
Social Marketing and Its Tools in the Process of Creating Consumer Purchasing Decisions

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Abstract:

Purpose: With the rise of digital technologies and the increasing access to the Internet, social media platforms have become an integral part of the daily lives of millions of people around the world. Social media marketing is all about building engagement and interaction with potential customers by creating engaging and creative content. The ability to reach a wide audience and integrate with them and their shopping preferences plays a key role here. The aim of the article is to determine the impact of social marketing, including influencer marketing activities, on the process of supporting and making purchasing decisions by consumers. The study focuses, incl. on identifying the key aspects determining the role of social media in shaping the shopping preferences of their users. The analysis covers both theoretical and practical issues, enabling understanding of the phenomena that may affect the success of marketing campaigns of enterprises conducted via social media.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is based on both a review of the literature on the concept, meaning, and contemporary scope and practical ways of using social media in Poland against the background of the global market, as well as on the results of primary research on the issue raised. The study was carried out using the method of a diagnostic survey. Thanks to the use of this method, descriptions of both mass phenomena and processes taking place in communities were obtained, which makes it possible to explain them. The link to the survey was shared via social media platforms, highlighting Facebook, Instagram and Facebook Messenger among the users of the application. The research was carried out in the period from 25.11.2024. to 31.12.2024. The form was filled in by 745 willing people. The sample for the study was selected in a deliberate manner, because its addressees were people who actively use various forms of Internet communication using social media on a daily basis.

Findings: Due to generational differences and continuous development in the IT areas, companies have to constantly adapt to the changing environment. Despite the constant need to use traditional forms of marketing, the world is developing extremely quickly and an increasing part of everyday life is moving to the virtual sphere, where promotional activities differ significantly from the classic forms used in the real world. Internet marketing includes many different forms of marketing communication, using it you can use solutions such as: social media marketing, influencer marketing, e-mail marketing, video marketing, viral marketing, content marketing and graphic ads – display, etc. Thanks to the use of various types of online marketing instruments, companies combine traditional ways of communication with modern technological solutions. This combination ensures that

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customer contact activities are optimized and that customer preferences are better understood.

Practical Implications: *The article contains a lot of valuable information on the contemporary ways of using social media and their instruments both in the everyday life of buyers and in the contemporary shape of the market functioning of enterprises. The analysis of the results of research on the role of social media in the process of purchasing decisions by consumers may be helpful in understanding the process of consumer behavior, and thus in the market functioning of enterprises and expanding the spectrum of methods of product promotion to include social media.*

Originality / Value: *The study contains important information on the impact of marketing policy and the social media and instruments used by companies on the purchasing decision process of consumers.*

Keywords: *Social media, marketing, digital marketing, Internet, influencer.*

JEL Classification: *M31, L11.*

Paper type: *Research paper.*

1. Introduction

In today's dynamically developing market environment, social marketing and its instruments are increasingly important as an important factor influencing consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. With the continuous development of digital technologies and more and more widespread access to the Internet, social media platforms have become an integral part of the functioning of companies and the daily lives of millions of people around the world.

The ability to reach a wide audience and integrate with ever-changing requirements and shopping preferences plays a key role here (Biel, 2023). Social media marketing is all about building engagement and interaction with potential customers by creating timely and creative content. An important role in the development of this area is played by broadly understood data analysis, tracking the reach and activity of platform users.

This is helpful in the process of adapting the marketing strategy of enterprises to market requirements, based on real research results and real consumer opinions. Thanks to the use of this type of marketing, companies combine traditional ways of communication with modern technological solutions. This combination ensures that customer contact activities are optimized and that customer preferences are better known (Duda, 2024, p. 9). Due to the widening generational gap and continuous development in the IT area, companies must constantly adapt to the changing

environment. Despite the constant need to use traditional forms of marketing, the world is developing extremely quickly and an increasing part of everyday life is moving to the virtual sphere, where promotional activities differ significantly from the classic forms used in the real world.

Internet marketing includes many different forms of marketing communication, using it you can use solutions such as: social media marketing, influencer marketing, e-mail marketing, video marketing, viral marketing, content marketing and graphic ads – display, etc. Today's companies are forced to constantly adapt selected marketing communication solutions to their capabilities and the type of business they run.

The aim of this study is to determine the impact of social marketing, including influencer marketing activities, on the process of supporting and making purchasing decisions by consumers. This study focuses on identifying the key aspects determining the role of social media in shaping the shopping preferences of their users.

In addition, the study aims to identify the areas of marketing activities with the greatest potential and importance for the development of companies and their product brands, including the proper selection of advertising platforms and identification of products that achieve the greatest success in promotional campaigns thanks to the use of social marketing.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

The study covers both theoretical and practical issues to understand the phenomena affecting the success of marketing campaigns of enterprises conducted through social media. The research part focuses largely on an attempt to determine whether the activity of companies and brands on social media platforms affects consumer shopping behavior.

The study was carried out using the method of a diagnostic survey. Thanks to the use of this method, descriptions of certain mass phenomena and processes taking place in communities were obtained, which makes it possible to explain them. The CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique, which was used to carry out the study, is based on examining the respondents' answers provided after they completed the questionnaire in a web browser, which affects the large reach of the study.

The link to the survey was shared via social media platforms, highlighting Facebook, Instagram and Facebook Messenger among users of the given applications. The research was carried out in the period from 25.11.2024. to 31.12.2024. The form was filled in by 745 willing people. The respondents were people who actively use various forms of communication such as social media on a daily basis. The form consisted of a total of 29 questions, including 4 questions about the respondent and

their socio-demographic characteristics, and 25 questions closely related to the role of social media and influencers in their lives.

3. Social Media and their Role in Modern Marketing and in the Market Strategies of Enterprises

The term "social media" is used to describe a set of tools that use mobile technologies to enable the interactive exchange of information between users. Through them, all restrictions are eliminated, and users can conduct dialogues regardless of their geographical location (Krok, 2011, p. 49; Wicińska, 2017, p. 115).

Social media is constantly transforming over the years. One of the most important factors in the process of social media development is considered to be the turn towards the creation of communication and telecommunications platforms based on collective participation, called Web 2.0. The term was first coined by Darcy DiNucci in 1999. It means the process in which users create a website thanks to their contribution to content design (Iwanowska 2016, p.171).

Examples of such a phenomenon are most often cited as Wikipedia, which has been widely known for many years, and Amazon, which, in addition to selling its products, was the first to introduce a review and the ability to add a consumer rating (Humphreys, 2016, p. 17). Web 2.0 is therefore based on cooperation between users or between users and a content or service provider (Hermeling, 2016, p. 312).

It can also be said that Web 2.0 is an Internet service that allows users to collaborate and exchange information online through online community sites. In addition to the natural functions of social media, such as enabling the exchange of information, views, and creating a community, social media can be effectively used in many marketing activities by various types of individuals (Wicińska, 2017, pp. 115-116).

Social media is a very dynamic tool, which means that in just a few months, both the appearance and the range of functionalities offered by various social networks can undergo significant changes. The purpose of these changes is to increase the loyalty of existing users and attract new users by improving the quality and competitiveness of social networking sites (Humphreys, 2016, p. 8).

It is becoming common today to say that marketing is marketing only if the consumer is able to see it (Kothler, 2021). Therefore, it is very important to show potential customers your online presence, follow current trends and be able to find yourself in the current reality in such a way that the content provided is encouraging for the audience and prompts them to take specific strategic actions.

A company's marketing strategy plays a key role in creating the company's image and promoting its products. The success of a project undertaken by a given brand

depends on a well-thought-out and planned strategy (Pluta-Olearnik and Murzyk, 2016, p. 242). Nowadays, an inseparable element of a good marketing strategy, in addition to conducting classic marketing activities, is also running a profile or advertising in social media.

This is because social media are characterized by high interactivity and an extensive communication system, which distinguishes them from traditional media. Their additional advantage is the relatively low cost of maintaining an account and buying potential ads. Other distinguishing features of social media include their large reach to recipients, easy accessibility, intuitive ways of use, durability of the message and short time for the message to reach the audience (Dorenda-Zaborowicz, 2012, p. 60).

All this makes advertising in social media seem to be an extremely attractive solution for companies. The relationships built between the brand and users affect the overall image of the company. Reaching the right audience allows for a self-perpetuating increase in brand recognition (Matwiejczyk, 2020, p. 171).

The role of social media, as noted by Witek and Sobotko (2022), is also to promote content and target audiences. Social media marketing and algorithms created in social media make it easier for the company to reach people with the right interests, preferences or lifestyle. These recipients are the company's target customers (<https://www.eactive.pl/blog-o-social-media/co-to-jest-social-media-marketing-i-jakie-oferuje-mozliwosci/>).

Social media, by significantly supporting marketing processes, perform many functions thanks to which consumers make specific purchasing decisions. As Tuten (2021, p. 25) explains, the most important functions of social media in the purchasing process include:

- Increase brand awareness through social media marketing;
- Increasing the desire to own the goods in question;
- Encourage users to join loyalty programs or take advantage of free trials;
- Facilitating purchases by creating a distribution channel, encouraging content and group offers;
- Creating a sense of brand loyalty. Companies reward consumers who are most engaged in a brand's social media.

Research conducted by Parzonko in 2015 adds the following aspects to the discussion about the impact of social media on consumer behavior, namely, it is (Parzonko, 2015, pp. 122-131):

- Increasing the importance of community opinion. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the sheep rush effect (Cypriański, Rudawska, and Grzesiuk, 2016);

- Changing the speed of making purchasing decisions (thanks to social media, it is possible to find information of interest to the consumer faster);
- Change the way you search for information. Social media have made it possible to find most of the information of interest to the consumer in one place. Forms of advertising that involve paying influencers for advertising specific products related to the industries in which they operate have also become popular, thanks to which potential customers encounter products that may interest them in a natural way.

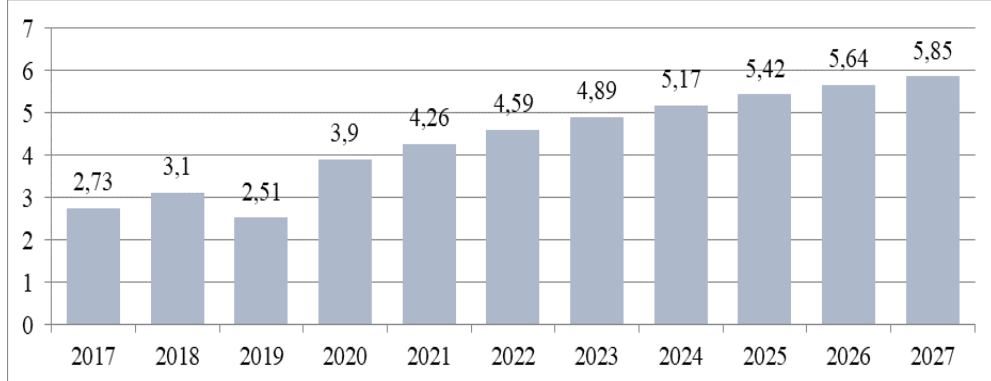
Taking into account the factors related to market behavior on the Internet, as well as the increasingly important role of the influencer in the virtual world, and noting their impact on current trends and the degree of social trust, it can be concluded that social media exert a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions (Głowacz, 2022, p.17). This is because the opinion about products and services expressed by other users can significantly affect the final behavior of a potential customer, and thus the competitive position of the product or brand on the market (Gruchot, 2022, p. 35).

4. The Structure and Scope of Social Media Use in Poland against the Background of the Global Market

Marketing activities carried out on the Internet more and more often translate into the success of brands currently operating on the market. According to data from 2024, there were 5.35 billion Internet users worldwide, which was about 66.72% of the total population. Of these, as many as 5.05 billion people used social media.

This trend is still growing. The more users are present in the virtual world, the more beneficial it will be to advertise products and services in social media. The current and expected number of social media users in the near future after 2025 is shown in Figure (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide>).

Figure 1. Number of social media users worldwide 2017-2027 (in billions of people)



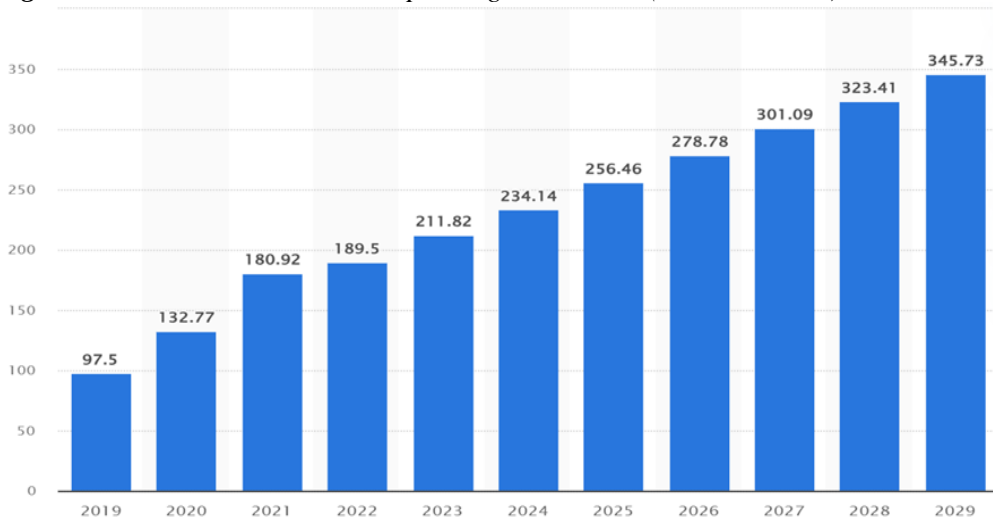
Source: Statista, Number of internet and social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027.

Companies' social media ad spending has been steadily increasing, from \$97.5 billion in 2019 to a projected \$345.73 billion in 2029. Rapid growth was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020 (\$132.77 billion) and then in 2021 (\$180.92 billion), showing how important social media has become for companies' marketing strategies.

Forecasts for the coming years point to further growth. This is the result of the growing role of social media platforms, which offer advanced targeting, content personalization, and data analytics capabilities, making them a key component of marketing strategies.

Further developments in artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and new advertising formats (e.g., video, immersive ads) could further accelerate the growth of digital advertising investments on social platforms (<https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1418549/social-media-ad-spend-worldwide>).

Figure 2. Global social media ad spending 2019–2029 (in USD billion)

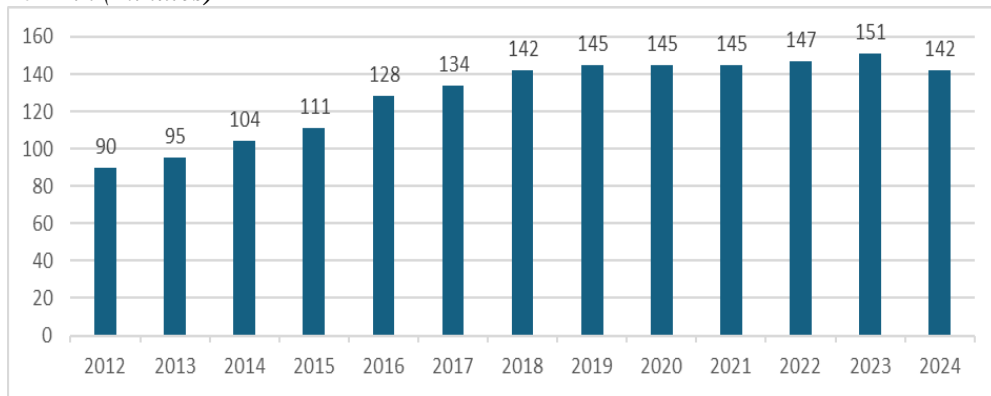


Source: Statista Research Department. Social media advertising spending worldwide from 2019 to 2029 (in billion U.S. dollars). (2024). <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1418549/social-media-ad-spend-worldwide>.

As statistics show, the global rate of social media use in the world in 2024 was over 59%. These figures will continue to increase as the use of mobile devices and social media platforms continues to gain popularity, especially in regions that were previously underdigitally developed, and its further growth is driven by infrastructure development and access to low-cost mobile devices.

According to research, users spend an average of over 143 minutes a day using social media, it can be seen that for modern society, they are becoming one of the main channels of communication, entertainment and obtaining information.

Figure 3. Daily time spent on social networking sites by internet users from 2012 to 2024 in (minutes)



Source: Statista, *Most popular social networks worldwide as of April 2024, by number of monthly active users (in millions)*; <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users>

According to the data obtained, Facebook remains the most used platform by marketers around the world (about 86% of users). This is due to its huge user base and advanced advertising tools that allow for precise audience targeting. Instagram, which ranks second with 79%, is also very popular among marketers, especially for strategies based on visual messaging and influencer marketing.

LinkedIn is in third place, used by 65% of marketers, which emphasizes its importance in B2B communication and building the image of brands in the professional sector.

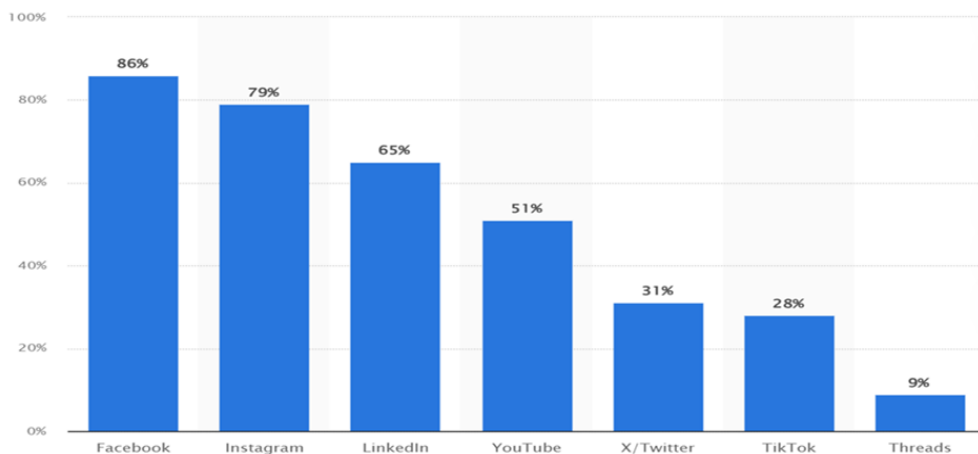
YouTube, as a video platform, is crucial for 51% of marketers, enabling audience engagement with longer forms of content. X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok recorded lower results (31% and 28%), which may be due to their specificity – X is more for quick communication, and TikTok requires a creative approach to short videos.

The Threads platform, launched by Meta as a competitor to X/Twitter, is at the end of the list, used by only 9% of marketers. This may be due to its relatively short presence on the market and its still limited advertising capacity compared to more established social networking sites.

(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/259379/social-media-platforms-used-by-marketers-worldwide/>).

On the other hand, referring to global figures on the analysis of the demand side of the social media market, the largest number of users in 2024 used Facebook – over 3 billion people. YouTube was in second place with the number of users approaching 2.5 billion people. According to the Global Media Statistics report (2024), users spend most of their time on it.

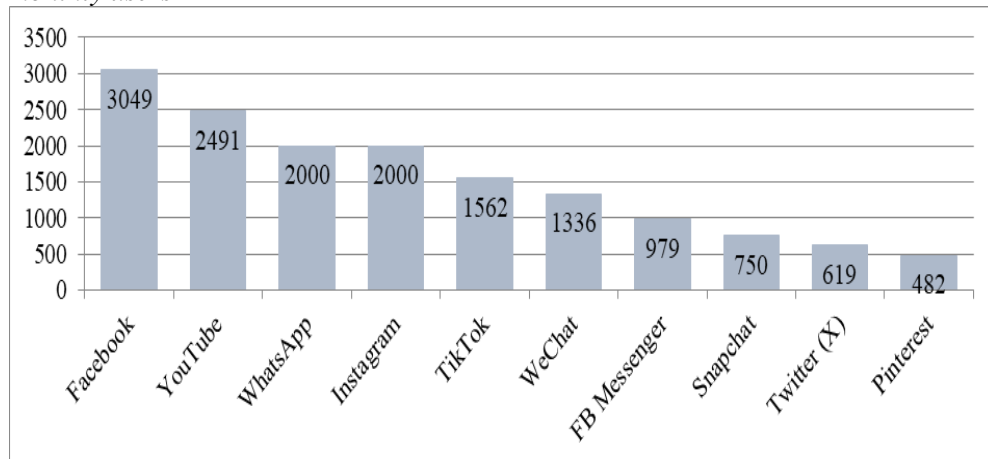
Figure 4. Leading Social Media Platforms Used by Marketers in the World in January 2024



Source: Statista Research Department. Leading social media platforms used by marketers worldwide as of 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259379/social-media-platforms-used-by-marketers-worldwide/>.

Platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram are attracted by just as many users, which currently have 2 billion users each. Despite its short time on the market, TikTok is very popular with 1.5 billion users. WeChat is also one of the most popular platforms, but it is mainly valued in China as a replacement for Messenger there (Kharpal, 2019). Almost a billion users use FB Messenger offered by Meta Platforms. The list also includes social media such as: Snapchat – 750 million. users, Twitter (X) – 619 million. users, Pinterest – 482 million. Users. The numbers are for monthly active users.

Figure 5. The most used social media platforms in the world in 2024 in millions of monthly users



Source: Global Social Media Statistics: <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users/>.

An important and still developing area of social media influence in the world today is influencer marketing, which consists in taking advantage of the popularity and trust enjoyed by certain people in social media. By working with influencers, brands can reach precisely defined audiences, thus increasing their visibility and authenticity in the eyes of users.

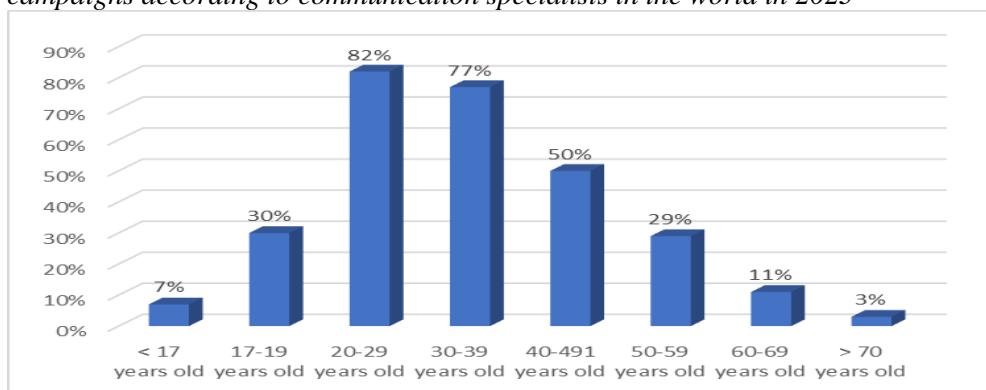
However, it is worth noting that the effectiveness of this type of activity depends on the appropriate selection of partners and care for the consistency of the message with the values of the promoted brand (Dziwulski and Tkaczuk, 2021, pp. 4-5).

Interestingly, the most common target group for influencer marketing is 20-29 year olds, accounting for 82% of campaigns. This age group is crucial for brands because they are most active on social media and likely to interact with influencer content. People aged 30-39 also play a vital role, covering 77% of campaigns, suggesting that marketers are increasingly targeting older, more established consumers. The age of 40-49 is another important group, included in 50% of campaigns.

This means that marketers are also seeing the potential of influencer marketing among people with higher purchasing power, who may be interested in premium or technology products. The age age of 50-59 accounts for 29% of activities, while 60-69 and 70+ are marginally included in strategies, at 11% and 3%, respectively, reflecting lower engagement of these groups in social media. The younger generation, 17-19 years old (30%), remains an important segment, but brands mainly target people over 20 years of age. People under 17, while active on social media, account for only 7% of targeted campaigns, which may be due to restrictions on advertising products and services to underage users.

(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1259044/target-age-groups-influencer-marketing>).

Figure 6. Age groups most often chosen as the target of influencer marketing campaigns according to communication specialists in the world in 2023



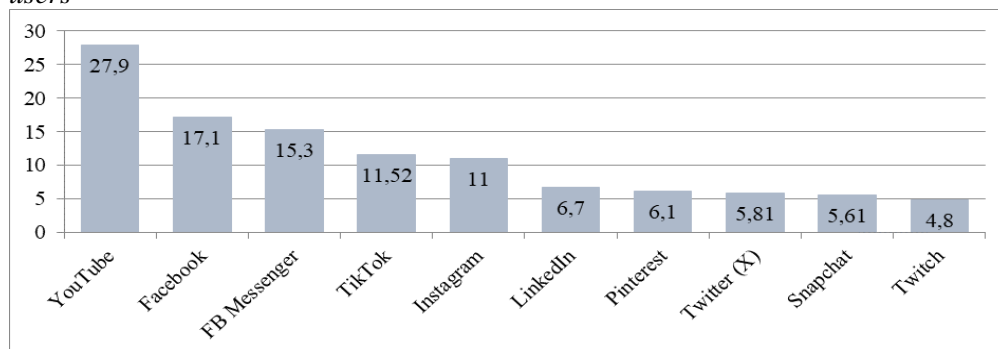
Source: Statista Research Department. Age groups most often targeted with influencer marketing according to communications specialists worldwide as of October 2023.. (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1259044/target-age-groups-influencer-marketing>).

Taking into account the changes taking place in social media, it should be stated that the Polish market also continues to follow global trends and is developing very dynamically. In the same period, i.e., in 2024, over 28 million. of social media users, which translates to 68.8% of the total population of the country.

According to DataReportal (2024), YouTube in Poland is used by almost 28 million users per month, which makes this portal more visited than Facebook, which is used by 17 million people in Poland. This is the opposite situation than in the world, where Facebook is the leader over other social media platforms. As many as 15 million of people use Messenger - a messenger created by Meta.

TikTok in Poland has become a more popular platform than its similar Instagram, as its users are about 11.5 million people, in contrast to the competition, which has 11 million users. The Polish ranking also includes LinkedIn, a website specializing in professional and business contacts with 6.7 million users. Platforms such as Pinterest – 6.1 million users, Twitter (X) – 5.8 million users, Snapchat – 5.6 million users and, as shown by the World Population Review (2024), the streaming portal Twitch – 4.8 million users are also very popular.

Figure 7. The most popular social media platforms in Poland in 2024 in millions of users

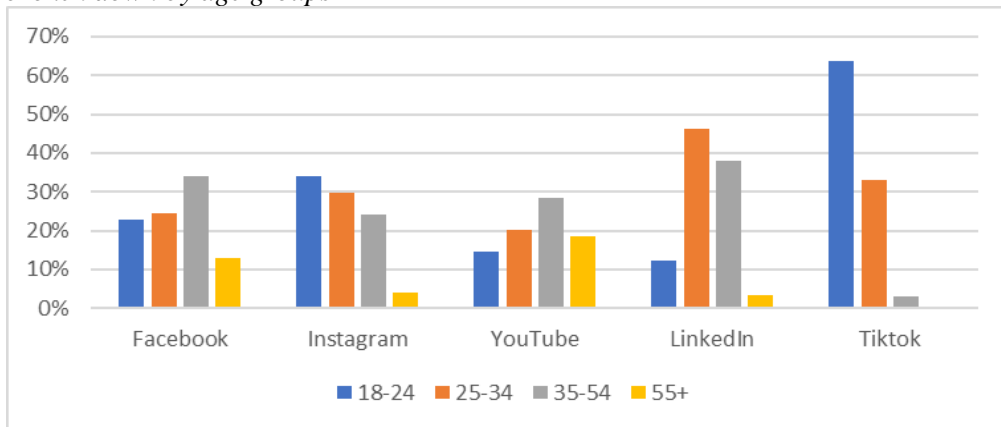


Source: Digital 2024: Poland (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-poland>).

All of the above-mentioned platforms are characterized by a similar idea of functioning. They allow you to reach a wide range of potential customers by means of various forms and ways of advertising. That is why advertisers using different platforms must remember to use their unique features and tools in order to achieve the best results in their advertising campaign and reach the right target audience (Zastrożna, 2013, p. 16).

As statistics show, the number of users of these platforms is quite strongly differentiated both in terms of age and the type of preferred content and ways of sharing it (<https://www.statista.com> and <https://www.start.io/audience/tiktok-users-in-poland>).

Figure 8. Share of users (in %) of various social media platforms in Poland in 2024, broken down by age groups



Source: Own study based on data collected from: <https://www.statista.com> i <https://www.start.io/audience/tiktok-users-in-poland>.

5. Research Results and Discussion

745 people took part in the study conducted for the purposes of the study. The vast majority of the respondents were women, as many as 72.1% of all respondents. The largest age group among the respondents, amounting to as much as 57.8%, were people aged 18 to 26. The next largest group were adults aged 45 to 52 – 17.6%. The proportion of people in the next age groups was fairly even, with 7.8% for those in the age group of 27 to 35, 7.4% for those aged 36 to 44, and 6.4% for those aged 52 and over. People under the age of 18 accounted for 2.9% of all respondents.

Most of the respondents came from cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, as many as 33.8% of the respondents belonged to this group, and 32.8% were residents of small towns with up to 50,000 inhabitants. The next largest group were people from rural areas – 21.6% of respondents. Residents of cities between 50 thousand and 150 thousand inhabitants accounted for 9.3% of the respondents.

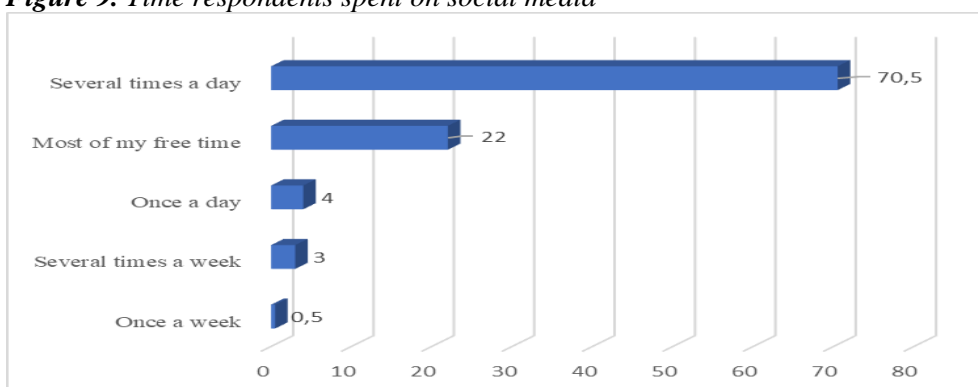
The least represented group were residents of cities between 150,000 and 500,000 inhabitants, constituting only 2.5% of all survey participants. Over 42% of the respondents were represented by the group of professionally working people, which is as much as 42.6% of all people participating in the survey. A slightly smaller group were working students (28.9%). Students constituted 13.2% of the surveyed people, as did unemployed students constituting 12.7% of the total. The smallest group, constituting 2.5%, were the unemployed.

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked about their attitude to social media, preferences, choices and their own feelings when browsing content on the various platforms they use. As the research showed, the vast majority, as many as

98% of respondents, declared regular use of social media in their daily lives and making purchasing decisions, so it was this group that took part in the further part of the survey.

Over 70% of the respondents declared that they view the content posted in the social media several times a day. As many as 22% of respondents admitted that they spend most of their free time following information on social media. Only 4% of respondents visit social networking sites only once a day, 3% do it several times a week, and 0.5% of respondents declare spending their free time on social media only once a week.

Figure 9. Time respondents spent on social media



Source: Own research.

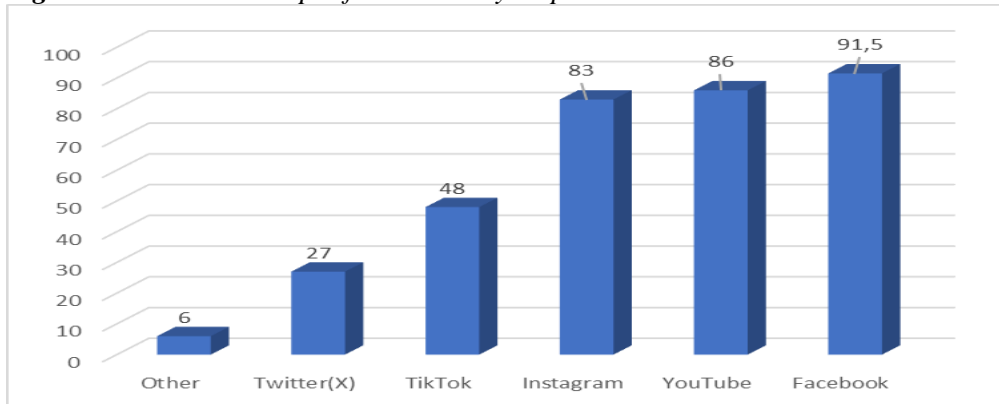
The social media platform most often used by the respondents was Facebook, which was used regularly by as many as 91.5% of respondents. Just as often, in as many as 86% of cases, users use the YouTube video platform. The third most popular social media, used by 83% of the respondents, was Instagram.

Almost half of the respondents, about 48% of people, confirmed using Tiktok. Definitely fewer respondents, 27%, use Twitter. Only 6% of respondents mentioned other social media they use. Among them were other platforms such as LinkedIn, Telegram, SnapChat and Discord.

The respondents, following social media on a daily basis, noticed the largest number of ads broadcast on Facebook, as many as 61.5% of people admit it. More than half of the respondents (54.5%) marked the YouTube video platform.

The Instagram platform also turned out to be close to achieving such a result, where the problem of a large number of ads is noticed by 49.5% of the users asked. Slightly fewer, 21.5% of respondents pay attention to the presence of ads on TikTok. The smallest percentage of respondents asked about the platform with the largest number of ads is given by Spotify – 3% of respondents and Twitter – 2% of respondents.

Figure 10. Social media platforms used by respondents



Source: Own research.

The respondents, following social media on a daily basis, noticed the largest number of ads broadcast on Facebook, as many as 61.5% of people admit it. More than half of the respondents (54.5%) marked the YouTube video platform. The Instagram platform also turned out to be close to achieving such a result, where the problem of a large number of ads is noticed by 49.5% of the users asked.

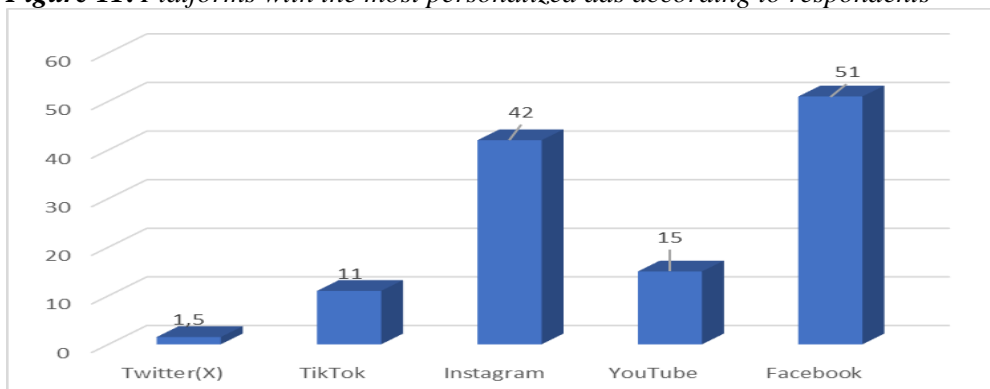
Slightly fewer, 21.5% of respondents pay attention to the presence of ads on TikTok. The smallest percentage of respondents asked about the platform with the largest number of ads is given by Spotify – 3% of respondents and Twitter – 2% of respondents.

During the survey, respondents drew attention to a very important practical aspect related to the impact of social media, namely the personalization of advertising content. According to the respondents, Facebook is the platform that most personalizes the provided (broadcast) advertising content (51% of responses). Less than half of respondents (42%) notice a lot of personalization on Instagram as well.

In 15% of cases, respondents pay attention to the personalization of content on the YouTube platform. Slightly fewer people – 11% of respondents notice the selection of ad content to their liking on Tiktok. The least personalization is on the Twitter platform, where personalization is seen by only 1.5% of respondents.

It is also worth noting that the respondents highly rated the marketing policy of companies and the presence of companies and their brands not only in conventional promotional channels, but also more and more clearly in social media.

Over 71% of respondents confirm that a company's activity on social media encourages them to use its products and services. Slightly less, about 20% of respondents are unable to take a clear position.

Figure 11. Platforms with the most personalized ads according to respondents

Source: Own research.

When asked about the impact of opinions or reviews about products or services on social media, respondents admit in 48% of cases that the purchasing action depends on a specific product, as well as on the specific situation accompanying the purchase procedure. As many as 29% of respondents admit that the opinions and reviews of others usually encourage them to take advantage of a given good.

As it turned out, over 66% of respondents declared that they had purchased a product advertised on social media, while 25% of respondents stated that they had never purchased such a product. The others were not able to give a clear answer to this question.

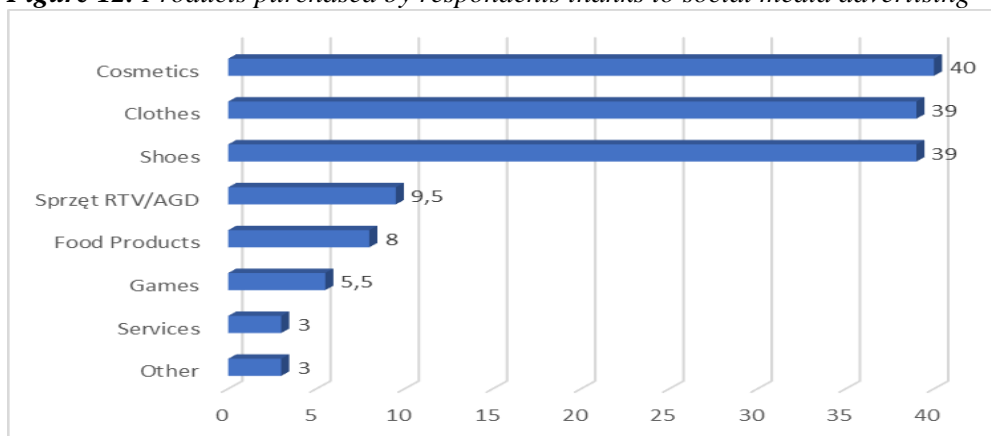
Among the products and services purchased by the respondents through advertisements in social media, the most frequently mentioned were: cosmetics (40% of responses). As many as 39% of people declared buying clothes they had seen on the Internet before.

Footwear is purchased by 22% of respondents. Electronics and household appliances are purchased by 9.5% of respondents. Only 8% of people eat food. The least popular are games – 5.5%, various services such as catering services – in 3% of respondents and also in the case of 3% of respondents declared other products such as power tools, snowboard equipment or household equipment.

The best-rated form of advertising broadcast on social media by 44% of respondents are user comments containing opinions about a given product. Short videos about the product that appear while browsing social media reach 33.5% of respondents. As many as 33% of respondents consider short videos showing products referring to current trends, e.g., through TikTok, to be one of the best forms of advertising. The best-rated form of advertising broadcast on social media by 44% of respondents are user comments containing opinions about a given product. Short videos about the product that appear while browsing social media reach 33.5% of respondents.

As many as 33% of respondents consider short videos showing products referring to current trends, e.g. through TikTok, to be one of the best forms of advertising. Posts from influencers using a product are encouraging for 32% of respondents. Traditional videos advertising products on platforms such as YouTube are effective for 26% of respondents.

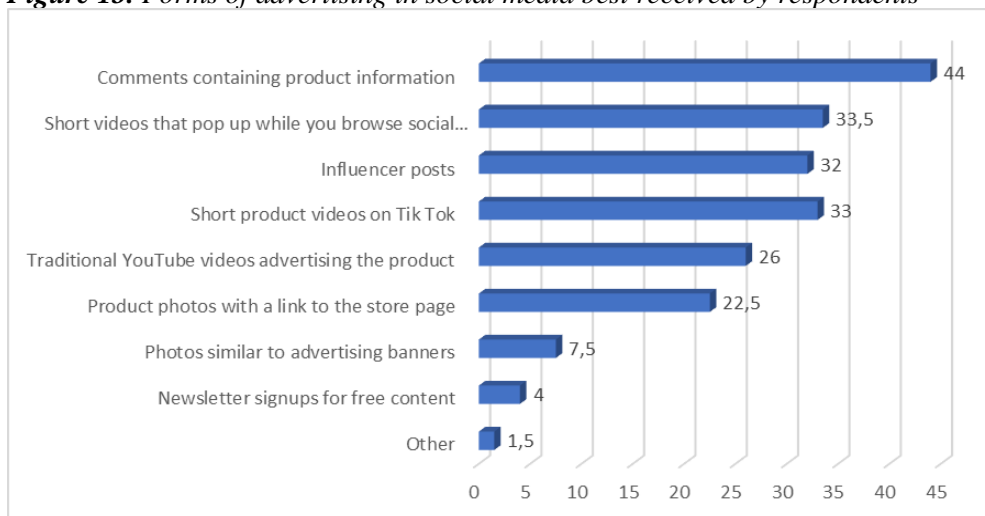
Figure 12. Products purchased by respondents thanks to social media advertising



Source: Own research.

Not much less, 25.5% of people admit that they receive ads in the form of product photography with a link to the purchase page. Only 7.5% of respondents consider photos showing products similar to advertising banners to be accurate, 4% - newsletter subscriptions in exchange for free content, and other advertisements such as memes are appreciated by 1.5% of respondents.

Figure 13. Forms of advertising in social media best received by respondents



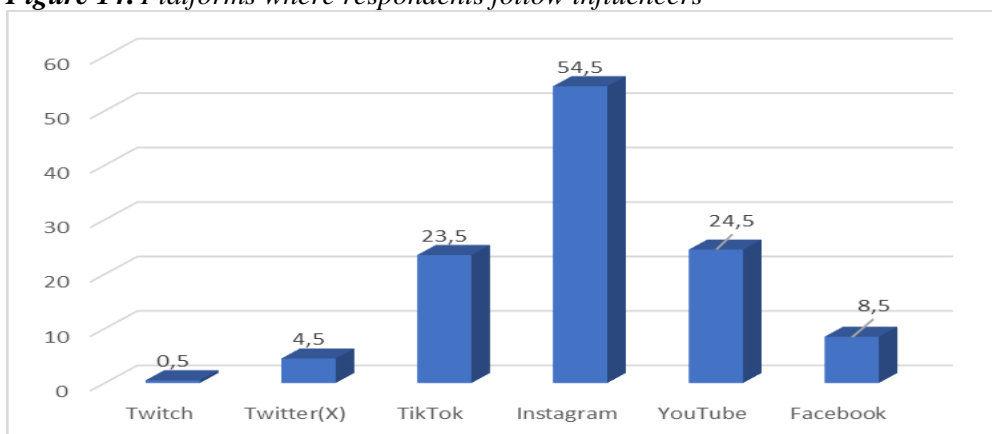
Source: Own research.

As shown by both the above-mentioned statistics and the conducted research, an important source of information about products, in addition to traditional activities in social media, are more and more often the activities of well-known people and those conducting their promotional activities on the Internet, the so-called influencers. The majority of respondents (94.2%) believe that feuds are increasingly contributing to the brand's reach in social media. Influencers today can also be perceived as an effective marketing tool, contributing to the increase in popularity and brand recognition in social media.

The results of the survey show that in the case of over 68% of respondents, a product was purchased on the basis of a recommendation by an Influencer. At the same time, more than 42% of respondents consider ads with Influencers to be more convincing than traditional ads.

The platform on which the most respondents follow the activity of influencers turned out to be Instagram (54.5%). For 24.5% of respondents, YouTube is the main place to observe influencers. Not much less, as many as 23.5% of people follow influencers on TikTok. Only 8.5% of respondents use Facebook to follow their idols. The fewest people use Twitter for this purpose – 4.5% and Twitch – 0.5% of respondents.

Figure 14. Platforms where respondents follow influencers



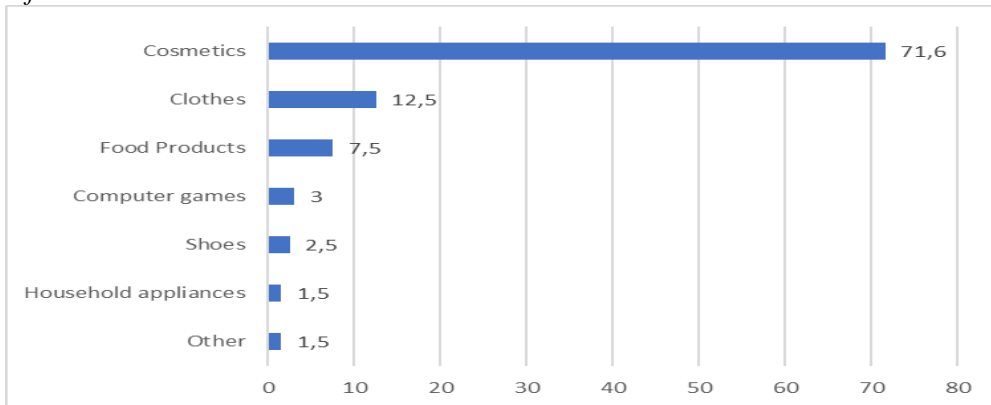
Source: Own research.

Cosmetics also turned out to be the most frequently purchased product recommended by people popular on the Internet (71.6% of respondents). The second type of products often purchased on the recommendation of an influencer were clothes, which 12.5% of respondents could be persuaded to buy.

About 7.5% of the respondents bought food products from recommendations. Only 3% of respondents decided to buy games, 2.5% bought recommended footwear, and 1.5% bought equipment from the electronics and household appliances category.

1.5% of respondents decided to make other purchases, and the products mentioned included supplements, jewellery and bicycles.

Figure 15. *Types of products purchased by respondents on the recommendation of influencers*

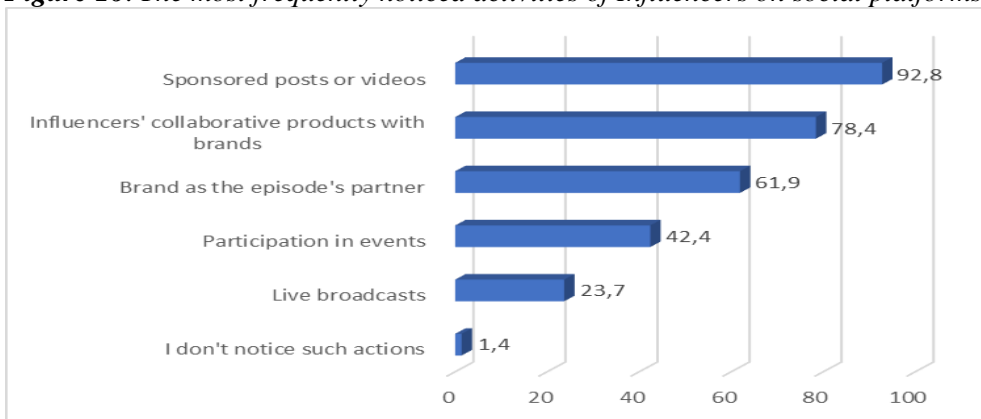


Source: Own research.

On the social media platforms they use on a daily basis, most respondents notice a variety of activities and activities carried out by Influencers. Over 92% of respondents notice sponsored posts or videos, 23.7% follow live broadcasts, 42.4% notice the participation of Influencers in important events, and 78.4% notice jointly presented Influencers' products related to well-known brands.

More than half of the respondents, 61.9%, note that brands were partners of the episode hosted by the Influencer. Only 1.4% of respondents do not notice any of these activities. These results clearly indicate the significant prevalence of Influencers' activities on social media platforms and their visibility to the general community.

Figure 16. *The most frequently noticed activities of Influencers on social platforms*

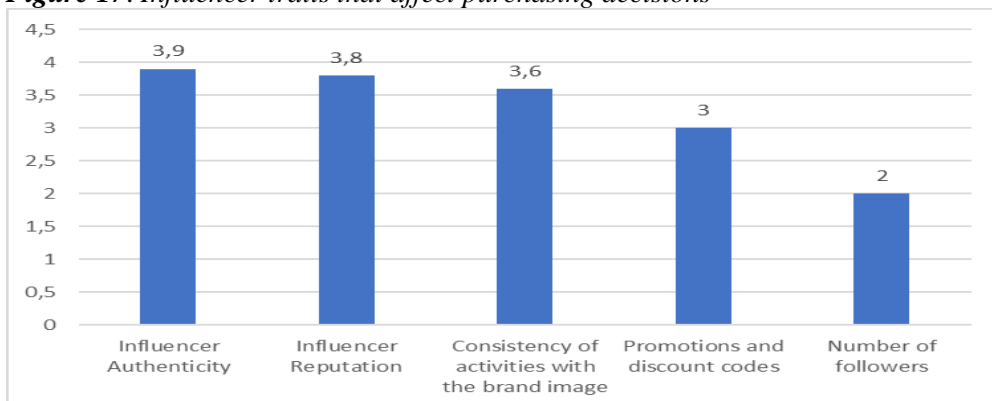


Source: Own research.

The study also attempted to determine the features taken into account when assessing the influencer's profile and credibility. One of the most important features, according to the respondents, is: the authenticity of the Influencer. This trait received an average score of 3.9 on a 5-point scale, suggesting that it is an important factor for many people.

The consistency of the Influencer's activities with the brand image received a score of 3.6, as well as promotions and discount codes obtained from the Influencer (3rd rating). The Influencer's reputation received a rating of 3.8. The number of followers of the Influencer received the lowest rating (2.0), which suggests that it is not a dominant but also an important factor (Figure 17).

Figure 17. *Influencer traits that affect purchasing decisions*



Source: Own research.

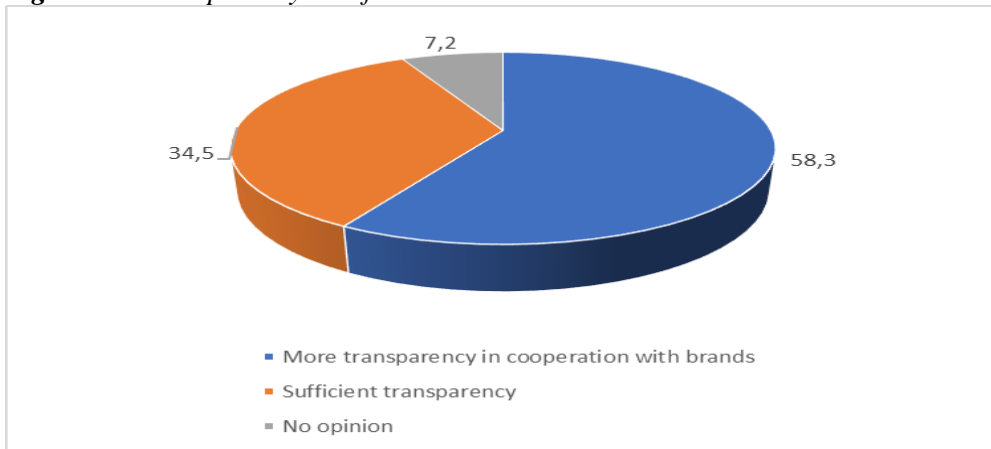
In addition to personality traits, important elements taken into account when assessing the influencer's activity are also factors that are independent of the influencer, but indirectly determine the purchasing decisions in the case of products that are the subject of advertising. As research shows, one of the important factors turned out to be the appearance of the product and the way the influencer presented the product.

An important element was also the opinions about the product expressed both by the influencer and other users of the advertised good. An important element that attention was also paid to is the actual quality of the purchased product advertised by the influencer. According to the research, over 57% of people who purchased the product advertised by the influencer paid attention to the discrepancies they noticed between the declared and actual quality of the good they physically received.

However, the source of this dissatisfaction is, among other things, too high expectations of customers regarding the credibility of a well-known person promoting a given object of exchange, and not the object of exchange itself and its use values.

When assessing Influencers' involvement in cooperation with product and service brands, the majority of respondents (58.3%) believe that Influencers should be more transparent in their advertising activities. Only 7.2% of people have the opposite opinion, and 34.5% do not have a clear opinion on the subject. This indicates the growing expectations and requirements of buyers for transparency in Influencer ads.

Figure 18. *Transparency in Influencer Ads*



Source: *Own research.*

To sum up, despite many mixed opinions on the role of influencers and their role in the purchasing process among customers, it turns out that over 68% of respondents admitted that influencers nevertheless have a decisive impact on their purchasing decisions.

6. Conclusions

Research on the presence of companies and brands in social media has shown a positive impact on their perception and recognition among consumers. This, in turn, opens up new opportunities for effective promotion through social media channels, which are easily accessible to both consumers and businesses of all sizes.

Research shows a significant impact of social media on consumer behavior, the intensity of which depends on the way of advertising in social media.

The most frequently noticed group of products advertised via social media, as the research has shown, is clothing, because it is from this category that advertisements are most often displayed to respondents.

However, this does not go hand in hand with the products most often purchased by the respondents, because cosmetics appeared in the first place in the sales results, their share in the products purchased by consumers slightly exceeded the frequency of purchased clothing.

As the research shows, an important source of information about products, in addition to traditional forms of marketing activity in social media, are more and more often the activities of well-known people and those conducting their promotional activities on the Internet, the so-called influencers. Cosmetics is a product category that, as in the case of traditional social media, has also been ranked the highest thanks to the recommendations of influencers.

The respondents' favorite platform, both in terms of the number of users and the frequency with which consumers buy the advertised products, was Facebook. Also on Facebook, respondents notice the largest number of displayed ads and the best personalization of displayed proposals to the preferences of a specific person.

The results of the individual parts of the research agree with each other, creating a logical cause-and-effect sequence. The conclusions of this study confirm the growing importance of social media as an important factor influencing the purchasing decision-making process. Understanding how social media works is becoming a key part of marketing strategies, enabling businesses to better adapt to the preferences and expectations of today's consumers.

The results of the research can have important applications in online marketing and be helpful in choosing tools for companies in the process of advertising in social media. Entrepreneurs, being aware of which social media platforms and which forms of advertising bring the best results in terms of reaching potential customers, are able to strategically direct a marketing campaign to achieve optimal results for the market functioning of a modern company.

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