

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THE USE OF LINKEDIN

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Abstract

The article presents the use of social media in the corporate communication processes between the company and the internal and external environment and the role that the relatively new social network LinkedIn plays in this act of communication. Secondary data analysis, with the subject literature and available research as the source of information, allowed to draw conclusions about the growing importance of social media in corporate communication and the significant role that LinkedIn fulfills in the act of communication with the stakeholders. It seems that along with the growth of communication needs, companies are constantly looking for new, integrated channels of communication with stakeholders, and recently their activities have moved to social media, where Facebook is the leader. Other social media, mainly LinkedIn, are overlooked, which may result in less effective corporate communication in social media by the companies.

Keywords: corporate communication, social media, LinkedIn.

Introduction

Rapid technological progress at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries contributed to the showing up of social media, which enjoyed great interest among Polish companies. As a consequence, social media can be an important area of communication activity of enterprises. Among the indications of the use of social media in corporate communication of a company are, for example, the steadily increasing number of users, advertisers and companies reaching stakeholders by electronic means. The main task of this article is to show the role and applies of social media in the communication of the company with the environment and the importance of LinkedIn's social networking site in this act of communication. The article was prepared on the basis of literature review as well as presentation and analysis of the available research.

A thorough analysis of the topic will allow to examine the correctness of assumed research hypotheses, which are the subject of this article. The first hypothesis assumes that for corporate communication, social media has become the main channel of corporate communication. The second hypothesis assumes that the social networking site LinkedIn supports corporate communication of the company. The author is interested in the reasons for transferring the activities of corporate communication divisions to

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social media and their impact on the discussed communication act. The proposed issue in terms of the role of the LinkedIn social networking website in the process of support of corporate communication was analysed.

Corporate communication is defined as a „tool for building relationships with the market environment (e.g. with investors, shareholders, business partners and employees) that increase the value of the company” [Kończak, 2017, p. 46]. Its aim is to build the image of the company’s brand, which is the basis for communication of the company with the external and internal environment. „A brand is a name, date, a sign, a symbol, a design or a combination of them to identify the company’s products or services” [Mruk, 2002, p. 13]. The image of the brand is in turn „an arrangement of images and thoughts existing in human consciousness, expressing information about the brand and the attitude towards it” [Budzyński, 2002, p.19]. The brand is often directly treated as an image created among the subjects of the environment in relation to a certain idea, product or service. „The brand’s image is created on the basis of a combination of personality and brand identity” [Goławska, 1998, p. 14-17. The role of the company and brand image in the modern market economy is growing dynamically both in relation to the individual and institutional client [Kotler, Pfoertsch 2006] as well as in relation to the employees of the company.

It is hard not to notice the power which lies in corporate communication, „which is the basis for building the company’s image and constituting one of the most important communication areas² of the company with the external and internal environment” [Kończak, 2017, p. 47].

Public Relations is one of key elements recognized in corporate communication, and it has two basic functions. The first one is „the overall communication of the company with all stakeholder groups, and the second one - strategic communication management, aimed at building the reputation (image) of the company” [Kończak, 2017, p. 47]. We treat corporate communication the same as marketing activities here. This same recognition has its justification, namely „we can perceive corporate communication as integrated marketing activities, and thus integrated marketing communication of the company and related activities undertaken within the brand” [Wójcik, 2015, p.148]. These activities may be „managing the communication of the company with the internal environment in order to shape its image on the market” [Krygier, 2104, p. 100]. „The opinion of the company’s internal environment is an important element in shaping the company’s reputation (brand)” [Kończak, 2017, p. 48].

Social media in cooperate communication in the company

To make a message reach a specific target group on a satisfactory level for, the most effective channel should be used so that it could be performed in a relatively short time. „For corporate communication, such a channel is media, and more specifically social media”³ [Kończak, 2017 p. 48], which is also placed high in the ranking of corporate communication functions, as evidenced by the pioneering research of the Institute ARC Rynek I Opinia about *the role of corporate communication*⁴. Respondents acknowledged

2 Corporate communication most often implements areas such as public relations and internal communication, press office and media relations as well as crisis communication.

3 According to Ph. Kotler and K.L. Keller „electronic channels are the fastest growing communication and sales channels on the consumer market” [Kotler, Keller, 2013, p. 578-579]. As social media, you can define Internet websites which main purpose is to enable interaction between their users. One of the first definitions of social media was proposed by H. Rheingold, presenting them as a social cluster, emerged on the Internet in a situation where individuals, using the network, conduct long enough public conversations with enough emotional involvement to create personal relationships with other individuals in cyberspace [Rheingold, 1993, p. 6].

4 The study *The role of corporate communication in Poland* was implemented using the CAWI

that social media channels play a key role in corporate communication, pushing areas such as: building the image of a CEO, the board, the employer or crisis communication to the background. Research shows that from the point of view of corporate communication the most important channels are such as: „social media (82 percent of indications) and the Internet (77 percent of indications). TV positions in the ranking on the tenth place (10 percent of indications), followed by radio (5 percent of indications), and the list closes with outdoor (2 percent of indications)” [Kończak, 2017, p. 49].

In corporate communication of modern enterprises there are more and more innovations, which is a reaction to changes occurring in their environment. „New media create new qualities for companies to communicate with the internal entities” [Bajdka, 2013, p. 203]. They have many specific features that show their advantages from the point of view of corporate communication, both internal and external, companies such as: „enabling the use of all presentation and representation resources, adapting the message to the information needs of an individual recipient, impact of the message on many senses and the lack of time and spatial constraints in the consumption of information by the recipient” [Witczak, 2013, p. 91-96]. As shown by studies of the consumer behavior and attitudes related to the use of new media in marketing communication, „only 25% of respondents declare that they often use social networking sites seeking information about companies and their products. Taking into account the fact that they are used by as many as 80% of respondents, with 65% at least once a day” [Bajdka, 2013, p. 204] should agree with Philip. Kotler, that „the social media should be seen as the future of marketing communication” [Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawa, 2010, p. 24], not forgetting that „it is treated as equal to corporate communication” [Wójcik, 2015, p.148]⁵.

LinkedIn

Over the past few years, the growing popularity of the international LinkedIn social networking site has been observed in Poland, which enables to establish professional contacts within trade. Both private individuals and companies have their own accounts on these sites. The content published on the portal is of professional character, and the building of the company’s image takes place not only in front of potential customers, but also employees. Unlike Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, it is focused on professional and business topics, which is why it has become a valuable tool for corporate communication for companies and brands seeking new customers, employees and those who want to shape a specific image (brand) in the recipient’s mind. The corporate website of the company on this portal has the ability to add posts, pin the most important one at the top of the site, target news⁶ and sponsor the most important ones.

In 2011, LinkedIn launched the „Influencers” program, which allowed top-level leaders to publish their posts. „In less than a year, he gathered 150 leading business figures, such as Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, founder of the group Virgin Richard Branson or a board member of Allianz Mohamed El-Erian” [Sawers, 2014]. According to data provided by the Microsoft technology company⁷, in July 2018, LinkedIn account had 294 million active recipients worldwide, and there were over 9 million corporate accounts.

method on June 10 - August 8, 2016 by the research Institute ARC Rynek i Opinia. 120 representatives of Polish (77) and international companies (43) took part in the research. The basic criterion for the selection of the organization was employment at a minimum level of 250 people. Respondents were people responsible for corporate communication in the company. The research tool was a questionnaire.

5 In addition, as the study „The role of corporate communication in Poland”, described in detail in the above footnote (see footnote: 3), corporative communication is often identified by respondents with marketing. 46 percent of respondents declare that marketing deals with it.

6 Determining the recipients of the group to whom the message is addressed.

7 Awan A. (2017), The Power of LinkedIn’s 500 Million Member Community [online: November 17, 2018], <https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/april/24/the-power-of-linkedins-500-million-community>

In Poland, according to the data from April 2018, the portal is used by 2.1 million users⁸, or every thirteenth user of the network, and profiles are run by 97% of Polish businessmen, including owners of Polish companies⁹. Thus, the activity of Polish businessmen in social media focuses primarily on the LinkedIn portal, and only the fifth of the leaders uses Facebook for these purposes.

The role of LinkedIn in the corporate Communications of the company

Looking into the activity of the company in social media, one can notice differences in the choice of the company's communication channel with the environment in comparison with the channels chosen by their leaders. According to the report *The State of Social Media 2018*¹⁰, which collected data from more than 1,700 marketers¹¹, Facebook is the leader of the platforms used by companies - 96% of marketers use it to communicate with the company's environment. Slightly less of them, or 89%, works on Twitter. 70% of companies actively use the LinkedIn and Instagram account. Respondents indicated that they use Snapchat and Pinterest the least frequently.

In the context of the analyzed research results, the question arises- what is the role of LinkedIn in corporate communication of the company. Despite its low position as a tool used to communicate the company with the environment, we should pay attention to the function that LinkedIn has in the discussed communication act. The community business portal you to:

1. increase the awareness of the existence of the enterprise in the target group by, for example, informing on the profile of the company about appearances in the media (information about the article and appearance on the radio or television),
2. build an expert image, or warming the image of the company by presenting, for example, expert content and PR activity of its selected experts by presenting and promoting the results of its own industry research,
3. present the marketing activities and successes of the company by informing the Internet community about the patronage over the particular event or the organization of its own event, where LinkedIn will also support the recruitment of participants,
4. increase the traffic on the company's websites and interest in the offer of the internet users' company through periodical publication of the newsletter or making the recipient interested with an attractive topic discussed on the company's blog,
5. support of promotion and recruitment of employees by having them informed about special actions carried out by the company in accordance with the previously chosen promotion scenario,
6. build a committed community around the company's brand and the ability to engage employees in communication on the business social platform by presenting activities on LinkedIn as a joint communication project and assigning the roles of brand ambassadors to employees which can arouse greater involvement of the employee in the company's business outside the platform and a sense of influence on the company's success.

8 Kania A. (2018), LinkedIn: the most interesting Polish company websites [online: November 18, 2018], <https://nowymarketing.pl/a/18999/linkedin-najciekawsze-polskie-strony-firmowe-prze-glad>

9 Hekman P. (2018), Polish businessmen in social media. LinkedIn is the undisputed leader [online: November 18, 2018], <http://wyborcza.pl/7,156282,23317546,polski-biznes-w-mediach-spolecz-nosciowych-linkedin-niekwestionowanym.html>,

10 Read A. (2018), The State of Social 2018 Report: Your Guide to Latest Social Media Marketing Research [online: December 2, 2018], <https://blog.bufferapp.com/state-of-social-2018>

11 Marketing and company communication specialists with the external and internal environment.

The function that LinkedIn fulfills in corporate communication of the company allows to conclude that, although it is not currently the leader of the platforms used by companies to communicate with the environment, it undoubtedly supports the activities of corporate communication divisions. LinkedIn's advantage over other social networking sites is based on a well-defined target group, which includes business partners and employees. On the one hand, this improves corporate communication in this channel, but on the other hand, it makes it more demanding due to the need to match the message to the demanding recipient and the need to arouse involvement in the company's activities.

Taking into consideration the growing role of social media in corporate communication, it should be emphasized that the participation of the company only with a commercial message is no longer accepted by the business environment, that is its online community. Today, Internet users expect such values as: „knowledge, skills, scarce resources, or benefits resulting from special treatment of members of external and internal community” [Pogorzelski, 2015, p.154]. They follow the expectations of the modern Internet user proposed by Pogorzelski LinkedIn meets their needs. The portal is perceived as a place of knowledge exchange, where posts are of a professional character and broaden information on a particular topic. Each published content is supposed to be valuable to other users and encourage discussion by asking further questions. Content, published on the profile, that arouses user's interest, should not only be a source of information and an advertising tool, but also an inspiration for broadening one's skills. Rare resources offer the possibility of priority access to job offers of the observed employer, published on his/her profile and the possibility of quick contact with the person who is responsible in the company for the recruitment. The possibility of contact is associated with increase of your chances of finding a job. Additionally employees of a given company are able to quickly respond to internal recruitments opened in their workplace and quickly respond to the offer, which allows promotion in the company's structures.

As mentioned in the first part of the article, the purpose of corporate communication is, among others, to build the company's image. LinkedIn is used, as an example of corporate communication, by the oil company LOTOS S.A., chosen by the author as an example. An enterprise, in social perception, wants to be perceived as an expert. The information flow strategy is targeted at the contributors, stockholders and shareholders of the company. LOTOS S.A.¹² when posting, refers to its own investments in the oil field, pioneering solutions in the field of modernization of the oil industry and ideas for the development of mining industries in Poland. It is puzzling about this group, that it overlooks employees, putting them lower in the hierarchy of importance for building the company's reputation. LinkedIn can be not only a tool for building, but also warming the image of a company where employers can create, for example, the position of a good employer, an example of which is the profile of the PKN Orlen SA¹³ stakeholder group shaping its brand as a highly pro-employee, where employee value stimulating systems play a key role in corporate communication of the company. On the LinkedIn profile, the oil company regularly publishes marketing content, the slogan “the family-friendly employer”, “the best employer in the world” or “employee safety is a company's priority”. The content is accompanied with a photo of, for example, smiling company employees or joyful children of employees visiting their parents during work. In public perception, PKN Orlen S.A. is associated with an image of a friendly employer who values employees working in the company.

The examples of building the brand image by businesses show the diversity of the use of the same tool - LinkedIn as to communicate with the company's internal and external environment. Two identical brands were chosen for comparison. The goal is

12 Polish oil company.

13 Polish fuel and energy company.

to show two different styles of corporate communication using LinkedIn by two Polish companies from the oil sector.

Summary

Social media, properly implemented in the communication strategy of the company may be not only the tool of this act communicated, but even be its core. For corporate communication, social media has now become the main channel of communication with the internal and external environment. Departure from traditional forms of corporate communication is visible mainly in the change of the way of communication between the company - stakeholders who do not want to be just passive observers. They demand not only the dialogue with their brand or employer but also exchange of knowledge, skills and special treatment by the company.

Corporate communication in social media should be based on the dialogue of both parties, where the mutual building of the brand, sharing opinions creates a new quality of the image of the employer and allows the change of brand awareness in the eyes of stakeholders. To sum up, companies should look for new channels of communication within the environment, because Facebook or Twitter are no longer enough for the demands placed on the brand. LinkedIn might be our chance, as it gives hope for a new and effective form of corporate communication in terms of building or warming the image of the company's brand. As a social business portal, it has tools not only to improve enterprise corporate communication, but also it includes communication of the brand environment in this act, which in turn meets the need for stakeholder dialogue with the company and gives the user a real impact on the company's operations.

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