The Use of Social Media in European Union Enterprises. Comparative Study.

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Abstract
There are over 3 billion Internet users all over the word today. Over 50 per cent of them already use social media. The main role of social media is to build and maintain relationships between people from different backgrounds, with similar expectations, interests or preferences. Social media are now increasingly used by businesses, for example, the Facebook profile have more than 16 million companies today. Enterprises use social media for marketing purposes, image creation, promotion and cooperation with business partners. The article presents general information on social media, advantages and disadvantages of its usage in European enterprises, and the results of research conducted on the use of social media by European companies taking into account the Member State, the size of the enterprise and the type of used social media. The article is enriched with an analysis of the strategies of selected enterprises holding profiles in popular social media in Poland.

Keywords: social media, Internet, European Union, EU Member States, enterprise.

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Introduction

Since the inception of the Internet, entire world has been functioning in the digital space. In Europe, 75% of the population uses Internet today. The activity of users of social media continues to grow, so that companies have greater opportunities for development. Nearly one-third of the time on the Internet users spend in social media. In comparison with 2000, in 2014 there were more than 760 percent increase in the number of Internet users worldwide. People spend more than 1900 minutes per month online, which gives more than 30 hours. In the Internet we do shopping, in 2013 the total value of products and services sold over the Internet in Europe reached 364 billion euros. If the company wants to be easily found on the Internet network, it must mark its presence online[1]. It can be easily done by using social media. As a result, Internet users will be able to find a company on the network, get to know it and become clients. Social media are particularly useful for creating relations with customers.

Social media as a modern medium of social communication

In recent years, social media has revolutionized the world and opened a number of completely new opportunities. All social media, in the present, common sense, can be classified as the trend of Web 2.0. They are a new form of activity on the Web, which is based on social groups[2].

The term social media means all these forms and online communication channels that allow dialogue and exchange of opinions on a specific topic. Among the communication channels there are numerous community portals, which bring together, in one place, people eg. by interests, place of residence or problems. Another important communication channel are social forums and discussion groups, often created by information portals and the websites of companies, newspapers, publishing house, etc. Another form of online social media enabling dialogue and interaction of Internet users are blogs and microblogs. A popular social media are also content communities that allow Internet users exchange interesting audio or video files. Thanks to them, members of the online community worldwide, can exchange their favorite content and share their experiences recorded by various media (video and audio) without any restrictions[3]. After Internet users are following companies, that want to be present with their messages, where their clients are.

Companies in social media

Every day, social media are visited by millions of people. These individuals and actions taken by them in the Internet, give companies many possibilities. Enterprises use social media mostly for marketing purposes as well as to cooperate with business partners. Making closer contact with customers - responding to interactions from the users, makes the relationships more open and friendly. The Internet can help

[1] Digital Agenda for Europe. Final Report , *Use of Social Media by European SMEs, 2013*

[2] Gogołek W., *Komunikacja sieciowa.. Uwarunkowania, kategorie, paradoksy*, Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, Warszawa 2010, s.160.

[3] Meerman Scott David, The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to use News Releases, Blogs, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing and Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly, John Wiley & Sons Inc, Hoboken, New Jersey 2010, s. 37.

companies in making relations in social networks, support online sales, it also can help them find new customers and keep existing ones[4]. The use of social media by the companies refers to the use of applications based on Internet technologies or communications platforms to connect, create and exchange content online with customers, suppliers and partners or within the enterprise[5]. Being online, companies can gain valuable information about potential customers - what they wish and how to ensure this. Internet allows showing ads precisely at the moment when the user is looking for something that the company offers.
The key elements of the digital space for the company are[6]:

- the use of search engines. Business opportunities that will appear in the results of the search are enormous. After entering the site, one can learn about the company, see the video related to the company, read customers comments, view price list, find a company on the map, ask questions, etc.

- the entrance to the company's social media site. One can find there more clues about it, e.g. photos and videos.

Social networking is now the most common and most frequently used social media by companies and corporations. The most popular social networks are today: Facebook, Google+, Linkedin, Pinterest. The number of users is enormous (at the end of 2012, Facebook - 901 million Twitter - 555 million, Google+ - 170 million Linkedin - 150 million and Pinterest - 11,5mln users)[7]. From the point of view of their impact on the development of business contacts and business development at the forefront are Facebook, Linkedin and Google+. In Poland, the most popular social networking sites used by the companies are Facebook and YouTube.

One is still looking for new social networking applications, and companies are willing to move more and more new areas of business to the Internet. Among the business applications of social networking sites can be mentioned[8]:

- establishing contacts,
- creation of mailing lists,
- use of mouth marketing,
- gaining trust of business subcontractors,
- advertising of brand and offers.

Facebook was created for individual users and the companies initially created there individual profiles, accepted friend requests, and operated on the site as common users. With time, however, the number of companies with a Facebook account increased so much, that the service has introduced a special kind of accounts for

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[5] Wyniki badań GUS, Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce w 2013 r. Warszawa, październik 2013 r.
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companies, corporations and organizations. They are so called fan sites or otherwise fanpage's that have functionalities adapted for the specifics of companies and their needs.

The end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 definitely can be called a revolutionary for advertising opportunities that appeared on Facebook. Many of them have already permanently inscribed in the practices of companies, such as MPA media, ie, carousel ad, but still there are new, so that campaigns can be conducted more efficiently.

Media tools and media storage that can be used by companies in social media are[9]:

- *Reach & Frequency* is a campaign, in which one can purchase the coverage and determine the frequency of display of media, as well as to determine the specific sequences (the order of the displayed messages). The main advantages of the campaign are: precise range control and spent budgets, possibility of capping setting, storytelling - continuity of several messages   and the ability of better optimization at the planning stage.

- *Facebook lead ads* is a campaign, which aim is to collect leads. Thanks to this advertising potential customers can leave their contact information or other information that the advertiser can use in its strategy. There are many purposes of using such a campaign, for example: newsletter (preference of the information, hours of receiving), the form with questions (to learn more about customers), conclusions, preorders or registrations, records on promotions, coupons, deals, contests (answers in the contest), inquiries concerning eg. insurance, inquiries eg. vehicle configuration, sampling, e-book, registration for the webinar.

- *Local awareness ads* is a campaign of local recognition, addressed to the people who are close to the advertised business.

- *FB product ads (Dynamic Remarketing).* Dynamic products advertising, through which one can promote products and services that have already been viewed by interested people on the website or the mobile application.

- *Remarketing.* Facebook introduces the possibility of clarifying the remarketing group with visitors on the website with thef requency of visits, the quality of visits to the site (or the time on a site in seconds), the value of the cart/value of purchases.

- *Carousel ad.* This advertising medium (MPA) is one of the best advertising solutions.
One has the opportunity to present up to 5 elements (images, videos or gifs) in one advertisement directing to different subsites on the indicated site. It is particularly appreciated by e-commerce.

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[9] 6 narzędzi, na które warto zwrócić uwagę przy prowadzeniu kampanii Social Paid, http://interaktywnie.com/okiem-eksperta/6-narzedzi-na-ktore-warto-zwrocic-uwage-przy-prowadzeniu-kampanii-social-paid-253268, Access on: 19-05-2016

- *Canva*. This is a relatively new advertising medium dedicated to the mobile device, its advantage is availability and the possibility of any configuration.

Currently, Facebook is a place that allows to make very precise targeted campaigns[10]. This portal offering better and better tools and effective models of settlements becomes a very viable alternative to Google's advertising system.

Marketing in social media - advantages and disadvantages

Thanks to social media companies have the opportunity to reach the greatest number of customers. Social media is an additional communication channel. Single flattering post on Facebook about the activities of the company is able to catch the attention of hundreds of people in one moment. Those customers can communicate information to others – this is how the mechanism for the information transmission in the social media working. The company is able to inform its customers rapidly about new products or changes. Social media provide instant action, within few minutes from the publication of information, the company gets responses from its followers. Improving communication between the company-customer. Rapid response to posts with questions about specific services or error notifications and defects and informing of the taken steps and their effects, resulting in customer satisfaction. Satisfaction generates attachment to the company, increases the chances of sharing a good reputation with other people and inspires confidence. The functioning of the social media in addition to the obvious advantages brings with it also a negative aspect. Unfavorable opinions of spammers, so called trolls and other people can tarnish a company's reputation. Often various malicious actions clearly defined against the company are observed. The growth of the importance of social media only aggravates the situation[11]. Companies also are afraid of the lack of control over content, the need for immediate response to events on the Internet and ensuring communication 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the need to create appealing content.

Social media in European enterprises - statistics

Research on the use of social media was carried out in 2013 by Eurostat[12]. The use of known social media in European enterprises in general as a percentage are presented in figure 1.

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[10] Treadway Ch. , Smith M., Godzina dziennie z Facebook marketingiem, Wydawnictwo HELION, 2010

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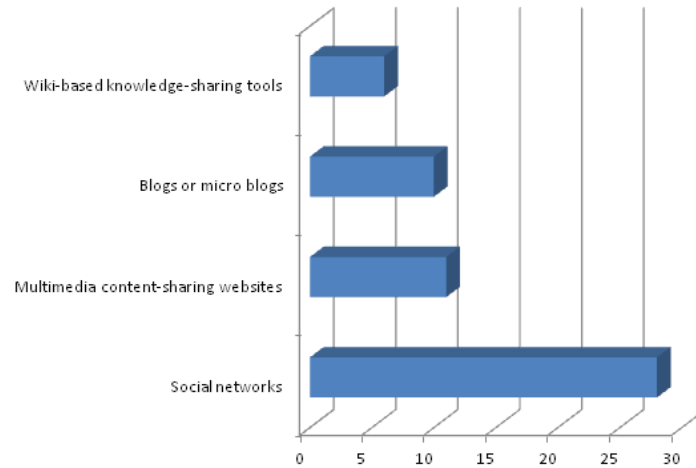
Figure 1: Social media in EU enterprises [%].

On the basis of survey results, in 2013, almost three quarters of enterprises employing 10 persons or more in the EU had a website. In the EU 30% of enterprises used at least one type of social media in 2013, although only 8% of enterprises had a formal policy for social media use. Looking at specific types of social media, 28% of enterprises in EU used social networks (e.g. Facebook) in 2013, 11% multi-media content sharing websites (e.g. YouTube), 10% blogs or micro blogs (e.g. Twitter) and 6% wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools.

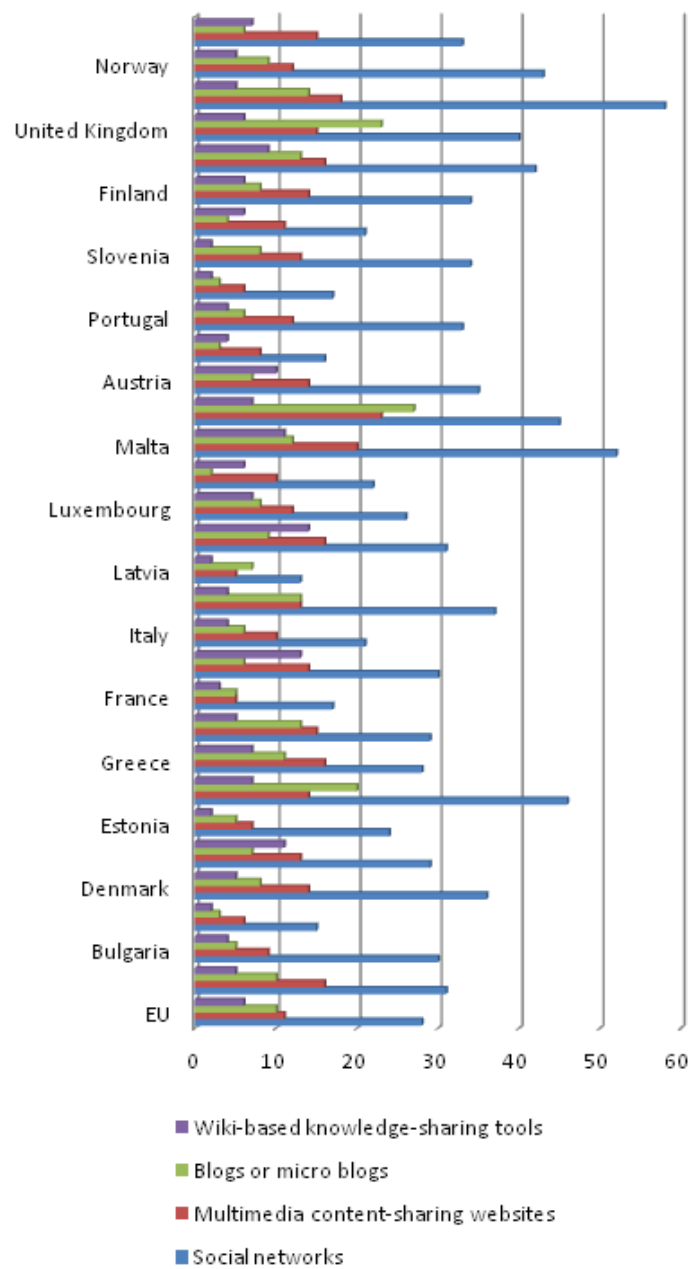The use of social media by European companies, by country are presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: Enterprise social media use in EU [%].

As it is shown in fig.2. among the different types of social media, European enterprises most often choose social networks, the least popular in Europe are wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools.

Figure 3 shows the European countries, which have the highest percentage of social networks use by enterprises, as well as those EU countries where the use of social networks is the lowest.
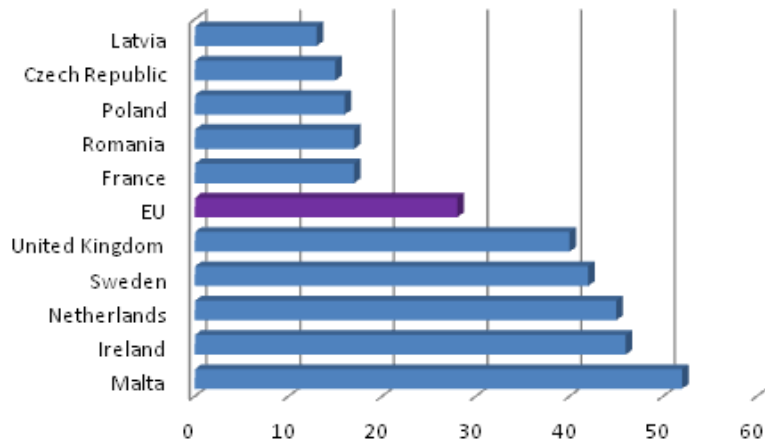
Figure 3: Social networks [%].

Fig. 3 shows, that the highest percentage of enterprises using social networks was registered in Malta (52% of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed), Ireland (46%), the Netherlands (45%), Sweden (42%) and the United Kingdom (40%), and the lowest in Latvia (13%), the Czech Republic (15%), Poland (16%), France and Romania (both 17%).

Figure 4 shows these European countries, which have the highest percentage of use multimedia content-sharing websites by enterprises, and those EU countries where the use of this social media is the lowest.
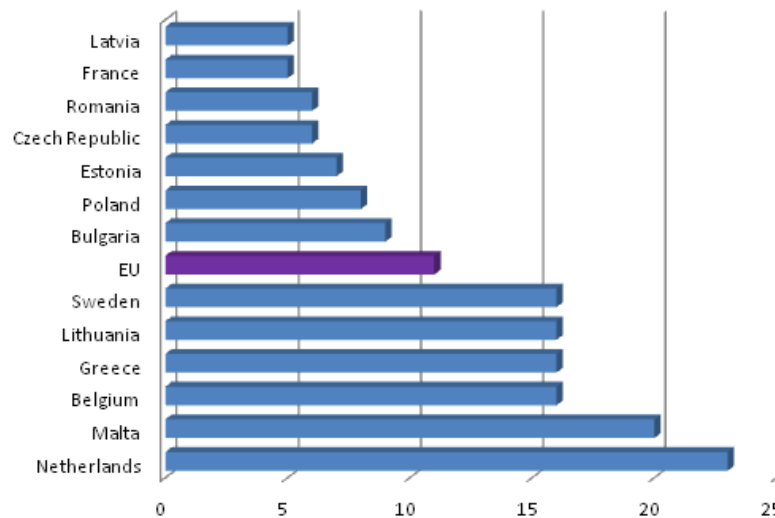

Figure 4: Multimedia content-sharing websites [%].

For multimedia content-sharing websites use, the highest percentage was observed in the Netherlands (23%), Malta (20%), Belgium, Greece, Lithuania and Sweden (all 16%). Seven EU Member States had shares of below 10%.

Figure 5 shows the European countries, which enterprises have the highest percentage of blogs and micro blogs use, and those EU countries where the use of blogs and micro blogs is the lowest.
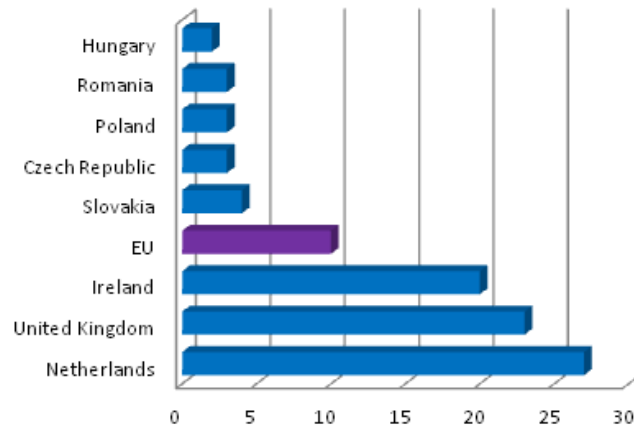
Figure 5: Blogs and micro blogs [%].

For the use of blogs or micro blogs, the Netherlands (27%) also came top, followed by the United Kingdom (23%) and Ireland (20%), nineteen EU Member States had the percentage below 10%.

European countries, which enterprises have the highest percentage of wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools use, as well as those EU countries where the use of this social media is at the lowest level are presented in figure 6.
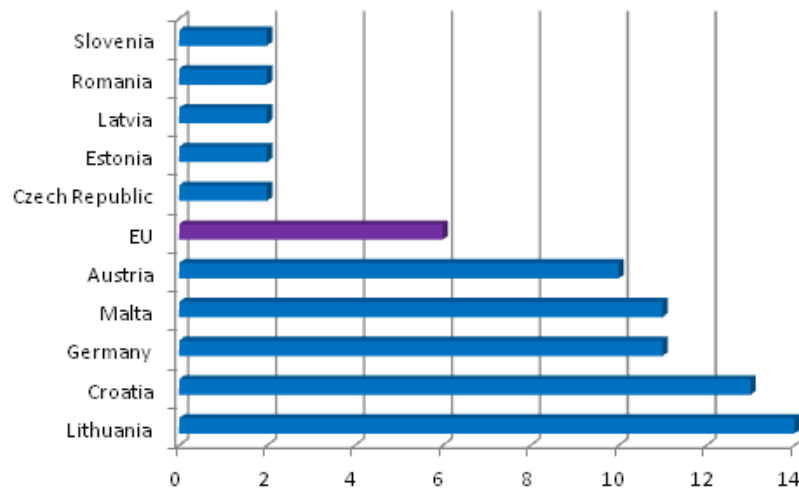

Figure 6: Wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools [%].

For wiki-based knowledge-sharing tools use, Lithuania (14%) had the highest percentage, followed by Croatia (13%), Germany and Malta (both 11%) and Austria (10%). The remaining twenty-three EU Member States had the percentage below 10%.

Percentage of EU large enterprises and SME's using social networks (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Viadeo, etc.) are shown in figure 7.
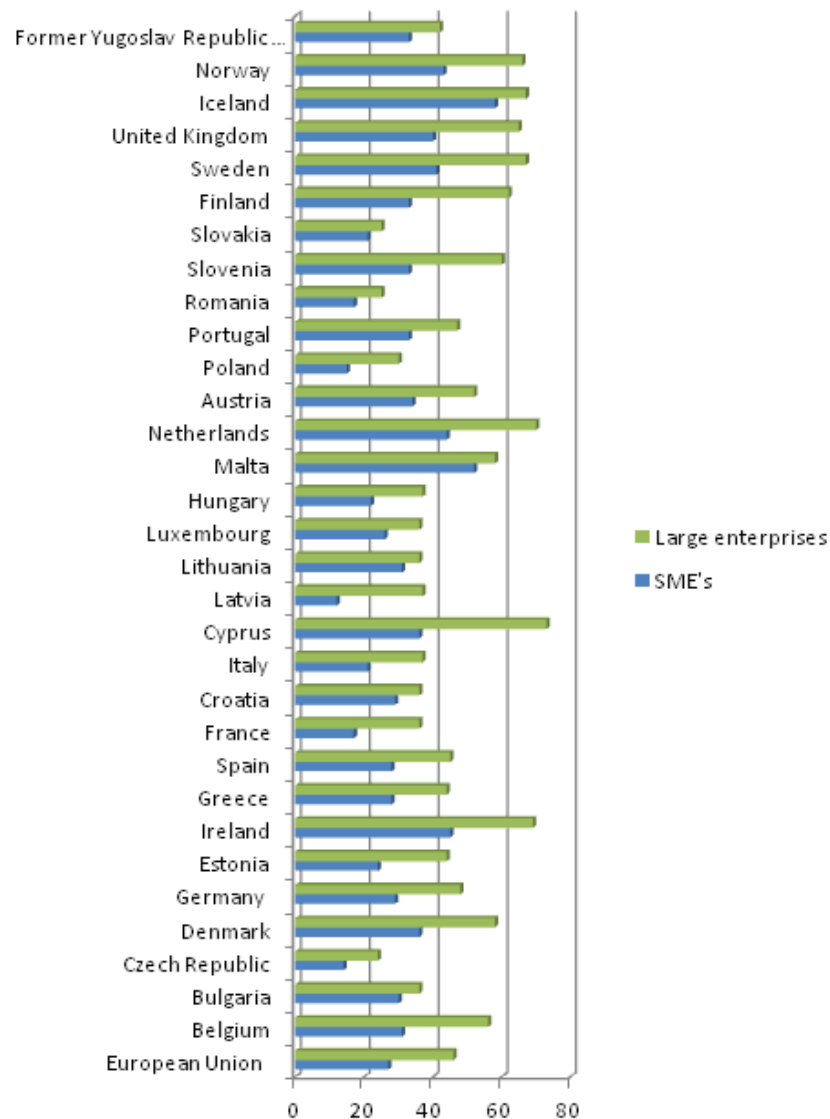
Figure 7: European large enterprises and SME's using social networks [%].

As shown in figure above the highest percentage of European large enterprises use social networks on Cyprus (73%), Netherlands (70%), Ireland (%), Sweden (%) and Iceland (%), while the lowest percentage of EU large enterprises used social networks in Louxembourg (36%), Poland (30%), Romania and Slovakia (both 25%) and Czech Republic (24%). In turn, the highest percentage of European SME's use social networks in Iceland (58%), Malta (52%), Ireland (45%), Netherlands (44%), Norway (43%), while the lowest percentage of European SME's use social networks in France and Romania (both 17%), Poland (15%), Czech Republic (14%) and Latvia (12%).

Polish enterprises in social media

Enterprises choose these social networking tools, which enable them to hit their message to the largest audience. Users of social media in Poland are among the most

active users of social platforms in Europe. Enterprises operating in Poland focus their activities on two services: Facebook and YouTube, as these are the most popular social media in Poland[13]. Not many companies stand out in the way to communicate with social media users. On Facebook marketers mostly focus on running fanpages. One can see, however, a positive stimulation of Internet users.

The most popular Facebook fanpage in Poland today is *Heart and Mind* run by the communication enterprise Orange. Since 2010, when the campaign of *Heart and Mind* began, both characters have been constantly used in marketing communication, it is one of the most successful campaigns in recent years. The company stands out in the communication way with users of social media. Every day the company publishes advertising virals, participants are engaged through competitions and queries, causing positive and witty responses. These features are most valued by the community of Facebook and attract many fans. Fanpage *Heart and Mind*, until today managed to gather more than 2.22 million fans. The enterprise was one of the least favorite companies nationwide, through advertising with likable and funny characters heart and mind its image-crisis has been resolved.

Lenovo is the fastest growing PC manufacturer in the world. The enterprise produces laptops: ThinkPads, IdeaPads, desktops, All-in-One: ThinkCentre, IdeaCentre, ThinkStation, ThinkPad and IdeaPad tablets. Lenovo Poland is another enterprise, which marketing and branding actions in social media are focused on Facebook. Company's Fanpage has been existing since 2010. At the beginning of the profile creation it was decided that fanpage is to be based on a partnership dialogue with the fans. New posts are placed on fanpage every day, among others on mobile payments, data encryption, informing about the company's commitment to ecology etc., The company also presents short films, news, publishes polls. Fans of Lenovo Poland can take part in games or competitions, which are to draw them into play extending contact time with the brand. At the Lenovo fanpage, current and potential customers consult the representatives of the company and other fans in matters related to the purchase or faulty equipment. They share both positive and negative experiences with the brand. According to the data presented by Lenovo, its fanpage likes more than 310 thousand people, and the number of monthly active users, is much about 24 thousand.

Another example is Tauron. This enterprise is providing electricity, intangible product that is difficult to distinguish. The company had a very interesting idea on social media. It was decided to involve communities around music by creating fanpage "Tauron New Music Festival". The festival is organized annually since 2006 and fanpage on Facebook has attracted almost 41 thousand fans. Thanks to the idea of Tauron, polish music lovers over the years have the opportunity to hear the biggest world stars in modern electronic music (for most of them it was the first time they have ever performed in Poland). In 2010 and 2012 the Festival received the European Festivals Award for Best Small European Festival. On the fanpage all information related to the organized festivals are available. Every year in this festival participate thousands of people.

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[13] Sumara K., et. al., Raport z badania . Polskie firmy w mediach społecznościowych, "Harvard Business Review Polska" 2012, No. 4.

Conclusion

Social media have enormous popularity today, the presence of companies in the social media is therefore inevitable. Companies should know exactly what they want to achieve in network. This makes it easier to establish priorities and develop an action plan. Companies choose social networking tools that enable them to hit with their message to the largest audience. Research show, that the share of EU enterprises using at least one type of social media ranged from 55% in Malta, 50% in the Netherlands, 48% in Ireland, 45% in Sweden and 42% in the United Kingdom, to 19% in France, Poland and Romania, 16% in the Czech Republic, and 15% in Latvia. The results of the research show, that the use of social media in polish enterprises is still on a low level. The analysis carried out for the purpose of this article shows the companies, which Facebook fanpage's are conducted in a professional way with a great success. However, the majority of Polish enterprises is not bent on keeping fanpage in such a way. Polish companies are usually limited to marketing communication with customers and potential customers through two popular sites - Facebook and YouTube (activity in other sites is usually rarely taken). There is no integration of the activities carried out within the marketing strategy. Managers, especially of small companies, treat social media as a free marketing channel, serving mainly presentation of products or services. They are not aware of the application areas of social media, their use and best practices in this area.

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