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SOCIAL MEDIA IN A BRAND AND IMAGE MANAGEMENT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MEDIA SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWE W ZARZĄDZANIU MARKĄ I WIZERUNKIEM FIRM W PERSPEKTYWIE PANDEMII COVID-19

Abstract: The objective of the article is to identify the approaches presented in the subject literature on the possibilities of social media marketing used by companies in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic to manage their brand and image. As a research method the review of the national and world scientific literature was adopted, concerning the use of social media (in terms of: (1) the role of social media in supporting corporate brand and image management, (2) behavior and trust of customers using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, (3) the use of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic and their opportunities – the table study 1) as well as Internet sources and Internet data statistics were utilized, primarily the reports which were used to obtain the answer to the formulated research question: what changes have taken place during the pandemic in using social media in corporate brand and image management? It was indicated what social media are most frequently used by marketers in image management, what opportunities they provide and whether, in the face of the existing pandemic situation, changes in company budgets can be expected in relation to the allocation of funds for e-marketing activities and what forecasts for corporate brand and image management in the online world are.

Keywords: social media, brand, image, marketing, management, COVID-19

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie podejść prezentowanych w literaturze przedmiotu dotyczących możliwości social media marketingu wykorzystywanego przez firmy w dobie pandemii COVID-19 do zarządzania swoją marką i wizerunkiem. Za metodę badawczą przyjęto systematyczny przegląd literatury naukowej krajowej i światowej, dotyczącej korzystania social mediów (w ujęciu: (1) roli social mediów we wspieraniu zarządzania wizerunkiem firmy, (2) zachowania i zaufania klientów korzystających z social mediów w czasie pandemii COVID-19, (3) zastosowania social mediów w czasie pandemii COVID-19 i ich możliwości – opracowanie tabela 1), wykorzystano także źródła internetowe oraz internetowe statystyki danych, głównie raporty, które posłużyły do uzyskania odpowiedzi na postawione pytanie badawcze: jakie zmiany dokonały się podczas pandemii w korzystaniu social mediów w zarządzaniu marką i wizerunkiem firmy? Wskazano, z jakich social mediów najczęściej korzystają marketerzy w zarządzaniu wizerunkiem, jakie dają one możliwości oraz czy wobec zaistniałej sytuacji pandemicznej można spodziewać się zmian w budżetach firm odnośnie do przeznaczenia funduszy na działanie e-marketingowe oraz jakie są prognozy zarządzania wizerunkiem firmy w sieci.

Słowa kluczowe: social media, marka, wizerunek, marketing, zarządzanie, COVID-19

Introduction

The modern technologies, communication techniques and distribution channels has changed people's daily lives. The most popular place to exchange information is the Internet nowadays[1]. Rapid progress forces its users to constantly learn and update their knowledge in order to effectively move in the virtual space. The society is able to use the Internet to pursue their various interests, e.g., education,

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[1] E. Leszczyńska, *Polacy w sieci. Analiza przemian użytkowania Internetu*, Publisher Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2019, p. 7.

communication, searching for curiosities, socializing, shopping and currently, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily for work.

Laato et al.[2] presented the summary of the literature on the impact of the pandemic on human behavior, and they concluded that the researchers gave not much attention to the impact of the pandemic on consumer behavior. The research focused primarily on the impact of the pandemic on the behavior in terms of preventive health care. From the marketer's point of view, slightly different information is important. For example, it is worth pinpointing that the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to obtain valuable information on customer behavior in a situation of uncertainty, what is important to them? what marketing activities occurring in social media they respond to? and whether information in social media shared by companies correspond with their needs? etc. Undoubtedly, these and other issues will be analyzed by researchers for a long time after the pandemic ends. On the other hand, in this article, the attention will be drawn primarily to the analysis of the use of social media marketing for corporate image management. However, it should be noted that an attempt to use COVID-19 for the purposes of corporate image management through social media posts can be encouraging, therefore, marketers need to develop communication strategies that will help them to establish contacts with customers more than ever before[3].

1. Literature review

Social media marketing towards brand and image management-pandemic requirements

Nowadays, social media are widely used by companies to advertise and promote themselves online, they have become a commonly used marketing tool[4]. In the last decade the use of social media has significantly increased[5], and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of social media among e.g., elderly people[6]. When

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[2] S. Laato, A. Najmul Lslam, A. Farooq, A. Dhir, *Unusual purchasing behavior during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic: The stimulus-organismresponse approach*, „Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services" 2020, vol. 57:102224, pp. 1-12.

[3] A. Kumar, A. Nishu, *Technology Adoption: A Solution for SMEs to Overcome Problems during COVID-19*, „Forthcoming, Academy of Marketing Studies Journal" 2020, vol. 25, Issue 1, pp. 1-16.

[4] A.A. Alalwan, N.P. Rana, Y.K. Dwivedi, R. Algharabat, *Social media in marketing: a review and analysis of the existing literature*, „Telemat. Inform." 2017, vol. 34 (7), pp. 1177-1190; K.K. Kapoor, K. Tamilmani, N.P. Rana, P. Patil, Y.K. Dwivedi, S. Nerur, *Advances in social media research: past, present and future*, „Inf. Syst. Front." 2018, vol. 20 (3), pp. 531-558; N. Misirlis, M. Vlachopoulou, *Social media metrics and analytics in marketing – S3M: a mapping literature review*, „Int. J. Inf. Manag." 2018, vol. 38 (1), pp. 270-276.

[5] S. Thota, *Social media: A conceptual model of the why's, when's and how's of consumer usage of social media and implications on business strategies*, „Academy of Marketing Studies Journal" 2018, 22(3), pp. 1-12.

[6] A. Samet, *2020 US social media usage: How the coronavirus is changing consumer behawior*, „Business Insider" 2020, June 9, Retrieved November 9.

assuming that the overarching objective of the contact with the environment is to create a reliable image of the company, it is necessary to respond to the questions what the current state of the image is and what the expected effect is to be? There are often differences between how the company evaluates its image and how it is actually perceived by the environment[7]. The concept of corporate brand and image is understood interchangeably with the words 'reputation' and 'identity', however, these concepts are subordinate. Image is an overarching concept, consisting of loyalty, reliability, and credibility, which consists of reputation as a narrower concept. Image is undoubtedly a complex and in a sense abstract and heterogenous category, taking into account the nature of factors that influence it, including primarily the perspective of the perception of the company by various customers[8].

In order to achieve the intended objectives, each company must be sure of its identity and manage its brand and image in a uniform manner. The company brand and image stability is important since it provides an opportunity for greater favor of stakeholders[9]. Social media have opened up new opportunities to create innovative marketing strategies for corporate brand and image management, focused on establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders based on the constructive dialogue. Most companies relatively rapidly found themselves in a new reality and attempted to make the best use of the possibilities of the network to improve their image[10]. The study conducted by Kantar, entitled COVID-19 Barometer, indicates that companies ought to pay attention to the manner they communicate with their customers at this particular time, which may also contribute to the enhancement of their own worth and mission. The research has also shown what marketing activities are expected by customers nowadays[11]: 78% expect brands to provide real help in their daily life, 75% want to be informed on the activities of brands during the pandemic (e.g., on the adjustment of the points of sail), 74% also think that brands should not use this situation directly to make profits.

[7] N.N.K. Yasa, I.G.A.D. Adnyani, P.L.D. Rahmayanti, *The influence of social media usage on the perceived business value and its impact on business performance of Silver Craft Smes in Celuk Village, Gianyar Bali*, „Academy of Strategic Management Journal" 2020, vol. 19, iss. 1, pp. 1-10.

[8] S. Dokmaipum., N. Khantanapha, R. Piriyakul, *Corporate Image Management of Retail Business (Downstream)*, Open „Journal of Business and Management" 2019, vol. 7, pp. 892-907; A.M. Wiśniewska, *Mechanizm oddziaływania wizerunku marki na zachowania konsumentów*, AUNCE, Toruń 2012, p. 190.

[9] T.C. Okoisama, E.C. Best, S.A. Anyanwu, *Corporate image management and firm's competitive advantage: a study of the telecommunication industry in port harcourt*, „International Journal of Advanced Academic Research, Social & Management Sciences" 2017, vol. 3, iss. 6, pp. 16-31.

[10] https://www.ideoforce.pl/wiedza/marketing-w-czasach-zarazy-koronawirusa,375.html [online access: 12.12.2021].

[11] *COVID-19 Barometr* (2020), https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Barometer-Consumer-attitudes-media-habits-and-expectations [online access: 13.12.2021].

The above expectations have also become an ideal manner to manage the company's image and to create unique assets of companies[12]. The study of COVID-19 Barometr 2020, indicates that companies are more likely to use the social media platform which provide them with an ideal channel of communication with customers. The publication of valuable content on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn is currently the basis for the operations of every company. However, the attention should be drawn to the currently prevailing principle, i.e., when promoting the product, one should not arouse fear or other negative feelings[13] since this is what the pandemic time is particularly associated with, this could bring the effect opposite to the desired one. Therefore, the published content should be comforting in order to arouse the feeling of support for the recipient.

So far, there have been many publications concerning the use of social media marketing during the pandemic (in various terms), but only few have examined their connection to corporate image management during the pandemic. Generally, the most frequently addressed topics discussed by researchers (the review of the latest publications), related to social media marketing and coronavirus, concerned primarily the three areas: **(1)** the role of social media in supporting corporate brand and image management, **(2)** the behavior and trust of customers using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, **(3)** the use of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic and their possibilities. Table 1 presents an exemplary literature review focused on the above topics.

Table 1. Social media marketing in the era of COVID-19 in terms of various research approaches

Tabela 1. Social media marketing w dobie COVID-19 w różnych ujęciach badawczych

Discussed topics	Sources
(1)	(Abbas et al. 2021, pp. 1917-1932; Anand 2021; Mason et al. 2021, pp. 1-17; Bukhari W. 2020, pp. 59-60)
(2)	(Camilleri 2021, pp. 1-18; Fattah, Sujono 2020, pp. 180-191; Hongwei, Harris 2020 pp. 176-182; Knowles et al. 2020, pp. 2-6; Mason et al. 2021, pp. 1-17; Sathish et al. 2020, pp. 224-230; Susanto 2021; Wong et al. 2020; 12.Cinelli M., Quattrociocchi, W., Galeazzi, A. et al.)
(3)	(Brough, Martin 2021, pp. 108-110; Hayes 2020, pp. 1-9; Jacobson, Gruzdb, Hernández-Garcíac 2020; Laato et al. 2020, pp. 1-12; Llewellyn 2020, pp. 1-2; Naeem 2021, pp. 1-10; Naeem 2020; Sheth 2020, pp. 280-283)

Source: own research.

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[12] A. Sharma, D. Jhamb, *Changing consumer behaviours towards online shopping - an impact of COVID-19*, „Academy of Marketing Studies Journal" 2020, Arden, vol. 24, Issue 3, pp. 1-10.
[13] O.D. Apuke, B. Omar, *Fake News and COVID-19: Modelling the Predictors of Fake News Sharing Among Social Media Users*, „Telematics and Informatics" 2020, vol. 56

The review of the latest publications (Table 1) on social media marketing in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of various research approaches clearly indicates the research gap in the area of the analysis of the role of social media in supporting corporate image management during the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides researchers with many opportunities to prepare their future analyzes, relations and correlations with various phenomena under the influence of Covid-19.

2. Research method

The review of the latest national and world scientific literature on the use of social media in terms of three approaches was adopted as a research method. Moreover, Internet sources and Internet data statistics were utilized, primarily the reports which were used to obtain the answer to the formulated research question: (Q): what changes have taken place during the pandemic in using social media in corporate brand and image management? In the subsequent point, the analysis of the selected social media platforms will be carried out as well as their possibilities of building the company's brand and image and changes caused by Covid-19.

3. Reaserch results

Selected social media platform shaping the company's brand and image – changes due to COVID-19

Nowadays, social media play an important role in corporate brand and image management, they constantly extend their offer to new functions and new portals. Placing adverts on them is already a very common phenomenon and has become a tool to involve recipients, to arouse interest in offers and to promote the company and its products and also the company's image[14]. Which social media meet the greatest approval of users in the network? According to the research social media all over the world already counted in January 2021 – 4.20 billion user[15]. The research indicates that the most popular portal in the world in January 2021, according to the number of active accounts, was Facebook.

Facebook maintains the highest position in the social platform ranking in the world each year, and there is little indication that anything will change in this respect[16]. Also in Poland, the most frequently used social networks are Facebook, In-

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[14]   N.N.K. Yasa, I.G.A.D. Adnyani, P.L.D. Rahmayanti, *The influence of social media*…, p. 1-10.
[15]   Digital 2021: Global overview report (2021), https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report [online access: 20.12.2022].
[16]   M. Kostrzewska, *Facebook w kontekście komunikacji marketingowej lokalnych przedsiębiorstw ze szczecina – na podstawie badań własnych*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie" 2021, vol. 22(4), pp. 139-151.

stagram, and YouTube[17]. In the interest of mental health of users in the era of coronavirus, e.g. Snapchat is introducing its new Here for You feature earlier. Facebook has created a business help center[18]. They constantly push interaction due to functions such as sharing photos or a status and social games. Other social networks, such as Tumblr or Twitter, talk about rapid communication and are aptly called microblogs. Some social networks focus on the community, others emphasize and display usergenerated content.

Marketers planning communication in social media face a very wide selection of channels to effectively influence business development and strengthen the image of the organization. The criteria they should pay attention to when using social media for the above purposes are primarily[19]: (a) the size of the website (understood by the number of active users monthly, however, marketers should primarily select the channels used by their target group, which means that the largest website is not always the best choice); (b) possibilities of conducting marketing and advertising activities (will depend on the possibility of expansion and use of tools offered by the specific platform, e.g., whether they are fully paid or they use influencers); (c) the question of the possibility of measuring the impact of communication and advertising activities on the website on sales growth or strengthening the brand image in the customer's mind (when being driven by this criterion, one should consider several important measures: statistical and analytical data shared by individual platforms; the effectiveness of advertising activities measured based on internal data, but also translated into the actual sales of the product; additional external image research, carried out by a specialized company or an internal research and the analyses department of the organization). In view of the above, Table 2 presents the summary and comparison of selected social media meeting the above criteria.

[17] https://www.iab.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raport-Strategiczny-Internet-2019-2020. pdf [online access: 5.03.2021]; https://www.iab.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Social-Media-wczasachzarazy_20.04.2020.pdf [online access: 6.12.2021]; M. Lis, *Polacy w internecie. Jak korzystaliśmy z sieci w zeszłym roku*, Tabletowo, https://www.tabletowo.pl/jak-polacy-korzystali-z-sieci-w--2018-roku/, 2018 [online access: 3.12.2021].
[18] A. Semeniuk, *Kryzys time-marketingu. Marka w czasach pandemii. Nowa rzeczywistość oczami Schulz brand friendly*, 2020, https://www.schulz.com.pl/Marka_w_czasach_pandemii_Schulz.pdf [online access: 8.04.2020].
[19] IAB Przewodnik po Social Media w Polsce 2019-2020, https://www.iab.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/IAB-Przewodnik-po-Social-Media-w-Polsce-2019-2020-1.pdf [online access: 22.12.2021]; M. Kostrzewska, *Social media in the context of marketing innovations – based on own research among service companies from Szczecin*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Małopolskiej Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomicznej w Tarnowie" 2020, tom 47, nr 3, pp. 117-131.

Table 2. Described social media and their possibilities of building the brand and image of the company – changes caused by COVID-19

Tabela 2. Opisane social media i ich możliwości budowania marki i wizerunku firmy – zmiany spowodowane COVID-19

Facebook and Instagram
Facebook and Instagram are social networking sites which, in the perception of Internet users, usually function as two separate beings, however, the whole Facebook advertising ecosystem, in addition to these two, also consists of Messenger and an external advertising network Facebook Audience Network, from which advertisements are displayed on external websites and in selected mobile applications. Altogether, it is one of the most popular communication channels, attracting most Polish Internet users every day. Large ranges, the best cross-device targeting possibilities on the market, advanced analytics combined with external research solutions cause that the Facebook ecosystem can be described as one of the most mature communication channels – both organic and advertising. It is also a very good place to build a positive brand image. Fanpage provides great opportunities to present the company, products. Thematic groups are also a very good form to advertise activities. The portal allows for creating own separate community or joining an already existing one. It is enough to search for or create a group dealing with the specific field in which the company operates and add a promotional post. The mechanisms of Facebook and promotion in social media are effective. The assumption is that if new solutions work in smaller enterprises, they will also do in large corporations. In the face of the pandemic and temporary isolation, it is also one of those social networking sites we are most likely to use. Therefore, if companies have such an opportunity, they should decide on increasing the budget for paid marketing during the crisis. This is a unique moment to increase market share and reach customers for whom the company was previously unnoticed. On the other hand, on the Instagram platform, there is a function of Influencer Marketing, it is a person who is an expert in the specific area, has experience in it and it is their trademark. They regularly participate in social media and many people observe their actions. Influencers belong to one of the four groups: celebrities, experts and authorities in the specific industry, bloggers and content creators, micro-Influencers. The latter have become particularly activate since the beginning of the pandemic. Instagram provides a few manners to show the company and products. The first of them is to present the products sold by adding the link in the description, which cannot be clicked on directly from the application. On the other hand, it is possible to use tools to shorten the link so that it can be easily copied. Another option is to set up an account e.g., on bitly, which provides an opportunity to create own personalized link, which will be easier to remember and original. This type of links also includes discount coupons and promotions. The second way to present the company is to show it from the inside, i.e., the stages of how the specific thing is created or the progress of the service. In such an approach, there are no obstacles to show employees who are working on something, what the company looks like and how it is developing. Another method is to insert educational and motivational posts. An educational post may show how to do something, e.g., bake a cake or do hair, whereas a motivational one may show a guiding motto or inspiring words, which are important to the specific field. The last of the recommended techniques is to show customers' posts with products or provided services and marked with the company hashtag. In this way, the base of customers satisfied with services can be built. The applications such as Repost of Instagram operating in both androids and IOS serve this purpose. Instagram in Poland has been developing dynamically and the situation with the coronavirus has further strengthened its position. From the brand's perspective, it is Instagram that ensures less formal communication with the target group, which in the case of the closure of stationary outlets makes it even more important as a communication channel. Currently, Instagram encourages users to contact online as directly as possible, i.e. Instagram Live

YouTube
YouTube is one of the oldest video sharing services – it was created in 2005. According to the data by Gemius (Gemius/PBI maj 2019), YouTube.com is the third most visited website in Poland. The platform which, in organic terms, allows for the publication of videos and discussions about them, provides marketers with numerous opportunities to conduct communication activities: from owned media – own channel through cooperation with influencers – youtubers to paid media – various advertising formats (among others, of the pre-roll type). All expert forecasts indicate an increase in video consumption in subsequent years, thus the Youtube position seems to be strong. The spectrum of possibilities is very large. Everything depends on the concept and ideas. Important principles in this regard are to find a distinctive feature of the company against the background of other companies and also to consider what is important to the public to prevent them from being indifferent to the posts, success, particularly taking into account the fact that people are reluctant to go through external links to other services. Since the beginning of the coronavirus YouTube has additionally launched a bookmark on the home page with current information about COVID-19 provided by verified sources. For advertisers, this time represents a larger audience focused in front of Youtube.

Twitter
Twitter is the most popular social networking service in the world for instant communication in a short and compact form – initially purely textual, but the role of multimedia has increased significantly over time (including live video broadcasts). There are more than 6 million Twitter users in Poland. The channel popular with journalists, politicians, press spokespersons – the first position where users search for immediate information (crucial for Real Time Marketing and crisis communication), also used in Public Affairs activities. Twitter has dynamically adjusted itself to the situation related to COVID-19. It has proven to be a credible source of information on the pandemic, providing up-to-date statistics on the coronavirus. But, equally important, twitter remains a great platform to show CSR activities or to transparently inform on the operations of the company during the epidemic.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn, i.e., business social network in its pure form – a place of building B2B relationships, expert communication and professional career development. In Poland, it has about 3.5 million users with male overrepresentation (about 2 million). The service is popular with middle and senior management (97% of managers using social media declare the use of LinkedIn). LinkedIn, like other platforms, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, sees an increase in user activity. It records a 55% increase in engagement compared to the previous year, 60% increase in content publication, 160% increase in the number of professionals joining educational groups.

Snapchat
Snapchat is a mobile application for sending videos and photos. After the initial success, the characteristic functions of Snapchat were implemented on Instagram and later on Facebook – as "Stories". As a result, there is a gradual shift of users worldwide towards the functions proposed by Instagram and Facebook, and the total number of Snapchat users in the world began to decline. However, it remains an important channel for reaching younger target groups and it records a steady increase in Poland (by about 30% per year). With almost 2.5 million real users in Poland, it occupies the 4th position among social networking applications examined by Gemius/PBI (after Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram). The level of engagement on Snapchat has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially between close friends. An increased activity on the platform can be certainly considered as an opportunity. Nowadays, there are much more opportunities to reach potential customers on Snapchat and present a useful and empathic side of the brand to them, thus improving own image. For some marketers, this can be an opportunity to begin advertising activities on this channel.

Pinterest
Pinterest started nearly a decade ago and it has been available in Polish since the end of 2013. The website is to "pin" interesting user content in the form of a cork board. After the initial boom and then a few years of low growth dynamics, the website is growing again in Poland, reaching the level of approximately 2.8 million real users and the range of almost 10% in December 2018 (a year earlier – 2.3 million and 8.3%). The service allows companies to create busines accounts and provides tools directly supporting e-commerce. During the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly beauty category brands and micro-entrepreneurs providing hairdressing and beauty services began to use Pinterest seriously, both in organic, paid and social SEO activities. It turned out to be a good solution to create educational content, e.g., showing ways to have a home SPA.
TikTok
TikTok is a mobile application allowing users to share short video spots – about 15-second videos most often presenting dancing or singing. It is one of the youngest social networking sites, at the same time, the most dynamically developing one of this type, according to the available data. Among various platforms presented in this report, TikTok is the least penetrated by advertisers. The characteristic feature of the website is also the youngest user base. At the same time, from the perspective of metering and analytics, it is the platform that provides the smallest number of metrics. The present situation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic caused that the number of monthly active TikTok users increased in Poland to 2.8 million. Each sector: beauty, FMCG, banking, service, entertainment will find its target here.

Source: own research based on Gemius/PBI 12/2018 (2018), https://www.wirtualnemedia. pl/artykul/facebook-traci-na-zasiegu-w-polsce-mocno-w-gore-whatsapp-instagram-wy-kop-pinterest-i-tiktok-w-dol-google, [online access: 7.11.2021].

Reasearch question: what changes have taken place during the pandemic in using social media in corporate brand and image management? Answers:

- Some social media platforms (e.g., Youtube) have launched a bookmark on the home page with current information about COVID-19 provided by verified sources, for advertisers (companies), this meant a greater number of audiences e.g., in front of Youtube, which proved to be a great opportunity to take care of own image as a company caring for its customers and being up to date with the most important information about the pandemic.

- The pandemic isolation has led to an increase in the number of social media users, for many companies, the obvious move was to increase the budget for paid marketing during the crisis, it is also a unique moment to increase market share, improve own image and reach customers for whom the company was previously unnoticed.

- Twitter proved to be a great platform to show CSR activities or to transparently inform on the company's operations during the pandemic. The impact on the company's image like in the previous point.

- Some companies, with their users in mind, have engaged in creating educational groups and educational content, e.g., through Pinterest or LinkedIn. This is a good way to manage the image through care for the educational development of customers.

- Snapchat has also provided more occasions to reach potential customers and present the useful and empathic side of the brand to them, thus, to improve their image.

- Due to constant presence in the lives of users, social networks have a definitely strong social impact, which in turn translates into the possibilities of using social media to create the company's image, which is worth utilizing.

- A company that manages its image based on social media marketing should take care of several basic issues during the Covid-19 pandemic: take a closer look at your customers to assess their comfort level, refresh your brand to adapt to changing customer priorities, increase the exposure of your products thanks to intelligent marketing campaigns, ensure the clarity and transparency of messages on the platforms of selected media, take care of the improvement of digital sales, marketing activities and campaigns based on social data and their prior analysis.

- CMO Survey[20] in the USA indicates what changes in marketing activities marketers had to make, e.g., shifting resources to create better digital customer service interfaces (61%), the change in the strategy for reaching customers and achieving a competitive advantage (56%), new offers (42%) and new forms of co-operation (41%).

4. Forecasts for using social media for brand image management

The basis for success in using social media platforms in corporate brand and image management is primarily precise target setting, i.e., what the company wants to achieve advertising itself or contributing to social media? For example, a larger number of likes, comments or views can be established as a target. When building the image, the most important is to arouse an interest of future and current customers. Experts and marketers agree not to stop marketing activities in cyberspace during the COVID-19 pandemic and rather use it to activate new customers[21].

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[20]   Badanie CMO Survey w USA, https://www2.deloitte.com/pl/pl/pages/deloitte-digital/Articles/marketing-pandemia-cmo-wplyw-covid-na-kondycje-marketingu-2020-.html, 2020 [online access: 22.11.2021].

[21]   https://sprawnymarketing.pl/ [online access: 6.11.2021]; R.A. Rather, *Demystifying the effects of perceived risk and fear on customer engagement, co-creation and revisit intention during COVID-19: A protection motivation theory approach*, „Journal of Destination Marketing & Management" 2021, vol. 20, 100564; M. Kieżel, *Komunikacja marketingowa online w marketingu w czasie rzeczywistym w dobie pandemii COVID-19*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie" 2021, vol. 22(4), pp. 39-54.

More than half (58.4%) of the respondents predict that the expenses for social media will increase even more. The situation in the field of SEO (55.4%), Content marketing (49.5%) and SEM (47.5%) is similar. Despite the fact that currently not much attention is paid to Video marketing, it is believed that it will be used more frequently in the future. On the other hand, email marketing (15%) and Display advertising (11%) are increasingly irrelevant. The situation at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic is presented by the forecasts on increasing e-marketing expenses confirmed by detailed analyzes among marketing agencies and marketers conducted by IAB Poland[22] – based on the results of the latest study of April 2020. The results of this research indicate that the Internet will be the only medium which will not decline. Almost all the respondents working in agencies, advertisers, marketers changed their plans related to advertising expenditure scheduled for the first half of 2020 and thus the budget changes affected practically all digital communication channels.

It is also worth mentioning an important issue which marketers did not pay attention to at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, stopping those who wanted to make money "in the fear of the pandemic". Therefore, new conditions have arisen to be met by online marketing activities. Due to the overwhelming amount of information on portals concerning the coronavirus, within the framework of the brand safety trend, brands began to attract more attention to the context in which their advertising occurs and also to its content itself and graphic design. Facebook and Google began to impose blockades on companies which use the content related to COVID-19 in their messages. In practice, this means that, e.g., one may count on blocking an advertisement on Facebook, if it uses the image of a protective mask and, in fact, the company advertising is not the mask manufacturer.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Dissemination of information via social media, in particular advertising, indicates the great importance of Internet marketing as one of the most active and influential sources changing the attitudes or preferences of customers as well as creating the company's image. Social media are an important source of affecting purchasing behavior of consumers who share reviews of products, experiences with services and/or guidelines concerning the use of products. The results indicate the growing importance of social media as a marketing tool which has emerged since the time of the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presented secondary and literature studies provided strong evidence of the usefulness of social media for companies during the COVID-19 pandemic, both in order to maintain constant contact

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[22]　IAB Polska, Konsekwencje epidemii COVID-19 dla branży komunikacji reklamowej online, https://www.iab.org.pl/aktualnosci/raport-iab-polska-wplyw-pandemii-koronawirusa-na-branze-reklamy-online-2/ [online access: 7.11.2021].

with customers and strengthen their image. It seems that an efficient use of social media ought to be a part of the marketing strategy of each business. For example, visualizations in social media, content, promotional activities and using the impact of the opinion leader should be used to positively affect consumer behavior. Moreover, social media platforms are an important marketing tool, particularly in relation to building brand awareness and emotions. Authors should discuss the results and how they can be interpreted from the perspective of previous studies and of the working hypotheses. The findings and their implications should be discussed in the broadest context possible. Future research directions may also be highlighted.

Social media used in e-marketing are definitely the vision of the future and a medium with high potential. In addition to private users, they have an increasing number of business profiles. This is because trends set and force companies to use e-marketing tools more often, including social media and increase their credibility with them, especially because social media recorded their 2% growth (i.e., 17.2% now), compared to the previous year[23]. Moreover, due to the use of analytical and advertising tools, there is a possibility of observing the effects of own operations and responding to a potential threat adequately. It is difficult to predict in which direction the situation connected with the COVID-19 pandemic will develop and in what other way social media will be used to build and manage the company's image. The coronavirus pandemic has shown, on the other hand, that both the society and companies are doing well in the virtual world where communication has shifted in the last year and recorded significant growth (the research by IAB Polska and PWC, 2020, dynamic development of online advertising at the level of 17% yearly, digital communication increased by 4.9% year on year (IAB Polska i PWC 2020). Probably spending time in front of the computer monitor is not enjoyable to everybody in the same way, but, for e-marketers it is a typical working day and now their activities are significantly increased. The research Barometr COVID-19 indicated what has changed in customer expectations in relation to marketing activities of the company, it is not only information on points of sales (their opening or closing or the possibility of collecting the goods ordered) but also information on support in their daily lives. Nowadays, companies using the slogan #ZostańWDomu (StayAtHome) encourage online shopping or share various ideas with customers on spending time with their product. In this way they approach the customer and care for their image, showing concern for customer.

Changes in using social media for image management also concern the content included in advertisements or posts of companies. E-marketers must remember about avoiding contents related to COVID-19, which cause fear among the audience. Moreover, what is important for Internet marketing (as indicated by Table 2), most platforms

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[23] IAB Polska i PWC, Wydatki na reklamę online w roku 2020 – wyniki badań, https://socialpress.pl/2021/05/wydatki-na-reklame-online-w-roku-2020-wyniki-badan [online access: 22.11.2021].

have strengthened their position on the Internet during the pandemic, thus providing marketers with many opportunities for the advertising and promotion of the company, i.e., reaching the customer via different communication channels, improving the company's image. The presented research (e.g., by IAB Polska 2020) also showed that companies changed their plans associated with expenditure on online advertising scheduled for the first half of 2020, being driven by the common belief that the Interned is the only medium which would not decline during the pandemic.

The above article has been the introduction to the own research conducted among Polish marketers into negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic in the marketing industry. This section is not mandatory but can be added to the manuscript if the discussion is unusually long or complex.

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