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**THE ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED
BY COMPANIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIGHT
OF RESEARCH CONCERNING THEIR USERS**

THE ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY COMPANIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIGHT OF RESEARCH CONCERNING THEIR USERS

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Summary

Social media are not losing their popularity. Despite their long (sometimes a few years long) presence on the Internet, portals from this category are gradually strengthening their position with regard to the number of registered users. In July 2014 the biggest social media portal — Facebook — had 1,320,000,000 active accounts around the whole world. In Poland in July 2014 the number of active users of the portal reached 12,000,000.

In the period from April 12 to May 25, 2014, the Department of Marketing of the Faculty of Management of University of Lodz conducted a research aimed at the assessment of activities conducted by companies in social media.

The goal of the research was to reach people using social media and investigate how particular measures taken by companies in social media are assessed by them, as well as to identify which of these actions boost engagement and influence making a purchasing decision.

In course of the research the method of Internet questionnaire was applied. 302 respondents took part in the survey and almost 90% of them declared that they use social media portals.

The most popular social network among the respondents is Facebook. YouTube also plays a major role. This may be seen as evidence that the marketing potential of video contents published on the Internet is huge.

The conducted research shows that among the biggest benefits associated with having an account on a social media portal is the possibility of fast communication, chance to find and follow friends, as well as accumulation of the most important information in one place.

Over 70% of the surveyed follows well-known companies and brands in social media. Fashion brands and brands associated with the food and electronics branches are followed most often.

What the respondents most often named as one of the advantages of following brands in social media is the possibility of continuously following novelties, opportunity to receive discount coupons, as well as a chance to win prizes in contests organized on brand profiles. Users also drew attention to the fact that the utilization of social media as a channel serving the purpose of solving the problems of current clients and resolving doubts of future clients.

Arguments encouraging people to follow brands in social media — according to the surveyed — are among others, actually using a product, interest in the subject (branch) represented by the producer and potential intention to make a purchase of an observed product. Respondents also pointed to such factors as additional information concerning the application of a product, as well as association with their work.

According to the respondents, among many activities conducted in social media the following have the biggest impact on making a purchasing decision: receiving a discount coupon, publication of information about a special offer, publication of information about novelty in an offer. The activity which, turned out to be least effective in attracting the attention of the Users are contests organized by the producers.

Keywords: social media, content marketing, social media service, brand, marketing

Factors determining the popularity of social media among companies and their users

The phenomenon of presence of companies and brands in the social media sphere is gradually gaining strength. An ever greater number of entrepreneurs and people managing brand strategies are becoming aware of the huge potential hidden in this modern and highly interactive channel of communication. What is important is the fact that the strength of social media has been proven not only on paper and in form of strictly scientific theories. Almost every day specialist media devoted to marketing and advertising report about spectacular successes of campaigns conducted within social media. Even though funds allocated to the implementation of campaigns in this channel are usually small, in vast majority of cases most of them bring above-average effects. Internet itself together with an undiminished popularity of social media channels appear to be the main place for discussion concerning brands, products, their advantages and disadvantages, they make it possible to establish relations between current and potential clients and thus gain additional information, they help make purchasing decision¹.

Researchers looking into the area of social media in course of their deliberations try to identify the secret of success of social media portals and their phenomenon, which makes it possible to achieve excellent results of marketing activities conducted within social media. The answer is simple — their success relies on the users. Social media, according to the definition by Tomasz Bonek and Marta Smaga, are “all Internet portals, where content is created by users, regardless of the purpose the content serves, whether it is entertainment, business, education or any other purpose”². Thanks to the possibility of influencing the contents present in the space of social media in a significant way, social media portals appear to be places almost perfectly adapted to the individual needs and character of users. It is the owners of accounts in these services who decide what and when they want to watch and this way they create a kind of favourite “corner” on the Internet. Additionally, social media perfectly fit in the notion of networked society. The users of social media portals form a kind of network, where “separate points (often called nodes, or node points) connected with each other thanks to links (often called ties) which are usually multiple and complex, crossing each other and appearing in excessive quantities”³. On the example of the most popular portal — Facebook — the owners of accounts build a network of contacts with other people using the portal. Usually, the key to these connections is a relationship in the real world, or gathering around certain contents, or concepts published on websites of the service.

Most certainly, one of the aspects which have a significant impact on the success of campaigns in social media is their reach. This is the number of people who have potentially seen a particular content. On Facebook it is provided in form of fanpage statistics, on Twitter the relevant figure is the number of people following a particular (...)”⁴. Social media are still not losing their popularity. Despite their long (most often a few years long) presence on the Internet, portals from this category are gradually strengthening their position with regard to the number of registered users. In July 2014⁵, the biggest social media portal — Facebook — had 1,320,000,000 active accounts around the whole world. In Poland in July 2014⁶ the number of active users of the portal reached 12,000,000.

The potential reach that can be achieved by means of social media is constantly growing. The number of users of portals of this kind is constantly growing, thus building a campaign step after step, in an office in Warsaw, we can reach users from the furthest corners of the world.

Social media portals are characterized by the possibility of accurate targeting of messages at the users. In short, this method of activity can be explained as adapting a particular message to a particular target group, which was earlier defined at the stage of campaign planning. This method has many advantages and the most important one is the fact that the message reaches only the users potentially interested in it.

Another factor which apparently influences the effects of activities in social media is the facility of using tools serving the purpose of building a campaign in social media. In fact, in order to take first actions associated with the creation of advertising activities in social media, you don't need any specialist knowledge. Creators serving the purpose of creating a campaign are very intuitive and additionally, they are most often explained in detail in special guides prepared for the advertisers.

A factor which in the most significant way encourages entrepreneurs (especially those from the SME sector) to be present in the social media space are low expenses associated with marketing activities conducted in social media. Funds spent on advertising on such a popular social media portal in Poland as Facebook are incomparably smaller than the funds usually spent on advertising in traditional media — television, radio, or press. Additionally, spending on promotion in social media can be precisely controlled at every stage of campaign. Effective advertising activities conducted thoughtfully make it possible to achieve low unit costs of reaching a single user. These results are hard to achieve based on other media.

Along with the development of social media and thus, the Internet society of mutual connections, it is assumed that the group of traditionally regarded consumers is being replaced by so-called com-sumers (communication + consumer)⁷. Campaigns conducted in social media are received by the target group in a much better way than messages conveyed by means of other means of communication. This happens most often due to some kind of interaction (and in particular cases a bond) which is established between the user (the recipient of a message) and a brand active in social media. Quite often, in their strategy of presence on social media portals, the managers of brand image on the Internet, decide to function in a certain model of personification. This means that when a user decides to bookmark a brand as "favourite", on pages of a portal visible to him posts concerning the brand will be written in first person singular. Such a strategy is more and more often visible in the area of brands aimed at youngest Internet users and is supposed to convince them that a brand "lives" on a social media portal. Users actively publish their opinions and comments associated with the functioning of a brand, its product offer. Information acquired by means of the producer's profile is transferred further, often to other people potentially interested in a purchase.

Users appreciate the possibility of direct communication with the producer. This way they can obtain information which will eventually allow them to make a purchasing decision, or resolve doubts arising after the purchase of a product, or service. Responding to the question of the user, brands often direct their response to a particular Internet user known by name and surname, which further enables building a sort of uniqueness and exclusivity of the relations functioning in social media. What is important, by means of social media portals it is possible to maintain contact with a brand almost the whole day round and what contributes to this state of affairs are ubiquitous smartphones and mobile Internet access offered by mobile operators. It doesn't matter where the user is currently located, what he is doing, what time it is. Mobile phone with access to the Internet makes it possible to be up to date with everything that producers wants to share with their fans in the virtual world.

A user taking advantage of social media services can follow the novelties introduced by favourite producers on a current basis. Often before a broad presentation of a new offer, an Internet user following the profile of a particular brand knows what product, or service will appear in the portfolio of the seller.

An Internet user following a few brands in the scope of one branch can be up to date with all changes taking place in the branch. Social media aggregate information

from all sources important for the user in an excellent way and build a certain kind of space on the Internet, which a holder of a social media profile doesn't have to leave at all.

The assessment of the activity of companies in social media in light of the results of research concerning their users

Along with the growing popularity of social media, more and more companies decide to enter this innovative space of the Internet. As long as big companies with strong position on the market include activity in social media in a broader framework of their image strategy, resorting to a set of previously thought-out and worked-out activities, as well as tools dedicated to raising the efficiency of their presence on social media portals, smaller companies from the SME sector in most cases function in a way, in the dark. These companies usually, sometimes more, sometimes less successfully copy the solutions applied by the biggest players and expose themselves to the risk of image failure.

Social media abhor formulaic approach, which is a fact that many people responsible for Internet branch of marketing tend to forget about. The fact that some kind of campaign was successful on the profile of X brand, doesn't mean that a campaign using exactly the same tools will achieve similar result in case of the profile of Y brand.

All activities have to be precisely thought out and what's most important, adapted to a particular target group. One kind of behaviour in social media will attract the attention of the fans of a producer of luxurious cars and a different kind of behaviour will be well received by followers of a clothes producer. It is also necessary to remember that not all actions taken in social media are appreciated by the users. Some of them are completely ignored and can often bring a result opposite to the desired one and discourage fans of a brand from further following a profile.

Promoting a brand by means of social media channels, a producer can limit, or completely avoid the phenomenon of so-called "banner blindness". Such places on the Internet as blogs, or social media portals make it possible to presume that a marketing message will be noticed much earlier, will get the recipient more engaged and will bring about the desired interaction⁸. What's important for the very strategy of presence of a brand on the Internet, official profiles in social media may expand a company's current scope of activity on the Internet and build less official, more informal communication with the clients⁹.

In order to really verify which of the actions taken by companies in social media attract most attention of their users, in the period from April 12 to May 25, 2014, the Department of Marketing of the Faculty of Management of University of Łódź conducted a research aimed at the assessment of activities conducted by companies in social media.

The goal of the research was to reach people using social media and investigate how particular activities conducted by companies in social media are assessed by the users, as well as to identify the which kinds of activities boost engagement and influence making a decision about a purchase. The intention of the Authors of the research was to reach possibly biggest group of people using social media portals. What's important, the surveyed group was supposed to include people using modern media with varied intensity and from various age categories.

At the stage of preparation of the research the following research problems were formulated:

- 1) Which portals (on which devices) do Internet users use most often?
- 2) What motivation do users of social media portals have at the moment of adding a brand (product) profile (page) to their "favourites"?
- 3) Which activities in social media are most valuable for u(potential clients) and which are least valuable?
- 4) How often and what kind of information should be published on brands' official media profiles?

In course of the research the method of Internet questionnaire was applied. For over a month the questionnaire form was available on a dedicated Internet website. The offer of participation in the survey was broadly promoted in the surrounding of social media portals. What's interesting, the official profiles of the biggest brands joined the campaign promoting the questionnaire and encouraged their fans to participate in the survey.

The survey questionnaire was filled out by 302 respondents. Among them 90% declared that they use social media portals.

Due to the fact that it was impossible to obtain a random sample for the survey, the research shouldn't be treated as representative and thus shouldn't be used to make generalizations about the whole population. The results of the research should be regarded as presumptions in the perception of what brands offer to users within social media portals.

Out of all surveyed respondents, 271 (which constitutes 89.79% of the surveyed sample) concluded that they use social media portals. Only 31 out of the group of 302 respondents (which constitutes 10.3%) declared that they don't use social media services.

Table 1. Do you use social media portals? — the respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers
Yes	271
No	31

Source: Own materials.

The above distribution of answers confirms undiminished popularity of social media portals and strengthens the conviction that those who want to run a professional business shouldn't forget about contact with current and potential clients by means of social media. Only a small fraction of the surveyed group declared that they don't use any form of communication by means of social media. Respondents who declared that they use social media portals are mostly women younger than 25. A major portion of the respondents were also studying men earning up to PLN 1,500 gross per month.

Among people who declared that they don't use social media portals there were university graduates earning more than PLN 7,500 gross per month.

Due to the possibility to use social media portals by means of various devices (apart from computers, also modern mobile phones — smartphones and tablets can be used) it was appropriate to ask the question about the extent to which particular devices are used to browse content found in social media.

It came as no surprise that computers are the most popular devices for browsing through the contents of social media portals.

In the surveyed population 125 respondents (which constitutes 41.4% of the surveyed sample) use social media more than 60 minutes a day by means of a computer. 43 people, (which constitutes 12.3% of the surveyed group) uses the computer for this purpose between 41 and 60 minutes per day, 37 respondents (12.3% of answers) use social media between 21 and 40 minutes per day, 33 people (10.9%) use social media up to 20 minutes per day. In the surveyed group one respondent (0.3%) declared that he doesn't use a computer for browsing social media portals at all. People using social media portals by means of a computer more than 60 minutes per day are students younger than 25 and working people aged 26–35.

Table 2. How much time per day do you spend looking through the contents of social media portals?

— respondents' answers

	Computer (n. of answers)	% of all answers	Smartphone (n. of answers)	% of all answers	Tablet (n. of answers)	% of all answers
0–20 minutes	33	10,90%	68	22,50%	16	5,30%
21–40 minutes	37	12,30%	24	7,90%	14	4,60%
41–60 minutes	43	14,20%	45	14,90%	5	1,70%
More than 60 minutes	125	41,40%	30	9,90%	4	1,30%
I don't use this device	1	0,30%	24	7,90%	131	43,40%

Source: Own materials.

68 respondents, (which constitutes 22.5% of the surveyed group) use social media up to 20 minutes per day using smartphones for this purpose. This group consists mostly of working respondents with university and high school education, aged 26–35. 45 people (which constitutes 14.9% of the group) use for this purpose a mobile phone between 41 and 60 minutes per day, 30 respondents (9.9% of answers) more than 60 minutes per day, 24 people (7.9%) between 21 and 40 minutes per day. Among all answers, 24 respondents (7.9%) declared that they don't use smartphones at all for browsing social media portals. This answer came from women with high-school education, aged 36–45.

131 respondents, (which constitutes 43.4% of the surveyed group) don't use in any way a devices such as tablet for browsing social media portals. This answer was given mainly by unemployed men aged 26–35. 16 people (5.3% of the group) use this tool to visit social media for up to 20 minutes a day. This answer was given mainly by studying women with high-school education, younger than 25. 14 respondents (4.6%) from 21 to 40 minutes per day, 5 respondents (1.7%) from 41 to 60 minutes a day, 4 respondents (1.3%) more than 60 minutes a day.

The above results draw particular attention to the growing utilization of smartphones, which are playing an ever greater role in the access to social media portals. Mobile applications making it possible browse such portals as Facebook, or Twitter are gaining (especially among the enthusiasts of new technologies) huge popularity. It is worth noting the fact that mobile advertising is one of the main pillars of income of the American giant — Facebook. This development makes it possible to presume that further, ever more innovative marketing activities in social media will be based on access to portals by means of mobile phones.

The number of portals using the functions of social networks is constantly growing. Before making a decision on the presence of a brand in the social media space, it is necessary to determine which portals a company wants to use to conduct its activities. Obviously, you shouldn't conduct activities in all possible places, because at a certain moment this could lead to an information chaos for users holding accounts on a few portals. In the conducted survey it was appropriate to identify the popularity of social networks, according to the assessments of their users.

Table 3. Popularity of particular social media portals in light of research results

Portal	Average popularity
Facebook	10,7
YouTube	9,4
Google+	8,9
Twitter	6,2
NK	5,8
Instagram	5,6
Vimeo	4,9
Ask.com	4,5
Pinterest	3,7
Forsquare	3,6
MłodeLata.pl	2,8

Source: Own materials.

Without any doubt, in the context of the conducted research the leader of the market of social media — Facebook — enjoys the greatest popularity. On a scale from 1 (I use this portal least often) to 11 (I use this portal most often) it achieved an average assessment of 10.7. Facebook was the most popular choice among men and women with university and high school education, aged less than 25 and in the 26–35 age group. The second most popular portal was video service YouTube, which achieved an average of 9.4. High result of a video portal may be evidence of the fact that users are becoming more and more interested in multimedia contents on the Internet. Additionally, in light of the opinions of many people professionally dealing with the new media, we can presume that in the future the popularity of tv contents will decrease and at the same time contents published in Internet video services will gain even greater popularity. It is noteworthy that the NK.pl portal with an

average popularity rating of 5.8 is most popular among women with high school education aged 36–45, earning PLN 1,501–3,000. At the same time Twitter was appreciated by men aged 26–35 earnings more than PLN 4,501 gross. Pinterest (average 3.7), Forsquare (3.6) and MłodeLata.pl (2.8) enjoyed the lowest popularity.

Having own profile on a social media portal is associated with many benefits. To a large extent they come from the fact that nowadays it is hard to find a person who doesn't use this form of communication. Most friends from our environment (especially from the environment of young people spend a lot of time on social media portals every day. Thanks to their presence having own account we can easily build a custom network of contacts and thus communicate with friends on the Internet in real time. The biggest social media portal — Facebook — has even created a separate application, its own messenger, which makes it possible to send text messages, photos, short sound recordings by means of mobile devices. Using the application is almost as easy as sending text messages by phone.

Looking into the behaviours of mobile phone owners, it is often possible to notice that they are slowly abandoning the practice of sending short text messages to phone numbers of their friends. This is happening, because people have almost unlimited access to the Internet by means of a smartphone and communicate more and more often by means of a social media portal. This means that there is a high likelihood that we can receive an answer faster when we send it to the mailbox on a social media portal, than when we send it to the mobile phone mailbox.

Apart from the undeniable advantage of communicating in real time, the authors of the research asked the respondents about other benefits associated with having a profile on a social media portal.

Respondents named the following benefits from having an account in social media: fast communication (71.5% of answers), possibility of finding and following friends (44.0% of answers), sharing information with friends (30.5% of answers). The users also appreciate the chance to keep up to date with the latest trends, thanks to following the profiles of popular brands, bloggers, celebrities (22.2% of answers). The surveyed notice that thanks to social media they can gain more information about favourite brands and products (17.9% of answers), and thanks to advanced technical solutions they can log into many places on the Internet using their account on a social media (13.2% of votes).

Table 4. What main benefits associated with using your social network accounts can you identify?
(choose no more than 3 benefits) — the respondents' answers

	Number of answers	% of all answers
The possibility of finding and following friends	133	44,00%
Fast communication	216	71,50%
The most important information in one place	91	30,10%
Following trends on the Internet (interesting video, music)	67	22,20%
Sharing information with friends	92	30,50%
The possibility of obtaining information about brands and products	54	17,90%
Access to many online services by means of one account in a social media portal	40	13,20%
Chance to have access to additional materials (in case of official profiles of artists, tv shows)	31	10,30%
Making new friends	12	4,00%
Others	7	2,30%

Source: Own materials.

Among answers in the "Others" category the respondents pointed to membership in various groups in social media services (especially student groups, where information about classes is mentioned), running own community, or doing something with free time.

Men taking part in the survey recognized the fact that all information can be found in one place and the possibility of gaining additional information about a product as the biggest benefits. Women much more often pointed to the possibility of fast communication, Chance to find and follow friends and share information with friends.

Having an account in a social network shouldn't be regarded as tantamount to following the profiles of brands active in social media. On the biggest social media portals there are plenty of inactive accounts which are used exclusively for the purpose of "taking a peek at" what's being published by the friends of a logged-in user. There are also users who on principle don't want to get in touch with any brand and want to avoid often annoying and undesirable marketing messages.

In order to identify the users following brand profiles in social media, it was necessary to ask a filtering question.

Table 5. Do you follow the official profiles of well-known brands and products in social media?

The respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Yes, I am following	199	65,90%
No, I'm not following	72	23,80%

Source: Own materials.

Among people using social media portals, 199 people (73.4% of respondents) declared that they are following profiles of well-known brands in these services, 72 people (26.6% of answers) didn't display such behaviour.

The group of people not interested in following brand profiles on social media portals was dominated by women with high school education, earnings up to PLN 1,500 gross. Among respondents following brands in social media, a major group were working men aged 26–35 earnings PLN 4,501–6,000.

Following brand profiles on social media portals can take two forms. The first form is associated with exclusively following posts published on brand pages which automatically appear on the user's main page and are visible directly after logging onto the portal. The second form involves directly visiting a brand profile in a social media service and following the information published there. The first of these forms may suggest lower engagement of the user in the online activities of a brand. The second form may lead to a conclusion that a user himself is interested in the producer's offer and is more susceptible to activities directed to people following a particular profile.

The following question concerned the frequency of direct visits to the profiles of chosen brands in social media.

Table 6. How often do you visit the official profiles of brands/products? — respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Very rarely	13	4,30%
Rarely	27	8,90%
Sometimes	92	30,50%
Often	52	17,20%
Very often	15	5,00%

Source: Own materials.

30.50% of the respondents following brand profiles in social media admit that sometimes they visit the pages of favourite producers. This answer was given mainly by working people with high-school education, younger than 25, earnings PLN 1,501–3,000 gross. 17.20% of respondents visit these profiles often (studying people younger than 25), 4.3% visit them very rarely (gross salary between from PLN 4,501 to 6,000).

On social media portals brands from almost all branches are present. Depending on the branch represented by a particular brand, an appropriate form of message, which eventually reaches the interested recipients, is chosen.

The starting point for further analysis of how companies function in the space of social media was finding out which branches are most often followed by people using social media portals.

**Table 7. Which branches are the brands and products you most often follow from?
(choose no more than 3) — respondents' answers**

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Fashion (eg. House, Monnari)	139	46,00%
Food (eg. Winiary, Knorr)	76	25,20%
Beverages (eg. Tymbark, Pepsi)	14	4,60%
Alcohol (eg. Wyborowa, Smirnoff)	18	6,00%
Electronics (eg. Samsung, HTC)	68	22,50%
Retail (eg. RTV Euro AGD, Media Markt)	21	7,00%
Services (eg. mBank, Orange)	51	16,90%
Tourism (eg. Rainbow Tours, US Embassy)	35	11,60%
Education (eg. University of Łódź, Łódź University of Technology)	38	12,60%
Others	20	6,60%

Source: Own materials.

According to the answers given by the respondents, brands from such branches as fashion (46% of answers, women under 25), food (25.2% of answers, women aged 36–35), electronics (22.5% of answers, working man under 25 and from 26 to 35) enjoy the greatest popularity among those mentioned as followed.

The surveyed also expressed interest in service branches (16.9% of answers, working men aged 26–35 earning PLN 3,001–4,500 gross) and education (12.6% of answers).

Such branches as beverages (4.6% of answers), or alcohol (6% of answers) enjoy the lowest popularity.

Among answers given in the category of "others", the respondents pointed to categories such as cosmetics, automotive industry, or building materials.

People dealing professionally with Internet marketing often ask the question about factors which convince users to pay attention to a brand in social media. Many specialists are interested in the reason why a particular user marks one of thousands of brands present on a social media portal as favourite. During the research, its authors decided to verify the factors which influence eventually adding a brand to followed profiles.

Table 8. What convinced you to follow a brand/product on a social media portal?
(choose no more than 3 options) — respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
General popularity	70	23,20%
Willingness to purchase/satisfy a need	91	30,10%
Using a product	116	38,40%
Advertising on the Internet	24	7,90%
Advertising in other media	7	2,30%
Friends' recommendation	28	9,30%
Interest in a subject	107	35,40%
Others	14	4,60%

Source: Own materials.

Among the main factors convincing users to follow the profile of a well-known brand the respondents mentioned: using a product (38.4% of answers), interest in the subject (35.4% of answers), willingness to purchase/satisfy a need (30.1% of answers). These options were chosen most often by working men and women.

What has the lowest impact on the decision to follow a profile, according to the answers of the respondents, are: friends' recommendation (9.3% of answers, studying men and women), advertising on the Internet (7.9% of answers) and advertising in other media (2.3% of answers).

Among answers classified as "others", respondents pointed to discount codes, special prices, information about the application of a product and professional issues.

Following the profile of a producer on a social media portal is associated with certain benefits. These benefits are usually associated with the possibility of participating in activities directed to only a particular group of people. What we are dealing with here is a certain form of distinction, exclusivity, as only the users following

a certain branch can achieve such a high level of interaction that it is impossible to achieve it by communicating with a brand (producer) by means of any other channel.

Table 9. What main benefits for you are associated with following a brand/product on social media portals?
(choose no more than 3) — the respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Possibility of following novelties on a regular basis	173	57,30%
Opportunity to ask additional questions	47	15,60%
Chance to win additional prizes in contests	54	17,90%
Meeting new persons gathered around a brand/product	9	3,00%
Possibility of solving problems faster	53	17,50%
Taking advantage of interesting games, applications associated with a brand/product	6	2,00%
Opportunity to receive discount coupon	96	31,80%
Others	5	1,70%

Source: Own materials.

57.3% of respondents declared that for them the most important benefit associated with following a brand on a social media portal is the possibility of following novelties in a producer's offer on a regular basis (answer given most often by working women younger than 25 and those aged 26–35). An important benefit resulting from marking a profile as favourite is the chance to get a discount coupon (31.8% of answers, respondents under 25, above all studying people). What's interesting is that the achieved result confirms a thesis formulated by Michał Sadowski, an entrepreneurs professionally associated with the new media branch (one of the creators of the tools serving the purpose of Internet monitoring — Brand24), that promotional campaigns in social media are one of the most effective, accessible and profitable methods of building business and (at the same time) supporting a brand¹⁰.

As some of the less significant benefits, the respondents mentioned, among others, opportunities to take advantage of interesting games and applications associated with a brand and meeting new people gathered around a product (2.0% of answers and 3.0% of answers, respectively). In the group of answers classified as "others", respondents mentioned, among others, the possibility of informing potential clients about a company's dishonest conduct.

Using a brand profile in social media gives a chance to conduct diversified actions. However, it is worth pointing out that not all kinds of practices based on the utilization

of fanpages are to the same extent related to attracting users' interest. Pages on a social medial portal can be used in many different ways.

Table 10. What is your assessment of various activities conducted by your favourite brands in social media?
(mark the right answer on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 — very uninteresting and 5 — very interesting)
— the respondents' answers

Answer	Average answer
Publishing information about novelties in offer	2,97
Publishing content broader than in tv commercials	2,54
Wall as place for asking questions	2,58
Organizing contests with prizes	2,43
Offering discount coupons to brand fans	2,94

Source: Own materials.

The above data show that all of the mentioned kinds of activities are characterized by similar popularity. In light of the achieved results it is possible to make an assumption that publishing information about novelties in a brand's offer, as well as offering discount coupons to fans of a social media page enjoy slightly higher popularity among people following the profiles of favourite producers. It is possible to make an assumption that due to the popularity of the answer referring to discount coupons among high school and university students, this group bases purchasing decision mainly on price incentives.

All of the activities conducted within social media are eventually supposed to make the user make a purchasing decision. Some of the activities reach the awareness of the users slightly more accurately and this way raise the likelihood of making a purchase, other don't encourage any kind of action outside a social media portal.

According to the surveyed, the following activities conducted by brands in social media have biggest impact on making a decision on purchase: receiving a discount coupon (39.7% of answers), publication of information about promotional campaign (34.4% of answers), publishing information about new offer (32.1% of answers). First two answers enjoyed the greatest popularity among studying women and men under 25. What was also valuable for the users were details about the way of application of a particular product (15.2% of answers).

Table 11. Which of the mentioned activities conducted by brands by means of social media have ever influenced your decision on purchase? (select no more than 3 answers) — the respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Publishing information about novelties in offer	97	32,10%
Detailed information about the application of a particular product	46	15,20%
Publishing information about promotional campaigns	104	34,40%
Recommendation from a well-known person	23	7,60%
Presentation of a test carried out by an expert	29	9,60%
Receiving a discount coupon	120	39,70%
Taking part in a contest	17	5,60%
Others	2	0,70%

Source: Own materials.

The respondents recognized taking part in a contest (5.6% of votes), recommendation from a well-known person (7.6% of answers) and presentation of a test carried out by an expert (9.6% of answers, men aged 26–35 and 36–45) as the least influential activities.

Running a brand profile in social media portal it is important to pay attention to the frequency of publication of new posts. The frequency level often has a huge influence on the strength of interaction of the user with a brand. The more often updates are published on a producer's profile, the more we encourage the follower to start a "dialogue" with a brand and get engaged in deeper interaction. Profiles, where new posts are published comparably rarely, are in many cases ignored and further forgotten by the users.

Table 12. How many times a day, in your opinion, should posts be published on the official profiles of brands/producers in social media services? — respondents' answers

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Once a day	109	54,80%
2–3 times a day	78	39,20%
4–5 times a day	9	4,50%
More than 5 times a day	2	1,00%
They shouldn't be published at all	1	0,50%

Source: Own materials.

For most of the surveyed, information on brands' official profiles in social media should be published once a day (54.8% of answers, working, university education, earning PLN

1,501–3,000 gross). 39.2% of the surveyed think information should be published 2 to 3 times a day (mainly studying people with high-school education, under 25).

Only two respondents declared that updates should be posted on profiles more than 5 times a day.

Respondents' profile

302 respondents took part in the survey. Among people who took part in the survey 186 respondents (61.6%) are women and 116 are men (38.4%).

Table 13. Sex of the respondents

Sex	Number of answers	% of all answers
Woman	186	61,60%
Man	116	38,40%

Source: Own materials.

Among the surveyed the dominant group (72.5%) were people under 25. 20.5% of the respondents belonged to the 26–35 age bracket. The smallest group of participants were people aged 46–55.

Table 14. Age of the respondents

Age	Number of answers	% of all answers
Under 25	219	72,50%
26–35	62	20,50%
36–45	12	4,00%
46–55	4	1,30%
Over 56	5	1,70%

Source: Own materials.

Most of the respondents had high-school education (44% of the surveyed) and university education (49% of the surveyed). 1.3% of people participating in the survey recognized their education as vocational and 5.6% had primary school education.

Table 15. Respondents' education

Answer	Number of answers	% of all answers
Primary school	17	5,60%
Vocational	4	1,30%
High school	133	44,00%
University	148	49,00%

Source: Own materials.

176 of the surveyed classified themselves as pupils/students (58.3% of answers) and 117 classified themselves as working people. A small portion of the respondents described themselves as either pensioner, or unemployed.

Table 15. Status of the surveyed

Status	Number of answers	% of all answers
Pupil/student	176	58,30%
Working	117	38,70%
Unemployed	6	2,00%
Pensioner	3	1,00%

Source: Own materials.

Conclusions

The results of the research have made it possible to answer the questions formulated at the concept stage:

- 1) Which social media portals (using which devices) do Internet users use most often?
- 2) What is the motivation of the users of social media portals for adding a profile (page) of a brand (product) to "favourites"?
- 3) Which activities in the social media are most valuable for the users (potential clients) and which are least valuable?
- 4) How often and what type of information should be published on brands' official social media profiles?

Users gain access to social media portals mainly by means of computers. According to the respondents' answers, the time devoted to browsing social media services by means of a computer exceeds 60 minutes a day (according to the answer given by almost every second respondent).

Along with the development of mobile telephony and such devices as smartphones, or tablets, the possibility of using social media by means of devices other than computer has emerged. According to the estimates of the respondents, people spend 20 minutes a day in social media space using smartphones for this purpose. Very few respondents use tablets for this purpose.

Looking at the results of the research from the perspective of popularity of particular social media portals, the leader of the segment is Facebook. Following positions were taken by, among others, YouTube, Google+ and Twitter. The respondents weren't interested at all in such services as Ask.com, Pinterest, Forsquare, which are popular abroad.

What the respondents appreciate most in the functionality of social media portals are above all: the possibility of rapid communication (most answers from the respondents), chance to find and follow friends (44% of all answers), sharing information with friends, as well as the fact that thanks to the so-called "wall" on a page on a social media portal all information is presented in one place. In contrary to a common conviction, the respondents negated the claim that social media portals are used as tools for meeting new friends online (4% of responses), they also rarely browse the official profiles of tv shows, movies, series in order to gain additional information associated with them. What also enjoys little popularity is the function which gives the possibility to log on to many different Internet portals by means of one login and password, which allow using the most popular portal — Facebook.

According to the answers given by the respondents, following brands in the social media space is associated with various benefits. The biggest group of respondents pointed to the possibility of keeping up to date with news concerning a favourite producer (57,3% of answers). What also plays a huge role is the chance to receive a discount coupon for products, or services (31.8% of answers). Such a solution is very often used by producers. They offer their fans periodical discount coupons. Often, it is possible to receive this coupon when you like the profile of a producer — the user is in a way forced to do it. A force which attracts users to brands in social media are contests, which give every person logged on person a chance to win valuable prizes. What's interesting, according to a report of the research company Sotrender¹¹, contest is one of the most often used hashtags in Polish part of Facebook. In September 2014 it was

used 680 times. According to the answers given by the surveyed group, games and applications used to promote services and products are completely unpopular. Only 2% of the respondents recognized them as interesting.

What constitutes the biggest motivation for users to mark the profile of a brand as favourite is that they are using the brand's products (38.4% of answers). The second most important factor is interest in a particular subject represented by a brand/producer. This answer as a factor encouraging to start following a brand profile was chosen by 35.4% of respondents. What also encourages users to add the profile of a producer to favourites in a significant way, is the willingness to purchase a product in the nearest future (30.1% of votes). It is often possible find additional, important information determining the eventual purchase of a product, or service on brand profiles, Quite often, social media portal is the place which determines the final decision of a potential client. What plays a small role is advertising in other media, which in a direct way encourages users to like a producer's fanpage (only 2.3% of votes).

The respondents assessed the majority of the most popular activities conducted on brand profiles as almost equally interesting. All of the activities mentioned in the questionnaire received marks close to 3. Only publishing information about novelties in offer and offering discount coupons to users were assessed as slightly more interesting.

What has an indubitable impact on making a purchasing decision is the way a brand profile on a social media portal is managed. According to the people participating in the survey, the purchasing decision is based mainly on financial incentives. For almost 40% of the respondents receiving a discount coupon through a page on a social media portal is a condition for purchasing a product. Another source of motivation associated with financial issues is the publication of information about current special offer for a product/service (almost 35% of votes). What also plays a major role here is the published information about novelties in the producer's offer (32.1% of votes). Here there is a unique room for the activity of innovators, who in a way above all want to purchase new products as those who set new trends for other people in their environment. What plays a small role in the decision on purchase is participation in a contest (5.6% of votes) and recommendation from a well-known person (7.6% of votes).

The frequency of publication of new posts plays a major role in the strategy of presence of a brand in social media. They shouldn't be published either too rarely (the user may simply not notice posts and thus completely ignore what is happening on a profile he is following in theory), or too often (a flood of information may be treated as an intrusive form of advertising). According to the respondents' answers, new posts

should be published once a day (54.8% of answers), or no more than 2 to 3 times a day (39.2% of answers).

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