

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY OF THE CITIES OF KUJAWSKO-POMORSKIE VOIVODESHIP

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Purpose: The purpose of the article is to analyze trends and evaluate the role of social media in the public relations strategy of major cities of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province. Selected aspects of the activities of Polish cities in social media (public relations, image activity, and the strategy of entities responsible for city communication on the Internet) were analyzed.

Design/methodology/approach: The research analyzed literature on the development of social media and its use by Polish cities. Compilations and reports covering users' online activity were analyzed. A survey was conducted by means of a Google questionnaire on groups associating residents of 3 cities in Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship.

Findings: Social media is becoming a tool for thoughtful creation and strengthening of the city's brand, as well as proper two-way communication. Thanks to the activities undertaken as part of agglomeration marketing, residents present in the virtual space should become true fans identifying with their place of residence, and through this, ambassadors of the place.

Research limitations/implications: Future research may be related to the creation of mentoring programs in the area under study.

Practical implications: The results of the survey can be used as input for designing training programs in the study area.

Social implications: Social media marketing means promotion conducted through a variety of means. This forces city managers to be dynamically flexible and look for solutions that can optimize promotional and communication processes online. The challenge facing the management of such communications is not only to encourage people to look at these profiles more often, but also to increase interactivity.

Originality/value: This article is mainly addressed to city managers who want to implement and improve the image strategy of the metropolis.

Keywords: social media, public relations, strategy.

1. Introduction

With the rapid growth of social media, it is constantly gaining new users eager to join in discussions on topics concerning both personal and business matters. Individuals, businesses, as well as public institutions are becoming part of a global network that treats all entities equally. In terms of the relationship between buyer and receiver of content, this is an innovative approach that brings many cobenefits as well as unprecedented challenges.

Nowadays, it is not only businesses that face the enormous challenge of operating and competing in a turbulent and changing market environment. Communication with the environment is becoming an integral part of cities' promotion strategies. City promotion is responsible for competitiveness, integration and the stimulating function of these activities (Sekuła, 2008). It is competitiveness that helps to compete for aid funds, investors, tourists, etc. Presence in the social sphere of the Internet can be an element that distinguishes a city from others, provided that a holistic brand strategy is created, of which social networks will be an element. However, they should not be treated as a unique extension of other communication channels, but as integral elements of a broader communication strategy. Cities and regions in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, fighting for influence among themselves, aim to create a strong image, emphasizing various qualities and signaling the leading benefits of a given city's offer.

The article is an introduction to the subject of the use of social media in the public relations strategy of the main cities of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. Selected aspects of Polish cities' activities in social media (public relations, image activity, and the strategy of entities responsible for the city's communication on the Internet) were analyzed. The article concludes with an analysis of current trends in social media and their potential impact on cities' territorial marketing activities.

2. Social media as a modern communication and image-building tool for cities

The term social media is used extremely frequently, both in personal and professional life. They are used to establish as well as maintain relationships, share important as well as less important moments, but also provide communication. In the literature, social media (SM) is defined as a category of social technologies that use the Internet and also mobile media to share ideas and news (Kłososky, 2012). They are collections of applications and websites that provide interaction between users (Brown, 2012).

P. Levinson's social media include: YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), Twitter and podcasts (Levinson, 2010).

The development of the Internet has modified the face of communication. However, it is social media that has revolutionized communication. Social media based on the Web 2.0 platform has features that no other media has had before (Adamski, 2012).

Andrzej Adamski suggests that Web 2.0 is a kind of phenomenon, a trend, a process that has become aimed at spreading the assumption of shared responsibility for published content and sharing both creativity and knowledge (Adamski, 2012).

In business, online social media is often referred to as consumer-generated media (consumergenerated media). They are all that binds all definitions of this phenomenon, a combination of technology and interactivity that results in the creation of new content.

Social networks offer skyrocketing prospects for spreading information. The moment you post a photo or any content on Facebook, you don't have to inform all your friends about it via email or instant messaging. This information is passed on automatically through the appropriate news feeds on the portal. It is important to remember when inserting any posts that all content posted on the profile, spreads in an instant (Tapscott, 2010). Social media also provides a wider opportunity to identify the needs and opinions of residents and other stakeholder groups.

Among other things, social media differ from traditional media in terms of price - they are not expensive, they allow, regardless of status, access to information - both to receive it and to broadcast and publish it, unlike traditional media, which generally require a specific background from those who want to publish information. The feature that unites traditional and new media is the ability to attract a significant audience - both a fanpage and a TV show can attract an audience of several or several million (Dorenda-Zaborowicz, 2012).

In addition to access to information sources, people gain the ability to form groups regardless of where they are, which allows them to discuss any topic with people from around the world. The overriding one is that all discussions are both open and public, and are usually watched by more than one person. Thus, each user is to some extent a moderator of a given discussion and can, and even should, verify the truthfulness of the presented arguments. If there is interest, you can start a discussion on any topic. In this sense, both the individual and the company or brand have similar tools to start and moderate discussions. Any user wishing to participate in a conversation on a given topic must perform a similar set of actions to which each party is already somewhat accustomed. In this way, the barrier associated with the need to leave the recipient's comfort zone is blurred, which is typical for communication with broadcasters associated with traditional media (Smirnov, 2018).

The ever-growing interest in social media is opening up new opportunities for cities in the process of personal branding. The level of emotion that is generated in the minds and hearts of its customers is the brand image. By definition, a brand is a combination of two components: tangible (services, products and the way they are communicated) and non-material (associations, feelings and emotions) (Ragnowicz, 2018).

The city provides users with a whole range of services and products to meet their needs. The situation illustrated in this way, allows us to assume that the aforementioned services and products should become the subject of promotional activities of cities. Promotion in this form should be carried out not only in virtual reality, but also in the real one. It is important to build a positive image of the city and induce people to use a given service or product.

When discussing the promotional activities of cities, it is important to remember that they are directed in two directions: outward and inward (Czornik, 2005). Internal promotion is directed to city residents, while external promotion is directed to people located outside the territorial unit. The task is one - to shape a positive image of the city. At the same time, it should be remembered that image building is a demanding and, above all, long-term process (Sekuła, 2008).

The product can be considered from a political perspective, where it becomes an idea and the proposed offer an opportunity to participate in its creation. In such an arrangement, it provides an opportunity for the user to engage in urban policy-making through participation, and this can add value. This opportunity builds a positive relationship between the city and its residents. Through social media, users are encouraged to take advantage of the city's offerings, thereby building awareness of a particular offering. Cities should take care to make the most of the potential of such platforms. It is important to develop a coherent concept that adequately creates the image of the city in the eyes of its residents. At the same time, it allows you to track the various stages that are being implemented. The starting point should always be the analysis of the situation, the designation of areas of responsibility, the implementation of the project and the evaluation of the results obtained. Ch. Treadaway and M. Smith proposed the stages of a properly planned social media campaign:

- defining the audience,
- defining tasks and overarching goals,
- setting configuration options,
- creating an engaging and interactive page (Treadaway, Smith, 2010).

In considering a properly developed social media campaign, it is important to discuss the phenomenon of "storytelling." This term was formulated by Henry Jenkins in 2003. It encompasses a new way of telling stories, using different types of media, methods and points of view. It is a form that focuses on the message contained in multiple channels of communication. Different but complementary factors are present, ultimately outlining an elaborate message composed of several interacting elements. The content itself often changes, mainly through the inspiration of the audience's story. Indeed, storytelling is a living organism of communication, which relies primarily on communicating content that evokes interaction. Influencing the development of a story brings users together, who identify with the characters in the story. This is crucial, as it allows the customer to turn into a propagator and even a follower of the brand (Storytelling..., 2015).

Social media activities are becoming one of the tools used by a city or region to achieve strategic goals such as attracting investors or encouraging tourists to stay in the region.

3. Social media - analysis and research results

A new opportunity for promotional activities and showcasing achievements for local governments is social media, especially social networking. This is significant in the context of relatively low costs, as most cities currently have had to cut promotional budgets. The spending plan for the promotion of local government units of the city of Bydgoszcz in 2022 assumed the amount of PLN 8 349 747. Of which a large part of the funds was allocated to promotional activities of the city through sports at national and international events (Bydgoszcz City Budget).

According to DataReportal.com research analyzing January 2022, there were 32.86 million Internet users in Poland. Of all active users, as many as 27.20 million browsed social media. The most popular social media site in our country in the year under review was Facebook, with some 17.65 million visitors, which accounted for 88.1% of active web users. The second most popular was Messenger, with 79.8%. The third in terms of user interest was Instagram, with 59.6%. The remaining portals had a smaller number of users. Detailed data on the percentage distribution of users of the most popular social media in Poland is shown in Figure 1 (<https://datareportal.com/about...>).



Figure 1. The most used social media platforms in Poland - January 2022.

Source developed based on (Raport datareportal <https://datareportal.com/about>).

Bydgoszcz, Torun, Wloclawek are the three largest regional urban centers, both in terms of population and area. Facebook is the most popular social media platform used by these cities to connect with residents. This choice seems fully justified. It makes sense to be where it is easiest to reach residents. And the latter are eager to visit the cities' profiles, treating them as a reliable source of local information and return the favor with their "likes". Not every office

manages to capture attention as effectively. Empemedia, a company that specializes in training for local government institutions, analyzes the progress of Polish cities online. According to the list for 2021, Bydgoszcz and Toruń are in the top 10 in terms of the number of observers. In terms of creating "storytelling", both cities are in the October 2022 list of Polish cities published by Storender (Figure 2).

Fans - Commitment

Facebook Trends Poland October 2022

Trend	Profile	Storytellers (mediana)	Increase
-	1 Łódź	48 116	8%
-	2 Wrocław [Wrocław]	29 552	11%
-	3 epoznan.pl	25 248	5%
.....			
-2 ↓	11 bydgoszcz.pl	7 885	9%
.....			
-2 ↓	16 Mój Toruń	5 392	4%
-6 ↓	17 Kraków i Małopolska	5 280	-18%

Figure 2. Summary of the involvement of users of Polish cities.

Source: Own elaboration based on <http://s3trends.s3.amazonaws.com/poland/facebook/202210/202210>.

According to the report, the most user-engaging post was published on the Bydgoszcz portal. Users commented and shared the published information. The post concerned a missing person who was found thanks to publicizing the case in social media (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The most engaging post published by the city of Bydgoszcz on Facebook.

Source: Own elaboration based on <http://s3trends.s3.amazonaws.com/poland/facebook/202210/202210>.

The above-mentioned cities are also present on Instagram. By far the most "followers" have Bydgoszcz, because as many as 29,000 observers. Toruń comes second with 15,800 observers and Włocławek comes third with 5,929 observers. Instagram mainly gathers a community on its portal, which shares various photos, videos and descriptions with other users. The application happens to be mainly a valuable source of inspiration, as it gives us access to a huge number of thematic profiles.

In fact, all social profiles of cities include: linking articles from the official portal of the city, information about events, planned in the city, links to other portals, photos and videos. Some also publish weather forecasts or recipes. Social networks give the opportunity to differentiate the content depending on the audience group, for example, in Bydgoszcz different messages are posted on Facebook and others on Instagram. In addition, what must and does differentiate the cities' website from profiles on social networks is the way in which the published information is communicated. Portal coordinators avoid duplicating official and dry information from websites. It is possible to vary the content depending on the time of day, for example, on the Facebook of some cities "wake-up" and "bedtime" music suggestions are published.

Presented below are partial results of our own research, conducted in the form of an electronic survey created through a Google questionnaire and posted on three Facebook groups bringing together residents of the cities of Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Włocławek. The survey was aimed at residents of the aforementioned centers. The survey questionnaire was conducted in August 2022 on a group of 120 residents of Bydgoszcz, 132 residents of Toruń and 105 residents of Włocławek. The purpose of the measures taken was, first, to find out whether city residents, as social media users, reach out to the official profiles of the cities in which they reside. Secondly, to find out citizens' opinions on the relationship between social media use and the image of the city.

When asked about the most frequently used social media, Bydgoszcz residents pointed first to Facebook - 66% of respondents, Toruń residents answered similarly - 63%, while Włocławek residents pointed to Instagram 65%. In second place in both Bydgoszcz and Toruń, Instagram was the most popular - 25% in both cases, and for residents of Włocławek, Facebook was the most popular - 27%. In third place in all analyzed cities was Twitter (Bydgoszcz 5%, Toruń 8%, Włocławek 6%).

Table 1.

Which social media do you use most often?

Bydgoszcz	Toruń	Włocławek
Facebook	Facebook	Instagram
Instagram	Instagram	Facebook
Twitter	Twitter	Twitter
Inne	Inne	Inne

Source: own study.

Next, respondents identified the online sources from which they get information about the cities. In Wloclawek, the official website of the agglomeration remains the primary source of news, more than half (58%) of respondents. In second place, they use information on Facebook, but in relation to the website, this is a much smaller group (30% look there often and 18% rarely). The third source is online forums. When it comes to larger centers like Bydgoszcz and Toruń, the situation is radically different. In both cases, the dominant source of information about the cities is the Facebook accounts of both agglomerations (75% Bydgoszcz - 60% use often and 15% rarely; 77% Torun - 55% use often and 22% rarely). In second place, residents seek information by visiting their cities' websites.

However, 20% of respondents from Wloclawek do not know at all that the city has a Facebook profile, 45% did not know about the profile on Instagram.

Types of activity of respondents on Facebook of the cities of Bydgoszcz, Torun, Wloclawek. Basically all those who declared using the Facebook of their agglomeration read or browse the content there, a negligible group post comments, write posts. Few encourage friends to like their Facebook profile or share information on their private profile.

Below is the percentage distribution of responses (Figure 4):

- Reads or views content - Bydgoszcz - 92%; Toruń - 89%; Wloclawek - 72%.
- Leaves comments on profile - Bydgoszcz - 25%; Torun - 26%; Wloclawek - 7%.
- Likes posts - Bydgoszcz - 29%; Torun - 27%; Wloclawek - 25%.
- Encourages friends to like this profile Bydgoszcz - 6%; Toruń - 4%; Wloclawek - 1%.
- Shares posts on their profile - Bydgoszcz - 2%; Toruń - 1%; Wloclawek - 1%.

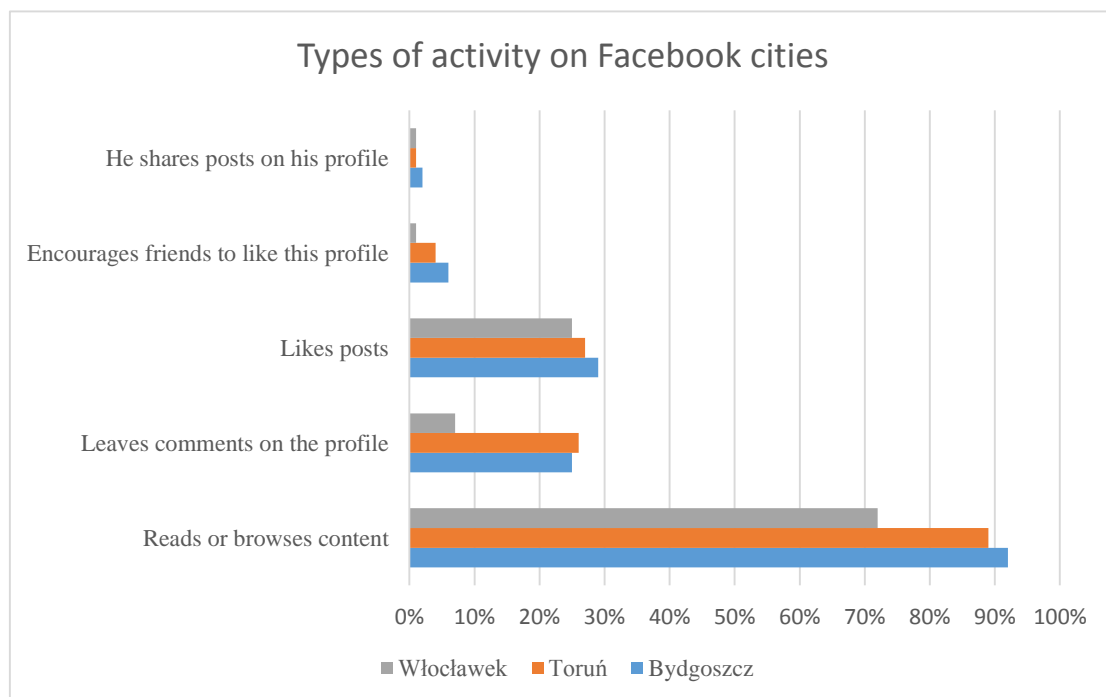


Figure 4. Types of activity on city social profiles.

Source: own study.

More than half of the respondents from Bydgoszcz believe that the city's use of social media can help improve relations with residents, while 25% see no impact on mutual relations, and only 8% pointed to the possibility of worsening them. In Toruń, the results were similar. In Włocławek, on the other hand, as many as 30% have no opinion on the subject.

Despite the fact that respondents quite rarely reach out interactively to the cities' social media, they overwhelmingly believe that the agglomeration, wishing to have a modern image, should use them in communicating with its audience.

4. Summary

The purpose of this article was to analyze and evaluate the use of social media in the strategy of major cities in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region. Selected aspects of Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Włocławek's social media activities were analyzed.

The analysis of available reports shows that the aforementioned cities maintain engaging social media profiles that encourage users to communicate. This fact fits perfectly with the information policy of the cities, the premise of which is efficient communication with the public.

The survey shows that the leading source of information mainly about the larger cities of the province are the so-called Facebook Fanpages of these centers (Bydgoszcz, Toruń).

Despite the fact that social media is a media based on interaction, city residents, as the main recipients of messages on agglomeration profiles, use it in the way that is characteristic of the old media, that is, they are mostly passive recipients. Although participation and interaction is the case of urban social media at a fairly low level, the trend seems to be upward.

Social media is becoming a tool for consistent city branding and strengthening, as well as good two-way communication. With consistent actions taken to promote the city, Internet users become engaged fans and ambassadors of the place. That is why it is so important to be dynamically flexible in finding solutions that can optimize promotional and communication processes on the web.

Those responsible for the functioning of cities in social networks should be aware that the modern Internet is characterized by a huge variability of the information presented, so they should creatively modify the forms of communication using the tools available on the web.

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