



Promotional tactics of Polish fashion brands in social media on the example of Vesna and Marie Zélie

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the social media strategies employed by select Polish niche clothing brands, identifying which approaches are more effective and the factors influencing this effectiveness. **Research methods:** The study utilizes media content analysis and economic indicator analysis to explore the portrayal of these brands in media. Specifically, it compares the Facebook and Instagram profiles of two Polish fashion companies, Vesna and Marie Zélie. Additionally, the research incorporates netnography to analyze online consumer behavior. **Results and conclusions:** Facebook and Instagram emerge as primary online marketing platforms for the examined fashion brands, used for product showcasing and audience engagement. These companies initiate engagement through questions in posts and maintain dialogue by responding to comments. A comparative analysis of Vesna and Marie Zélie's post nature and frequency indicates a more successful social media promotion strategy by Marie Zélie. **Cognitive value:** This article sheds light on contemporary strategies for social media promotion among companies. It uniquely analyzes the promotional tactics of niche fashion brands Marie Zélie and Vesna in social media, providing a comparative study of a successful and a less successful strategy. This comparison could guide other actors in formulating their social media advertising strategies.

KEYWORDS

Facebook, Instagram, Marie Zélie, fashion brand, social media marketing, promotion, Vesna

Social media's popularity continues to surge, with a global user base of 4.2 billion (Kemp, 2021). Marketers have quickly acknowledged this trend, recognizing social media as an optimal platform for corporate-public communication. The fashion industry, in particular, thrives on these platforms, adept at showcasing its products through photos and videos – the predominant communication forms on sites like Instagram and Facebook. However, the effectiveness of social media marketing varies significantly among companies. While some struggle to gain traction despite earnest efforts, others quickly rise to success following their debut on these platforms, continually enhancing their standing over time.

This article explores the significance of social media in the advertising efforts of micro and small enterprises, defined as those with no more than 50 employees and an annual turnover under €10 million. It aims to analyze the strategies employed by select Polish clothing brands on social media, identifying the most effective approach in impacting company growth and profitability, and determining the factors contributing to success in this realm. The study assesses the effectiveness of social media activities on Facebook and Instagram, gauging it by the popularity of the companies' profiles, the performance outcomes they report on these platforms, and the audience's engagement with their content. The analysis seeks to answer key research questions:

1. The frequency of post publication.
2. Whether identical or similar content is shared across different platforms.
3. The types of posts that garner the most reactions, likes, or comments.
4. The platform experiencing more audience activity (in terms of likes and comments).
5. The typical commentators on posts (individuals or institutions) and the extent of brand interaction with them.

The research utilized media content analysis, which Stanisław Michalczyk (2009) describes as “an empirical, systematic, and intersubjective description of the content and formal characteristics of media messages” (p. 97). This was complemented by an analysis of economic indicators. Another method employed was netnography, defined by Jurek (2013) as “a type of online qualitative research focused on communities formed and transformed in computer-mediated communication” (p. 90). The study involved comparing the Instagram and Facebook profiles of two Polish fashion brands, Vesna and Marie Zélie, with all relevant data pertaining to the accounts and posts as of 22 February 2021. This included an analysis of Vesna's posts from its inception until the last available post (25 July 2019 to 16 June 2020) and Marie Zélie's posts from the same period for a comparative evaluation of their promotional strategies. The audience's comments on these posts were also considered, providing insights into their perceptions and attitudes towards the brands. Additionally, the research examined the first year of promotional activities of Marie Zélie (from 9 March 2016 to 9 March 2017), offering a comparative perspective against Vesna, a similarly profiled company established three years later. This period is critical for assessing a company's potential for success or failure, with the Central Statistical Office reporting that about 70% of companies in Poland survive their first year (‘Najtrudniejszy pierwszy rok...’, 2021, acc. 5). The study also identified and compared the most popular post from each brand on both social networks during their overlapping period of existence (25 July 2019 to 16 June 2020), with the selection based on the number of likes on Instagram and reactions on Facebook.

Marie Zélie and Vesna share several similarities. Both are relatively young brands, established in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, with Marie Zélie founded in Gdańsk and Vesna in Starogard Gdański. Starting as small, local companies, they commenced their operations in the same region, thereby targeting the same customer base and facing comparable opportunities for success. Their business profiles were similar, encompassing analogous product ranges, distribution channels,

and market segments. Both brands focused on manufacturing and selling comparable products, and they shared a similar vision and mission.

Social media marketing

The concept of marketing, as defined by Grażyna Rosa (2016), “includes the totality of generalised knowledge concerning the principles of decision-making and activities in the sphere of a company’s contacts with the market” (p. 15). Ewa Jaska and Agnieszka Werenowska (2016) argue that traditional media alone are no longer sufficient in the process of brand promotion. They suggest that marketing activities in social media should be combined with those in traditional media, and they should be correlated with each other (p. 207). Marketing activities in social networks became popular at the turn of 2009 and 2010 (Grzegory, 2011, pp. 35-38).

Michael Haenlein and Andreas Kaplan (2010) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61). The Digital 2020 report indicates that 49% of the world’s population actively uses social networking sites, with Facebook being the most popular platform (Kemp, 2020). Katarzyna Sanak-Kosmowska’s 2015 study revealed that even at that time, as many as 96% of companies reported using social media for promotional purposes. For the majority of these companies, a Facebook profile was a crucial element of their promotional strategy (Sanak-Kosmowska, 2018, p. 82).

Social media fulfills multiple functions for companies. It serves as a platform for informing customers about news or promotions, generating interest, and encouraging purchases. Additionally, social media allows companies to gather feedback on their activities and products (Brzezińska-Waleszczyk, 2015, p. 69).

For businesses engaged in marketing, understanding the basic characteristics of social media is crucial. These characteristics include its significant role in the daily lives of users, its viral nature enabling user-driven content dissemination, user-friendliness in content creation and posting, universality, accessibility, and low cost (Drzazga, 2013, pp. 107-110). Managing a company’s fanpage involves the publication of text and visual content, audio and video materials, real-time interaction with the audience, and providing additional applications (Grębosz, Siuda, & Szymański, 2016, p. 72).

Marketing on social media is based on interacting with customers. In this media, customers decide when to engage with the brand based on their time and inclination. Companies practicing social media marketing should attentively listen to their audience, respond to their questions, express gratitude for compliments, and reward those who promote them, thereby encouraging more purchases (Falls & Deckers, 2011).

Facebook, a social media platform founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, emphasizes the creation of a profile to build a loyal audience as a key element of promotion (Wicińska, 2017, p. 116). “Facebook profiles can be created and maintained by individuals, groups of individuals, but also by companies, brands or institutions that treat it as a direct communication channel with potential consumers and an effective marketing tool” (Gumkowska & Czarkowska, 2017, p. 5). Communication on Facebook is based on dialogue through various interactions such as likes, comments, and shares, meeting the needs of customers who wish to engage with the daily life of the brand and share their opinions (Wicińska, 2017, p. 116). The typical Facebook user in Poland likes at least one page, leaves an average of 11 likes under posts per month, comments on average three times, and shares one post. Women are more active on Facebook and are more likely to click on Facebook ads (Kemp, 2020).

Instagram is described as “an app and social media platform for sharing photos and videos of everyday life” (Wicińska, 2017, p. 116). Launched in 2010, it was developed by Mark Krieger and Kevin Systrom. Communication on Instagram revolves around photos and short videos, which can be shared either as regular posts or through Instagram Stories, where they vanish 24 hours after being posted. A key aspect of Instagram communication is the use of hashtags, initially popularized by X (former Twitter). These hashtags allow efficient content discovery for users, and, for businesses, help characterize their activities and reach their target audience effectively (Wicińska, 2017, pp. 116-117).

Gaining the trust of internet users can involve strategies like showcasing a brand’s behind-the-scenes processes, as the product creation journey is important to some customers. On Instagram, this approach can also include tactics such as posting discount coupons (Czarnota, 2017, pp. 134-136). User activity is crucial because it is visible to their friends, potentially sparking their interest in the brand. To encourage audience engagement, companies often organize competitions with prizes (Adaszyńska, 2015, p. 147). Piotr Chmielewski (2016, p. 333) identifies three highly effective methods for engaging online users: publishing entertaining content, emotional content, and content that allows users to influence the company’s decisions, thereby giving consumers a voice in the brand’s activities.

Arkadiusz Podlaski (2011) observes that “the mere presence of a brand on Facebook or another social network does not guarantee success” (p. 122). Echoing this sentiment, Falls and Deckers (2011, p. 34) note that simply creating a website or registering on a social network is insufficient on its own. Active participation in community discussions is crucial, but it’s important to avoid ‘spamming’ or sending an excess of unwanted messages. Consistency is key – through ongoing and regular engagement, internet users become familiar with and trust the brand. Podlaski emphasizes that all company activities should be well-planned and thought-out (2011, pp. 113-114), with published content being valuable, interesting, and not overtly commercial. Additionally, communication must be consistent; a company that promotes certain values should adhere to them (Fabjaniak-Czerniak, 2012, pp. 187-190).

The main challenge in promoting a company on Facebook lies in the overwhelming abundance of information. An individual message is typically replaced by another within about a minute and a half, leading to not every post being displayed to all followers (Dorenda-Zaborowicz, 2012, p. 73). The recommended posting frequency on Facebook is one to two, and at most three posts per day (Czichos, 2020). For Instagram, it’s advised to publish at least one post daily (Miles, 2019).

Research shows that by 2016, 75% of Poles were shopping online (KPMG, 2018). The Polish clothing industry experienced a significant impact during the 2020 pandemic, with sales dropping by almost 50% compared to the previous year, leading to an increased focus on e-commerce channels (Polish Investment and Trade Agency, 2021).

An opportunity for the Polish clothing sector lies in the strong preference of Poles for domestic products. Additionally, it’s anticipated that customers will increasingly value the quality of clothing, preferring timeless and durable items. This shift towards buying fewer but longer-lasting clothes aligns with current environmental trends (Polish Investment and Trade Agency, 2021).

In 2016, the year Marie Zélie began its operations, the sales value in Poland’s clothing and textile sector was PLN 29.1 billion, with 22,080 entities active in the industry. The following year, the market value rose to PLN 29.7 billion, and the number of entities increased to 22,237. Almost two-thirds of these were apparel manufacturing companies, and about 85% were small businesses (KPMG, 2018; KPMG, 2019).

The primary challenge for micro and small enterprises, particularly family businesses and startups, is the lack of sufficient capital for sustained promotional activities, including on a global scale (Polish Investment and Trade Agency, 2021).

In the rapidly evolving fashion industry, innovative promotional tactics and marketing strategies are key to gaining a competitive edge. Recent research sheds light on diverse marketing approaches within the sector:

Yiman Li (2023) explores Louis Vuitton's marketing strategies in the Chinese market, now pivotal for luxury goods due to China's swift economic growth. Li emphasizes the significance of maintaining a quality-centric brand image and the growing role of online social media in enhancing brand visibility in local markets, noting the shift in consumer buying behavior towards digital platforms.

Wenxuan Li (2023) takes a broader view, examining the marketing techniques of fashionable brands like Lululemon and Brandy Melville. Through case studies and interviews, he identifies seven fundamental marketing tactics and forecasts future trends. He proposes a strategic plan for emerging fashion retailers, highlighting the necessity of understanding consumer e-commerce activities and the efficacy of various marketing tools. This extensive analysis offers a roadmap for new brands navigating the complex terrain of fashion marketing.

In the context of fast fashion, Yu Xie and Qinting Yang (2023) present a comparative study of ZARA and H&M, two brands synonymous with this business model. Their research reveals how these companies have captured significant market shares through distinct marketing strategies characterized by rapid product turnover, competitive pricing, and vigorous promotion. The authors also pinpoint areas for enhancement, suggesting that even successful brands must continually reassess their strategies to stay competitive in the market.

The unified narrative from this research underscores a trend of adaptation and strategic refinement. Luxury brands are adjusting to new markets, focusing on quality while embracing digital sales channels. Across the fashion industry, a variety of marketing tactics are in play, with an emphasis on understanding e-commerce consumer behavior and the implementation of sophisticated marketing strategies. This reflects the fashion industry's ongoing evolution to meet the needs of a global, digitally connected consumer base.

Marie Zélie – a thriving fashion brand

Marie Zélie is a clothing brand established in Gdańsk, Poland. The online shop opened on 2 June 2016 and continues to operate. Founder Krzysztof Ziętański characterizes the brand as "Timeless, classic-referencing, feminine cuts. Natural materials. Simple, minimalist forms. Clothes of good quality, close to the slow fashion trend" (Ziętański, n.d.). The brand aims to meet female consumers' expectations, systematically expanding its offerings with new designs (Ziętański, 2018). It aspires to cater to all women, whether they prefer elegance or casual everyday style. The products are known for their tailored fit and perfect finishing ('O nas', n.d.).

Marie Zélie's share capital stands at PLN 141,792 (Marie Zélie, n.d.). Initially, Ziętański handled most of the business operations himself, with limited advisory and support staff. In autumn 2017, he expanded his team, including hiring for social media management (Ziętański, 2018). The company transitioned from a sole proprietorship to a joint-stock company in 2017, attracting its first investors and funding for further development (Ziętański, 2018). By 2021, the brand's team had grown to 50 people (Marie Zélie, 2022).

Currently, the brand's primary objective is to become a global premium brand. The founder plans to build international recognition by partnering with influencers from different countries and increasing physical store sales. An IPO is planned for 2024. Additionally, there are intentions

to open a sewing room in Gdańsk (Ziętarski, 2019). However, part of the production has been outsourced to Bangladesh and Turkey ('Produkcja', n.d.). The brand's progression towards these goals was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a restructuring announcement on 14 February 2022 (Marie Zélie, 2022).

Vesna – a new clothing brand on the Polish market

Vesna, a family-run business, was founded in Starogard Gdański by Paweł Kalinowski and Natalia Kowalke-Łepek. Officially launched on 25 July 2019, the company also opened its online shop on the same day. The brand's vision was to enrich women's wardrobes with its offerings (Kalinowski, 2020). Despite the wide array of clothing available on the market, the founders perceived a gap in subdued, elegant, classic attire for women. Embracing a timeless vintage style rooted in the 1950s and 1960s, Vesna utilized plain, classic colors and delicate patterns (Kowalke-Łepek, 2020). Its inaugural collection featured two dress models available in six color variations.

As a new entrant in the market, Vesna's initial goal was to reach its target audience and introduce its offerings. Future collections were planned to be developed in collaboration with female customers, aligning with their needs and preferences. The founders aspired to establish Vesna as a strong Polish brand in the clothing industry and to achieve premium status in both domestic and international markets ('Vesna store - prawdziwe piękno jest w każdej z was!', n.d.).

The company started with a capital of PLN 25,000 (Kowalke-Łepek, 2020) and operated as a limited liability company. The founders chose not to hire additional staff, with the team consisting solely of the two of them throughout the brand's operation (Kalinowski, 2020). However, Vesna faced significant challenges due to an insufficient budget, including limited funds for promotion. The communication strategy they adopted failed to yield results, leading to a complete drop in sales and no profit generation. Lacking further financing options, the company ceased operations on 16 June 2020 and was formally dissolved on 3 March 2021 (Kalinowski, 2020).

Promotional content analysis of Marie Zélie on Facebook

Marie Zélie's Facebook profile, bearing the same brand name, was established on 20 November 2015. The profile features the brand's logo as its picture – the brand name in black font on a white background. As of 22 February 2021, the fanpage had garnered 85,008 likes and had 88,612 followers. The volume of posts during the analyzed period suggests that Facebook was Marie Zélie's primary promotional platform. From 25 July 2019 to 16 June 2020, a total of 681 posts were made, 273 more than on Instagram. The average post received 153 reactions and 30 comments. Although the Facebook account had more followers and posts, Instagram posts attracted more likes on average (269). However, Facebook posts received more comments, indicating it was the main platform for dialogue between the brand and its consumers. The most popular post received 3,630 reactions (Marie Zélie, 2020a), while the least popular one garnered only five reactions (Marie Zélie, 2019a).

The company's first post on its website appeared on 20 November 2015 (Marie Zélie, 2015), coinciding with the profile picture setup. Marie Zélie began announcing its market entry on social media three months in advance. On 7 March 2016, a post from founder Krzysztof Ziętarski's private profile was shared, showcasing the brand's creation and preparation for a photo shoot (Marie Zélie, 2016a). On 2 June 2016, the opening of the online shop was announced in a post that highlighted the products' key features, included a shop link, and featured the slogan "We want you to be beautiful!" This post received 67 reactions, 39 comments, and was shared 13 times.

In its first year, Marie Zélie posted five videos, all showing behind-the-scenes footage of photo shoots. Notably, a short video celebrating reaching 20,000 Facebook fans was posted on 2 September 2017, a little over a year after the brand's launch (Marie Zélie, 2017). The profile hosted eight albums containing a total of 4,700 photos. Since the start of its Facebook presence, 58 videos have been published, including 10 during the study period.

Initially, Marie Zélie's posts predominantly highlighted the benefits and key features of products, along with delivery and returns information, making them more informative. As the brand evolved, the content shifted focus towards engaging the audience and fostering ongoing relationships. Social media platforms were utilized to announce discounts from the outset. Between 25 July 2019 and 16 June 2020, the brand shared 143 posts about current promotions and discount codes. From the beginning, posts often included questions to engage internet users, asking for opinions or preferences, such as their favorite product. The posts frequently encouraged interactions, for instance, by prompting users to 'tag friends.'

Marie Zélie's Instagram presence, under the handle *mariezelieland*, mirrors its Facebook profile with the company logo as the profile picture. The bio mentions that it is a Polish brand offering elegant, timeless products, includes the slogan "Everyday is a great day to wear a dress!", a website link, and suggests hashtags for customers to use (*#mariezelieland* and *#mariezelieland*). As of 22 February 2021, the Instagram profile had 35,500 followers, with Marie Zélie following 938 accounts including individuals, bloggers (like *women_in_dress*), and other companies or organizations (like *acardopl*).

Since its inception, Marie Zélie has published 1,242 posts on Instagram and been tagged in 1,277 posts, typically by individuals wearing their clothes or collaborating bloggers. From 25 July 2019 to 16 June 2020, the brand posted 408 times, including 387 photo posts and 21 videos. The average photo post received 269 likes and 7 comments. The most popular post in this period received 1,469 likes, while the least popular, unrelated to the brand or its products, garnered only 41 reactions. Videos averaged around 2,500 views, with a notable video on 15 April 2020, showing a model styling the brand's clothes at home for pandemic-era inspiration and social distancing, attracting 62,606 views (Marie Zélie, 2020c).

The company's inaugural Instagram post was shared on the same day as on Facebook, 9 March 2016 (Marie Zélie, 2016d). This initial post was brief, indicating that more information would be forthcoming. It wasn't until the fourth post, on 2 June 2016, that the official launch and opening of the online shop were announced (Marie Zélie, 2016e).

In its first year on Instagram, Marie Zélie posted 214 times, comprising 211 photo posts and 3 videos. The first video, uploaded on 25 August 2016, received only 6 views (Marie Zélie, 2016f). The average number of comments on posts since the brand's inception is 4, with an average of 115 likes per post during the first year.

Instagram served as a platform for Marie Zélie to announce discounts, new arrivals, model restocks, and returns. Most early posts, particularly in the first year, included links to the featured products or the shop's homepage. Initially, the focus was on advertising products and details like fabrics, patterns, and colors, including images of parcels being shipped. Over time, the content evolved to be more inspirational, showcasing complete styles using the brand's products and highlighting the benefits of specific items. Instagram also provided a glimpse into the brand's post-production processes in its early days.

On Instagram, Marie Zélie often initiates discussions in posts but tends not to engage extensively in the comments, responding mainly when consumers ask questions or raise issues. Comments are predominantly from individuals (mostly women), as well as other companies, organizations, and bloggers. In contrast, Facebook lacks comments from other companies and

organizations and shows less collaboration. Among Facebook commenters, there are frequently so-called fan leaders (Katarzyna Wołoszczuk, 2020; Ewa Kuliś, 2020), indicating a group of highly active individuals who have been engaging with the brand for a long time. This suggests a loyal customer base, as evidenced by comments like “I discovered you in 2017. And I stayed forever” (Iwona J. Wawrzeńczyk, 2020), “At the moment I have 11 dresses (plus 4 that I let go further into the world), 4 skirts, a bomber jacket, a blouse and a lot of blouses” (Magdalena Majcher, 2020), and “I love Nemeë, I have 5 of them and I would like more” (Iwona Chorzelska, 2020).

The frequency of comments on Marie Zélie’s Facebook posts largely hinges on the nature of the content. Posts that pose questions to internet users, even those not directly related to the brand or its products, often attract more comments. A particularly engaging post that invited fans to a game, where they were asked to share their favorite patterns and others had to guess their names, received 247 comments (Marie Zélie, 2020d). Comments frequently include customer opinions, suggestions for product improvements, and inquiries, such as questions about size availability. When initiating a dialogue, Marie Zélie anticipates and often partakes in the ensuing discussion, or at least acknowledges comments with a reaction. The brand responds to all types of feedback, including negative comments or criticisms, offering explanations or commitments to improvement. Complimentary comments typically receive a simple but appreciative ‘super’ reaction. The interaction between the company and its female customers is more prevalent on Facebook than on Instagram.

Activity on Facebook has been consistently higher than on Instagram, escalating as the company grew, likely due to its larger fan base on this platform. After the online shop’s launch, posts were made with relative regularity, typically one per day or at most every few days. From July 2019 to June 2020, the posting frequency increased to 2-3 posts per day. In contrast, Marie Zélie’s initial activity on Instagram was less consistent. Posts were sporadic following the brand’s official launch, varying from daily to every few days. However, over time, the posting frequency on Instagram increased, reaching a pattern of two posts per day between 25 July 2019 and 16 June 2020.

Vesna’s social media promotion strategy analysis

In assessing Vesna’s presence on social networks, it is evident that Facebook was the primary platform for its promotional efforts. Since the brand’s inception, Vesna posted 42 updates on its Facebook page, which include changes to the profile picture and cover photo. The Facebook page, also named Vesna, was established shortly before the brand’s official launch, on 18 July 2019. As of 22 February 2021, the page had accumulated 545 likes and 567 followers. In total, 47 photos were shared on the page. The cover photo was changed eight times, marking various occasions like participation in the Bakalie fair. In its first year, Vesna posted just one video.

The majority of Vesna’s Facebook posts were informative, aimed at showcasing the product range. These included announcements about promotions, discount codes, or the company’s participation in exhibition events. The posts often contained links to the website (12 posts) or to specific dress models (3 posts), with a maximum of one link per post.

Vesna did not use its social media to pre-announce its market entry or to build anticipation for its products. The profile picture (the brand name and logo on a white background) was updated two days after the account’s creation, on 20 July 2019 (Vesna, 2019a).

Further activity on Facebook coincided with the brand’s launch day. A new cover photo was added (Vesna, 2019b), and three posts were published. One of these posts shared content from ‘fotografia i film dla biznesu’ (‘obiektywni.pro - photography and film for business’), a fanpage

managed by photographers who worked with Vesna for product shoots and videos (Vesna, 2019c). Interestingly, it was these photographers who first announced the launch of the new Polish fashion brand on their profile, two days before Vesna's official launch. On the launch day itself, Vesna released a "Lookbook - Summer 2019" video showcasing all the dresses from its first summer collection (Vesna, 2019d). This video provided potential customers with a view of how the dresses appeared in motion, in different lighting, and during regular wear.

Vesna collaborated with a blogger to promote one of its dresses. The company 'reposted' a post from the *majjstyle.co.uk* fanpage, inviting followers to read the review, and shared another post by the blogger referencing the brand. However, both posts received only a few likes.

The final post, identical on both Facebook and Instagram, was published on 16 June 2020. It announced the suspension of the shop's operations and the brand's transition, promising a return to the Polish clothing market and providing a new email address. On Facebook, this post garnered 12 positive reactions and two comments showing affection for the brand (Vesna, 2020a), while on Instagram, it received 18 likes and one comment (Vesna, 2020b).

Most posts had at least a few shares, indicating efforts to disseminate information beyond the immediate followers, but the low number of reactions suggests these efforts were not as effective as desired. On Facebook, comments were predominantly from individuals, usually women, with no input from other companies or organizations. The comments and reactions indicated a positive perception of the company throughout its operation. Although Vesna did not build a large community, it garnered a few loyal customers who actively followed and engaged with the brand. However, the limited reach and audience engagement were evident, as posts often failed to reach even those following the page.

On Instagram, operating under *vestnastorecom*, Vesna used the same brand logo as its profile picture. The bio highlighted the motto "We dress special moments", new email information, and the ongoing transformation and revamping of the online shop. As of 22 February 2021, Vesna had 132 followers and followed 51 accounts, including individuals, bloggers, and other companies or organizations (e.g., *buyspolskieprodukty*). The brand posted a total of 31 posts and was tagged in 14 posts by other users. Like on Facebook, Vesna did not pre-announce its market entry on Instagram. The first post, made on the launch day, 25 July 2019 (Vesna, 2019g), included an invitation to the website and Facebook fanpage.

The photos on Vesna's social media predominantly showcased the brand's products, with only seven photos on Instagram not featuring dresses. On Instagram, the focus was more on the details of the dresses. Vesna also shared behind-the-scenes glimpses, like sketches of garment designs and images of packaging orders for shipping. Informative posts with minimalist graphics and text received fewer likes. All photos of the dresses were taken in natural settings, either outdoors or in styled indoor environments, deviating from typical studio product photography. The brand aimed to demonstrate how the dresses fit into everyday life and various styles.

Despite having fewer followers on Instagram (132) compared to Facebook (567), posts on Instagram received more likes, averaging 21 per post. The total number of comments on Instagram, including brand responses, was 39, averaging roughly one comment per post. However, 15 posts received no comments, with the others getting between one and four comments.

For Vesna, social media served as the primary communication channel with fans and potential customers. The company actively responded to most comments, showing eagerness to interact with users. Vesna consistently liked comments on Instagram or offered positive responses on Facebook and addressed negative feedback by explaining any issues raised. The brand's approach to engaging users involved initiating conversations through questions in posts, such as "How do you like them?", and including well-wishing phrases like "Have a good Sunday!".

Vesna's posting schedule was irregular from the outset. On Facebook, only four posts were made on the launch day, followed by posts every few days, typically one per day and occasionally two. One month after the launch, the posting frequency decreased to once a week. Activity declined significantly at the end of December 2019, with a two-month gap before the next post, and a three-month gap before another. Less than a month later, the final post was shared. A similar pattern was observed on Instagram. Initially, Vesna was more active on Facebook, but activity on Instagram increased towards the end of the brand's operation.

Conclusions

For both Vesna and Marie Zélie, Facebook emerged as the principal online marketing communication platform. This preference was supported by the larger audience they garnered on Facebook compared to Instagram. Intriguingly, despite the larger following on Facebook, both brands experienced a higher average number of likes on Instagram posts. However, Facebook led in terms of comments, indicating that it served as a more interactive space for dialogue between the companies and their consumers.

For Marie Zélie, the most-liked posts did not differ significantly from the general content. On both Instagram and Facebook, posts showcasing specific products or designs garnered the most likes, with images featuring mothers or entire families also gaining popularity. For Vesna, the most popular posts were those published shortly after the brand's launch, highlighting their product range and activities such as industry events.

The comments under both companies' posts were predominantly from individuals, mainly women, with occasional contributions from friendly companies or bloggers. At both Marie Zélie and Vesna, the social media teams actively engaged with users, answering questions and participating in customer dialogues. The majority of posts were informative, providing updates on discounts, new arrivals, etc. Both brands employed a strategy of engaging fans by posing various questions in posts related to their products and sometimes unrelated to the brand. However, these queries did not always elicit responses and did not significantly affect the popularity of the posts.

Marie Zélie demonstrated consistent and active engagement on social media from the outset. Posts were published regularly, maintaining an optimal frequency – two to three per day on Facebook and one to two per day on Instagram. Vesna's primary shortcoming was the lack of frequency and regularity in content publishing, possibly due to a deficit of compelling ideas and visual material for the audience.

A notable strategic difference between the two brands was Marie Zélie's approach to announcing its market entry several months in advance on both platforms. This period was utilized to gather potential customers, gradually introducing them to the upcoming brand and building anticipation for the launch of its first collection. In contrast, Vesna's initial posts on both platforms coincided with the brand's launch day, addressing a significantly smaller audience.

On the Facebook and Instagram profiles of both companies, similar materials were often posted. At Vesna, some posts were identical, while others used the same photo with different descriptions, alongside unique posts. Marie Zélie frequently repurposed photographs with varied descriptions, sometimes posting the same photos at considerable intervals. A common tactic was to post photos from the same session separately over time. This approach allowed for a broad use of visuals from a single session, providing ample content, especially beneficial during times like the pandemic when new production was limited.

The analysis suggests that Marie Zélie executed a more effective social media marketing strategy. Its activities resonated with the audience, garnering a substantial following on Facebook

and Instagram. The content published by Marie Zélie stimulated significant user interaction, including reactions and comments. The brand's social media success contributed to an increase in followers, consumer interest in the brand and its products, company growth, and expansion of its product range, as evidenced by social media posts and updates on the company blog.

Marie Zélie's approach to social media involved regular, engaging posts and maintaining polite dialogue with the audience, including addressing negative comments. The content was original, interesting, and effectively utilized various forms of communication available on the platforms, such as photos, videos, Boomerang, InstaStories, and the then-available IGTV. Content was predominantly unique, with minimal duplication across platforms. The brand's collaboration with influencers on Instagram and investment in paid Facebook advertising align with what many researchers deem essential for brand promotion on social media (Falls & Deckers, 2011, pp. 58-59; Stawarz-Garcia, 2018, p. 94; Żukowski, 2018, p. 34). Additionally, Marie Zélie hired a dedicated person for social media management early in its operation. Effective social media promotion can offer numerous benefits, contributing significantly to a brand's market success. Marie Zélie has demonstrated sustained success over the years and is on track to become a premium global brand.

The fashion industry offers the opportunity to present a brand and its products in an attractive manner, creating aesthetically pleasing and inspiring content that is valuable to viewers. Companies can utilize a range of modern solutions to build a bond with customers. For researchers, the promotional tactics of small companies with modest advertising budgets are particularly interesting. Despite using the same advertising media and tools, some brands quickly achieve their promotional goals, while others never gain the expected popularity, and all attempts at customer acquisition fail. Social media has been a constant, and in some cases dominant, element of companies' marketing strategies for the past decade or so. As social networks develop and evolve, the forms and available promotional tools change, making it necessary to continuously examine the issue of brand promotion in social media. A detailed analysis of the communication strategies used by fashion brands on social media platforms allows a better understanding of the complex structure of promotion in this industry. Identifying the most effective practices can help improve marketing efforts and strengthen the competitive position of brands in the dynamic social media environment. In the future, it would be worth paying attention to whether companies are adapting their strategies to changes and current trends, whether brands attempt to stand out from the ever-growing competition and build their unique image, and how Polish niche brands compare with foreign companies with a similar business profile.

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