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СОЦІАЛЬНІ МЕДІА В МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ ЗАХОДАХ ПОЛЬСЬКИХ ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДІВ – В СВІТЛІ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

Вказано на необхідність ведення ВНЗ маркетингових заходів. Ціль статті – визначення ролі соціальних медіа в маркетингових заходах польських вищих навчальних закладів. Отримані результати вказують, що досліджувані заклади використовують соціальні медіа для контактів з групами потенційних або теперішніх студентів, для загально зрозумілої діяльності з просування та інтеграції, а також для основних досліджень громадської думки. Заслуговує на увагу також позитивна оцінка використання середовища соціальних медіа. Подальші дослідження з використання Інтернету в маркетинговій діяльності вишів здійснюватимуть також в Україні.

Ключові слова: маркетинг освітніх послуг, маркетинг ВНЗ, інтернет-маркетинг, маркетинг у соціальних мережах, управління ВНЗ.

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SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE MARKETING ACTIVITY OF POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The article focuses on the effects of the implementation of the *Law on Higher Education* of Sept. 1990, such as the creation of a free market of educational services in the field of higher education, including the product, the demand and the student as the client. It also hints at the need for higher education institutions to carry out marketing activity, with special emphasis on the activity online due to the common digitalisation of marketing, as well as the specific target group, the so-called *generation Z*, which stays online all the time.

The issue of marketing in education has been widely discussed by a number of authors, the major points of reference being the notion of the educational service, understood in Kotler's sense as an extended product, as well as the student, perceived as a specific client whose expectations cannot be satisfied in full without prejudice to the quality of the service rendered.

It is observed that online marketing, and specifically its WEB 2.0 paradigm including the social media sector, still remains a relatively unexplored area of marketing activity among a number of marketing tools implemented by higher education institutions. Crucially, WEB 2.0 is not considered here primarily in technological terms, but rather as the next stage of the evolution of the Internet characterised by some new, extremely dynamic trends. It's no longer computers, but humans, who stimulate the development of the web. The era of the monopoly on content creation is over. Nowadays, it is delivered by (Internet) users, who actively create and sort out information available on the Web.

The point of this article is to present the results of the research into the role of the Social Media in online marketing activities of the Polish higher education institutions, both public and non-public. The research has been conducted by the author of the article in Poland and concerns the comprehensive use of the specific tools of Internet marketing in the activity of higher education institutions, ranging from the strategy to the use of mobile technologies.

The research results concerning the use of Social Media in the marketing activity of higher education institutions bring about a specific dilemma. On the one hand, the use of the social media is evaluated positively, on the other hand, though, questions arise as to whether they are used as effectively as possible, in a way that allows to exploit their potential. This dilemma requires further investigation.

The obtained results indicate that the schools subjected to research use Social Media for contacting the environments of present and potential students, in order to carry out broadly understood promotion and integration – oriented actions, as well as basic opinion polls. The area of advertisement, due to its ever new forms of communication and targeting, deserves separate attention. It is to be expected that the activity of higher education institutions in the sector of social media will be systematically increasing, with the area of mobile technologies – the main direction of the development of online marketing, performing the key role.

Further research into the use of the Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions, encompassing the same areas as the research carried out to date in Poland, will be conducted in the Ukraine, which will not only make it possible to diagnose the state of the Ukrainian market, but also allow a comparative overview of the online marketing activity of higher education schools in the two countries.

Key words: marketing of educational services, marketing of higher education institutions, online marketing, social media in marketing, management of higher education institutions.

Statement of the problem. The last decade of the 20th century in Poland constituted a period of abrupt political changes, aptly described as "transformations". According to W. Kopaliński, the term "transformation" denotes a change, modification, metamorphosis or transfiguration [1, p. 827]. All these expressions, however adequate, reflect the nature of the advances of that period only residually. In fact, the changes affected every sphere of functioning of the Polish state, including all the levels of the system of education.

The development of higher education in the first decade of political transformation was determined by the Law on Higher Education of 12 Sept. 1990 (Official Journal of Laws no. 65, item 385, as amended). The act provided for, among others, the two-tier system of studying, establishment of non-public higher education schools, creation of new fields of study, collection of fees for fulltime (non-public schools only), as well as evening, extramural and remote studies (all types of schools) [2].

In that sense, the act created a free or, to put it differently, an open market for both public and non-public higher education institutions, thus turning students into clients. This is how the demand for education found its product by way of establishing a market of higher educational services. All the consequences relating to the functioning of business entities in the free market economy, including the marketing activity, followed naturally. However, it seems that among numerous marketing tools implemented by higher education institutions, the area of online marketing, in particular the one based on WEB 2.0 paradigm, with social media constituting one of its leading sectors, remains relatively unexplored.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of marketing in education has been discussed in the works of, among others, B. R. Clark [3], H. Hall [4], A. Pabian [5], I. Seredocha [6] and A. J. Fazlagić [7]. According to Jerzy Dietl, marketing is *"a process of management oriented at regular acquisition of clients, in particular end buyers, by predicting, identifying and catering for their needs and demands, which yields competitive advantage and aims at maximising the long-term market value of a given organisation"* [8, p. 14]. Still, it would be difficult to relate such a definition in a direct way to the so-called market of educational services without a more profound analysis of it specific components.

The functioning of the market mechanism in economy is perceived in terms of the economic processes that yield selection and transition of production factors into products and services [9, pp. 16–19]. Educational services, a peculiar instantiation of which is the sector of higher education, have their own separate subjective and objective identity. Therefore, the point of departure to the analysis of the marketing activity of higher education institutions frequently referred to in the literature is the analysis of objectives set by a given school. According to Magdalena Krzyżanowska, these fall into social (arising out of legal

regulations) and economic (relating to the rules of financing of schools) [10, pp. 36–37]. The resulting dichotomy gives rise to further considerations which constitute a potentially interesting material for separate research. In the discussion herein, it seems crucial to acknowledge the relevance of creating an added value of educational services, a correlation between the number of students and the quality of teaching, the pricing policy (also in light of quality), as well as the ethical aspect of competing for students (clients, to use market terms). The concept *student-client* constitutes the subject matter of the works of M. J. Armstrong [11, pp. 371–374], R.S. Franz [12, pp. 63–69], or M. Sirvanci [13, pp. 99–102], among others.

Irrespective of theoretical considerations, in the context of a market on which supply exceeds demand (and this situation may currently be observed on the Polish market), the marketing – oriented attitude of higher education institutions is a fact and the Internet has become one of the basic tools for running marketing campaigns. Ever since the 90's of the 20th century, the use of the Web for marketing activity has been inseparably linked with the basic features of the medium itself, such as the following:

– bidirectionality of commmunication, i.e., interactivity,
– individualised contact,
– round-the-clock functioning,
– pull-type communication, as opposed to push-type communication (in case of the latter, the message depends exclusively on the sender),
– egalitarian nature,
– possibility to integrate elements of marketing mix

After over two decades of adapting e-marketing concepts to the functioning strategies of organisations, a reverse process may be observed. In particular, it is the organisations that are getting adapted to the widespread digitalisation of marketing, the milestone being the appearance of a new paradigm based on the concept WEB 2.0, which set the scene for social network technologies.

Most importantly, Web 2.0 should not primarily be perceived as a specific technology, but rather as the next stage of development of the Internet characterised by new, extremely dynamic trends. Computers are no longer its main stimulus, as humans have taken over. There is no more monopoly on content creation. By participating in creating and sorting out information, Internet users have become co-authors of web content.

Web 2.0 has was popularised in 2004 by companies like O'Reilly Media and MediaLive International during a series of conferences devoted to new Internet techniques based predominantly on the content generated by the users of a given website. According to Tim O'Reilly, Web 2.0 *"is a business revolution in the computer world caused by progressing towards the Internet as a platform and trying to understand the recipe for victory on this platform. The main rule says: create applications which sort out the Web more efficiently, so that more and more people will use them"* [14].

Web 2.0 should also be considered in terms of the technology of creating WWW websites with the use of XHTML, SOAP, AJAX, XUL, RDF, RSS and Atom channels as well as network services. As other crucial concepts, Web 2.0 does not have any strict frame and is difficult to define in a clear-cut manner. It is most aptly described as a system of specific, mutually correlated characteristics, social trends and technologies.

In their approach, Charlene Li and Josh Bernhoff distinguish the following, still evolving techniques of communication among online creators and recipients [15]:

1. Placement of a virus video.
2. Activity in social networks and websites featuring materials created by the users.
3. Activity in blogosphere.
4. Creation of communities.

Markets are conversations was one of the postulates of the famous manifesto of www.cluetrain.com. Thanks to Web 2.0, these conversations in social media have a very specific character. This communication and marketing phenomenon is of primary importance for each and every organisation aiming at building and gaining competitive advantage on the market nowadays.

Goals of the article. The aim of this article is to show the role of the use of Social Media in the online marketing activity of Polish higher education institutions, both public and non-public, based on the conducted research.

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The main material of research. The research results concerning the use of social media for marketing purposes by Polish higher education institutions presented in this article constitute part of a larger research enterprise carried out in the period from Nov. 2013 to April 2014 within the confines of the original project entitled "the Internet in the marketing activity of higher education institutions in Poland".

The aim of the project was to specify the role and the importance of the Internet in the marketing activity of Polish higher education institutions. The research was conducted in the form of a survey based on a questionnaire. The questions were of the closed, open and half-open type. The questionnaire was sent to the persons responsible for the marketing activity of a given institution. The respondents were mostly managers, rector's proxies for marketing, persons appointed to represent the institution, as well as those supervising and participating in the preparation of marketing activities. Among the respondents of the survey were both public and non-public schools. The distribution of the sample with respect to the type of a higher education institution is presented in tab. 1.

Table 1

Distribution of research sample as per type of higher education institution

Type of higher education institution	Number of higher education institutions CSO 2011	Research sample
Universities	19	4
Higher schools of technology	25	5
Higher schools of agriculture	7	2
Higher schools of economics	77	17
Higher schools of pedagogy	17	4
Higher maritime schools	2	1
Medical universities	9	2
Physical education universities	6	1
Higher schools of arts	23	5
Higher schools of theology	14	3
Higher state vocational schools	36	8
Other higher education institutions	218	48
Total	453	100

Source: Author's own compilation based on the data of Main Statistical Office

One of the areas of the online marketing activity of Polish higher education institutions subjected to analysis was marketing research. Some schools conduct opinion polls by following student activity in Social Media, as indicated by 45 % of the respondents (out of whom 24 % consider this activity as moderately intense, 8 % evaluate it as very intense and for 7% it is intense). 41 % do not use Social Media for this purpose, for details see tab. 2.

Table 2

Intensity of use of Social Media for following student activity as part of online marketing research conducted by the Polish higher education institutions

Not used	Low intensity	Medium intensity	High intensity	Very high intensity	I don't know	No answer	Total
[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]
41	6	24	7	8	14	0	100

Source: Author's own compilation based on the research conducted

Yet another researched area of online marketing activity of the Polish higher education institutions was advertisement. In this respect, marketing activity in Social Media was rated very high, i.e., by 78 % of the respondents (54 % and 24 %, respectively, evaluated it as good and very good). The results suggest that

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Social Media cherish high advertising potential and constitute a valuable asset in the opinion of school marketing specialists. At the same time, they mark the devaluation of other forms of online advertisement, which is probably connected with the target group, fairly specific for higher education schools, characterised by intense activity in social media (compared to other groups aged 30 or more). The detailed results are presented in tab. 3.

Table 3

**The degree of implementation and opinion on the specific forms
of Internet advertisement used by the Polish higher education institutions**

Form of Internet advertisement	Not used so far	Opinion: negative	Opinion: neutral (neither positive nor negative)	Opinion: good	Opinion: very good	I don't know	No answer	Total
	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]
Traditional banners (468×60 pixels)	24	**2**	**60**	**13**	**1**	0	0	100
Derivative forms (e.g., scyscraper, billboard, other non-standard sizes)	35	**4**	**41**	**16**	**4**	0	0	100
Pop up	67	17	10	4	1	1	0	100
Interstitial, superstitial (typically full-screen animation displayed between the subsequent websites)	81	0	8	6	5	0	0	100
Top layer (animation displayed on top of website content)	76	6	4	13	1	0	0	100
Video advertisement	80	0	2	9	9	0	0	100
Sponsored article	47	2	5	22	24	0	0	100
WWW sponsoring	21	**0**	**11**	**49**	**19**	0	0	100
Advertisement in Social Media	7	**6**	**9**	**54**	**24**	0	0	100
Amplification through Internet fora	89	0	0	5	1	5	0	100
Direct e-mail (mailing)	69	1	4	15	11	0	0	100

Source: Author's own compilation based on the research conducted

Further research also confirmed that social media are ranked high in terms of their usefulness for advertising purposes. The key research questions in this respect were formulated as follows: *What is the role of the marketing activity conducted by a given higher education institution with the use of Social Media? How do you rank the way in which this role is fulfilled?*

The research revealed that the highest number of respondents, i.e., 66 % and 18 %, consider direct contact with study candidates as, respectively, very good and good. Making new contacts and maintaining the existing ones with students ranked second, evaluated as very good (34 %) and good (51 %). The third most important aspect of the activity was, according to the respondents, the promotion of the school's image (19 % – very good, 63 % – good). Next, the respondents appreciated the possibility to advertise educational offers (crucially, corresponding with previously obtained results, thus confirming high awareness and rising expectations with regard to Social Media), student integration (below expectations, possibly due to poor coordination of this type of activity), the source of information about the school, PR-oriented activity (relatively low score, indicating that the potential of Social Media for PR-purposes is underestimated), positioning of school's website in www browsers (indispensable for organic search purposes, given the recent changes in Google search algorithms). The detailed scores are presented in tab. 4.

The role and evaluation of the specific marketing activities of the Polish higher education institutions in Social Media

Specification	No role	Poor	Ocena Neutral – neither good nor bad	Good	Very good	I don't know	No answer	Total
	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]
Direct contact with study candidates	**0**	**0**	**11**	**18**	**66**	**4**	**1**	**100**
Making and maintaining contacts	**0**	**1**	**6**	**51**	**34**	**6**	**2**	**100**
Promotion of school's image	**0**	**0**	**16**	**63**	**19**	**0**	**2**	**100**
Advertising educational offer	**17**	**4**	**22**	**47**	**9**	**1**	**0**	**100**
Student integration	**0**	**0**	**2**	**33**	**23**	**41**	**1**	**100**
Source of information on students' opinions	19	0	43	18	17	3	0	100
PR-related purposes	14	0	13	7	17	35	14	100
Positioning of school's websites	7	0	8	15	10	49	11	100

Source: Author's own compilation based on the research conducted

The research constitutes an attempt to provide a general assessment of the way Social Media has so far been used for marketing purposes by the Polish higher education institutions. Most judgements in this respect are moderate (46 %), whereas 28 % of the respondents consider it good, and for 5 % it is very good. This indicates that 1/3 of the subjects consider the marketing activity in Social Media not only positive, but also highly valuable. However, 13 % of the respondents consider it poor. The details are presented in tab. 5.

Evaluation of the use of Social Media for marketing purposes by the higher education institutions in Poland to date

Very poor	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very good	I don't know	No answer	Total
[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]
3	13	46	28	5	5	0	100

Source: Author's own compilation based on the research conducted.

Conclusions and recommendations for further research. Transitions in higher education are not a peculiar feature of the Polish education system. Rather, they have a global character and are related to a number of factors, including the commoditisation of teaching, as well as the perception thereof in terms of a specific product – service. However, it should be pointed out that the Polish context is crucially determined by the transitions that took place in 90's of the 20th and laid the foundation for the free market of educational services with all its attributes, the product, the demand and the student as the client (a move that has given rise to a lot of dispute and controversy). In this respect, the research into the use of various tools in the marketing activity of higher education institutions, with special emphasis on the role of the Internet, seems particularly relevant.

The research results regarding the use of Social Media in the marketing activity of higher education schools presented in this article reveal certain dualism. Although the use of the social media environment to date is evaluated positively, questions arise as to the way it is used, i.e., whether its potential is fully exploited, an issue that calls for further research.

The schools subjected to the research use Social Media to contact present and potential students, carry out broadly defined promotional and integration actions as well as a source of basic opinion polls. The activity of higher education institutions in the field of Social Media is expected to rise due to its ever

rising marketing potential, ubiquitous presence among target recipients, the development of mobile technologies as well as other patterns of communication and compatibility with other platforms in Web 2.0, and even Web 3.0, understood by Tomasz Goban-Klas as the Internet of the future, available anytime and anyplace, *"in business, entertainment, and social contacts thanks to fast, reliable and safe networks"* [16, p. 155].

As for future research, apart from further exploration of the specific aspects mentioned above, may also be extended onto other countries which, similar to Poland, have undergone the process of transforming the higher education sector into market economy. A relevant example at this point is the Ukraine, which has already been subjected to investigation.

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