
The Role of Social Media Strategy in Building Image and Increasing the Visibility of Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of the article is to show that having a social media strategy by higher education institutions can influence the improvement of indicators and increase the visibility of the institution among various target groups.

Sedigne/Methodology/Approche: Activities in social media can be conducted in a planned or unplanned manner. The research hypothesis was defined as follows: Conducting social media activities based on a strategy increases the chance of reaching and actively engaging recipients. The following research methods were applied in the study: content analysis of documents and social media data, [and] the observation method.

Findings: Without an appropriate social media strategy, including tracking trends, content, and the popularity of individual media, engaging recipients and increasing reach will not be possible.

Practical implications: The actions presented in the article can serve as a guideline for other higher education institutions.

Oryginal/value: The article has practical application. The results of the analysis can be used by higher education institutions and other entities that operate in social media according to a strategy they have planned.

Keywords: Social media, social media strategy, image (or brand image), higher education institutions.

JEL classification: M30, M39.

Paper Type: research work

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1. Introduction

Social media has become very influential in shaping the image and reputation of organizations, including universities. Ineffective management of these platforms can put the university's reputation at risk, but social media can offer significant benefits when used strategically.

Research indicates that universities with solid social media strategies are more skilled at promoting their services, increasing audience engagement, and expanding the reach of their communication (Zanariah Yusoff, S., Hafizah Abdullah, N., Ahmad Sani, N. 2025).

Brand image holds a vital role in developing a brand since brand image involves reputation and credibility of a brand which later on will become a guideline for consumers to try or use goods or services and generate a specific experience (brand experience) which will determine whether the consumers will become a loyalist or opportunist (easy to switch to other brand).

Brand image is a representation of the whole perception of a brand and formed from informations and knowledge about that brand. Image of a brand is related to attitude such as trust and preference towards a brand (Wijaya, B.S., Putri, M.D. 2013)

Building a strong university brand community in social media is necessary not only for attracting the target people to the university but also for retaining them and maintaining their loyalty and positive word of mouth after they complete their education. Social media in higher education institutions can enhance the student experience, alumni communication, and brand development.

It is also a tool that can enhance identification with the university and can assist in increasing student engagement. When we take the needs and expectations of the digital natives who are the new entrants to higher education institutions, we can further appreciate the relevance of social media for higher education (Nevzat, R., Amca, Y., Tanova, C., Amca, H. 2016).

Social media has a huge potential as a weapon to create brand image about a certain brand and attracts consumers. Social media can also become a very useful option for companies that cannot afford their marketing and advertisement budget. Creating an image about a brand through social media is an outstanding way to communicate with consumers.

By providing space for consumer to convey their opinions, it can be an input for the company and consumers will feel comfortable knowing that the company cares about their opinions. Social media sites such as twitter and facebook allow people to give positive reviews, product recommendation, and tweet about the related company.

The existence of social media makes company's name and brand can be viewed by a significant number of people. Therefore, a continuous utilization of social media can eventually create brand image and help increasing sales (Wijaya, B.S., Putri, M.D. 2013).

Communication through Facebook requires specific skills to establish relationships with potential and existing customers and engage and retain communication with them. These actions should be carefully directed to maintain the university's brand image and not damage it (Kazaishvili and Khmiadashvili, 2022)

Research conducted previously shows that there are several variables that also determine prospective students' decisions in choosing a university, including: social media marketing, customer relationships and brand image. It is very interesting to investigate how the brand image of a university influences students' decisions in choosing to continue their studies at that university (Fina, Y., Pravitasari, E. 2023)

2. The Significance of Strategy in Social Media

A higher education marketing strategy supports the strategic goals contained in the university's strategy, and the features constituting a marketing strategy model include (Białoń, 2015):

- marketing goals resulting from the university's overall strategy;
- structure of target segments and opportunities to acquire new ones;
- concept of solutions to marketing problems;
- selection of marketing tools;
- selection of marketing communication channels.

E-education should certainly be included among the elements of a university's strategy, as an innovative form of higher education and a special "attraction" that has its place in the university's marketing strategy (Pluta-Olearnik, 2006)

Currently, higher education marketing strategies are actively redirected towards the use of internet technologies in the communication process. At the same time, modern technologies (primarily the Internet) enable the development of universities' strengths and their attractive presentation to the end consumer of educational services. (Kisiołek, 2021)

The education market in Poland is becoming increasingly competitive. Foreign universities are increasingly competing for Polish students. Through numerous scholarship programs and international collaborations, pursuing education in another country is becoming popular.

The demographic decline in Poland will generate even greater competition for student applicants.

Therefore, universities should conduct promotional activities based on strategies. Due to the constantly evolving social media landscape, universities should have strategies dedicated to social media. Due to the frequent changes taking place in social media, this strategy should be modified depending on ongoing changes in social media, such as changes in algorithms, trends, and the emergence of new formats.

Reinartz, Kraff, and Hoyer state that consumer preferences tend to fluctuate according to current conditions. Therefore, every business entity or organization, including universities, is expected to be able to adapt to continuously changing consumer preferences.

To attract the interest of prospective students, universities need to develop attractive promotional strategies, one of which is by utilizing social media marketing, as well as improving relationships with customers through various advertising media, sales promotions, and personal and direct selling interactions expected to attract high school graduates to register, especially at private universities according to their wishes. (Setyowati, T., Widjayanti, F.N., and Kristiyana, N. 2025)

Organizations are also able to maintain customer relationships and target potential with customers how they engage with their audience on social media platforms that are used by the organization. Managing social media to maintain a positive corporate reputation is a process that involves planning for monitoring the social media platforms that the organization uses, sharing strategic social media content and engaging with customers who talk about the organization on social media platforms. (Maboe, L., Naidoo, P., Ramlutchman, N., and Rawjee, V. 2024).

3. Data Analysis Based on Facebook Statistics

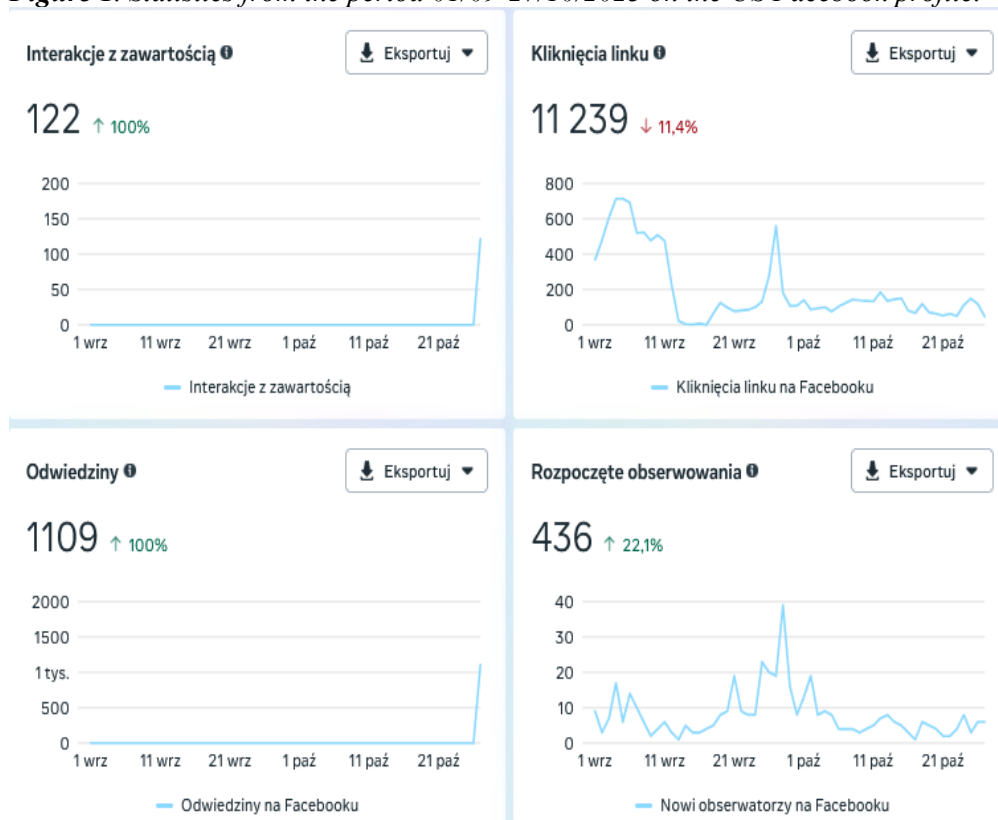
The University of Szczecin maintains profiles on several social media platforms, including Facebook. Data from the same periods, specifically between September 1st and October 27th, was prepared for the analysis, spanning the three years 2023, 2024, and 2025 (details are provided in Figures 1, 2, and 3).

According to the descriptions provided on the Facebook platform, the terms analyzed in the graphics mean:

- Content Interactions – the number of likes or reactions, saves, comments, shares, and replies to your content, including ads. Content includes formats such as posts, stories, reels, and more.
- Facebook Link Clicks – the number of clicks, taps, or swipes on links in your content, including ads. Content may include formats such as posts, stories, and reels, which lead to destinations or content on or off Facebook.

- Facebook Visits – the number of visits to your page or profile.
- New Facebook Followers - the number of accounts that started following you in the selected period.

Figure 1. Statistics from the period 01/09-27/10/2023 on the US Facebook profile.



Source: Facebook US.

In the area of content interaction, a huge increase, from 122 to almost 7,000, occurred between 2023 and 2024. In 2025, this number increased slightly compared to 2024 (over 7,000), which shows a continuing upward trend in this area, which translates into growing user engagement.

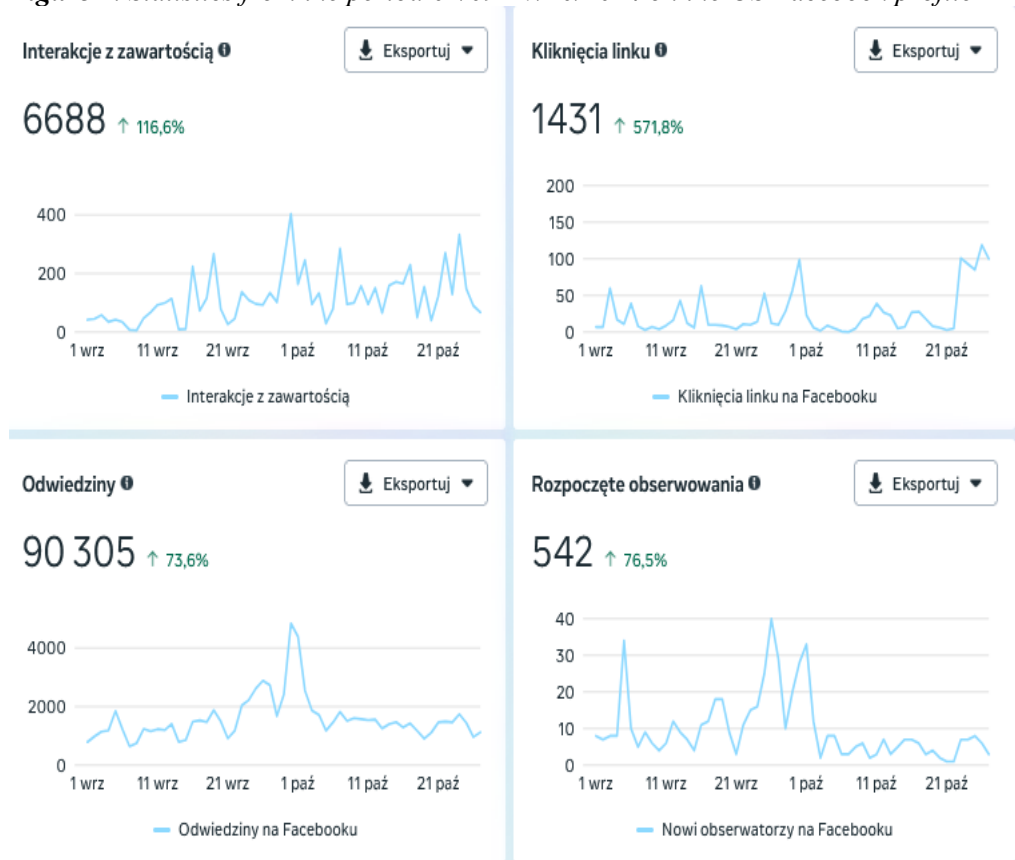
The largest changes occurred in the link click rate, which shows that the number of visitors is high, but they rarely click on external links. A significant change occurred in 2024 compared to 2023. It's worth analyzing the number of posts in these periods to see if the number of linked posts has decreased. Changes to the Facebook algorithm should also be taken into account. There's a slight improvement in 2025, but there's still a huge difference compared to 2023.

In terms of visit rate, the best results were achieved in the analyzed period in 2024 (over 90,000). It's possible that this may have been influenced by a planned

campaign, not just a permanent organic effect. Visits in 2025 are also high, but with a downward trend compared to 2024 (over 20,000).

The rate of acquiring new followers is increasing year on year, which means that activities carried out after 2023 resulted in a rapid increase in visits and also successfully converted some of the traffic into followers.

Figure 2. Statistics from the period 01/09-27/10/2024 on the US Facebook profile



Source: Facebook.

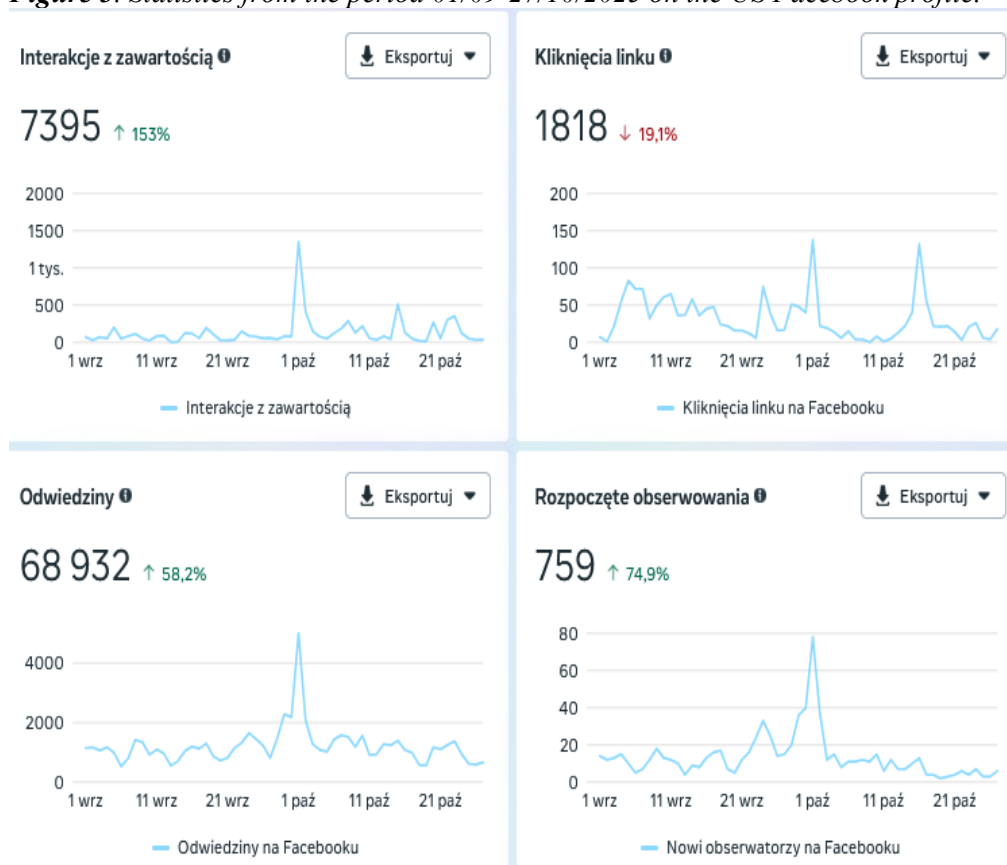
Based on the data presented, significant progress can be clearly seen in results achieved between 2023 and 2024, most evident in the increase in visits and interactions. The period examined in 2025 shows sustained engagement levels and further growth in visits, although the dynamics have slowed somewhat. Link clicks are the weakest.

On the one hand, this is due to the fact that many posts do not contain links. On the other hand, it is certainly worth considering improving articles containing links with

better CTAs (calls to action), link content, and testing various formats with links in comments and descriptions.

To increase organic growth, consider refining the communication and goals of individual campaigns.

Figure 3. Statistics from the period 01/09-27/10/2025 on the US Facebook profile.



Source: Facebook.

4. Conclusions

The analyses conducted confirm the upward trend in these activities, demonstrating the importance of social media in building the image and reputation of universities. With appropriate and strategic management, social media can become a key marketing communication tool, supporting the process of shaping a university's positive brand image, increasing its recognition and engagement with the academic community and applicants.

Literature analysis also confirms that a well-thought-out social media presence fosters the development of relationships with diverse audiences, builds trust, and increases the likelihood of potential students choosing a given university.

The information presented regarding the University of Szczecin's Facebook profile for the 2023-2025 period shows a significant increase in engagement rates – particularly interactions with publications and the number of profile visits. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the university's communication efforts and its growing ability to engage its audience.

The continued growth of new fans demonstrates that the community surrounding the university's brand is becoming increasingly strong, while the observed decline in link clicks indicates the need to adapt content to increase conversion and test new forms of communication.

The analyzed results suggest that social media should be viewed as a key element of a university's communication strategy, requiring constant monitoring, planning, and adapting to evolving trends and algorithms used on platforms. Flexibility and the ability to quickly respond to changes in audience behavior are crucial here, as confirmed by numerous studies conducted by researchers.

To maintain and further develop a positive image of the university in the digital environment, it is necessary to create a coherent, long-term social media strategy based on data analysis and adapted to current communication trends. Effective use of social media can not only expand the university's reach and popularity but also strengthen connections with current and future students, academic staff, and alumni, contributing to the development of a lasting and credible university brand image.

It is also worth mentioning that analyzing the data contained in social media statistics is increasingly difficult due to changing algorithms. These changes are so frequent that comparing periodic data is often inappropriate. Often, it's necessary to devote more time to content analysis during the evaluation periods to confidently interpret the data. Other metrics should be considered when analyzing social media activity, such as the PTAT (People Talking About This) metric.

People Talking About This metric shows user engagement with a Page broadly – it takes into account people who liked a given Page, posted, reacted to a Page's post, commented on it, or shared it, responded to a Page's survey, but also responded to an event invitation, mentioned the Page, tagged it in a photo, or checked in at a business location.

PTAT is the only metric that allows for assessing the impact of advertising activities without access to insight data (which is why we also decided to display it in Facebook Trends reports), including so-called dark posts, i.e., content that doesn't appear on a brand's Page but only in users' news feeds (Żyłka, 2025).

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