

Using social networks in business

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Abstract. Social media platforms and channels are being increasingly used nowadays, influencing almost all types of businesses. Social media are mainly used as a source of information and means of dissemination of knowledge that may change the opinions of people. They can be considered very important business marketing strategies since they participate significantly in creating new business opportunities, building a stronger position in the market, or in the transformation of consumer behaviour. The main goal of the paper is to determine which social networks are most commonly used in business and their purpose. To achieve the goal, the method of questionnaire survey was used, in which a total of 237 respondents participated. The results of the survey show that business entities mostly use Instagram in their business activities, mainly for promoting their company, which was followed by Facebook, through which they sell their products or attract new employees. In addition, companies also use social networks as a communication channel with employees or customers.

Keywords: Communication, society, social media, customers, advertising

1 Introduction

Today's time is characterized by various innovations and modern technologies, including social networks, which can be considered an integral part of everyday life [1]. In nearly all parts of the world, countless people, both young and adult, old or even retired use social networks on everyday basis. Today, practically every person has the opportunity to communicate via computer, notebook, tablet, smart phone, etc. with any person registered on a given social network [2].

Social media is a global phenomenon that is used daily by several billion users. Obada and Dabija [3], see social media as a means of communication and uniting people around the world, which enable people to learn about new customs and cultures and enhance mass dissemination of information among people (sharing videos and photos, job offers, reviews, etc.). Recently, they have been widely applied in the business activities of business entities. According to [4], the influence of social media enters all aspects of human life, both personal and professional. Business entities try to use the power of social media mainly for the promotion of their products, building their brand, or attracting new customers. Social networks help in building the loyalty of the existing customers to the point that they will

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voluntarily and for free increase the awareness of the qualities of a given company. Possible users of social networks include both individuals and groups of employees or marketing managers themselves.

Pavliček [5] states that the adoption of social networks by companies in recent years has enabled creating new and more interesting social networks. Any social network is based on common interests, family ties, or other more pragmatic reasons, such as economic, political, or cultural interests. The main reason for business entities to use social networks in their business activities is the extent of the field of their activities. An example can be Facebook with the number of users exceeding two billion.

There is no doubt that social networks in general open new challenges and opportunities but on the other hand, they may also pose threats and misused opportunities [6].

The main goal of the presented paper is to identify the social networks most used in business and their purpose.

To achieve the set goal, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: For what purposes do companies use social networks?

RQ2: What communication channels do companies use?

2 Literature research

The present turbulent development of information technologies forces companies to adapt to the current trends in their business activities, especially those concerning IT [7]. This applies even more to business entities that carry out their business activities in the online environment. One of the most used and pronounced current trends include social networks [8].

As Tiwasing [9], states, the term social networks/social media emerged quite recently in connection with the emergence of various technologies such as RSS and blogs and online resources (on-line social networks, video hosting, etc.). Although the above-mentioned technologies might seem not to have much in common, this is not entirely the case, as all of them serve to facilitate the exchange of information between users compared to the technology of the previous generation when the Internet consisted predominantly of static pages [10].

According to Jurišová [11], social media have several basic typical features. Specifically, the author states that social media stimulate users to communicate, respond or provide feedback for everyone connected. Social media can be seen as an open system with almost no barriers, providing two-way communication; support effective communication of communities [12].

Rakshit et al. [13], argue that social networks can be used by companies as a way of advertising, employee communication, or as an intermediary between a company and a customer or potential customer.

Social networks enable people to keep in touch with their friends, share their experiences, or even find work. Although social networks might appear to be at their top and not evolving further, it is not true. Social networks are still one of the fastest growing internet environments, oriented not only towards individuals and groups but also an effective tool for internet marketing [14].

The following text briefly describes some of the existing social networks.

One of these networks is e.g. the social platform Facebook. Facebook can be seen as a means to satisfy the human need for sharing, for having something in common, including everyday activities [15]. Facebook is not only a page for posting but also a platform, a place where it is possible to run various smaller applications [16]. Social network LinkedIn

aims to create a professional network that would enable increasing the connectivity of contacts between individual employees and establish closer contact between them. LinkedIn was initially intended for finding contacts with people we need through people we already know and trust. According to [17], it enables creating a professional identity on the Internet and finding and obtaining job offers. LinkedIn provides numerous advantages that can be used for professional development and starting the desired career. It enables creating professional profile, uploading CV and the information about education and work experience and thus attracting potential employers and obtain the desired job [18]. Social network Twitter was created in 2006 and works on the basis of the so-called microblogs. Microblogs are short messages whose length does not exceed 140 characters. This network was primarily intended for travelling people so that they could quickly share their experiences through mobile phones or other devices [19].

Another very popular social network is Instagram, a free application for sharing photos and videos available for iPhones and Android devices. People can use Instagram to share photos and videos with their followers or selected groups of friends. There are also used so-called hashtags that enable easier search for the content with the same topics [20].

3 Data and methods

The basic data source was the responses to questions asked within the first questionnaire survey, which aimed at achieving the set goal of the paper presented. The effectiveness of the research results to a certain extent depends on a suitably chosen sample of interviewed respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to 247 social network users, and a total of 237 completed questionnaires was obtained.

The questionnaire was created using websites, specifically survio.com, and consisted of 8 questions. For convenience, the respondents could choose from the proposed options. The structure of the questionnaire is as follows: in the introductory part, the respondent is informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and its approximate length, with included request for the completion of the questionnaire by the respondent. The first three questions are general: the questions from the fourth one concern the issue of social networks.

The second data source is another questionnaire, which was created for an unnamed company. Based on this questionnaire, it was found which social networks are used by companies and for what purpose, whether they use social networks only within the company, whether they are available for their customers, and whether they use them to sell their products.

All answers will be processed graphically and then interpreted.

4 Results

The first question aimed to determine whether social networks are more used by men or women (see Figure 1).

As seen below, social networks are more used by women (133 women) compared to 104 men; the difference is thus not significant.

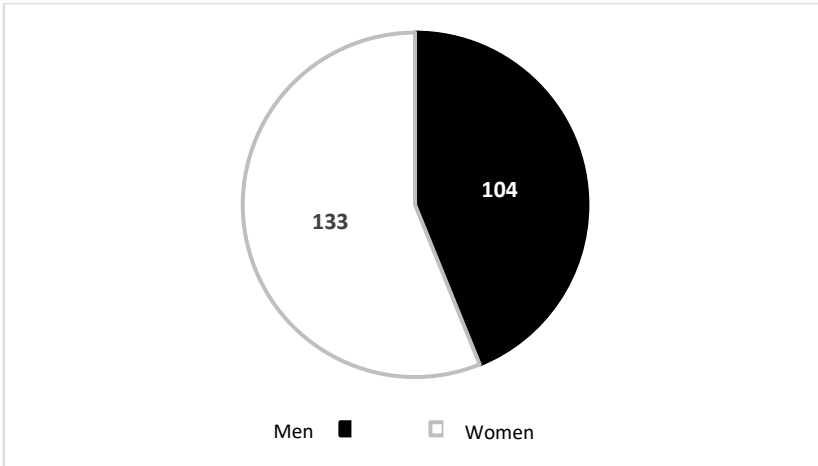


Fig. 1. Social network users.

Source: Own processing.

Furthermore, it was determined by which age groups are the social networks most used. The group aged 18-24 dominated the largest share of social network usage. The age group 17 and under and 25 - 34 were in the background. These groups were the focal point for gathering information and evaluating data. The 45-54 and 55-64 age groups do not use social networks so significantly to increase the rating of businesses. The last group of 65+ does not participate in the use of social networks almost at all.

The responses to this question are graphically processed in Figure 2.

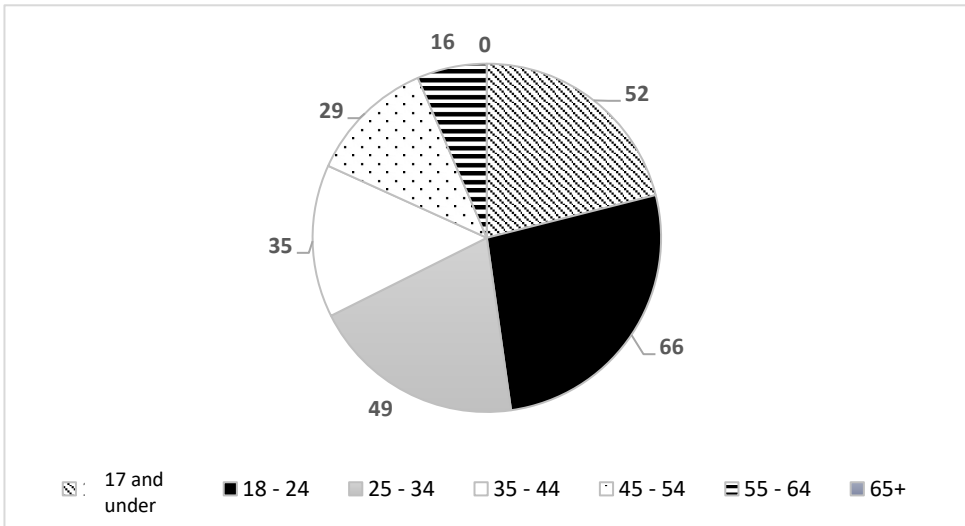


Fig. 2. Age structure of social networks users.

Source: Own processing.

The third question focused on the most used social networks. The responses can be seen in Figure 3.

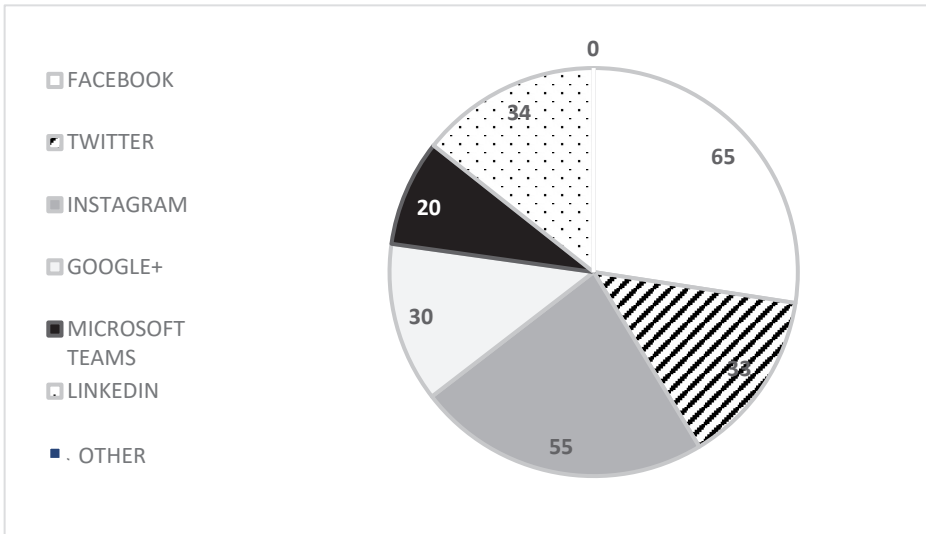


Fig. 3. Social networks used by the respondents.

Source: Own processing.

Figure 3 shows that the most commonly used social networks are Facebook (65 respondents) followed by Instagram (55 respondents) and Microsoft Teams (20 respondents).

The next part of the questionnaire focused on information concerning the issue obtained from an unnamed company, i.e., which social networks the company uses. The rest of the platforms are used less by the respondents, in which LinkedIn, Google+ and others were evaluated. The responses are processed graphically in Figure 4.

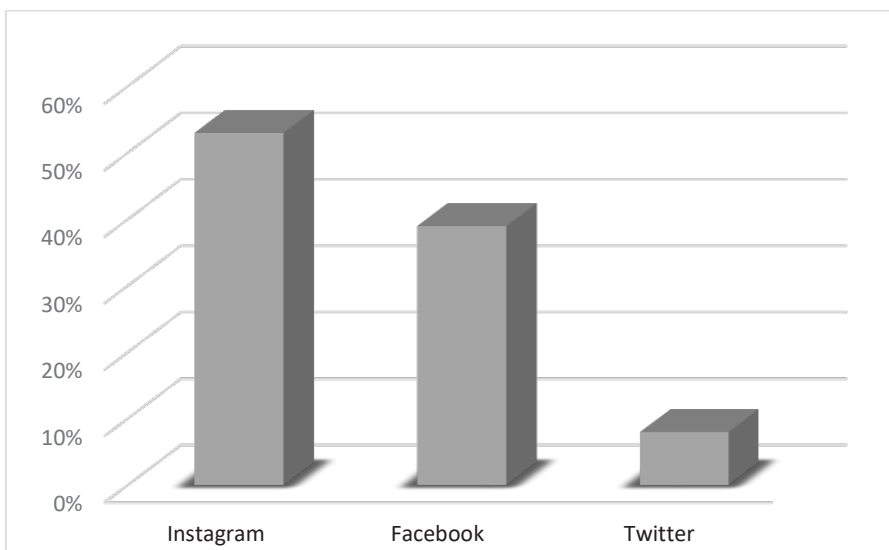


Fig. 4. Social networks used by the addressed company.

Source: Own processing.

As can be seen in the figure, the company mostly uses Instagram, Facebook, and sometimes Twitter, out of which Instagram represents the largest share. Instagram is used by the company both for promotion and to obtain feedback from customers, which means that Instagram enables the evaluation of its functioning. Facebook is used for recruiting new employees, posting vacancies, and also for selling its products. Twitter is the least used platform, used by companies for the purposes of posting microblogs but not very often.

Figure 5 below shows the purpose of using social networks as interpreted above.

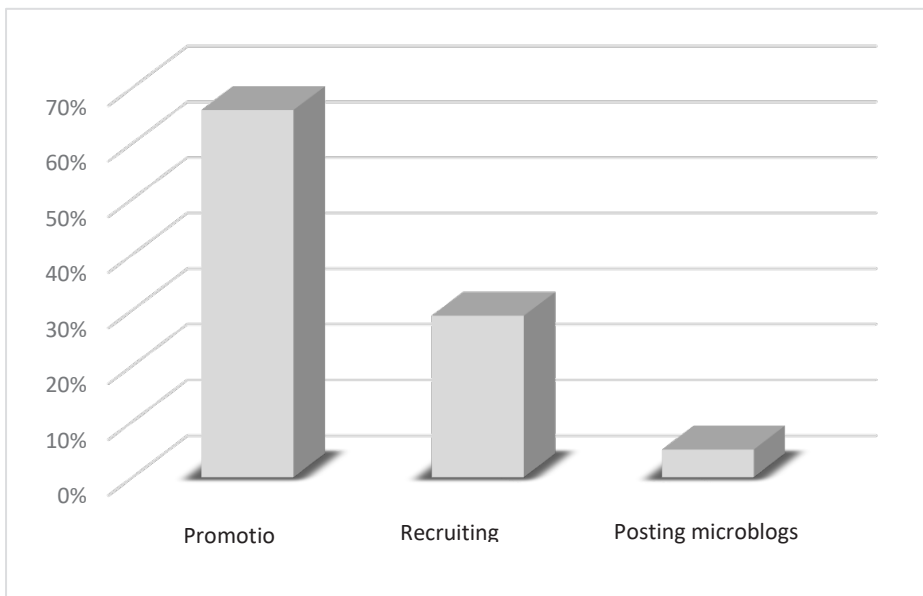


Fig. 5. Purpose of using social networks.

Source: Own processing.

5 Discussion of Results

Based on the obtained results, it is possible to answer the formulated research questions concerning for what purpose the company addressed uses social networks. The company uses social networks mostly for the promotion of the company in order to increase its competitiveness among other companies.

The research shows that the most widely used platform for this purpose is Instagram, where the company has its account and publishes various posts concerning new information about the company, successes, or who is interested in the company. It is also possible to obtain feedback from its customers, who can evaluate the company, add reviews and comments, follow the posts and share them with their friends. Furthermore, it was found that the company uses Facebook for selling its products or for recruiting new employees. It has the opposite effect when customers or potential employees share the posts concerning either vacancies or products being sold. The last platform used by the company is Twitter, which serves mainly for sharing short posts not exceeding 140 characters, which are also referred to as microblogs.

The communication channels used by the company include Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. A business could focus on other social media platforms, but that would require much more extensive management and care. The most important point is communication with customers to create comfort and an active approach regarding their satisfaction. The use of

social networks increases consumer perceptions of mutual involvement in customer purchases of goods or services. Customer reviews, discussion forums and product scores provide important data for rating overview. The collection of information further informs customer decision-making. The question remains of whether the company should focus on other applications besides the promotion of the company, either communication with customers or communication among employees, which is an important step for the prosperity of the company.

6 Conclusion

This post aims to provide answers to questions that the lay public usually cannot answer, i.e., what social networks companies use and for what purpose. In our article, it was found that social networks can be used to promote a company. Representations of the most used platforms according to the results were shown in the graph, where the highest user rank was occupied by Facebook and Instagram. The platforms LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Microsoft Teams and others were placed in the background. The main reasons for companies using social networks were represented in a bar graph, where the most important activity of the companies was their promotion of the company. In other words, companies want to achieve the highest possible visibility on the competition market. Another reason was regarding the recruitment of new employees for agreeing certain dates for recruitment interviews. There are still a lot of people who are unaware of this fact or unfamiliar with the subject; even users of social networks often do not think to investigate this issue in more detail. This post may be of benefit to people who have never considered using social media for this purpose or to people who do not use social media at all. Based on the use of social networks, people can obtain a lot of information and opportunities, whether work or otherwise. Perhaps it would be appropriate to carry out further research, which would also cover the negative effects of social networks.

The aim of the contribution was to identify social networks used by companies and their purpose. The purpose of the post has been met. Data obtained from a questionnaire survey of distributed users of social networks and unnamed companies was analyzed and processed. The questionnaire was created through the website survio.com, where the options of possible answers were also obtained.

The obtained results were analyzed and evaluated in the Discussion. According to the analysis, the companies should improve communication to achieve even better results. At the end, the benefits of the submitted contribution and recommendations for possible further research were presented.

The main limitation of the research was that the approached companies were not willing to share internal information. It was therefore necessary to modify one of the questionnaires to obtain some information.

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