

EVOLUTION OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE ŁÓDZKIE VOIVODSHIP

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to present changes in the use and basic advantages of social networks in communication of local government units on the example of cities in the Lodz voivodeship.

Design/methodology/approach: The study consisted in analysing the content of the official websites belonging to the local governments of the individual cities of the Łódzkie Voivodeship in order to see how information on the social networks used (location of plug-ins) is made available and a review of active profiles on these sites was carried out in order to diagnose what content is published. The survey was conducted in December 2022. The results were cross-referenced with the corresponding survey carried out in 2019 and 2020. Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version).

Findings: The study showed that out of the 44 cities analysed in the Łódzkie Voivodeship, 42 use at least one social networking site. The most common is Facebook - 42 cities have a profile, followed by YouTube - 25, Instagram - 14 and Twitter 7. 3 cities have profiles on 4 sites at the same time, 11 have 3 official profiles on different social networking sites, while another 15 cities have 2 and 13 have one each. For 2 cities, no profiles were found on social networks. The content and frequency of publication on the profiles varies. Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version).

Research limitations/implications: The study did not take into consideration social networks which were less popular at the time of writing (e.g. TikTok - among the cities surveyed, only Łódź has an official profile there). The objectives of the communication activities of individual cities are not known. This may be part of further research through in-depth interviews with those responsible for promoting the cities. It is also possible to extend the research to cities of other voivodships and among the target recipients of communication activities in particular sites.

Practical implications: On the basis of the author's audit of the communication activity of cities in the Łódzkie Voivodeship on social networking sites, this article suggests that the use of social media is an appropriate tactic in cities' communication, both in the external promotional dimension and in communication with citizens due to the participatory, interactive and open nature of social media.

Originality/value: The publication presents the results of research carried out on the basis of the author's audit of the activity of the cities of the Lodz voivodship in the social media.

Keywords: social media, city marketing, city promotion, marketing communication.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Social networks have been known for a long time, but it is only the virtual space and available online applications that have allowed them to flourish and be used for business, social and political purposes. Thus, social networks using social networks as organisational and communication platforms have become social networks (Papińska-Kacperek, Polańska, 2016). The continuously improving ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) infrastructure and the increasing use of technology has changed the way modern communication is conducted interpersonally and, consequently, commercially. Public administration could not overlook the new solutions that have been improving the work of commercial institutions for years. Websites such as Facebook, YouTube have become popular in the daily lives of citizens, as well as cities (as local government units) in their contact with citizens via the Internet. A developed ICT infrastructure as well as a high Internet penetration in society are prerequisites to ensure that a large number of citizens are able to use social media and other online communication channels. Both of these factors can be found in the concept of 'Informational Word Cities' (Stock, 2011; Mainka, Khveshchanka, Stocka, 2011). Informational cities consist of two spaces: the space of places and the space of flows. The space of places (i.e. buildings, streets) is dominated by the space of flows (e.g. money, power, information). Such cities are the metropolises of the 21st century, following on from Manuel Castells' concept of 'Information Cities' (Castells, 1989). "World city" (Word City) is defined by the degree of "urbanness" (Friedmann, 1995; Taylor, 2004; Sassen, 2001), where a large population does not necessarily constitute an information city. However, ICT infrastructure should be developed to ensure that cities meet the needs of the space typical of an information city. On this occasion, other terms related to the development of ICTs in relation to cities such as digital city (Yigitcanlar, Han, 2010), smart city (Shapiro, 2006; Hollands, 2008; Jonek-Kowalska and Wolniak, 2019), knowledge city (Ergazakis, Metaxiotis, Psarras, 2004), or creative city (Landry, 2005; Florida, 2005).

In view of the above, the use of social media in public relations is becoming an important element of cities' communication strategies. The city's communication, mainly with regard to promotional aspects, has an integrative, stimulating and competitive function. The integrative function refers to the local community and aims to strengthen the bonds between the people of a region. The stimulating function serves to increase the degree of identification with the territory under consideration. The last function relates to competition for external funds, investors, tourists, etc. Skilful social networking profiles can contribute to the emergence of a kind of community of residents acting in the name of the general good. In addition, it is an opportunity to inform residents about the activities of local authorities in a non-invasive way, and thus a valuable source of information and another element for building an information society (Koszembar-Wiklik, 2013; Woźniakowski, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this article is to present the changes in the use and the basic advantages of social networks in the communication of local government units on the example of cities in the Łódzkie Voivodeship.

2. Principles of social media in cities' communication

A social networking site can be defined as a site aimed at a specific social group or people with similar interests. These sites allow quite a lot of interference by their users in its content and nature (Rzepecki, Hankus-Matuszek, 2009). What is their strength is that visitors to profiles are not fully aware that behind the eye-pleasing graphics, catchy texts under which they press the "Like!" button, there is (or at least there should be) a carefully laid out, well-thought-out plan of action down to the smallest detail, which assumes the opportunities, threats and potential benefits of each message, i.e. a network of efficiently selected facts and conclusions (Woźniakowski, 2015). The skilful use of social networks in marketing communication can result in the fact that by sending out messages, the organisation - the city - can build lasting relationships with its audience - the inhabitants (or other stakeholders, e.g. tourists, investors), which will not end with the action carried out (Rak, 2011). This means that a well-created, credible message will be perceived positively by the environment and will be further replicated by the recipients. In addition, informal communication between audiences proves to be much more effective than conducting standard promotional activities (Brunk, 2010).

In a broad sense, social media is a major area of marketing innovation in the promotional strategies of cities and regions (Łopacińska, 2014). Image creation through social media has become an obligation for dynamically developing cities. Positioning the image of a modern and innovative city is not possible without the conscious use of these communication channels. Exemplary communication in social media should be:

- informal (being closer to local people),
- emotional (based not only on information but also on language),
- interactive (rich in images and videos that shape the image),
- engaging (based on dialogue with users),
- problem-solving (faster, simpler and less bureaucratic).

Looking at cities' communication through social networks, three styles of stakeholder dialogue can be defined. These have been named metaphorically, highlighting their most important characteristics: "announcement pole", "hotline" and "discussion club" (Annusewicz, 2019). The first style - the 'announcement pole' - is the least participatory form of dialogue. It is characterised by a focus on the realisation of the information function of the communication carried out and is implemented in the formula of one-way communication, focused on broadcasting and not interested in feedback. The characteristics of this style are (Annusewicz, 2019):

- a small number of observed accounts of other users, predominantly local government institutions, local politicians, other local government units and public administration entities,
- lack of any interaction with other users,

- sharing and adding to liked posts of only other local government entities, possibly media representatives,
- publication of posts of a purely informative nature.

The second style, 'hotline', is characterised by:

- a relatively large number of observed accounts, although those observed outside the city's subordinate institutions include mainly local journalists, activists, politicians,
- reactive interactions, replying to comments that mention the user's name directly,
- publishing mostly informative posts.

The last of the communication styles - the most intensive and to the greatest extent allowing it to be called participatory in the sense of the essence of communication - is the format metaphorically called 'discussion club'. It is characterised by:

- a large number of followed accounts, among which a significant group are residents, people identifying themselves with the city/municipality,
- proactive (also reactive) interactions involving participation in discussions on a given social network not only when they are somehow related to the city, but also when they go beyond the subject of a given locality,
- with a high number of likes and shares for posts made by individual, not widely known users of a given site,
- engaging content of posts,
- broad reactions to comments.

It is important to remember that social media combines vertical communication and horizontal communication (Brzustewicz, 2014). This means that communication is not only based on the contact between the company (in this case the city) and the users (stakeholders), but also has the dimension of exchanging experiences directly between the audience. A city with an active social media presence should observe, learn from and respond to the needs of its inhabitants.

3. Social networks used by the cities of the Lodz region

The study consisted in analysing the content of official websites belonging to local governments of individual cities in Łódzkie Voivodeship from the point of view of checking how information on the social networks used is communicated (the location of plug-ins) and the profiles themselves in these media in order to see what is published and how. In the absence of a link on the website to the most popular social network, Facebook, such a profile was searched for through the portal's internal search engine. In the case of other sites, profiles with no direct links on the cities' websites were not taken into account, although a few profiles were

identified through search engines (YouTube - Brzeziny, Drzewica, Łowicz, Pajęczno; Instagram - Drzewica, Łowicz, Pabianice, Radomsko, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Zgierz; Twitter - Bełchatów, Piotrków Trybunalski, Wieluń), but due to the information contained in the profiles, in most cases it is not possible to verify whether they are official profiles of the cities.

The survey was carried out in three stages: in October 2019 and 2020 and in December 2022. This made it possible to observe changes in the use of the various portals, as well as in the way they communicate. Particular attention was paid to what and how was communicated on the cities' profiles in the period before the pandemic (2019), during the pandemic (2020), as well as after the announcement of its end (2022). Year-on-year percentage changes were also indicated for basic information about the profiles themselves, such as the number of users following a profile or the number of publications.

The analysis showed that out of the 44 cities analysed in the Łódzkie Region, 42 use at least one social networking site. This is most often Facebook - 42 cities have a profile, followed by YouTube - 25, Instagram - 14 and Twitter - 7. 3 cities have profiles on 4 sites at the same time, 11 have 3 official profiles on different social networking sites, while another 15 cities have 2 and 13 have 1 profile each. For 2 cities, no profiles were found on social networks. Tables 1-4 show which cities have their own profiles on each site, together with the number of fans and/or publications and/or impressions in October 2019 and 2020 and December 2022.

Table 1.

Facebook in the communication of cities in the Łódź Voivodship - comparison of basic information - as of October 2019 and 2020 and December 2022

No.	City	Number of users following 2019	Number of users following 2020	Number of users following 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022
1	Aleksandrów Łódzki	9450	10990	14877	14%	26%
2	Bełchatów	14333	15674	18484	9%	15%
3	Biała Rawska	-	-	-	-	-
4	Błaszki	-	1117	1200	-	7%
5	Brzeziny	3405	4009	5400	15%	26%
6	Drzewica	2136	2705	3700	21%	27%
7	Działoszyn	-	-	2100	-	-
8	Głowno	4524	5702	7400	21%	23%
9	Kamieńsk	32	75	139	57%	46%
10	Koluszki	4631	5868	7225	21%	19%
11	Konstantynów Łódzki	8879	10061	12156	12%	17%
12	Krośniewice	995	1301	2000	24%	35%
13	Kutno	12636	13447	14000	6%	4%
14	Łask	2700	3184	4800	15%	34%
15	Łęczyca	2922	3270	4447	11%	26%
16	Łowicz	10983	11597	12912	5%	10%
17	Łódź	344261	368328	459000	7%	20%
18	Opoczno	3902	4642	6300	16%	26%
19	Ozorków	-	2313	3300	-	30%
20	Pabianice	2554	2906	3600	12%	19%

Cont. table 1.

21	Pajęczno	-	1307	2200	-	41%
22	Piotrków Trybunalski	8386	8971	10000	7%	10%
23	Poddębice	571	860	1600	34%	46%
24	Przedbórz	-	-	1500	-	-
25	Radomsko	4729	5413	7684	13%	30%
26	Rawa Mazowiecka	3469	4173	5980	17%	30%
27	Rzgów	-	1195	2256	-	47%
28	Sieradz	4493	5907	8450	24%	30%
29	Skierniewice	15670	17173	19000	9%	10%
30	Stryków	1914	2876	4700	33%	39%
31	Sulejów	2481	3475	5500	29%	37%
32	Szadek	229	556	1000	59%	44%
33	Tomaszów Mazowiecki	11277	13288	14891	15%	11%
34	Tuszyn	-	-	-	-	-
35	Uniejów	5672	6354	7800	11%	19%
36	Warta	1689	2965	5300	43%	44%
37	Wieluń	11189	12110	13000	8%	7%
38	Wieruszów	3483	4768	6200	27%	23%
39	Wolbórz	1717	1928	2700	11%	29%
40	Zduńska Wola	5830	6311	7600	8%	17%
41	Zelów	1842	2538	4100	27%	38%
42	Zgierz	11535	13219	16412	13%	19%
43	Złoczew	4372	5021	6500	13%	23%
44	Żychlin	3652	3944	4500	7%	12%
Total (number of profiles)		36	40	42	10%	5%

Source: own research.

Table 2.

Youtube in the communication of cities in the Łódź Voivodship - comparison of basic information - as of October 2019 and 2020 and December 2022

No.	City	Number of views of the most popular video 2019	Number of views of the most popular video 2020	Number of views of the most popular video 2022	Channel subscriptions 2019	Channel subscriptions 2020	Channel subscriptions 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022
1	Aleksandrów Łódzki	126984	13154	88795	671	896	1210	34%	35%
2	Bełchatów	255605	273325	301632	644	693	810	8%	17%
11	Konstantynów Łódzki	1037	-	598	24	0	92	-100%	-
13	Kutno	-	-	1435	-	-	101	-	-
15	Łęczyca	10016	10096	10146	65	70	72	8%	3%
17	Łódź	-	-	1058650	-	-	5690	-	-
18	Opoczno	10833	12864	16105	451	695	919	54%	32%
19	Ozorków	9288	9769	13298	545	792	1070	45%	35%
22	Piotrków Trybunalski	-	567398	668275	-	3750	5750	-	53%
25	Radomsko	18066	19735	20736	138	185	218	34%	18%
26	Rawa Mazowiecka	-	-	6558	-	-	164	-	-
27	Rzgów	-	-	3147	-	-	99	-	-
29	Skierniewice	6218	16823	17690	287	461	569	61%	23%
30	Stryków	7048	7437	7919	255	305	326	20%	7%
31	Sulejów	-	-	117080	-	-	733	-	-

Cont. table 2.

33	Tomaszów Mazowiecki	51174	79259	88564	387	516	673	33%	30%
35	Uniejów	761	11506	34458	26	28	99	8%	254%
36	Warta	1589	1958	9395	21	33	83	57%	152%
37	Wieluń	38157	44332	54777	136	149	189	10%	27%
38	Wieruszów	2892	9051	10668	47	72	95	53%	32%
39	Wolbórz	8588	9852	1944	20	24	54	20%	125%
40	Zduńska Wola	331	107565	116453	80	283	316	254%	12%
41	Zelów	2083	2673	33520	65	105	331	62%	215%
42	Zgierz	17564	19399	48980	238	285	1020	20%	258%
44	Żychlin	3764	3866	4137	46	61	92	33%	51%
Total (number of profiles)					19	19	25	0%	32%

Source: own research

Table 3.

Instagram in the communication of cities in the Łódź Voivodship - comparison of basic information - as of October 2019 and 2020 and December 2022

No.	City	Number of posts in 2019	Number of posts in 2020	Number of posts in 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022	Number of followers 2019	Number of followers 2020	Number of followers 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022
1	Aleksandrów Łódzki	-	-	193	-	-	-	-	1039	-	-
2	Bełchatów	-	-	419	-	-	-	-	1315	-	-
8	Główno	-	-	174	-	-	-	-	933	-	-
11	Konstantynów Łódzki	150	1	231	-99%	23000%	900	305	782	-66%	156%
13	Kutno	-	-	417	-	-	-	-	3257	-	-
17	Łódź	3596	4782	6487	33%	36%	62800	78700	103643	25%	32%
28	Sieradz	62	94	230	52%	145%	481	675	1010	40%	50%
29	Skierniewice	505	773	1998	53%	158%	2444	3185	4610	30%	45%
31	Sulejów	-	-	61	-	-	-	-	585	-	-
35	Uniejów	-	-	441	-	-	-	-	1969	-	-
37	Wieluń	73	77	82	5%	6%	2658	2813	2846	6%	1%
38	Wieruszów	72	79	117	10%	48%	266	498	777	87%	56%
43	Złoczew	259	259	259	0%	0%	500	512	520	2%	2%
44	Żychlin	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Total (number of profiles)							7	7	14	0%	100%

Source: own research.

Table 4.

Twitter w komunikacji miast województwa łódzkiego – porównanie podstawowych informacji - stan na październik 2019 i 2020 oraz grudzień 2022 roku

No.	City	Number of tweets 2019	Number of tweets 2020	Number of tweets 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022	Number of followers 2019	Number of followers 2020	Number of followers 2022	Change YOY 2019-2020	Change YOY 2020-2022
10	Koluszki	22	22	22	0%	0%	58	62	76	7%	23%
11	Konstantynów Łódzki		13	13		0%		17	48		182%
13	Kutno			878					896		
17	Łódź	4228	5331	8463	26%	59%	5945	8060	13400	36%	66%
25	Radomsko	2029	2029	0	0%	-100%	634	698		10%	-100%
33	Tomaszów Mazowiecki	137	142	143	4%	1%	170	220	291	29%	32%
36	Warta	1	1	1	0%	0%	1	1	2	0%	100%
40	Zduńska Wola	359	412	0	15%	-100%	136	161	196	18%	22%
Total (number of profiles)				6	7		7		17%	0%	

Source: own research.

The Facebook profiles in place are up to date and the fan numbers suggest that an actively run fanpage mainly for office-resident communication has great potential. Each active Facebook profile has seen an increase in the number of followers during the periods analysed. In many cases, new posts are added daily or even several times a day. They usually relate to current events in the city and contain numerous photos or videos. The published posts take on a different character in the analysed period October 2019 - December 2022. 4 phases in communication can be distinguished. The first before the pandemic, the second at the time of its occurrence and the time of the so-called first lockdown in the period March-April 2020. The third after the loosening of restrictions - from May 2020, and the fourth from spring 2021. In the first distinguished stage, all published posts can be grouped according to the following categories (Woźniakowski, 2020):

- for residents (health/social welfare, temporary traffic obstructions, civic budget, event coverage, education) - most content published,
- leisure (cultural and sports events/activities, openings of new catering establishments, presentations of places, "behind the scenes" of municipal institutions, e.g. showing the work of the sewage treatment plant, competitions, memes),
- tourism (tourist attractions, history of places - photos and graphics comparing the historical and contemporary appearance of a place, festivals),
- investment/renovation/business (public and commercial, new jobs, fairs and conferences).

In the second stage, the posts published took on an official, formal character somewhat at odds with the idea of social media communication and only addressed epidemic issues such as:

- statistics - number of people infected/number of deaths following covid-19 infection by: total country/province/municipality,
- safety/prevention rules for the spread of the virus,
- information on restrictions imposed by central authorities.

In the third stage, some cities continued to publish mostly posts in a formal tone, referring to official government communications, as at the beginning of the pandemic. In contrast, the second group returned to the original form of communication using Facebook, thus generally following the accepted rules with regard to the form of communication (less formal, shortening the distance with the recipient), also adding posts related to the current epidemic situation. Only in the fourth phase from spring 2021 can the communication style be considered to have returned to the time before the pandemic. Although the communication of many local authorities has seen an emphasis on messages aimed at residents on broad health and health-promoting prevention.

With regard to the second service analysed - YouTube, the number of subscribers to each of the channels - profiles is significantly lower than on Facebook. However, in the case of this service, more important than the number of regular observers is the number of views of individual videos, which in many cases is tens or even hundreds of thousands. The number of channels on YouTube increased to 25 (against 19 in the previously analysed period).

However, it can be concluded that the increase in the number of channels has not been followed by an increase in the quality of the videos published. The biggest problem for self-governing channels on YouTube continues to be the randomness of the content they publish, their small number and the lack of new publications. There is also a lack of basic descriptions about a channel in the "information" tab, which could at least confirm that we are dealing with an official city channel.

A channel on YouTube is often treated as a kind of web TV (e.g. channels: Bełchatów TV, TV Ozorków) or a regional news service (e.g. Zgierz Space, Tydzień Reporterów TV Aleksandrów Łódzki). In some cases, the channel mainly reports on the deliberations of the city council or its subordinate committees (e.g. Zelów, Wieruszów, Stryków). Which, of course, is not a bad thing, but such content will not reach a wide audience. A better idea would be to create a playlist for such films, and another for other films published on the channel. Such an approach would allow a logical categorisation of individual films, as well as making it easier for interested users to find interesting content.

The third social network analysed - Instagram - has seen the largest increase in the number of profiles since 2020. There are currently 14 of them. On one profile - Złoczew - activity ceased in May 2019. In the case of the profiles of, among others, Wieluń and Wieruszów, new posts appear quite rarely (intervals of several weeks or even several months). Over the years analysed, the problem with Instagram is the provision of relevant content all the time. The main

characteristic of the service is visual content, mainly photos and short films, hence the publications should have a kind of artistic value, or at least the character of professional photo shoots. Consequently, the lack of a clearly defined purpose for having a profile on Instagram becomes apparent. There are often posts that duplicate content previously presented on Facebook. They are additionally accompanied by the same photos or graphics. In this case, it is difficult to engage the user, to persuade them to like the content on Instagram, when essentially identical content is provided regardless of the channel. Against this backdrop, the Łódź profile stands out, as it is the only one that is actively maintained, and the posts published (all bearing, among other things, the hashtag #kochamlodz) are in keeping with the nature of the service. The vast majority of posts refer to the presentation of various places in the city, often in an atypical manner, thus expressing the 'spirit' of the city in a rather symbolic way, which may encourage both residents and tourists to visit the presented places.

In the case of the last service analysed - Twitter, 7 of the identified city profiles are sporadically updated or have ceased any activity. The exceptions are the profiles of Kutno and Łódź. In the case of Kutno, tweets are added on average 2-3 per month (slightly too infrequent considering the nature of the service). On the provincial capital's profile, however, sometimes even a few tweets are added daily. They are mostly about current events in the city, although there are also some that encourage people to be more active (e.g. to search for more and more detailed news) on other services, mainly Facebook. As for the idea behind the posts, they are in keeping with the nature of the service, which is designed to publish short messages to refer the viewer to the full content published on other services and generate discussion.

Compared to the analogous analyses of the use of social networking sites by cities in the Łódzkie Voivodeship performed in 2019 and 2020, it should be noted that the errors that appeared in these communication channels have not been eliminated. The first shortcoming is the often erroneous positioning of social media plug-ins in the structure of the official website belonging to the city hall. They should be in a prominent position, preferably in the top bar of the page, or alternatively in the bottom menu or footer of the page. However, it still happens that they are in an inconspicuous place in the structure of the site, or the plug-ins for different profiles are in different places on the site, or they are not present at all despite the fact that a given profile exists, or they link to a non-existent service (e.g. a link to Google+ on Zgierz's website). In addition, clicking on a plug-in should open the profile on the social networking site in a new browser tab, rather than replacing the currently displayed content, which is not standard.

The second mistake is maintaining inactive profiles. Sometimes, despite the social networking plug-in being prominently placed on the page, out-of-date information or none at all is visible when redirected to the profile. If there is no new content, there is no justification for having a profile on a social networking site, it contradicts the basic idea of their functioning and may give the recipient the impression that nothing interesting worth showing is happening in the city.

Another problem is the lack of consistency in the message delivered through individual profiles on different social networks. Adopting a coherent communication strategy using profiles in individual services can produce a synergy effect, enable cross-activities, e.g. encouraging users of one service to follow an account in another service, because a competition for residents will be announced there, etc. Sometimes it can even give the impression that there is a lack of coherence in the communication strategy. Sometimes it can even feel as if random content is being published, as if the next post is forced. The inconsistency of the message is also related to. Profile pictures and background pictures posted on individual social media profiles. For ease of profile identification. It is a good idea to set up a single profile picture. For background photos, adapt to the specifics of the site. There are cases where profile pictures do not intuitively identify a city. E.g. Placing a view of the town hall building in the evening.

The last most common mistake (although the above certainly does not exhaust the topic) is to have too many profiles when there is no clear communication strategy using social media. In this case, one can stick to the principle that less is more. For example, on Opoczno's website there are six plugins for six different Facebook profiles of the town. The first one is "Opoczno the capital of oberek", the second one is related to the Ceramic Tile Festival, the others are "Eko Opoczno", "Sport and recreation", "Opoczno 2.0" and the last one - the municipality proper. It seems that it would be possible to make them one, especially as in the case of most profiles the publications are quite occasional.

4. Summary

On the basis of changes in interpersonal communication, communication between the authority and the resident (or other stakeholder, e.g. investor, tourist, etc.) is constantly evolving. Various types of innovations introduced in this area can temporarily improve the communication process or even revolutionise it (Wozniak, 2015). Image creation through social media has become an obligation for dynamically developing cities. Positioning the image of a modern and innovative city is not possible without conscious use of this communication channel. The image of cities in social media is created in many dimensions. It results not only from the development of the city (which builds identity) and the communication of information about it (which shapes image). Images of the city are also influenced by communication between representatives of local government units and interested audiences, which is directly related to the specifics of social networks. Social media have become a tool for the consistent strengthening of a city's brand and its popularity (Delińska, Kęprowska, 2018).

When summarising the ways in which cities of Łódź Province communicate on social media, it should be noted that despite more than two decades of their widespread use by people and numerous organisations, a significant proportion of cities' profiles are run as if their administrators were taking their first steps in the social media marketing environment. Against the backdrop of all the cities analysed, the regional capital certainly stands out, whose activities could be a benchmark for other cities. This is not about a disproportionately high promotional budget compared to other cities, as maintaining a profile on a social networking site can be a relatively low-cost communication tool. It is mainly a question of solving problems related to the division of responsibilities and competences of the relevant people in the office to coordinate social media activities, possibly employing a suitable external entity. In order for social media communication activities to be effective, you need to have a proper social media strategy for all channels. Without this, in many cases there will continue to be a sense of chaos and randomness in the content posted. In addition, local authorities that do not have any presence on the Internet (apart from a website, which is nowadays natural) must remember that "a city that is not on the Internet is treated as a technologically backward city" (Markowski, 2002, p. 132), and in such a city a significant part of the population may simply not want to live, study, etc., tourists to visit and potential investors to invest their capital.

Creating an image through social media has become an obligation for rapidly developing cities. Positioning the image of a modern and innovative city is not possible without conscious use of this communication channel. The image of cities in social media is created in many dimensions. It results not only from the development of the city (which builds identity) and the communication of information about it (which shapes image). Images of the city are also influenced by communication between representatives of local government units and interested audiences, which is directly related to the specifics of social networks. Social media have become a tool for the consistent strengthening of the city's brand and its popularity.

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