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## **Twitter in awareness campaigns on same-sex unions in Poland and in the USA**

### **KEY WORDS**

awareness campaigns, Twitter, social media, same-sex unions, LGBT organizations, social campaigns

### **ABSTRACT**

Public awareness campaigns have begun to more often employ social media, including Twitter. This notion also concerns controversial social and political issues, new ideas and habits, arousing hot debates, as exemplified by same-sex unions. Analysis of the Twitter communication conducted in 2015 by the Polish and American organizations supporting same-sex unions served as a basis to formulate conclusions about the role of Twitter in modern informational and educational campaigns.

The turning point in debates on same-sex unions in the world (mainly in the United States) was 2015, when the US Supreme Court came to a decision gay marriages in all states. On 26 June 2015 the US Supreme Court recognised state bans on same-sex unions (marriages) as unconstitutional. It was the finale of public discussions that lasted from the 1970s, when the first applications for marriage certificates from people of the same-sex appeared. American courts consistently rejected them, because same-sex unions were not considered equivalent to marriage. Informational and persuasive actions of homosexual movements, liberally oriented media and scientific circles did not bring results.

Single-sex unions, also known as civil unions, are legally permitted in Europe since the end of the 80s – in Denmark since 1989 and in Norway since 1993, and later on in other countries (e.g. PACS in France in 1999), in a form different from marriage, with community property and with a number of rights previously vested in the closest family. However, they did not mention the adoption of children and the equality of rights with marriages.

President Bill Clinton in September 1996 signed the Defence of Marriage Act (DOMA), which ordered the federal authorities to recognise marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. This had consequences for those employed by the federal government in the area of family insurance, social benefits, immigration rights of spouses, regulations on bankruptcy, as well as joint tax settlement.

States in the US since 2004, starting from Massachusetts, allowed same-sex unions, and in June 2013, the US Supreme Court challenged the DOMA law of 1996 and, as a result, allowed same-sex couples to be recognised as marriages. An information and promotional campaign about same-sex marriages conducted by activists, LGBT organisations, civil rights associations, law firms and a large part of the US media led to the decision of the US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) of 26 June 2015, which by 5 votes for and 4 against recognised state bans on same-sex unions (marriages) as unconstitutional. The campaign involved LGBT organisations and associations with a social and cultural profile, for example GLAAD<sup>1</sup>, as well as movements focused exclusively on this subject, such as Marriage Equality USA<sup>2</sup>.

In Poland, the scope of the debate on same-sex unions is limited by the definition of marriage contained in art. 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which says that “Marriage as a union of a woman and a man, a family, motherhood and parenthood are under the protection of the Republic of Poland”<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, as well as due to cultural, historical, social differences prevailing in society, the possible introduction of solutions similar to those in force in the United States and Western Europe encounters obstacles in Poland. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland does not refer to other forms of relations between two persons and does not regulate them, and also does not include the ban on unions between persons of different and same sex.

Discussions in the media and on the Internet, public information campaigns, and mainly changes in regulations in Western countries regarding relationships between people of the same sex, have become an inspiration for Polish organisations gathering homosexual people to introduce this topic to the public agenda. Such efforts were undertaken in 2015 by two of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.glaad.org/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marriageequality.org/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>3</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, art. 18, Journal of Laws 1997, no. 78 item 483 as amended, <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/polski/kon1.htm> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

most important Polish LGBT organisations, namely Campaign Against Homophobia<sup>4</sup> (KPH) and Lambda Warsaw Association<sup>5</sup>. Although American and Polish LGBT organisations at the time set different goals (abolishing state restrictions on concluding same-sex unions in the US and legal acceptance for unions in Poland), they referred to tools typical of information and education campaigns, including social media, with special regard to Twitter. Its use is a testimony to changes in contemporary information and education campaigns, which – in addition to the basic recipients achieved by mass media – must appeal to selected opinion-forming groups: journalists, politicians, decision makers, officials, experts, scientists more often using Twitter<sup>6</sup>. The American and Polish examples are used – on the one hand – to show Twitter communication used by similar organisations in both countries, and on the other – to present trends in information campaigns, still determined by US entities.

### Literature review

The public information campaign – according to Charles Atkin and Ronald Rice – can be defined as “deliberate actions to inform or influence large audiences, taken at a given time with the help of an ordered set of communication undertakings and presenting a series of messages in various media, subordinated as a rule, achieving non-commercial benefits for people and society”<sup>7</sup>. Researchers highlight the similarities between campaigns on health, education, social, cultural and ideological issues and commercial advertising campaigns<sup>8</sup>. Campaigns on ideological issues, social and cultural changes, human rights, political topics, including election campaigns, combine elements of information and advertising campaigns, and their ultimate effect is to change the behaviour of recipients in a shorter (e.g. election) or longer (e.g. tolerance for immigrants or one-sex unions) perspective<sup>9</sup>.

Public information campaigns are divided according to their area of primary interest to: social, health, environmental and educational campaigns. Educational campaigns that refer to different fields should be considered the most widespread, and their aim is to provide information

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<sup>4</sup> <https://kph.org.pl/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>5</sup> <http://lambdawarszawa.org/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>6</sup> S. Hwang, *The effect of Twitter use on politicians' credibility and attitudes towards politicians*, “Journal of Public Relations Research” 2013, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> C. Atkin, R. Rice, *Theory and principles of public communication campaigns* [in:] *Public communications campaigns*, ed. R. Rice, C. Atkin, Los Angeles 2013, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> R. Hornik, *Why can't we sell human rights like we sell soap?* [in:] *Public communications campaigns*, op cit., pp. 45–47.

on a significant topic and thus influence the campaign's addressees. This is in line with the approach propagated among communication researchers, focusing on the strategy of obtaining social control, based on the model referred to as 3E (*education, engineering, enforcement*), i.e. education, expertise, and enforcement<sup>10</sup>.

Most information campaigns refer to educational topics, showing and explaining a given phenomenon, the need to introduce changes and the consequences of not ignoring them, for example in messages on child vaccinations or car seat belts. Education is often followed by technical, regulatory or organisational solutions requiring the involvement of specialists and the actions of the authorities, for example, installing unfastened seatbelts alarm in the car or sending reminders to parents about the upcoming vaccination deadline. The last method, the least used in information and education campaigns, is to enforce promoted solutions by means of laws, regulations and recommendations, combined with sanctions for neglecting them, for example in the form of fines for driving without seatbelts or a fine for parents who avoid compulsory vaccinations. This mechanism is available only in campaigns of public authorities focused on popularising new regulations, solutions or institutions. The proportions between elements of the 3E triad (education, expertise, enforcement) in the practice of an information campaign depend on the goal, the strategy adopted, and above all on the organisation, association or group that is the organiser and broadcaster.

Public information and educational campaigns serve to introduce changes (reforms) in social and public life, in legal solutions and customs, in perceiving and assessing phenomena, in values and behaviours, using various methods (traditional and new media, own media and social media of groups and institutions that are running the campaigns). The campaign's role is not only to directly reach the groups affected by the problem, but to introduce desired changes in the wider social environment<sup>11</sup>.

In Polish literature, the terms “public information campaign”, “educational campaign”, “social campaign” are treated as synonymous or even identical matters. This is evidenced by the often quoted definition of a social campaign by Beata Tarczydło, as a communication and promotional undertaking whose aim is to “trigger changes in attitudes towards a certain idea or

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<sup>10</sup> W. Paisley, C. Atkin, *Public communication campaigns – the American experience* [in:] *Public communications campaigns*, op cit., p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> A. Tkocz, *Rola marketingu społecznego w kształtowaniu zmian społecznych* [The role of social marketing in shaping social change], “Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu” 2016, no. 458, p. 31.

problem (...) by informing, explaining, inducing to activity, touching difficult or embarrassing issues taking into account social interest”<sup>12</sup>.

Among the organisers and broadcasters of information and education campaigns, there are three groups of entities: public, non-governmental and social (the third sector), and business. Public institutions organising campaigns include authorities at various levels, government and local government institutions, and international organisations. In the non-governmental sector, information and educational campaigns are run by foundations, associations, social organisations, ideological, political, civic and cultural movements. Companies, industries, business organisations, chambers of commerce refer to the campaign when they want to introduce or popularise new technologies and new ways of using existing solutions; get support for lobbying or *public affairs* or present themselves as responsible “corporate citizens” in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

The specificity of information campaigns in Poland was the use of public information campaigns as an important component of the so-called transitional PR (term by Ryszard Ławniczak) during the changes of the political and economic system at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s<sup>13</sup>. The annual competition for the best social campaign promotes the popularisation of social, educational and information campaigns in Poland<sup>14</sup>.

The evolution of social, educational and information campaigns is manifested in the increasing use of new communication methods (in addition to mass media), including the internet and social media. Social media has become a widely used tool in contemporary communication, also in various types of campaigns.

According to Włodzimierz Gogolek, social media means “the form of natural, unrestricted exchange of information in the network between people about common interests” and such activities are a manifestation of a fundamental change in the media and a specific demonopolization of current forms of collecting and distributing information and opinions<sup>15</sup>. Their use is an indispensable element of various communication projects, because it is social media that are more and more often the basic source of information and opinions for recipients of

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<sup>12</sup> B. Tarczydło, *Kampania społeczna w teorii i praktyce* [Social campaign in theory and practice], “Studia Ekonomiczne” 2013, p. 226.

<sup>13</sup> *Public relations contribution to transition in Central and Eastern Europe. Research and practice*, ed. R. Ławniczak, Poznań, 2001, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>15</sup> W. Gogolek, *Komunikacja sieciowa. Uwarunkowania, kategorie i paradoksy* [Network communication. Conditions, categories, paradoxes] Warszawa, 2010, pp. 160-161.

public relations, social, information and educational campaigns<sup>16</sup>. The importance of social media in social campaigns – according to Anna Lusińska – results from their openness and usually free content, which democratises communication compared to traditional media, generally expecting to place expensive advertising by the creators of the campaign. In the case of social media, the campaign budget is no longer so important, and the idea is<sup>17</sup>.

### **Twitter as social media**

Among the social media popular in PR programs Facebook and Twitter prevail, mainly due to their popularity (in the case of Twitter limited to selected, but influential groups, such as journalists, experts, analysts, politicians); convenience; facilitating two-way communication; initiating and maintaining dialogue, as well as the ability to create and comment on content by users<sup>18</sup>.

Twitter, existing since 2006, is an information platform and a social service for posting, replying to, transmitting, marking, commenting, rating and reading short messages, so-called tweets, up to 140 characters long. Since the creation of Twitter, its functions have been a model for other internet platforms (including Facebook) and have often been copied<sup>19</sup>. All Twitter services are available to registered users on mobile devices, mobile phones, tablets and computers, and unregistered users can view content published by other people<sup>20</sup>. Currently, the number of Twitter users exceeds 300 million per day, of which 79 percent comes from outside the United States. They send an average of 340 million messages per day, the most tweets (500 million) appeared on 16 August 2013<sup>21</sup>. The basic application of Twitter in public relations, institutional communication, in information and educational campaigns is the transfer of news, updating data, establishing a dialogue with interested people and reminding them about the

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<sup>16</sup> D. Wright, M. Hinson, *Tracking how social and other digital media are being used in public relations practice: a twelve-year study*, "Public Relations Journal" June 2017, vol. 11, no. 1.

<sup>17</sup> A. Lusińska, *Social media a kampanie społeczne. "Facebook to nie życie" jako przykład kampanii społecznej o i na Facebooku* [Social media and social campaigns. "Facebook is not life" as an example of a social campaign about and on Facebook,] "Zarządzanie Mediami" 2016, vol. 4 (4), p. 248.

<sup>18</sup> A. Austin, *Framing health through social media. A web analysis of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's use of social media* [in:] *New media and public relations*, ed. S. Duhé, New York, 2012, p. 210.

<sup>19</sup> D. Phillips, P. Young, *Online public relations. A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, London–Philadelphia–New Delphi, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> <https://about.twitter.com/company> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.internetlivestats.com/twitter-statistics/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

progress of the campaign. Twitter easily and quickly reaches simultaneously millions of users<sup>22</sup>. Thanks to the use of hashtags (#)<sup>23</sup>, it is useful for consistently giving a conceptual framework to content in PR, information and educational campaigns.

Researchers emphasise that it pays off for companies and institutions to engage on Twitter, because opinions about them are more positive, as long as they engage in two-directional dialogue with stakeholders<sup>24</sup>. Already Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge in a well-known work *Putting the public back in public relations. How social media is reinventing the aging business of PR* stressed that Twitter is one of the most powerful tools for dialogue<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, many companies, also the largest in the “Fortune 500” list, use Twitter as a one-way platform for sharing information and opinions rather than building long-lasting relationships with stakeholders. Dialogue with important groups in the environment often remains merely a claim<sup>26</sup>.

Twitter is also used to address controversial issues that arouse public disputes and polemics in the traditional and online media. It becomes a forum for the exchange of views and presentation of positions by participants of the discussions promoting such solutions or an organised information or educational campaign for them. One of the examples of controversial issues widely discussed on Twitter are the relationships of people of the same sex (the so-called unions), called in some countries homosexual marriages.

Twitter is also useful for quick response in crisis situations<sup>27</sup>. This is a common phenomenon, for example in the United States, where the number of Twitter users is 67 million, or more than 28 percent of American adults<sup>28</sup>. This is much more than Poland, where – according to a survey conducted by the UM media house – Twitter is used by about 5% of adults<sup>29</sup>. Twitter

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<sup>22</sup> J. Choi, *Crisis communication through Twitter. An analysis of BP's response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster* [in:] *New media and public relations*, op cit., p. 311.

<sup>23</sup> D. Breakenridge, *Social media and public relations. Eight new practices for the PR professional*, Upper Saddle River, 2012, p. 95.

<sup>24</sup> T. McCorkindale, M. diStaso, *The state of social media research: where we are now, where we were and what it means for public relations*, “Research Journal of the Institute for Public Relations” Summer 2014, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> B. Solis, D. Breakenridge, *Putting the public back into public relations. How social media is reinventing the aging business of PR*, Upper Saddle River, 2010, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> I. Himelboim et al, *A social networks approach to public relations on Twitter: social mediators and mediated public relations*, “Journal of Public Relations Research” 2014, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 363.

<sup>27</sup> D. Wilcox, G. Cameron, B. Reber, *Public relations. Strategies and tactics*, Boston, 2015, ed. 11, p. 376.

<sup>28</sup> S. Aslam, *Twitter by the numbers: stats, demographics & fun facts*, <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/twitter-statistics/> [accessed: 18.09.2017].

<sup>29</sup> tw, *Facebook in Poland has a larger percentage range than globally, WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat outrun Twitter and Netflix*, <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/facebook-youtube-whatsapp-instagram-twitter-netflix-snapchat-linkedin-i-periscope-statystyki-w-polsce-i-globalnie>, “Wirtualne Media”, 18.09.2017 [accessed: 19.09.2017].

is popular in opinion-forming circles: among politicians, economists, journalists, scientists, experts, representatives of the world of culture<sup>30</sup>.

### **Methodology**

Investigation of the use of Twitter in campaigns run by organisations promoting same-sex relationships requires referring to tweets published in a given period. For relationships and so-called gay marriages 2015 was the key year, when the US Supreme Court decided that the restrictions on same-sex marriages existing in some US states were unconstitutional. LGBT organisations and associations in the world (including Poland) in 2015 referred in the communication to the US campaign and to legal procedures there. The focus on 2015 in the analysis of communication on Twitter was dictated by the desire to capture the most important goals, strategies and messages at a key moment in the campaign of organisations promoting same-sex relationships in the United States and Poland. The number of messages from 2015 and their scope allowed to formulate conclusions in these areas.

For the purpose of this study, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of messages (tweets) sent in 2015 by four organisations and social movements from Poland and the USA was carried out (two organizations from Poland: Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH) and Lambda Warsaw Association and from USA: GLAAD and Marriage Equality USA) on the subject of relationships between people of the same sex was shown in the context of the goals of these organisations, adopted communication strategies, key messages, tools and communication intensities. Among the analysed tweets there were own messages, initiated by all organisations, their responses to tweets of other institutions and people, as well as messages passed on (retweets).

All tweets were collected of @KPH\_official, @lambda\_warszawa, @glaad, @MEUSA from 2015, including those regarding the relationships of people of the same sex. Their source was primarily the listed profiles of these organisations on Twitter. For checking and possibly supplementing the materials, the following tools were also used: <http://backtweets.com/>, allowing you to search the previously sent tweets, and an additional Twitter application <https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>. The total number of messages from four organisations on Twitter

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<sup>30</sup> T. Gackowski, *Twitter – Złoty Graal komunikacji XXI wieku?* [Holy Grail of communication in 21st century?], „Medioznawca” 2013, <http://www.medioznawca.com/blogi/blog-medialny/22-twitter-zloty-graal-komunikacji-xxi-w> [accessed: 19.09.2017].

in 2015 exceeded 5,000 (5,112), of which almost 2,000 (1937) were related to same-sex relationships. Tweets have been saved in the database, which includes: their full content, web address, date and time of publication, other elements of the message (e.g. hashtags). The database did not include the statements of other Twitter users (responses, comments, additions, polemics, etc., often a dozen or a few dozen with one tweet of analysed organisations, especially American ones) related to registered tweets, or forms of dialogue specific to this platform. Although it would be cognitively important, tracing the debate on Twitter around the analysed messages exceeded the framework of this study (and the author's capabilities), which is why it was not undertaken. For the same reasons, I omitted the number of likes (FAV) and transfers (RT) of individual tweets which – together with the mentioned debates around them – could be the subject of separate study, for example in the area of linguistic communication and rhetoric<sup>31</sup> or conducted with tools related to large information resources (Big Data)<sup>32</sup>.

All tweets from four organisations published in 2015 were initially read by two people. Next, the main themes (conceptual frames) appearing in the analysed messages were identified, and then each person divided them into the indicated categories. To check the clarity of the criteria used before starting the analysis, both persons made a preliminary categorisation of 20 randomly selected tweets from each organisation. The obtained results were very similar, only with individual deviations, so this method guaranteed precise qualification of tweets to the identified into 9 categories.

Among these categories (conceptual frameworks) are: “decisions of courts and authorities”, “campaign support”, “current events”, “initiatives and lawsuits”, “life stories”, “reports and opinion polls”, “polemics and criticism”, “from the world” (the last two categories were largely a reaction to the statements of other institutions, organisations and people) and “other”. The names mentioned clearly explain the content of tweets qualified for individual groups. All categories had to take into account the different nature of communication between Polish and American organisations, other strategies and goals of activities and information campaigns. Due to the number and nature of published tweets, the full analysis was conducted

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<sup>31</sup> A. Tereszkiwicz, *Komunikacja z klientem na Twitterze – analiza wybranych aktów mowy w interakcji handlowej online* [Communication with the client on Twitter – analysis of selected speech acts in the online shopping interaction], “*Studia Medioznawcze*” 2017, no. 1 (68), pp. 75–85.

<sup>32</sup> W. Gogolek, K. Jaruga, K. Kowalik, P. Celiński, *Z badań nad wykorzystaniem rafinacji informacji sieciowej* [From research on the use of network information refining]. *Wybory prezydenckie i parlamentarne 2015* [Presidential and parliamentary elections of 2015] “*Studia Medioznawcze*” 2015, no. 3 (62), pp. 32–41.

only for one organisation from the US, because – as it turned out – the others used Twitter for the subject of same-sex relationships only to a limited extent.

Based on materials collected from Twitter and other messages of selected organisations, an attempt was made to answer two research questions:

1. *How do organisations and social movements in Poland and the US use Twitter in information and education campaigns?*

2. *What are the similarities and differences between the two countries in the main messages, themes, number of messages and conceptual frameworks used on Twitter?*

### **Results**

The analyses show that for three of the four organisations the subject of same-sex relationships was not a priority, and was in the spotlight only for Marriage Equality USA. It results from the specificity of these organisations, social and cultural conditions and legal regulations (especially for Polish organisations), as well as from the various intensities of communication on Twitter.

In total, the following numbers of tweets from 2015 have been identified on the four profiles examined (Figure 1):

@lambda\_warszawa – 387 tweets, of which 20 related to same-sex relationships,

@KPH\_official – 582 tweets, of which 130 related to same-sex relationships,

@glaad – 2499 tweets, of which 143 related to same-sex relationships,

@MEUSA – 1644 tweets, all directly or indirectly related to same-sex relationships.

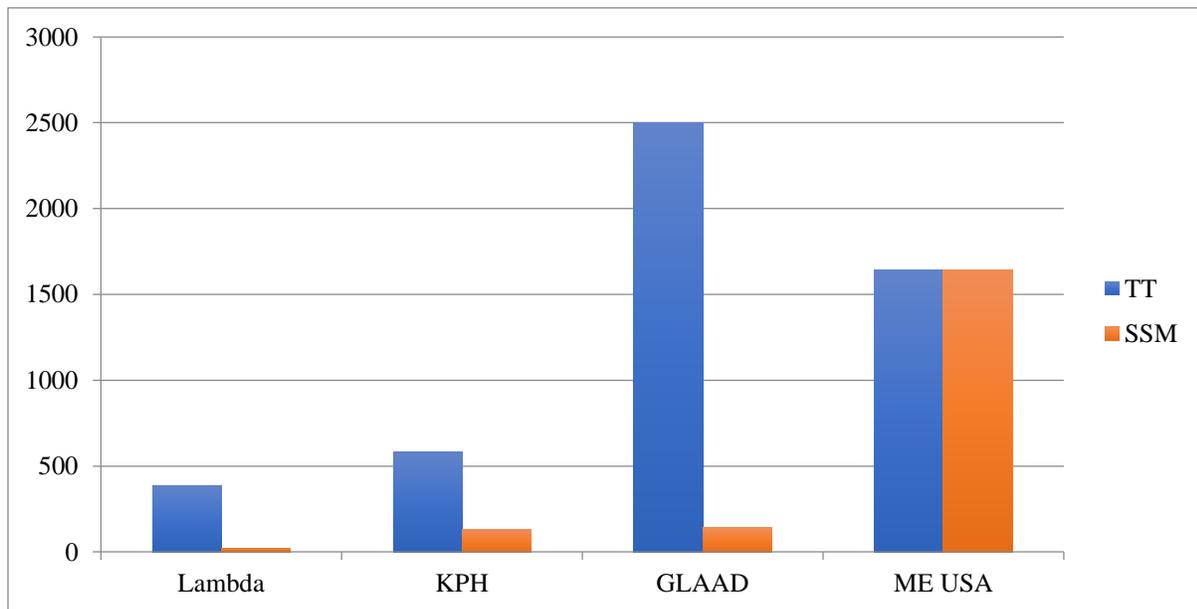


Fig. 1 Organisations on Twitter in 2015 - the total number of Tweets (TT) and tweets about same-sex relationships (SSM)

Source: author's calculations based on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

The presence of Lambda Warsaw on Twitter in 2015 (as in other periods) was not very intense, as evidenced by the modest number of messages posted in this medium, by far the smallest in the analysed organizations. This is partly due to a fairly passive communication strategy, as well as focusing attention on the environment of people with non-heterosexual (LGBTQ) orientations, on their life and social problems, everyday situations and on resolving crisis situations. Lambda Warsaw was established in 1997. According to the website, its mission is to “create space for building a positive identity of the LGBTQ community, providing independent, professional and expert assistance in difficult and crisis situations, (...) internal development of lesbian and gay communities, bisexual, transgender and queer people, (...) locally and nationally”<sup>33</sup>. Lambda Warsaw declares faith in the possibilities of civil society, the need to act together on matters important to the group or the environment, as well as political neutrality and independence from external pressure.

@lambda\_warszawa profile on Twitter since June 2013 and up to 20 July 2017 shows a total of 1338 Tweets. The profile was then observed by 1203 people (*followers*), and observed 163 other profiles. In 2015, only 20 tweets out of 387 published this year (slightly above 5%)

<sup>33</sup> <http://lambdawarszawa.org/> [accessed: 20.07. 2017].

concerned same-sex relationships. Messages on @lambda\_warszawa referred to the politicians' support for unions (relation from interview with Marshal of the Sejm, Radosław Sikorski, published on 12 January 2015 at Salon24.pl<sup>34</sup>); debate in the Sejm on this subject ("The Sejm rejected the draft law on unions at first reading. All clear. @Platforma\_org @sldpoland "- tweet from 26 May 2015); postulates of Lambda Warsaw in this matter (1 tweet); Poland's vote in the UN for the extension of marital benefits for UN employees remaining in same-sex relationships, contrary to the position of Russia and Muslim countries (tweet of 26 March 2015<sup>35</sup>); decisions on introducing same-sex marriages in the USA (a total of 5 tweets, including 1 on radio broadcasts in Radio dla Ciebie on this topic, published on 26-28 June 2015); information about the funds collection for the production of the film "Artykuł osiemnasty" on same-sex relationships in Poland<sup>36</sup> (tweet of 10 October 2015); laws on unions in Portugal and Cyprus (tweets from November 2015). The vast majority of the other Lambda Warszawa messages posted on Twitter in 2015 were devoted to training, education, assistance, social activities, workshops, cultural undertakings and cooperation with other organisations.

The Campaign Against Homophobia is more visible on Twitter, on the Internet, in the media and in the Polish public debate. It was founded in 2001 as a nationwide organisation counteracting intolerance and discrimination of LGBT people, and now has the status of a public benefit organisation (OPP). According to its own declaration, "it works for homosexual and bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people and their relatives, through political, social and legal advocacy, creating and implementing systemic educational solutions for many professional groups and building a broad allied movement"<sup>37</sup>.

The Twitter profile of @KPH\_official exists from June 2013. Up to 20 July 2017 it had a total of 2062 tweets, profile is observed by 3032 people (*followers*), and the number of profiles observed by @KPH\_official was 697. In 2015, @KPH\_official posted 582 tweets, of which 130 (22%) referred, usually indirectly, to same-sex relationships. The vast majority of tweets represented a reaction to current events: support from politicians for unions (Radek Sikorski, Anna Grodzka, Wanda Nowicka and Janusz Palikot spoke in this spirit), a debate in the Sejm on

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<sup>34</sup> *Radek Sikorski supports unions*, Salon24.pl, 12.01.2015, <https://www.salon24.pl/newsroom/625783,radek-sikorski-popiera-zwiazki-partnerskie> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>35</sup> BBC, *UN thwarts Russia over gay staff rights*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32031238> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>36</sup> *Artykuł osiemnasty. Complete funds collection on a documentary film on Pomagam.pl.*, <https://pomagam.pl/art18> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>37</sup> <http://kph.org.pl/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

this subject, creation of a coalition for unions in Poland in December 2015<sup>38</sup>. A lot of space on @KPH\_official profile has been covered by news and comments about same-sex relationships and marriages in other countries (4 on the US Supreme Court decision in June, 10 on the Irish same-sex marriage referendum in May, 23 on Cyprus in November 2015 and in Greece in December 2015), also unfavourable for the organisation (LGBT referendum unsuccessful in Slovenia about same-sex relationships in December 2015). KPH's own initiatives included the introduction of the topic of unions to the presidential campaign, support for the relevant draft act and a critical statement of the KPH on Poland and Hungary (December 2015)<sup>39</sup>.

From the list clearly it can be concluded that communication of the Campaign Against Homophobia was more extensive, systematic and focused on current political topics than in the case of Lambda Warsaw. To a greater extent, it related to same-sex relationships, although it was quite random, because it is difficult to see a clear communication strategy, or even a proper assessment of phenomena, as the organisation devotes more attention to events on Cyprus than to the decision of US Supreme Court of June 2015 on the abolition of state restrictions for same-sex relationships, which is important United States, and to the whole world.

Both Polish LGBT organisations used Twitter in communicating with stakeholders, but to a limited extent. They posted a few tweets, on average, 1-2 daily, which may be a satisfactory result for a hobbyist, but not for an association, foundation or social movement seeking to support postulates by wide social circles. The messages do not show a clear idea or communication strategy. It was not possible to note in them the consistent use of hashtags (#) that would facilitate the search for information on a specific topic, for example on unions. Polish organisations did not actively join debates on same-sex relationships in the US and Western Europe, but only sporadically referred to them. This was probably because of difference cultural, historical, customary, prevailing social views about homosexual relationships in Poland, but also different understanding of freedom and liberal traditions in Poland than in the United States and Western countries.

In turn, both analysed organisations from the United States used Twitter much more intensively than their Polish counterparts, as evidenced by a much higher number of published

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<sup>38</sup> *New coalition for civil partnerships in Poland*, ILGA Europe, 16.12.2015, <https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/new-coalition-civil-partnerships-poland> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>39</sup> *PiS vetoes unions in the EU - harsh criticism of KPH*, Campaign Against Homophobia, 10.12.2015, <https://kph.org.pl/pis-wetuje-zwiazki-partnerskie-w-ue-ostra-krytyka-kph/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

messages, observing, interacting with other users and likes. Both GLAAD and Marriage Equality USA have made Twitter one of the main tools in communicating with stakeholders and achieving organisational goals. Twitter was complemented by GLAAD and Marriage Equality USA's own media (websites, profiles on social media) and numerous publications about them, often mentioned in tweets.

GLAAD, a long-standing organisation in the media, culture (mainly popular) and in the social life of the USA, has a much longer tradition. It exists from 14 November 1985 (until 2013 as Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), and its aim is to monitor media, mass culture and influence the presentation of sexual minorities in the press, TV, and movies. GLAAD was created in the artistic, journalistic and literary circles as well as among cultural activists in response to the sensational texts of the New York Post on HIV and AIDS. It is a combination of a media observer (in 1987 it introduced the name "gay" to "NYT") with a promotional agency and public relations working for sexual minorities in the US and in the world<sup>40</sup>. GLAAD cooperates with the main media (printed, electronic and internet), providing them with topics, inspirations, interlocutors and examples from the LGBT community. It deals with untruthful or unreliable – according to the LGBT community – opinions and statements about them, and when necessary – also polemics. It is important for GLAAD to introduce characters from LGBT environments to popular culture, film and television productions, computer games, and comics by working with screenwriters, writers, producers, publishers of books and games, film studios, TV and radio stations. GLAAD successfully applies the latest communication techniques, including Twitter.

@Glaad profile from is present on Twitter since April 2009. By 20 July 2017, a total of 28.4 thousand Tweets were on it. The profile is observed by 371 thousand people (*followers*), and the number observed by @glaad was 45.3 thousand. In 2015, @glaad posted 2499 tweets, of which only 143 (less than 6%) related to same-sex relationships. The vast majority of them referred to culture, film, TV, media, sport, education, social life, and sexual minorities in these areas. This is the result of the genesis and interests of the movement focused on presenting representatives of the LGBT community in popular culture.

Among the messages referring to relationships of the same sex, the most common were news from the world (mainly about same-sex marriages, support from a Catholic priest and a referendum in Ireland – 25 tweets for the LGBT movements), largely from other media. In

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.glaad.org/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

January 2015, GLAAD referred to the President Barack Obama's the State of the Union Address, who recognised that “homosexual marriages have changed from the issue of dividing society into a story of freedom in the country” and that's why he invited a newly married homosexual couple to the White House (tweets from 20 January 2015). In June 2015, the simultaneous marriage of 10 Chinese same-sex couples in California was also announced<sup>41</sup>.

The most topics for @glaad (20 tweets) were provided by the June decision of the US Supreme Court to abolish state bans on same-sex marriages and the satisfaction expressed on this occasion by American and world celebrities. Relationships of the same sex in films, TV, media (also outside the US) were discussed, combined with reviews and assessments of LGBT characters appearing in them. In @glaad messages about relationships of the same sex, the #LoveWins tag was most often repeated. The position and strategy of GLAAD is summarised by the statement of the boss, Sarah K. Ellis, from 8 November 2015: “Marital equality and magazine covers are an important reference point for us, but not the finish line”<sup>42</sup>.

Marriage Equality USA (MEUSA) founded in 1996 only deals with the problem of same-sex relationships. It is the longest-running organisation that aims to “build equality for the LGBTQ community through equal rights for their marriages in every state and at the federal level”<sup>43</sup>. It brings together more than 40,000 members in all 50 states, based mainly on volunteering and grassroots initiatives on education, training, activities and coalition for unions, LGBTQ couples and their families, also by presenting examples from the LGBTQ community to get broad support for it<sup>44</sup>.

Since March 2009 r. @MEUSA profile is present on Twitter. By 20 July 2017, a total of 23.4 thousand Tweets were on it. The profile is observed by 37.1 thousand people (*followers*), so ten times less than @glaad, and the number observed by @MEUSA was 1307.

In 2015, 1644 messages were posted on @MEUSA and basically all were directly or indirectly related to the same-sex relationships. This is the result of the specialisation of Marriage Equality USA, whose mission is to introduce and propagate same-sex relationships, recognised in the US as marriages.

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<sup>41</sup> K. Sutton, *10 same sex couples from win destination weddings in West Hollywood*, GLAAD, 8.06.2015, <https://www.glaad.org/blog/10-same-sex-couples-china-win-destination-weddings-west-hollywood> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>42</sup> <https://twitter.com/search?q=magazine%20covers%20%40sarahkateellis&src=typd> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>43</sup> [www.marriageequality.org](http://www.marriageequality.org) [accessed: 20.07.2017].

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

The frequency of publication depended mainly on current events, especially on judicial and administrative decisions regarding same-sex relationships in the US and in other countries. Most messages were published in June (324), and not much less in April (249), January (202), July (179), March (178) and May (174). In the second half of the year, when same-sex relationships became part of the US legal system, their presence on the @MEUSA profile was much rarer (dropped to 16 tweets monthly in November and December 2015). The number of tweets about same-sex relationships on the @MEUSA profile in particular months of 2015 is shown in Fig. 2.

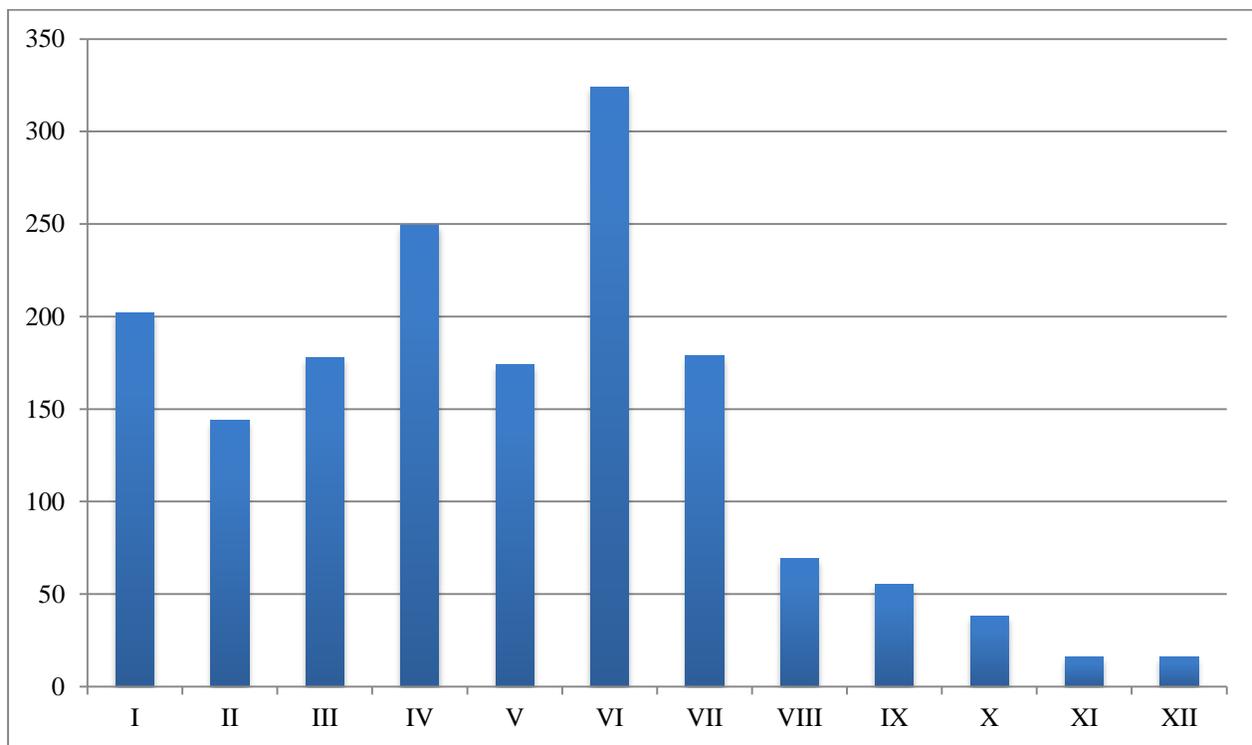


Fig. 2 Marriage Equality USA activity on Twitter in particular months of 2015

Source : author's calculations based on <https://twitter.com/MEUSA>

Most tweets concerned current events, concerts, marches, events, publications on homosexual relationships – it is over a quarter of all tweets @MEUSA (455 from 1644). The second block of issues referred to court and administrative decisions at the federal, state and individual counties level (e.g. the beginning of the marriage certificates for single-sex couples) – 258 such messages appeared. The third most common topic (226 tweets) was the criticism of

opponents of homosexual marriages (politicians, officials, activists, some media, some religious groups, like the Catholic Church, including the Pope). The @MEUSA profile devoted less attention to initiatives and lawsuits from the LGBT community (166), news from the world (Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Mexico, Puerto Rico, China, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam – 135), examples and stories from life (121), support for same-sex relationships campaign (115 tweets) and others (119).

The theme of tweets on the @MEUSA profile is shown in Figure 3. Only positives, often marked #MarriageEquality, less frequently #LoveWins or #ssm (Same Sex Marriage), but with no references to #HomosexualMarriage, were posted.

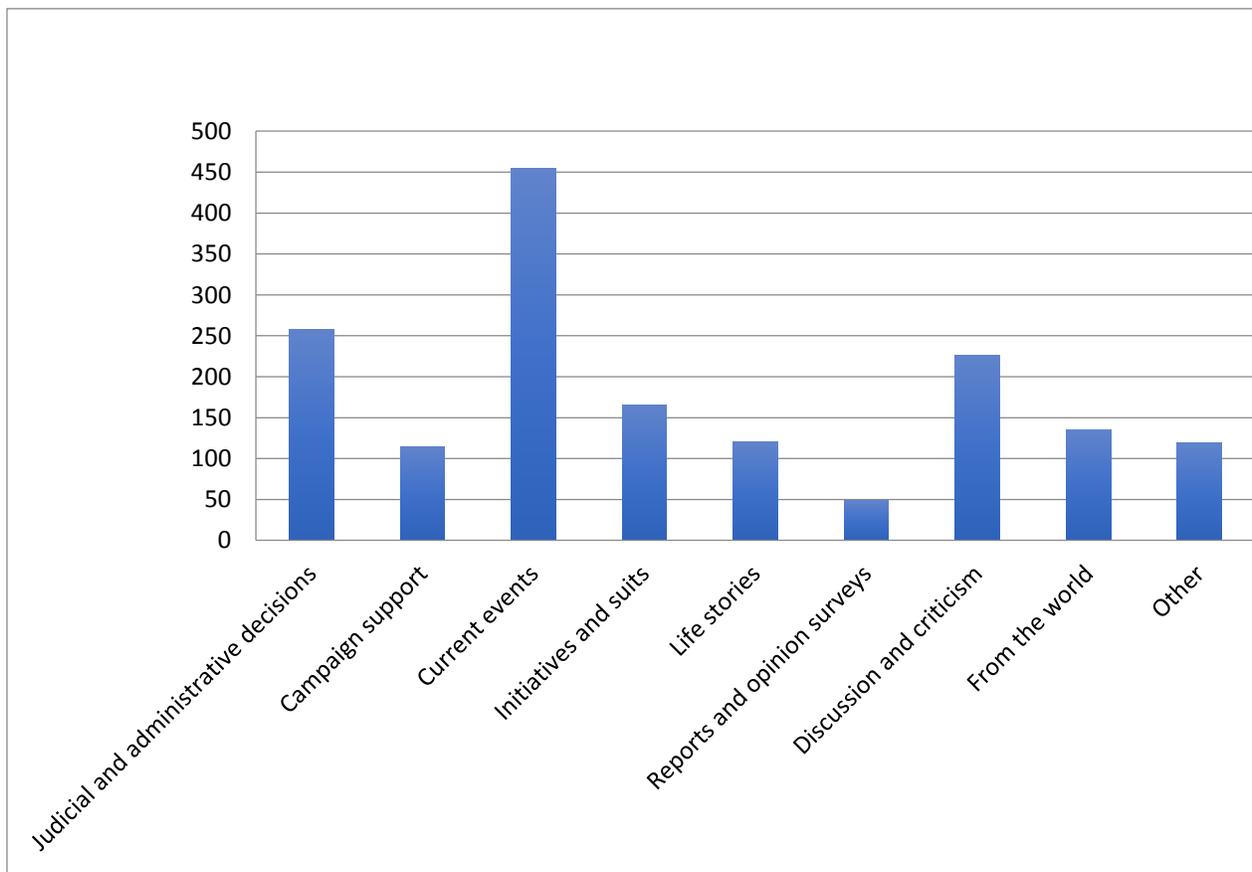


Fig. 3 Topics covered in the @MEUSA profile in 2015

Source : author’s calculations based on <https://twitter.com/MEUSA>

In 2015, Marriage Equality USA conducted intensive communication on the @MEUSA profile. Twitter was undoubtedly among its most important communication tools. In the case of GLAAD

and the analysed Polish organisations, the use of Twitter was less important in informing, educating and persuading about same-sex relationships, also because of other, more general (cultural, social, training or ideological) goals of these organisations.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for the PR campaign**

On the basis of the presented analyses, it can be stated that social media, including Twitter, is an indispensable component of contemporary information and educational campaigns of public institutions, ideological, cultural and social movements, also concerning controversial issues for the general public, like same-sex relationships, called in some countries homosexual marriages. The intensity of debates in major media, social media and societies depends to a large extent on campaigns conducted by movements interested in solutions such as Marriage Equality USA.

As proved by the research, the effectiveness of such information and education campaigns requires focusing on the main message (as evidenced by the consistent use of the #MarriageEquality hashtag), and not only occasional inclusion of the topic into the mainstream communication (as in the case of two Polish organisations and GLAAD). For this reason, the @MEUSA profile – almost entirely devoted to same-sex relationships – is an example of the consistent use of Twitter in the information and education campaign. It can be argued that the success of Twitter communication is more likely in the case of focusing on one topic (such as Marriage Equality USA), and the campaign will bring better results when it is organised by a specially appointed team (task force), which should work until the goal of the information and education campaign is achieved.

The most frequently appearing topics in communication of the Marriage Equality USA movement were informative (every fourth tweet). Twitter by nature (due to its short, signal messages) is suitable for quick information about important events, statements and opinions. It is worth noting that the strategy of communicating of the @MEUSA profile featured building a coalition and mobilising support, not only traditionally among artists, actors, writers, celebrities, but also among selected churches, such as Episcopal or Methodist. However, the Catholic Church (including the Pope), Baptists and Mormons were criticised for their critical attitude towards same-sex relationships. Less important for @MEUSA were the opinions of politicians, unless they clearly supported the relationships of people of one sex, like President Barack Obama.

Effectiveness of campaigns and communication in traditional and social media requires

systematic publication of messages (including tweets). In 2015, on the @MEUSA profile, there were on average 5 tweets per day, though with varying frequency: sometimes there were even a dozen or so of them during the day. Also deliberately limiting the campaign to the chosen hashtag (#MarriageEquality), looking for any positive about same-sex relationships (including making alliances, signals of understanding and support among creators, artists, clergy, politicians, celebrities), omitting “bad news” (i.e. unfavourable for LGBT) by @MEUSA contributed to achieving the desired effect, which was the introduction of new legal solutions and obtaining social acceptance for them in the US. According to the well-known Pew Research analysis centre, in 2017, as much as 62% of Americans support same-sex marriages, and 32% oppose them, while in 2001, when research on this subject began, the proportions were reversed - same-sex relationships had only 35% supporters and 57% opponents<sup>45</sup>. Certainly this result was also influenced by the efficient use of social media and Twitter during information and education campaigns by organisations and groups supporting same-sex relationships.

The comparison of communication methods, strategies and topics discussed on Twitter in information campaigns conducted by organisations from Poland and the USA also showed – apart from ideological, cultural and social differences between the two countries – differences in competences, workshops and strategy building between specialists from Poland and the USA (on advantage of the latter, especially in the case of Marriage Equality USA). Activities of consultants from the USA still remain the reference point for Polish public relations specialists.

The presented analyses focus on the use of Twitter as a mainly informational and educational medium, which for both Polish organisations and for GLAAD in the discussed area is, in fact, a one-way tool, without dialogue element and tracking of discussion triggered, polemics and exchange of opinions. The messages of the Marriage Equality USA organisation were different, among which at least two of the nine categories discussed (“polemics and criticism” and “from the world” and partly “other”), or nearly 400 tweets, were responses, reports or retweets from other sources. Thus, it can be concluded that tweets of Marriage Equality USA largely reflected public debates and statements in other media (traditional, online and social), although – due to the adopted methodology – the analysis did not cover all aspects of communication of selected organisations relating to the same-sex relationships.

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<sup>45</sup> Pew Research Center, *Changing attitudes on gay marriage*, <http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/> [accessed: 20.07.2017].

In further studies of this type, it is worth looking for the impact of the Twitter campaign on traditional media and other social media, also for more than one year. This can be done using such indicators as the number of information provided (*retweets* – RT), likes (FAV), scope and intensity of debates in the media of the campaign's own creator (SM, blog, website), in traditional, internet, social and mobile media. Twitter and social media research would be useful from a rhetorical perspective, discourse analysis or sentiment research with the help of Big Data.

Experiences with Twitter and social media in Polish and American campaigns for same-sex unions, effective communication strategies and tools, methods of their application can be used for other informational and educational projects addressed to selected groups, categories (e.g. experts, media, politicians) or to the whole of society. This particularly applies to issues that trigger public debates and controversies, including those based on different ideological and social positions than the described campaigns on the same-sex relationships.

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