

Ю.Г. Лысенко и др.; под ред. Р.Н. Лепы / НАН Украины, Ин-т экономики пром-ти. – Донецк: АПЕКС, 2012. – Т.2. – 122–133. – (Серия “Жизнеспособные системы в экономике = Життєздатні системи в економіці”. – Вып.3).
14. Кузьмін О.С. Рефлексивний підхід до регулювання техногенних збитків промислових підприємств / Кузьмін О.С., Бублик М.І. // Рефлексивные процессы и управление в экономике: тезисы докл. III Всеукр. науч.-практ. конф. (Севастополь, 26–29 сентября 2012 г.) / НАН Украины, Ин-т экономики пром-ти; ред. кол. Р.Н. Лепы (отв. ред.) и др. – Донецк: АПЕКС, 2012. – С.187 – 190.
15. Kot S. Foreign Direct Investment in Silesia Region. W: The Challenges for Reconversion. Innovation – Sustainability – Knowledge Management. Ed.by Piotr Pachura. ISI Pierrard, HEC du Luxemburg, Virton, 2006.

УДК 330

М. Хмелєцькі

Громадська академія наук

МАРКЕТИНГ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕДІА В ПОЛЬЩІ – СТАВЛЕННЯ СТУДЕНТІВ ДО БЛОГІВ

© Хмелєцькі М., 2012

Протягом кількох останніх років соціальні медіа змінили спосіб здійснення маркетингу. Ціллю статті є представити відношення польських студентів до блогів. Ця стаття представляє результати дослідження, проведеного в місті Лодзь в Польщі.

Ключові слова: блоги, соціальні медіа, маркетинг

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN POLAND – STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLOGS

© Chmielecki M., 2012

Over the last couple of years social media have transformed the way in which marketing is carried out. The aim of this article is to present attitudes of Polish students towards blogs. This article presents research findings results carried out in Lodz in Poland.

Key words: blogs, social media, marketing

Introduction. The emergence and proliferation of the Internet have not only transformed businesses, but also altered the relationship between businesses and the customer. Advances in technology have helped to migrate this relationship to an interactive level where technology contributes to brand building by creating and sustaining a long-term relationship with the customer. The growth of social media (Figure 1) carries numerous implications, one of which is how social media technologies can transform business and especially marketing. Numerous marketing departments in companies are now facing difficult questions related to social media. Should and if so how marketers engage online communities to increase brand awareness and reach out to consumers for product ideas?

Nowadays customers are armed with tablets, smartphones and many digital technologies, they have gained unprecedented control over the media and content to which they are exposed. As a result, marketers are facing an increasingly complex web of challenges, including media fragmentation, excessive commercial clutter and a growing resistance among customers towards marketing messages of all kinds. YankelovichPartners study [3] found that almost 60% of U.S. customers find marketing to be irrelevant for them personally. Perhaps even more importantly, almost 70% are interested in products and services that would help block marketing attempts. The same study also found that customers respond more favorably to marketing when they have control over what they see, when they see it, whether it can be personalized to fit their needs, and when they can be active participants in the marketing process. People may not be averse to marketing messages when they can control their delivery and format, and when the messages are personally meaningful to them.

Social media. Social media is a relatively new concept, therefore social media experts have not finished to debate a proper definition of the term, and deciding on a universally accepted definition may prove impossible. Nevertheless, taking into account definitions from several social media experts assists in determining a reasonable definition—one that accurately describes the core purpose of social media.

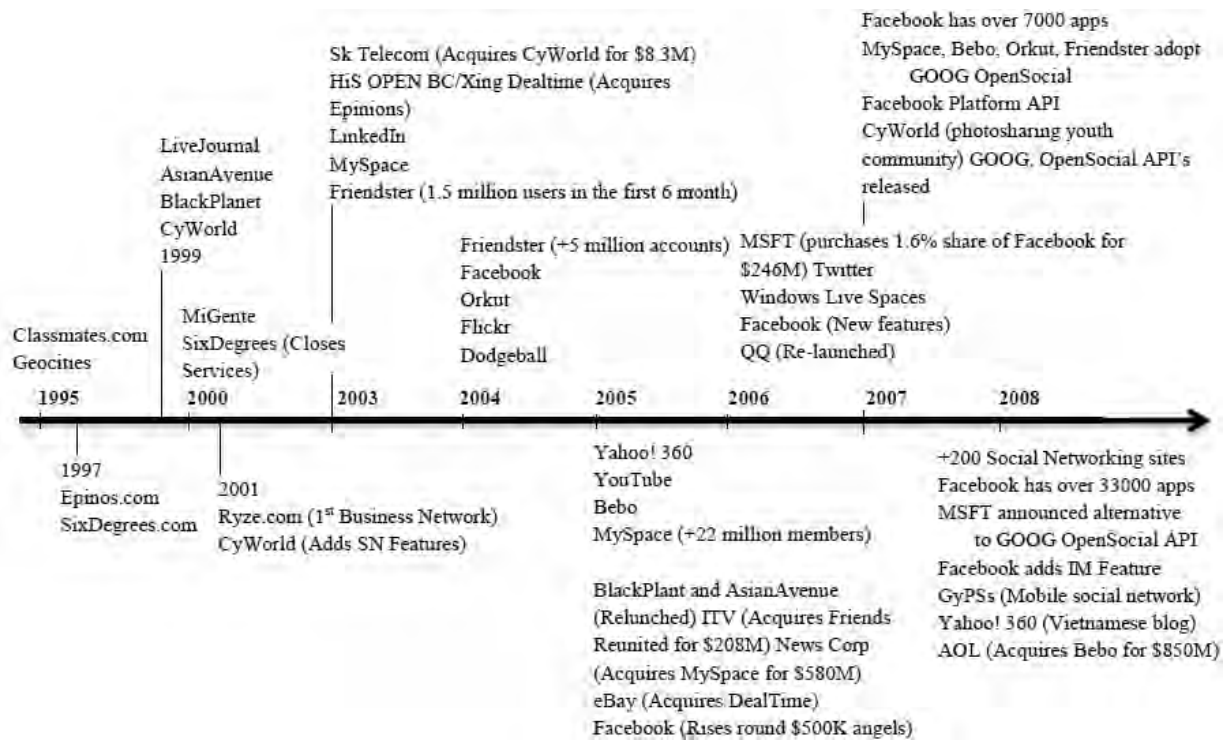


Figure. 1. Social media development from 1995 to 2008

Source: [12]

Safko and Brake observe that social media “refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media” [10]. Weinberg notes that social media “relates to the sharing of information, experiences, and perspectives throughout community-oriented websites” [14]. Comm believes that social media is “content that has been created by its audience” [4]. The Universal McCann report refers to social media as “online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interaction, collaboration, and the sharing of content” [13]. The preceding definitions describe various aspects of social media but do not grasp its essence.

Palmer and Koenig-Lewis [9] divide social media into following categories:

- blogs,
- social networks,
- content communities,
- forums/bulletin boards,
- content aggregators.

Zarella offers a basic definition that brings clarity to the term: “Social media consists of online technologies that facilitate the creation and distribution of content.” [15] Concise and simple, this definition lays the foundation for a proper understanding of additional facets of social media.

According to Zarella [15], social media uses many forms:

- blogs,
- micro blogs,
- social networks,
- media sharing sites,
- social bookmarking and voting sites,
- review sites,
- forums,
- virtual worlds.

Once a definition of social media is established, accurately defining social media marketing is possible. A basic definition of social media marketing is “using social media channels to promote your company and its products” [2] Weinberg presents a broader definition “a process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and to communicate with and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional advertising channels” [14, p.3] This definition emphasizes communication with a community, which is crucial to the discussion. Hunt [6] maintains that social media marketing is synonymous with community marketing.

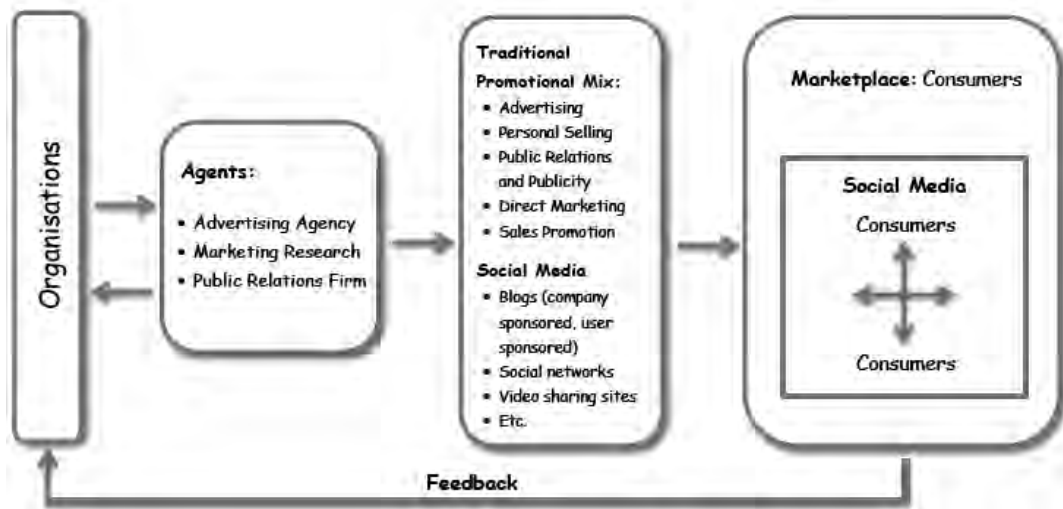


Figure 2. The new communication paradigm

Source: [7, p. 358]

Mangold and Faulds developed a model for a new communication paradigm (Figure 2). In this model it is visible that marketing managers lost full control over content of information concerning their products and services. Communication tools and strategies have changed, thus classic communication paradigm (Figure 3) is no longer valid.

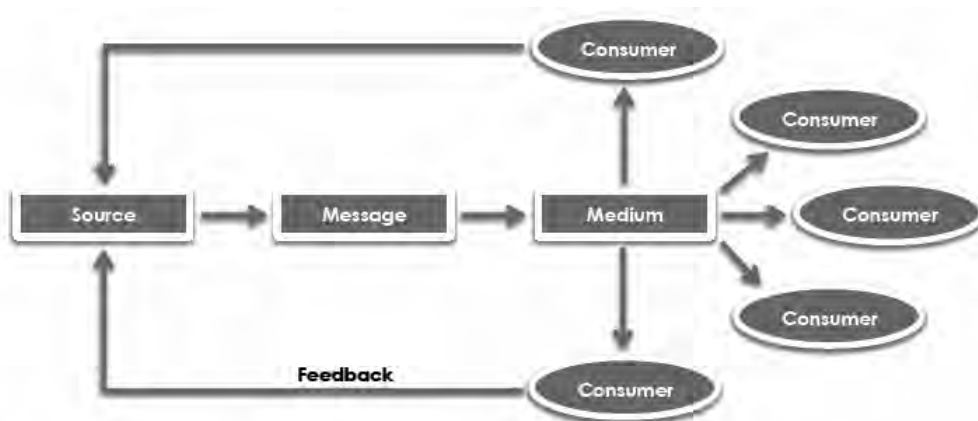


Figure 3. Traditional communication model

Source: [11]

Blogs and blogosphere. Communicating with the customer involves using many tools available to the firm, and targeting them in such a manner that the message remains focused, differentiated, and relevant. While traditional tools such as TV, radio, print, and billboards have been steadily becoming less effective, new tools have emerged to supplement that media. Blogs have relatively quickly become a major force in the new generation of marketing. Most researchers and industry experts believe that blogs are now an important part of a sound marketing strategy. Some even claim that blogs are not a business elective, they're a prerequisite [1, p. 56]. Marken [8, p.31-33] refers to blogs as some sort of collective conversation. It is similar to a message board or Internet posting, but goes beyond that since it facilitates conversation by enabling individuals who blog on behalf of firms or on their own to post comments and link to other blogs. Blogs have some common elements. These include:

- comments (comments that a reader adds),
- categories (subjects that the entry discusses),
- trackbacks (links to other sites that also discuss the entry),
- permalinks (permanent URLs to individual posts).

Blogs can be thought of as a gateway to vast sources of information where users may respond to a blogger by sending comments and links to additional information. In this sense, it is fulfilling many needs.

The blogosphere, which is the term for the collection of all blogs on the Internet, is made up of more than 170 million blogs. (See figure 4).

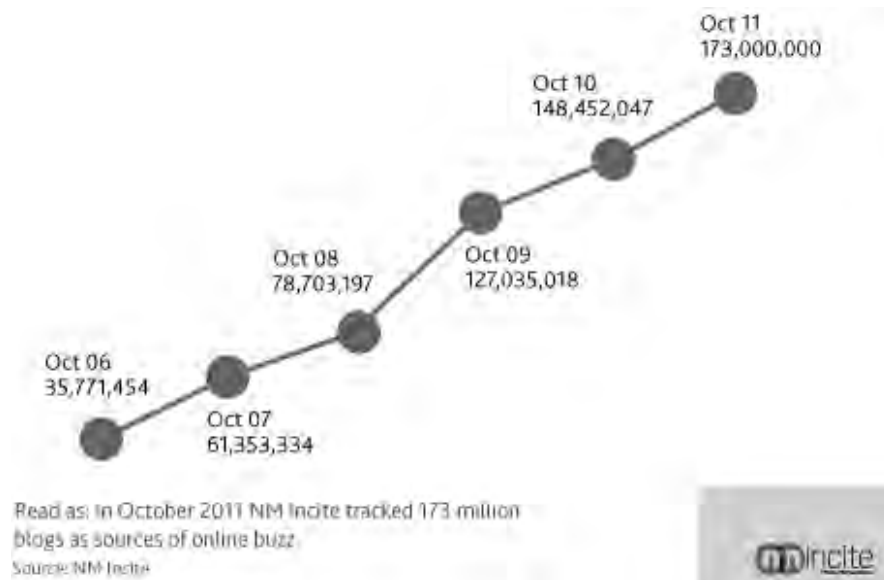


Figure 4. Number of Blogs Tracked by NM Incite

Source: [16]

In the US three out of the top 10 social networking sites are Blogger, WordPress and Tumblr . These are for consumer-generated blogs. Overall, these three blogging websites combined for 80 million unique visitors, reaching more than 1 in 4 active online users in the U.S. during October 2011 [5]. In Poland the most popular blog sites are blox.pl (211 000), blog onet.pl (1600 000), bloog.pl (816000). It is estimated the altogether there are around 3 million blogs in Poland.

Research methods and findings. In order to see how do Polish students use and perceive blogs in their consumer decision making after completing literature studies a series of 24 in-depth interviews with Polish students were conducted. Then it was followed by a series of CAWIs. Tables 1,2 and 3 illustrate the research sample. The research was conducted from April to June 2012.

Table 1

Research methods used in the study

| Researchmethod | Researchtype | Number of respondents |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Deskresearch | Qualitative | - |
| IDI | | 24 |
| CAWI | Quantitative | 158 |

Source: Own study

Table 2

Selected sociodemographic characteristics of respondents - IDI

| Men | Women |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 11 | 13 |
| Age – mean 24 years | Age - mean 25 years |

Source: Own study

Table 3

Selected sociodemographic characteristics of respondents - CAWI

| Men | Women |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 75 | 63 |
| Age – mean 23 years | Age - mean 26 years |

Source: Own study

Reading blogs seems to be quite popular among students (See figure 1). The majority of the students 42% follow 5 to 6 blogs. Only 16% of the respondents follow 7 or more blogs.

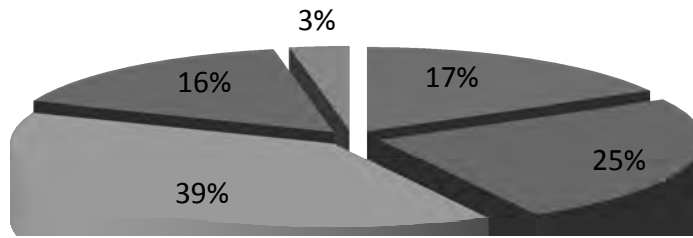


Figure 5. How many blogs do you follow?

Source: Own study

The majority of the students – 49 % spend about 4-5 hours on reading blogs during a week whereas 21% spend 6-7 hours.



Figure 6. Time (per week) spent on reading blogs

Source: Own study

A far as the place is concerned, the majority of the students – 46% read blogs while travelling. 28% read blogs at school / university, and 24% read blogs at home. Figure 5 presents these findings.

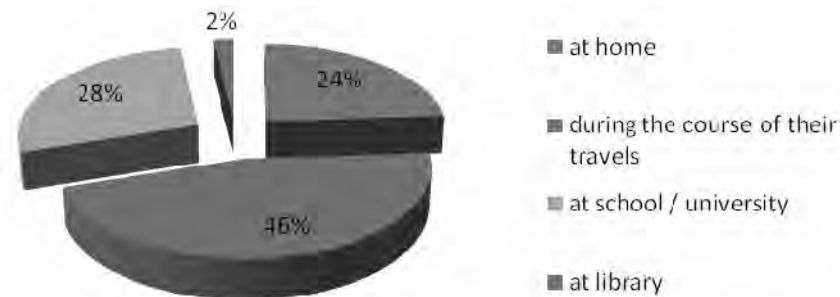


Figure 7. Where do you read blogs?

Source: Own study

The majority of the students - 44% use smartphone while reading blogs while only 15% of the students use desktop computers (Fig 7.).

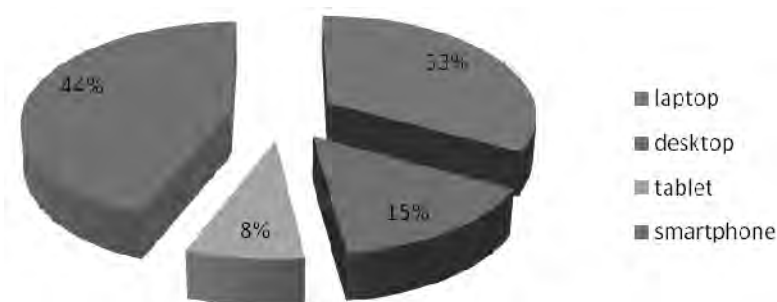


Figure 8. Devices that are used while reading blogs.

Source: Own study

It's clearly visible (figure 9) that health and beauty blogs are the ones most frequently read. This category is closely followed by film and tv (17%), travel and tourism (13%) and cars and vehicles (12%).

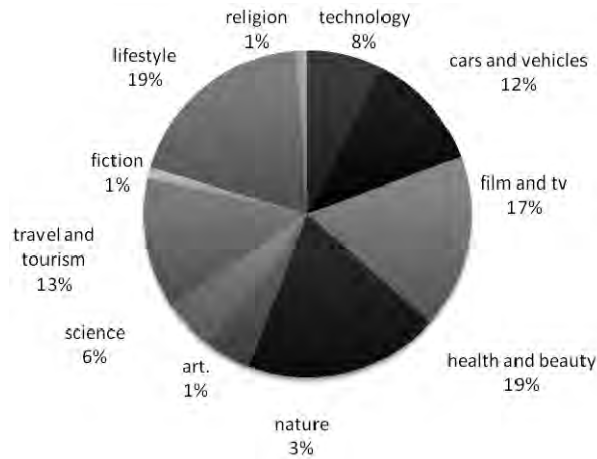


Figure 9. Most frequently read types of blogs.

Source: Own study

As far as giving comments is concerned, the majority of the students – 85% give them at least once a day. 8% of the students give them around once a month, and 5% of the students give them around once a week. The rest 2% of the students do not give comments at all.

Consumers were found mainly posting comments when they had knowledge to contribute with or when they needed information that they could not otherwise find in the blogs.



Figure 10. How often do you post comments?

Source: Own study

What is quite surprising is the fact that 69% of blog readers trust the information provided by blogs. IDIs showed that users of social media indicated they are more likely to completely trust blog posts written by friends than Facebook posts or tweets written by friends.

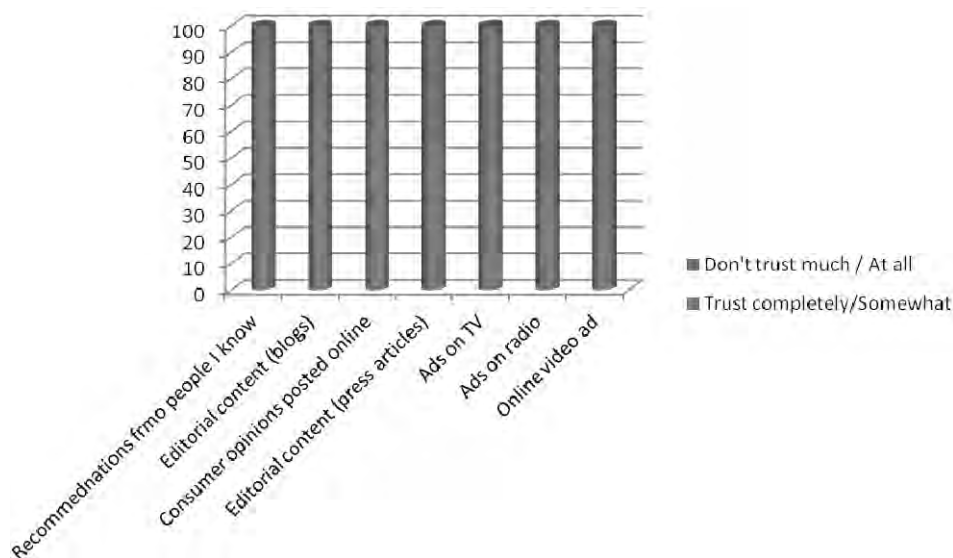


Figure 11. Do you trust the media?

Source: Own study.

IDIs showed that if bloggers have succeeded in cultivating close and engaging relationships with their audiences, their audiences are likely to take their word when it comes to recommendations and opinions. Brands should seek to form enduring relationships with bloggers that have demonstrated the ability to consistently engage a close knit audience.

How does it all translate to consumer decision making. The use of blogs as a communication tool has the huge importance for companies to understand how consumers use blogs in their decision making. During IDIs it was identified that consumers use blogs throughout their decision making and CAWI confirmed that 62 percent of blog readers say they have made purchases based on a blog recommendation (see figure 12).

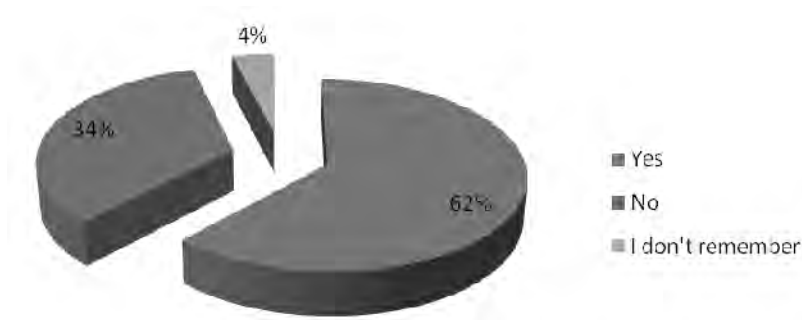


Figure 12. Have you ever made purchases based on a blog recommendation?

Source: Own study.

Summary. Social media gives marketers a voice and a way to communicate with partners customers and potential consumers. It personalizes the "brand" and helps companies to spread their message in an often relaxed and conversational way. The advantages of participating in the blogosphere far outweigh the challenges. Organizations that actively manage the world of blogs can gather powerful market intelligence, create communities of dedicated brand advocates, and reach the elusive customer more effectively than is possible through traditional media. The phenomenon of blogs is growing rapidly and is expected to increase even in a more rapid pace. Blogs provide a new way of communicating with customers, as customers want to be talked with, not to.

1. Baker S. *Blogs Will Change Your Business* / Baker S., Green H. // *Business Week*. 2005. – 2 May. – P. 57-67.
2. Barefoot D. *Friends with benefits: a social media marketing handbook* / Barefoot D., Szabo J.. – San Francisco: No Starch, Press Inc., 2010.
3. *businesswire.com*
4. Comm J. *Twitter power: How to dominate your market one tweet at a time* / Comm J. – Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.
5. http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/buzz-in-the-blogosphere-millions-more-bloggers-and-blog-readers/
6. Hunt T. *The Whuffie factor: Using the power of social networks to build your business* / Hunt T. – New York: Crown Business, 2009.
7. Mangold G. *Social media: the new hybrid element of the promotion mix, New business horizons* / Mangold G., Faulds D. – Kelly School of Business, IndianaUniveristy, 2009. – P. 358.
8. Marken A. *To blog or not to blog. That is the question?* / Marken A. // *Public RelationsQuarterly*. – 2005. – P.31-33.
9. Palmer A. *An experiential, social network-based approach to direct marketing* / Palmer A., Koenig-Lewis N.// *International Journal Of Direct Marketing*. – 2009. – Vol.3, No. 3.
10. Safko L. *The social media bible: Tactics, tools & strategies for business success* / Safko L., Brake D. K. – Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.
11. Solomon M. *Consumer behaviour: Buying, Having and Being*, 8th edition / Solomon M.. – Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009.
12. Trebnick C. *Social media market dynamics and impact on communications infrastructure, Americas Growth Capital*. – 2008.
13. Universal McCann. *Power to the people: Social media tracker wave 4*. – Retrieved from <http://universalmccann.bitecp.com/wave4/Wave4.pdf>.
14. Weinberg, T. *The new community rules: Marketing on the social web*. – Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2009.
15. Zarrella, D. *The social media marketing book*. – Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2010.
16. www.NMIncite.com