facebook, to several hundred thousand, e.g. Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest [WWW 7].

An interesting example of the use of social media is Facebook. It allows a user to instantly and massively share information. Its range can be compared to the impact of television [Trzeciak 2015]. It is worth noting that the portal, due to the companies using it, has introduced a special dedicated type of accounts, the so-called fan pages. Facebook gives the companies numerous opportunities. They can, for example, create events to which they invite fans, create applications with contests, and organize interactive games or quizzes. Their main task is to encourage fans to actively participate on the site. A big plus from the company's perspective is the ability to constantly view statistics, which allows them to analyse and collect data from fanpages. LinkedIn [Treadway 2010] is one of the most significant business social networking sites. The portal aims to bring people of the business world together in one place. The most important information that is displayed on your accounts is abilities, education and language skills. The main task of the portal is to promote people and help companies find the right employee and thus check their qualifications. Only people invited by existing users can join the LinkedIn community. The YouTube community service, which allows users to share video files, is of interest to companies and corporations. On this website, companies can publish information about the company or other advertising films and then can tag them thematically. Promoting the company on YouTube is particularly important because the portal is visited by 800 million users every month, and as you know, video is one of the best forms of promoting the company. Website users can comment on movies, share and rate them. YouTube also allows buying ads appearing on boxes or other videos. Interesting video materials published by the company are often shared by Internet users. The last site to pay attention to is Snapchat, which is growing faster and faster. This application already has over a million users in Poland, and its popularity is constantly growing. What distinguishes Snapchat from other social networking sites is primarily the transience of its content. The examples above show how countless functionalities social networking sites

have though they may seem similar to each other. This allows a user to choose the social media suitable of him/her and to get the most out of it. Thanks to them, through interesting tools, companies reach a wide audience [Żukowski 2016].

Another important point to discuss is the use of corporate blogs. They can be called a kind of online journal that looks like a public company journal. The most important thing in running a blog is publishing content regularly. Blogs are most often used to share knowledge and promote the company's image. They provide a tool that allows a user to achieve many marketing goals through minimal costs, which means that the barriers to their use are relatively small [Mazurek 2008]. The main attribute of blogs is greater interaction with the client and useful message interesting for the recipient. Blogs are a reliable source of information for customers about the services offered by the company. Next to corporate blogs, some microblogs allow publishing relatively short messages at a given time for people watching a given profile. Their main advantage in the context of an application is the dynamic form of communication with the environment in the form of dialogue.

DEGREE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY COMPANIES

There are many reasons why companies are interested in social media. The most important advantages include the possibility of obtaining information on consumer opinions, learning about current trends or the direction of development of a given industry or area. Social media are also a carrier that aims to increase brand awareness. The diverse functionalities of social media allow various methods of communication between users of these media, such as the ability to build applications that attract the attention of fans through games or competitions, which gives the company a great opportunity to win likes of new and current fans of the portal. The second function which allows learning about consumers' opinions is the option to ask questions. Another very important reason for the presence of companies and corporations in social media is that the mechanisms governing social media allow them to quickly reach recipients with a specific message. These options are particularly used by gastronomic companies. Restaurants can inform their customers about lunch of the day or the current menu. Moreover, a significant reason for the interest of companies in social media is a low cost of these activities. Huge corporations or micro entrepreneurs can afford such ventures. Functioning of companies in social media depends largely on the expectations of Internet users. It cannot be denied that Internet users are becoming more and more demanding when it comes to activities directed towards them by social media companies. The research conducted by IAB (within 377 respondents) shows that entertaining content or funny photos are not enough to attract the user's attention for longer (Fig. 1).

It proves that the social media users like to be surprised and they also expect profiled communication personalized to their needs. It is worth noting that consumers' interest in the activity of brands on these sites is growing (Fig. 2). Consumers are increasingly trusting messages; however, they trust not those placed in traditional media, but information published by experts and recommended by friends on social media.

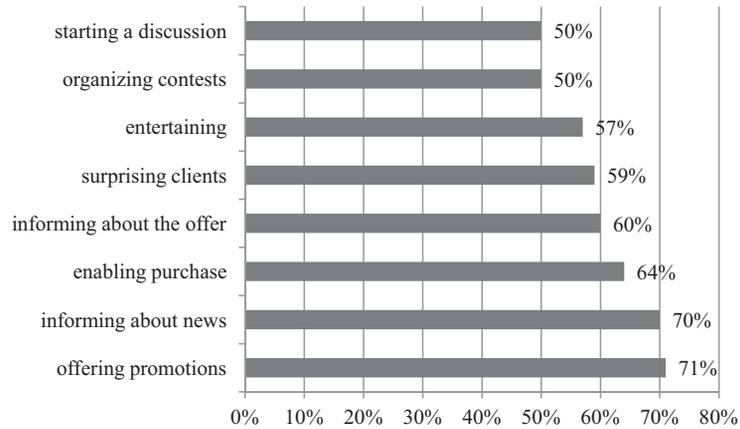


FIG. 1. Expectations of Internet users from companies operating in social media

Source: IAB Poland [2012].

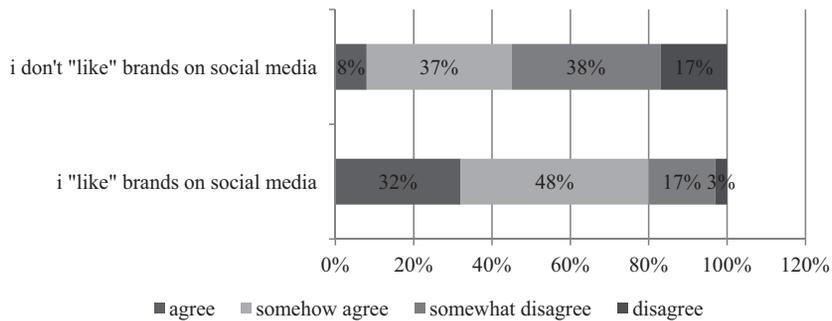


FIG. 2. Active look at brand profiles (liking brands)

Source: Chamber of Electronic Economy [2016].

As the Figure 3 showed, most of Polish respondents often mention two reasons for liking brands. The first is the desire to learn what to buy (25%), while the second (23%) is the desire to receive and be up to date with the news.

Nowadays, it is often said that companies should orientate themselves to customers' needs [Dussel 2009]. However, the question is whether companies know what customers are looking for. As the chart above shows, the reasons for sympathy for a given brand are very different and can be surprising. The Chamber of Electronic Economy report [2016] also shows that Polish respondents, when asked which brands they would like to follow on social media, usually list about three. These usually include fashion, cosmetics, and electronics. For the fashion category, the following names appear most often: Zara, Nike, Zalando, Adidas, Puma, House, and in the electronics category: LG, Samsung, Nokia, Philips, Sony, and Apple, while in the cosmetics industry such brands as e.g. Garnier,

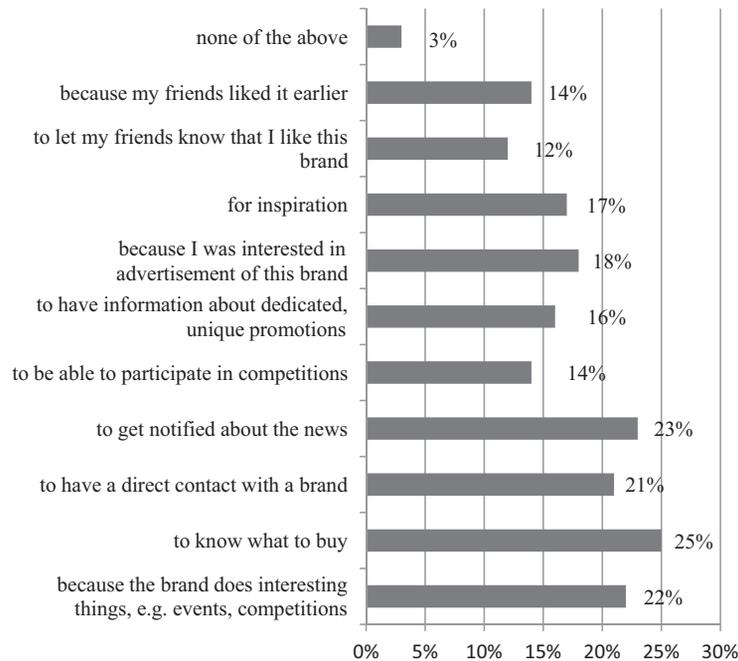


FIG 3. Reasons for liking brands on social media

Source: Chamber of Electronic Economy [2016].

Nivea, Vichy and Golden Rose. Figure 4 shows the categories that are mentioned by Poles in the context of popular brands in social media. The top three are hobby, electronics, and fashion. It is worth noting that there were large differences in the preferred categories depending on the gender of the users. Women most often follow categories such as hobbies or fashion, while men follow electronics, sports and shopping platforms in turn.

People who represent the brand in social media best are celebrities (Fig. 5). Other significant positions are occupied by clients, employees, bloggers, and experts in a field. On the other hand, the information presented by people representing companies, e.g. the President or the Director, have little interest.

Consumers expect inspiration from social media and reliable information about new products and organized promotions or competitions. The smaller group, in turn, looks forward to consulting fans to introduce new products. The users attach great importance to the number of fans of a given brand, which according to them testifies to the quality of the products or offered services. The platform users also believe that the absence or no activity of a brand in social media negatively affects its image. Consumer expectations towards company pages on social media are constantly growing. They also appreciate the ability to log into the store of a given company by using a social profile. Direct contact with consumers is a huge advantage for users of social media. They want a direct and quick response. Expenses as well as the overall presence of companies and corporations in social media are increasing each year. The size of the company is irrelevant. In turn,

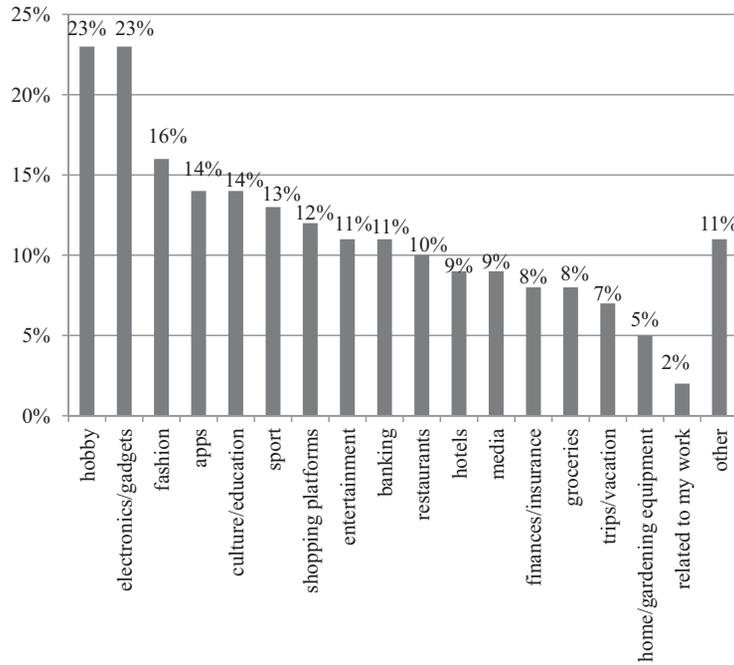


FIG 4. Categories in which the users like brands on social media

Source: Chamber of Electronic Economy [2016].

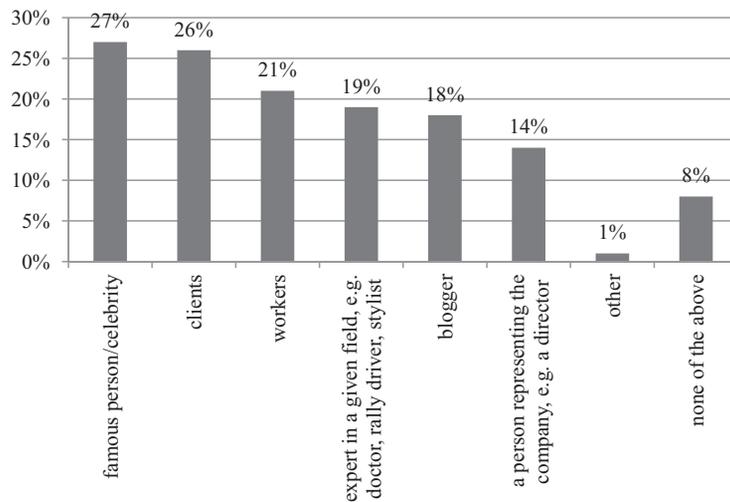


FIG. 5. People who represent the brand best on social media

Source: Chamber of Electronic Economy [2016].

some barriers are associated with the use of social networking sites, which are often impossible to overcome. This includes, among others, hiring an agency or a team, preparing modernization strategies or reports. It should be emphasized, however, that most companies have specific funds in their budgets for marketing and image-related activities in social media. Social media give a lot of opportunities for both small and medium enterprises that do not have a large budget allocated for this purpose. Small and medium companies use them primarily for marketing purposes as well as to build a community around the company. There are services available on the market where creating an account is free, which gives many opportunities to companies with a limited budget. Small companies in social media can attract recipients most often through original content as well as through their creative ideas about, e.g. organizing events or competitions. Large companies and corporations are dynamically using social media to build relationships with their clients. It is worth noting that very often the management of such companies is active on Facebook or Twitter. These activities are usually carried out on a very large scale, targeted at thousands or even millions of Internet users. Corporations also place great emphasis on the PR activities in social media.

STARBUCKS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Starbucks Corporation is the largest cafe chain in the world. It was founded on March 30th, 1971, in Seattle, Washington [WWW 8] by Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegel, and Gordon Bowker. As of July 7, 2016, the concern had 24,464 cafes in 72 countries. The first cafe in Europe was opened in 1998 in London. Starbucks cafes offer mainly various types of coffee, as well as teas, frozen drinks, desserts, hot chocolate, and bottled drinks. In cafes, customers can also buy accessories for preparing and serving coffee. In Poland, the first cafe was established in April 2009, and now there are 54 of them. The Starbucks logo features a mermaid known from Greek mythology. Starbucks is definitely one of the best-performing concerns in social media. For example, information indicating that Starbucks on Facebook is followed by almost as many people as live in Poland. The second argument is that the #starbucks hashtag is one of the most popular hashtags entered on the web. In 2008, the Starbucks Facebook fan page was launched, which currently has over 36 million fans. Starbucks very willingly uses its profile to inform its clients about current promotions and competitions. It was one of the first organizations in the world to use Facebook as a way to inform its clients about current promotions. In its first post of this type, it announced the possibility of receiving a cake for free when ordering coffee in the morning. With Facebook, Starbucks enters into a dialogue with its clients, invites them to have fun and actively participates in discussions under published posts. Active fans can quickly receive answers to comments or questions. It is also a place used by the company as an effective way of informing about new products or temporary lack of a given product in individual cafes. Messages like these, although they are short, are very important for customers, because they like to be constantly informed about any changes or new products introduced. This solution also works well when making customer complaints in the form of comments. Then both parties have the opportunity to explain the situation without problems and quickly apologize for it. Starbucks also allows viewing

current job offers, a description of individual positions created in a cafe, or an application for a given workplace. This function seems to be very handy as well as easy to use for potential employees of the company. The site allows redirecting an interested person to an email or a company profile on LinkedIn. Besides, to facilitate future employees, it has a search engine that provides a chance to find a given type of work. Also, Facebook brand in question has tabs with local fanpages, which makes it easier to find matching fanpages for users in a given country. What's more, it is also possible to locate restaurant points on the map. The number of functions, as well as their advancement, makes the Starbucks Facebook fanpage one of the best fanpages of this type. Users have the opportunity to get a lot of information, which is actually at their fingertips.

Furthermore, the corporation builds its range at a low cost, thanks to its customers who contribute to social media content, especially on Instagram. Users love to share photos with a coffee from Starbucks. Uploaded photos have hashtag #starbucks, which is why it is one of the most popular ones on the web. Currently, Starbucks has 14.1 million followers on this site. The first interesting function that the company added on its profile is the like2buy button. It allows after clicking on a given photo to transfer the user straight to the company's e-store, where it is possible to read the description of the product or to see its price. The company's operation on Instagram can be assessed as very effective because it is evidenced by the number of followers alone. Photos published on the fan page are thought out in every detail, which creates a uniformly coherent whole of the content transmitted on the website. These are no accidental pictures found on the Internet, but processed photographs with a well-thought-out message. Similarly to Facebook, Instagram competitions require using the hashtag assigned by Starbucks or have a profile designation, which allows them to perfectly build reach and promotions among friends of competition participants.

Starbucks brand profile existed on Twitter since almost the very beginning the site (2006). It is observed by almost 12 million potential clients of the company. The company does not have a single profile. One of the more popular is Frappuccino, which is the flagship product of the brand. Similarly to Facebook or Instagram, the company focuses on enabling activity for people watching the profile through participation in competitions and numerous interesting challenges. Nevertheless, the company promotes its image on LinkedIn and less on Snapchat. When it comes to the company's profile on LinkedIn, it mainly aims to present current job offers as well as show new and current employees of the company and describe their job positions. On the other hand, on Snapchat, short videos from the life of the organization and read current information can be watched.

RESERVED IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Another interesting example of using social media is Polish clothing company called Reserved. This organization was founded by Marek Piechocki and Jerzy Lubieniec [WWW 9]. Its headquarters are in Gdańsk, Poland. The brand offers clothing for women, men and children. The first Reserved store was established in 1998 [WWW 10], while nowadays the brand can be found in most large shopping centres. The company is run by LPP S.A. and it was under this name that the first company stores operated, which

in the future were replaced by the Reserved stores. Currently, LPP has as many as 146 Reserved stores in Poland with a total area of 102,000 square meters. Moreover, there are 97 stores localized abroad. Products that the company has in its offer are relatively low-priced because they belong to the so-called “chain stores”, which means that short-term collections predominate in it. The company logo has only been slightly modified over the years. Currently, it is a logotype with the brand name in a font with widely spaced letters. The company very often supports young designers and discovers new talents, as well as releases limited collections in cooperation with already known designers such as Paprocki and Brzozowski.

Reserved’s marketing department entrusted the service of company profiles in the social media of an external agency. This cooperation is, among others, aimed at developing and implementing communication strategies in social media, as well as maintaining the brand’s profile on Facebook and Pinterest. The agency has created an efficient and quickly responsive monitoring system for the brand and has built tools to shorten the response time of potential customers. The website on which the company promotes its image is Facebook [Krawiec and Wyrwisz 2013]. Currently, Reserved profile has almost 2.5 million likes. Reserved Facebook fanpage is well-developed and leaves many possibilities for its recipients. As most companies with their Facebook fanpage organize competitions, Reserved also doesn’t forget about it. Competitions are usually conducted on a timeline, and the most common criterion when it comes to meeting the competition expectations is adding the company hashtag given earlier or liking the brand page. The competitions offered by Reserved are usually very encouraging and engage a large number of potential brand customers through interesting prizes.

Similarly, Instagram is primarily used to show the company’s current collection, stylizations, and inspiration. The company’s website is followed by 151,000 fans. The dynamic functioning of the brand on Instagram is certainly helped by the fact that it is a clothing brand and its promotions can be conducted by publishing photos straight from the back of photo sessions, where their products are shown. Competitions organized by the company often involve participants in independent photo sessions with products of this brand. Below photos of specific brand products, a customer can also find links to the product, which is very useful for people who decide to buy it.

The company uses each of these media in many ways, not limiting itself to publishing only assortment photos. Reserved created its hashtag #reservedband, which allowed the brand to become more visible on Instagram and to achieve better promotional activities, which would provide positive results in the future in the form of more followers. The company also runs its YouTube channel, where mainly company ads are published, as well as videos related to the current collection.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the use of social media by companies and corporations significantly affects their position and competitiveness on the market. The huge range of tools available through social media allows the entrepreneurs to achieve numerous goals. They are both an effective and innovative communication tools that can visibly increase the sales of

offered products by the opportunity to engage customers in co-creating the company's offer. It is also worth noting that companies usually use different social media at the same time, which allows mutual promotion, e.g. by placing links referring Internet users to the company's website. Social media quickly attracted hundreds of millions of Internet users, which could not escape marketing and sales specialists. People are increasingly using social media. This is mainly due to the desire to be in constant contact with a family and friends, as well as to be up to date with the market news. Companies and corporations noticed this interest and growing popularity of social media and decided to be closer to their customers, which is why they began to use websites. Companies use many media without limiting themselves to only one of them. Their presence on social media is primarily caused by the desire to be closer to their customers and stand out from the competition, as well as the relatively low costs associated with conducting this type of marketing. As the examples show, the organization's activities in social media can bring many benefits, such as creating a positive image of the brand, increasing the interest of potential customers, as well as increasing the number of positive feedback about the company on the web. The examples of the use of social media by two companies presented in the study show how many opportunities individual social networking sites provide and to what extent these companies cope with their use. Based on the analysis of the activities of these companies, it can be seen that they are diverse in both scale and scope. Nevertheless, smart use of media can bring a lot of profit.

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Summary. The study deals with a new phenomenon, which is social media, which radically changed communication, image creation as well as company promotions. The study discusses the evolution of social media and focuses on such media as blogs, social networking sites and microblogs. The significance of the social media in using them by both Polish and foreign companies was presented. the use of social media by companies and corporations

significantly affects their position and competitiveness on the market. The huge range of tools available through social media allows the entrepreneurs to achieve numerous goals. They are both an effective and innovative communication tools that can visibly increase the sales of offered products by the opportunity to engage customers in co-creating the company's offer. It is also worth noting that companies usually use different social media at the same time, which allows mutual promotion, e.g. by placing links referring Internet users to the company's website.

Key words: social networks, Internet, blogs, microblogs, social media

JEL: M31, M37, L82

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