

## **Implementation of Communication in Social Media by Promoting Studies at Higher Education Institutions**

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*New technologies penetrate into all spheres of our lives and shifts personal communication as well as traditional communication between customers and organizations; provide all the participants of communication with more possibilities. Economic crisis promotes internet-based communication and stimulates organizations to look for cheaper possibilities, i. e. to integrate social media into relations building, public relations and other activities.*

*Recent theoretical and practical scientific studies emphasize the importance of the development of social media ideas and its integration into organizations' communication activities, which used in appropriate way, can help to reach the appointed results: to present and to sell services or goods, to build brand value or to maintain two-way relations with target audiences, etc. Social media is changing the traditional marketing paradigm and stimulates new attitudes toward relations between organizations and consumers, where information flows bilateral, direct and effectively, may be diffused in social networks by consumers' wishes and can help to strengthen organization positions in the market. Therefore scientists recommend organizations to appraise the value of every member of virtual communities and to communicate in correct way: adding value, helping to solve problems, educating and etc.*

*The article concentrates on the attitude which organizations have to have for successful social media, implementation and achievement of organizational goals. Different departments of organization should be involved in more effective use of social media. Business organizations have to consider both positive and negative social media application aspects in order to avoid certain risks. The negative aspect of social media that is mostly appointed by scientists is the lack of control mechanism: message content, timing and frequency. In order to avoid the risks related with communication in social media organizations have to plan social media implementation process.*

*The main objective of this research is to build up the structural model of communication in social media and to test the application perspectives of the model for study promotion in public higher education institutions.*

*The result of theoretical analysis is an original model of communication in social media. The steps of the model implementation are: environment and competitors' analysis preparation of communication strategy, selection of appropriate channels, communication process, monitoring, assessment and comparison of results. The theoretical model of communication in social media includes not only the process of communication between the organization and consumers, but also the stages of preparation and assessment that are also important in the evaluation of implementation of the overall communication strategy.*

*A case study of Lithuanian state higher education institutions was used to reveal the possible application of the suggested model of communication in social media in the promotion of higher education studies in social media.*

*The communication of higher education institutions in social media is important since active involvement of prospective students in communication in social media can help prospective students to choose the university where he or she would like to study. Social media presents a university as „live“, communicating and caring about current and prospective students.*

*The study on communication in social media by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions showed that the suggested model of communication in social media of business organizations can be successfully applied to the communication of universities in social media. The popularization of higher education institutions and involvement of prospective students should originate from environment analysis and planning as well as benefit assessment that may be gained by social media.*

*Keywords: social media, model of communication in social media, higher education institutions, study promotion.*

### **Introduction**

Internet technologies have revolutionized the communication process with target audiences. Previously communication of organizations was mostly pursued through the intermediate – media (TV, radio, magazines and newspapers). And now the variety of communication

tools in the internet ensure direct relations between organizations and target audiences as well as help internet users to communicate with each other. In order to be competitive in global market, organizations are seeking to involve the emerging new possibilities (Zostautiene, Daraskeviciute, 2009; Banyte, Salickaite, 2008; Ghosh, Skibniewski, 2010; Ginevicius, Krivka, Simkunaite, 2010).

The economic crisis even promotes penetration of new technologies into all spheres of organizations. Internet-based communication is cheaper and used in appropriate way can help to reach the appointed results: to present new services or goods, to build brand value or to inform about organization actions (Janonis, Dovaliene, Virvilaite, 2007; Banyte, Salickaite, 2008; Stravinskiene, Zailskaite, 2008; Kuvykaite, Mascinskiene, 2010; Alam, Yasin, 2010; Alam, Ali, Jani, 2011; Kazokiene, Stravinskiene, 2011). Popularity and the number of social media (SM) tools (social networks, blogs, forums microblogs, creativity shearing sites, wikis, vidcasts, mashups online virtual worlds and others) and restrained economical resources just empower the organizations to look for more alternatives.

Higher education institutions (HEI) absorb experience from business in services promotion (studies promotion), market research and others.

Volatile market and challenging environment enforce higher education institutions to look for more advantages for study promotion. Higher education institutions may benefit from the penetration of social media for several reasons:

- Young people are open to novelties. According to last years' inquiries made by Kaunas University of Technology (KUT) Informatics faculty, more than 80 per cents of prospective students (PS) are browsing in the internet and looking for information about particular studies.
- The traditional model of one-way communication when the message is created, reported and controlled becomes less relevant even in communication process of universities. Social media gives possibility to spread the message from many to many, i. e. as virus.
- Universities' target audiences have their opinion and have possibilities to express it through a variety of social media channels. Social media helps to reach community and in more relevant way, to pursue direct communication.

In this article prospective students or schoolchildren we will define as prospective customers of HEI services.

Higher education institutions are following the business experience for SM implementation. Young people have interest in new possibilities and this interest enforces HEI institutions to look for more competitive advantages for study promotion.

The article defines the main field where SM may be used in organization, what are advantages and disadvantages of such possibilities; how to implement SM. This article analyzes and observes social media channels of fourteen Lithuanian public universities. The results could help universities to pursue coherent actions of communication using new technologies.

**The purpose** of the research is to build up the structural model of communication in social media and to test the application perspectives of the model for study promotion in public higher education institutions.

**The object:** communication in social media.

*First*, this paper defines an emerging role of social media for business promotion. *Second*, the model of communication in social media in the internet will be presented. *Finally*, the applicability perspectives of the model for promotion of HEI studies will be analyzed.

**Research is formed by** systemic, comparative and logical scientific literature analysis and case study.

## Social Media Importance for Business Promotion

Social media have fundamentally changed the nature of communication in organizations and outside organizations. It requires different view toward relations with target audiences, because of communication channels possibilities and multiplicity in internet. Everyone who is using internet can become the participator of communication and can create content or express own ideas. Orsini (2007) emphasizes, that the number of options for effective communication may seem overwhelming, but using a wide range means you are more likely to reach a wider audience in a more personal and relevant way.

The crisis had influence on communication, marketing, public relations process too (Valackiene, 2010). Organizations are looking for cheaper and more effective possibilities for their products and services promotion. Successful examples of social media implementation and restrained economical resources just empower the organizations to look for more alternatives.

Summarizing the scholars Mangold, Faulds (2009), Mayfield (2008), Henderson, Bowley (2010), Lundin, Nilsson (2010) definitions about social media we may state that emerging new internet-based communication possibilities describe a variety of collaborative online applications and technologies that are created, initiated, circulated and used by community on collaborative fashion and on educating purposes about products, brands, services, personalities and other issues. SM includes social networks, forums, microblogs, blogs, podcasts, vidcasts, mashups, wikis, online virtual worlds and others.

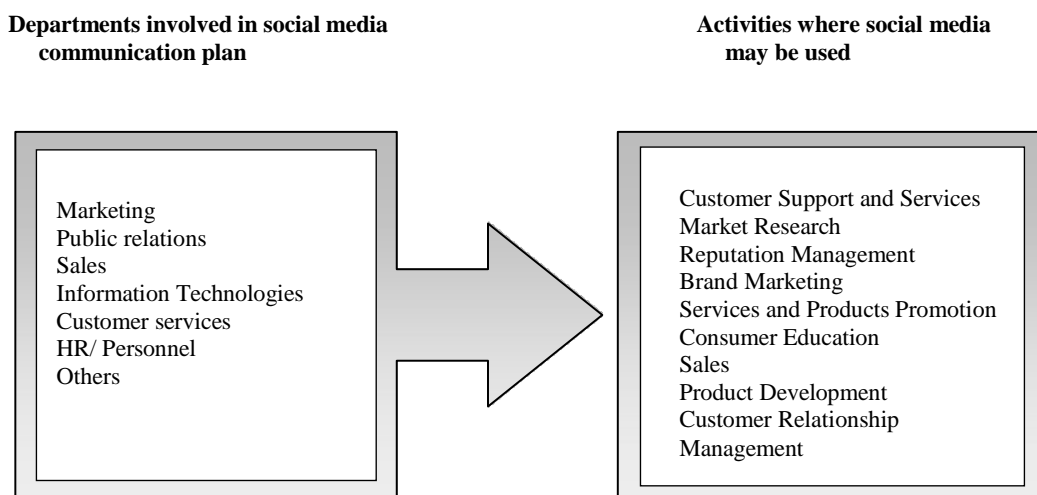
Kurucz (2008) indicates that it is social process to buy products or services. The decisions to purchase a service or good may be influenced from somebody the customer know. Social media gives a platform to spread the opinions or messages about sales, i. e. SM gives possibility to spread information word-of-mouth. But at first networked environment should be created, information has to be available where audiences can find it, and it often needs to be customized or customizable (Ranchhod, Gurau, Lace, 2002).

The world tendencies are very favourable for social media, but in Lithuania it is still conservative looking to these new possibilities. All these channels (microblogs, networks and others) give possibilities to attract users and to build virtual communities, to analyze community members' actions, to form special message which will reflect community interests, activities and purposes and be accepted by community. The highest value of virtual communities is their members, which are creating and sharing information, helping to strengthen the positions of organization in the market. Therefore business has to think how to become a required part of internet users' communication process (Kangas, Toivonen, Back, 2007).

Harris, Rae (2009) states that the skills and enthusiasm for social media amongst the "Google generation" had been highly overrated: while the internet users were prepared to use social networks for personal activities, they were skeptical about their relevance to the business world

Ranchhod *et. al* (2002) state that internet technology is the most efficient medium for companies to provide newly fragmented audiences with the data they desire. Organizations are using SM in many functional areas of business and are enjoying numerous tangible benefits such as increasing sales, search engine optimization, web traffic, customer satisfaction and revenue (ISACA, 2010).

Referencing the research and information of marketing firm Digital Brand Expressions (2010) and Branding and business expertise group North (2009), Balnchard (2010) the departments which are included in social media implementation plan and the activities of organizations where may be used social media presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Departments involved in social media and activities where social media may be used.

In social media implementation process Marketing, Public relations, Sales, Information Technologies, Human Recourses, Customer Services and others departments should be involved. The media could be used for customer support and services, market research, reputation management, brand marketing, services and products promotions, consumer education, sales, product development, customer relationship management.

Business organizations deciding to implement social media have to accept and to know the risks and advantages which may arise:

- Organizations can't expect to keep control of their marketing message while at the same time allowing a transparent voice to their staff and customers through a blog or other online forum (Harris, Rae, 2009). The fear of negative information which can't be hidden may arise. But this may empower organizations to improve internal communication.

- Organizations have also discovered that they are able to monitor the market, their competitors and their customers via social media outlets. This allows engaged organizations to be on top of any changes that may be needed and to proactively make appropriate adjustments to strategies, products or services (ISACA, 2010). The actions of organizations can be followed by other organizations as well.

Scholars Ashcroft (2001), Hurme (2001), Mangold, Faulds (2009), Pan, Lan (2009), Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, Li (2008), Kaplan, Haenlein (2010) define several reasons which may encourage the use of social media and where organizations should take precautions in communication process. According to the mentioned reasons, we excluded positive and negative aspect of social media.

Table 1 presents an overview associated with social media positive and negative aspect. In general social media may help to ensure better, direct, effective communication between institutions and its target audiences. The negative aspect which may most affect communication process is the lack of message control mechanism. The receivers of the message may even consider the transmission as 'spam'. With this lack of control comes the potential of negative impact from viral campaign (Woerndl *et al*, 2008).

Social media describes a variety of collaborative online applications and technologies that are created, initiated, circulated and used by community on collaborative fashion and on educating purposes about products, brands, services, personalities and other issues. The emerging new internet-based communication may help to promote business if it is done in correct way: adding value, helping to solve problems, educating and etc. In other case risks may arise which can have negative effect on organizations actions. The most negative aspect of social media is lack of information control. Therefore every organization should plan social media implementation process, to set up the purpose, to plan resources, to define the target audiences, to select social media channels and to pursue planned actions.

### Model of Communication in Social Media

The marketing community is moving away from strategies that emphasize mass reach to strategies that involve targeting fewer people with a message that is more relevant and compelling and thus more likely to be acted upon (Keller, 2009). Companies should be able to take an advantage of opportunities provided by social media and directly communicate with consumers.

Table 1

**Positive and Negative Aspects of Social Media**

Aspects	Positive	Negative
<b>Speed and effectiveness</b>	Better and prompt answer; Reaches audiences within a short period of time; Rapid and fast diffusion; Boosts adoption speed; Exponential	The information may be estimated as spam
<b>Direct communication/ better understanding</b>	Two-way and direct communication without intermediaries and interpretation of information; Better understanding of consumers requirements; Access to diverse audience	Consumers unwilling to provide referrals unless there is some return; Negative information may be visible; The hazard of boring and monotonous information
<b>Word-of-mouth communication</b>	Extension of two-way direct communication customer-to-customer; More reliable to get information from someone you know; Voluntary transmission by senders	Difficult to follow-up of all information because of involvement of many consumers; Negative word-of-mouth can happen; Negative word-of-mouth leading to boycott, ruin, unfavourable attitudes
<b>Unified message/content</b>	Helps to emphasize fundamental values of the organization	Loss of good content (important message may be lost due to abundance of information)
<b>Lack of control mechanism</b>	–	No control over distortion processes e. g. information passed by consumers might be filtered, incomplete and biased
<b>Cost</b>	Low costs	–
<b>Loyalty</b>	More possibilities to enhance loyalty of internal and external audiences	–
<b>Freedom of choice</b>	More possibilities to find the best way how to satisfy consumers want get and respond to information	Consumers are choosing the way how to communicate by themselves
<b>Potential negative impact</b>	–	Risk of backlash; Hate sites; May lead to negative perceptions of organizations and brands;
<b>Security</b>	–	Inherent risks that could negatively impact; Organizations security
<b>Monitoring</b>	To follow competitors actions; Quickly reaction to the changes	Competitors may crib ideas

When building up a model for communication in social media it is important to assess the specific features of communication in social media. Li, Bernhoff (2008), Mangold, Faulds (2009), Patterson (2011) in the analysis of companies' communication in social media distinguish three aspects of communication in social media:

- communication between business organizations and consumers;
- consumer-to-consumer communication);
- communication between consumer and business organizations (feedback).

**Communication from company to consumer.**

Communication of companies in social media becomes dependent on the wishes or will of consumers. Consumers decide themselves how to interpret every message sent by a company.

In his blog Ronnestam (2009) distinguishes components that are characteristic to the message in social media: brand / product, famous person, lifestyle or culture and one of the most important components – an innovative idea. Novelty should guarantee the interest in message. Consumers simply never disseminate boring news. When messages are attractive they spread among consumers like a virus. Another aspect that companies should also take into consideration is the frequency of messages. An excessive number of messages can be considered spamming, but if messages are sent too rarely, consumers will not be actively involved in the process of communication and rare messages will not have a strong impact on consumers.

Companies should prepare for communication in social media in advance and consider this process as a complex of actions (analysis, audience research,

communication planning, preparation for communication, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of results) and integrate communication strategy into the overall strategy of the company and not to confuse the communication strategy with implementation tactics.

Thanks to the Internet, companies and consumers can support the following types of communication (Hurme, 2001; Popworth, 2009; Zailskaite-Jakste, Kuvykaite, 2010):

- one-to-few (i.e. communication in separate Facebook groups);
- few-to-few (i.e. communication in Twitter);
- one-to-one (i.e. communication in Twitter by sending direct messages);
- one-to-many (i.e. information in blogs);
- many-to-many (i.e. a number of opinions are provided to multiple readers in forums).

**Communication consumer to consumer.** Social media has given a very high power to consumers who no longer are passive recipients of press releases and product information (Li, Bernhoff, 2008).

Consumers can see the strengths and weaknesses of every message, comment on them, criticize them and etc. Having received the information a consumer transmits it to another consumer and the latter transmits it to yet another consumer. Information spreads among consumers like a virus. It should be taken into consideration that in social media word-of-mouth communication spreads much faster than in the real word and a message can reach millions of consumers in a short time.

Research done by Bambauer-Sachse, Mangold (2010), Bickart, Schindler (2001), Smith, Vogt (2005), Trusov, Bucklin, Pauwels, (2009) showed that word-of-mouth communication is more influential than traditional

communication since it is perceived as providing a rather reliable information. Thus, word-of-mouth communication influences the formation of consumer perspective and behaviour.

Even though the company cannot directly control messages transmitted in consumer-to-consumer manner, it can influence consumer dialogues or discussions. For companies that are trying to control a word-of-mouth communication on the Internet Bronner, Hoog (2010), Bambauer-Sachse, Mangold (2010) recommend to constantly observe the ongoing communication and consider both positive and negative comments.

**Consumer's response to company, i.e. feedback.**

The formation of company's and its goods image in the consciousness of the consumer and the procurement act can be consumer's response to successful communication of the company in social media. Consumer's response or reaction to company's communication can be assessed by conducting consumer surveys.

In order to better understand the implementation of communication in SM, the model of communication in social media was constrained. The model is based on theoretical and empirical studies in the field of communication in social media (Mangold, Faulds, 2009; Litvin, Goldsmith, Pan, 2007; Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, Wilner, 2010; Hollenhorst, Michael, 2009; Low, 2009).

The model of new communication paradigm by Mangold, Faulds (2009) shows that social media appears alongside with traditional support complex where the

consumer becomes the most important participant in communication.

Litvin's, Goldsmith's, Pan's (2007) conceptual model of word-of-mouth includes the following elements: sources from which the information is obtained, variable factors that influence communication, motivation for contribution and striving to participate in word-of-mouth communication.

Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, Wilner (2010) presented the network coproduction model which defines new tactics and metrics implementation for directly target and influence on the consumer or opinion leaders. The messages and meanings do not flow unidirectional in this model, but rather are exchanged among members of the consumer network.

Hollenhorst, Michael (2009) and Low (2009) distinguish the following stages of implementation of SM: listening what others are talking about and analysing dialogues, planning, selecting channels that are suitable for communication, formation of community to control dialogues by putting efforts to involve a greater number of consumers and to evaluate the success.

Presented model of communication in social media (Figure 2) involves six steps: environment and competitors assessment, communication strategy, appropriate selection of channels, communication process (account creating, content building, communities building, consumers engaging, community maintaining, message sharing), monitoring and assessment and comparison of results.

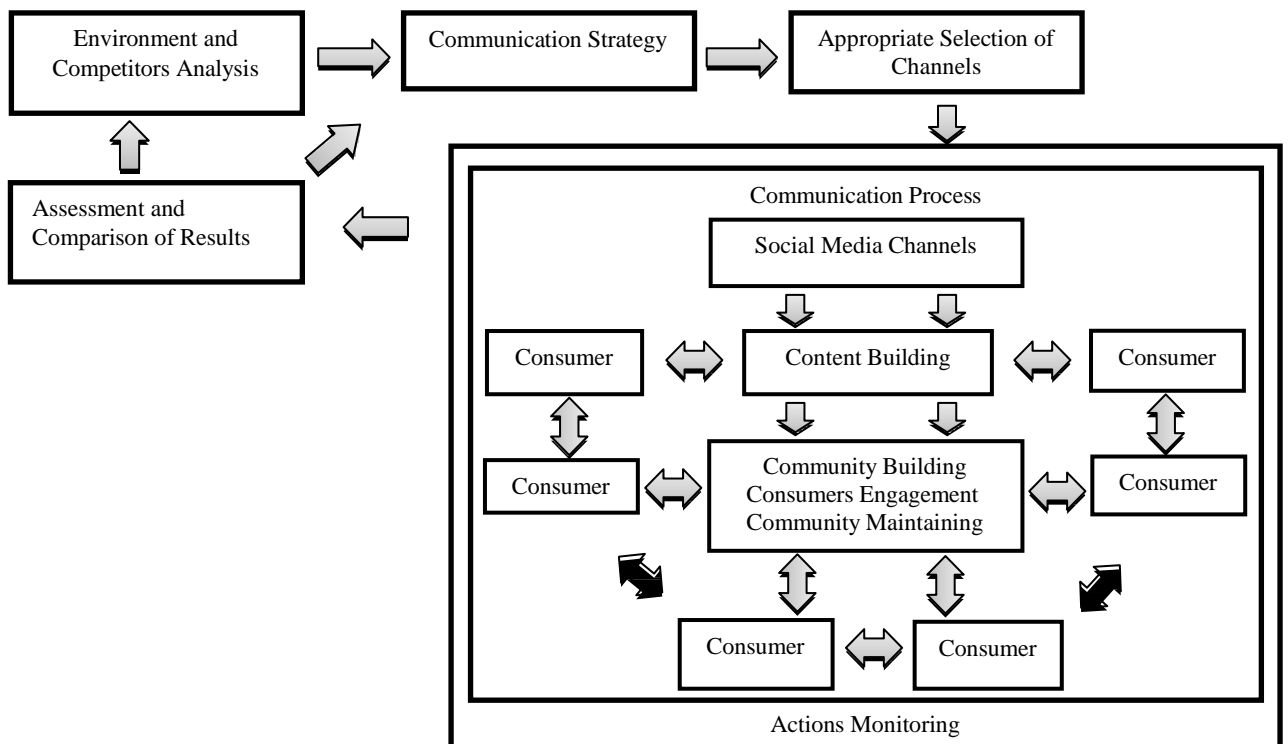


Figure 2. Model of Communication in Social Media.

The theoretical model of communication in social media involves not only the process of communication between the organization and consumers, but also the preparation and assessment that are also important implementation of the overall communication strategy.

The first three stages of the model (environment and competitors' analysis, communication strategy, selection of appropriate channels) include the preparation of the company for communication in social media.

The process of communication, content creation, consumer attraction and maintenance of communication reflect *the communication between the company and consumers*.

When consumers receive a message from the company they begin to communicate with each other. A communicative message can spread like a virus through word-of-mouth. This is how *consumer-to-consumer communication* is implemented.

The model of *communication between consumer and business organizations i. e. feedback* reflects the monitoring of actions, assessment and comparison of results.

The contents of constituents of the introduced communication in social media model will be discussed further.

**Environment and Competitors Analysis.** Lundin, Nilsson (2010) states that in this step the organizations have to make environmental analysis which will present a picture of how the competitors have adopted social media, to analyze good and bad examples of content, i. e. to compile all information what will help to be competitive.

Hollenhorst, Michael (2009) suggests analyzing social media at the beginning of strategy preparation: in which platforms and how consumers talk about the company, what they say about companies that are carrying on similar business, what are negative comments or misunderstandings, what resources are used by other companies. For this analysis Hollenhorst, Michael (2009), Low (2009) recommends to conduct monitoring by using the following tools:

- Google Trends – to monitor enterprise search traffic;
- Google News Search – to monitor the media mention;
- Google Blog Search – to monitor the blog mention;
- FriendFeed.com – to monitor Facebook voices;
- BoardReader.com – to monitor forums;
- Socialbakers.com – to monitor Facebook page statistics (Veidaknyge.lt – in Lithuania);
- Others.

**Communication Strategy.** The second step is related to goals setting, strategic initiatives, social media incorporation into organization strategy, social media channels planning.

Blachard (2010) declares that social media should be done by or in collaboration with the management level in the company. The following steps are proposed:

1. Identify goals – the purpose of the social media implementation.
2. Identify target audiences – who should reach.
3. Develop strategy and integrate the strategy into general strategy of company.

4. Clarify intent – why social media can be plugged into the organization.

5. Provide direction – how social media can be implemented.

When preparing a strategy Hollenhorst, Michael (2009) recommend distinguishing target groups, considering and selecting appropriate channels that will help to achieve the objectives; to considering the basic idea in the message transmitted to consumers, how active the communication will be, how consumers will be engaged in communication. At this stage it is also crucial to define the objectives of communication in social media, e.g. to strengthen relationships with consumers, increase awareness, increase the number of visits on a web page and etc.

Social media requires time, it is not free. Therefore, it is important to plan how many employees will be involved in communication in social media and how much time they will have to spare.

Marketing, public relations, sales, information technologies, customer services, human resources or personnel and other departments should be involved in this step. For example, human resources or personnel units should plan how many employees' organizations will need for social media implementation, do they have enough knowledge, competence and etc.

**Appropriate Selection of Channels.** The third step toward effective and successful communication is the analysis which social media tools are the most popular. This analysis could be done by marketing or public relations departments with help of information technologies department.

Not all social media tools are well-liked. Therefore the organizations depending on their activities have to choose the most appropriate social media sites where they can reach the respective target audiences and continually communicate with them (Zailskaite-Jakšte, Kuvykaite, 2010).

The next step of the model is to build and to maintain community, i. e. to present created channel to target audiences, to attract consumers, to propose engaging content, to react timely and etc.

**Communication Process.** The fourth step includes: social media channel creation, content building, community building or consumers in internet engagement, messages dissemination. Marketing, public relations, information technologies, sales departments should collaborate together in order to ensure direct, appropriate, effective and two way communication with consumers (in universities with prospective students).

Companies communicating in social media should remain transparent, write in a simple, comprehensive style, write about things that they know, admit mistakes, not to ignore the negative information (Low, 2009).

Content building correlates with community building: interesting, attractive, easy content, sincere tone, frequent, but not tiresome messages may engage internet users.

Mangold, Faulds (2009) proposes for users engagement to use such elements: provide networking platforms, use blogs and other social media tools to engage

customers, provide information, provide exclusivity, design services with talking points and consumers desired self-images in mind, support causes that are important to consumers, organizations can leverage emotional connections by embracing one or more causes that are important to their customers, utilize the power of stories.

Attractive information as viral message can be spread between internet users.

**Actions Monitoring.** Moreover the social network enables to investigate the interconnected people on how they influence each other with the information they have and hence their decision.

Public relations or marketing unit or community manager should follow up the conversations of community members in real time: to count likes, posts, comments, rebroadcasted messages, responses, authority, sentiment and others. Rapid feedback and insight from consumers provide a mechanism for executives to assess consumer opinion and use this information to improve products, customer service and perception (ISACA, 2010).

There are many tools in internet which may help to monitor whether the message or even all the program was successful. We have introduced several tools (Google Trends, Google News Search, Google Blog Search, FriendFeed.com, BoardReader.com, Socialbakers.com), that can be used in marketing when we discussed the analysis of environment and competitors. The following programs can also be useful for communication monitoring:

- Social Mention – real-time social media search and analysis:
- Addict-o-matic – monitoring of the latest news, blog posts, videos and images;
- Twitter Search – monitoring the latest messages;
- Others.

The comparison of the information flow of different sources will get the best results.

**Assessment and Comparison of Results.** This step shows success of social media implementation. Assessment of results and comparison should be done by marketing or public relations departments. Of course, potential contribution of every department should be estimated. Usually companies use different metrics to measure social media success: Web Site Traffic (68 %), Engagement with Prospects (60 %), Engagement with Customers (52 %), Revenue (38 %) (Lundin, Nilsson, 2010).

Low (2009) suggests evaluating the success of social media by employing content metrics (who is talking), compliance metrics (is the content adapted to the target audience), impact metrics (does the content prompts to take action).

In this part the model of communication in social media was presented which may be used for business organizations. The model is composed from six steps: environment and competitors' analysis, communication strategy, appropriate selection of channels, communication process (account creating, content building, community building and maintaining, consumers engaging and message shearing), monitoring, assessment and comparison of results. In this model communication flows from organization to customers, between customers and from consumers to organizations.

## **Empirical study of communication in social media: a case study of public Lithuanian higher education institutions**

Higher education institutions are following the business experience for SM implementation, because young people have interest in new possibilities. This interest enforces HEI institutions to look for more competitive advantages for study promotion.

The communication of higher education institutions in social media is important since active involvement of prospective students in communication in social media helps for prospective student to choose the university where he or she would like to study. Social media presents a university as „live“, communicating and caring about current and prospective students.

One of the most important features of HEI is its openness to society, based on the abundance of knowledge, their application and distribution.

With higher education institutions communicating in social media it is necessary to assess the specificity of activities of higher education institutions. This specificity is primarily reflected by target audiences (youth - prospective and current students; university staff; the general public). Young people are open to novelties. They are spending a lot of time surfing, browsing and looking for information about particular studies on the Internet.

Internal audiences can join and do join the process of communication of higher education institutions by promoting studies at higher education institutions in social media: students, scholars and teachers, administrative staff, technical staff (Stravinskiene, Zailskaite, 2008). It is rather difficult to control the communication of all these internal audiences in social media. On the other hand HEI can ensure successful communication with target audiences by taking advantage of these internal audiences for distribution of messages.

Moreover, not only the representatives of central administration have channels in social media, but also the departments, as for instance faculties or centres. Thus, when communicating in social media the universities should involve these divisions in the implementation of overall communication strategy.

An empirical study was aimed at finding if the suggested model of communication in social media can be applied in promoting studies at higher education institutions in social media. The research was examined applying the method of a case study.

The empirical study raised the following questions:

*RQ1. How do Lithuanian HEI involve consumers in communication in social media?*

*RQ2. How communication in social media is planned by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions?*

Content analysis has been used to analyze how Lithuanian state university-type higher education institutions involve consumers in communication in social media. At first, the research of social media channels was made including the analysis of higher education institutions web pages, looking for social media icons or references; search of social media icons or references,

using search engine Google.com; social media channels survey estimating reach of the channel, community size and interactivity. Fourteen web pages of Lithuanian public universities were analyzed.

We were looking for information about social media channels, i.e. icons. During this research we have visited first internet pages of universities. The icons on first page show continuity (relations between web page and social media channels) of institutions' activities. The web page presents institution as well as gives the appropriate information for every target group.

The social media channels for prospective students' attraction were found through the major search engine that are the most frequently used in the Lithuania, i.e. Google.com. The data were collected using key terms: the name of HEI and social media channels.

The community sizes and the rising number of the community members usually reflect the efforts of institutions to attract target audiences. The endeavor of communication of institutions in SM can be assessed counting number of: likes, posts and comments in social networks; posts, retweets, responses in microblogs, recency of posts in microblogs and social networks; comments and rankings in creativity works sharing sites (Burson-Marsteller, 2010).

An interview with the head of Public Relations Department of Kaunas University of Technology and

deputy director of Public Communication Management of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU) was conducted in order to find out how HEI plans and implements the communication in social media in practice. The respondents were selected by considering the results from the first stage of the study and index of social media, evaluating efforts and results of communication in social media of higher education institutions, presented by public relations agency „Komunikacija ir konsultantai“ in November 2011 (index of Kaunas University of Technology – 22,4, index of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University – 20,05).

**Research results.** The results of using social media by involving the prospective students at public Lithuanian higher education institutions were obtained in content analysis and are presented in Table 2. The research showed that just three Lithuanian universities are trying to use social media for studies promotion.

At first the front pages of HEI were analyzed. Universities don't have a need to put icons of social media channels into front pages of institution. Only one university has social media channels icons on its first pages for prospective students. The social media channels for prospective students/schoolchildren where find using search engine.

Table 2

Social media use in HEI for prospective students' attraction

University	Channel used by HEI	Channels for prospective students attractions	Reach of the channel from the first web page	Community	Interactivity (January - February of 2011)			
					Number of posts	Likes/ Rankings	Comments/ Responses	Retweets/ Recency of posts
Vilnius University	Facebook Blake YouTube Frype	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University	Facebook Twitter YouTube	www.brendu.lt YouTube Facebook	No No	62 1792	5 18	– 20	– 5	–
Vilniaus Pedagogical University	Facebook YouTube	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mykolas Romeris University	Facebook Twitter YouTube	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Vytautas Magnus University	Facebook Twitter Flickr YouTube Vimeo MySpace	Facebook	Yes	2097	37	137	61	–
Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lithuanian University of Health Science	Facebook	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lithuanian University of Agriculture	Facebook	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Kaunas University of Technology	Facebook YouTube	Facebook	No	181	10	–	–	–
Šiauliai University	Facebook	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Klaipėda University	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
The General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania	Facebook	–	–	–	–	–	–	–



In general the most popular social media channels are social network – Facebook, microblog – Twitter and creativity works sharing site – YouTube:

- 12 universities are using social network Facebook;
- Four HEIs have accounts in microblog Twitter, one in Blake – the Lithuanian microblog;
- Six HEIs have accounts in creativity works sharing site YouTube, but just one has YouTube channel committed to prospective students;
- Three universities have their accounts for schoolchildren/prospective students in social network – Facebook.

It is necessary to pay attention towards Vilnius Gediminas Technical University communication in social media. This HEI has web page <http://www.brendu.lt>, where the character called Gedas is trying simply to explain science subtleties and presents other information, which is actual for schoolchildren. This character has its own Facebook and YouTube accounts.

Only one higher education institution in Lithuania seeks to maintain integrity between internet front page and social media channels providing the consumers with possibility to go directly from university internet page to social media channel.

The interactivity of universities in social media are low, i. e. messages are submitted quite seldom, small number of likes, comments, responses.

The study (interview) on communication in social media by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions revealed that the suggested model for communication of business companies in social media can be successfully applied to the communication of universities in social media.

The popularization of higher education schools and involvement of prospective students should originate from environment analysis and planning as well as benefit assessment that may be gained by social media.

According to the model of communication in social media the first step toward SM implementation is the **Environment and Competitors Analysis**. HEI should analyze the channels used by universities as well as by business organizations.

The interview revealed that KUT follows what means are used by competitors, partners and sponsors. The staff responsible for social media takes part in different trainings, where they learn the latest trends and strive to adapt them.

The team of VGTU portal designated to schoolchildren <http://www.brendu.lt> also follows social media tools that are used by other universities for communication with schoolchildren.

**Communication Strategy.** Universities, which have created their accounts in Facebook for schoolchildren, have a purpose to communicate with these target audiences directly. The aim of social media implementation is to enhance university positions among schoolchildren and promote studies of particular university.

Kaunas University of Technology identifies the following objectives of communication in social media

with prospective students: „to reach the prospective entrants“, „to show the versatility of the university“, „to involve schoolchildren in two-way communication“, „to show the benefits of studying at the university“.

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University has the following objectives of communication with schoolchildren in social media: “to stimulate schoolchildren curiosity, interest not only in technologies, ecology, innovations and creativity, but also in student life, procedure of entering the university, events that take place in the university.” VGTU portal for pupils <http://www.brendu.lt> also strives to motivate pupils to communicate and consult professors prior to studies.

According to the representative of KUT, social media makes the university more “live”, as it gives an opportunity to reach the target audiences and maintain the relationship with them.

Representatives of VGTU claim that not only the number of fans is important, but also the audiences to which the information is provided: schoolchildren, their parents, teachers; therefore, characteristic features of audiences are considered in communication.

Two staff members of KUT take care of communication in social media. The team of VGTU portal <http://www.brendu.lt> consists of two people who are responsible for the contents of the portal (video, messages and etc. material), the development of the website, implementation of strategy, commercial.

**Appropriate Selection of Channels.** Content analysis showed, that universities choose social network Facebook and creativity works sharing site – YouTube for studies promotion. Both of them are popular in Lithuania.

According to Kaunas University of Technology, the university uses two channels YouTube and Facebook for communication with prospective students.

VGTU study programs are promoted in portal for pupils <http://www.brendu.lt>. The portal can also be found on Youtube and Facebook channels. VGTU also aims at cooperating with prospective students in relevant platforms of social media that are devoted to schoolchildren – other portals, newspapers, magazines.

**Communication Process.** The content has a big impact on prospective students’ attraction.

According to representatives of KUT, the university organizes various campaigns and initiatives, calls for schoolchildren opinions and invites them to participate in events, promptly responds to questions of prospective students i. e. aims at involving schoolchildren in active communication:

„We try promptly respond to every comment or question, also negative one, and inform how we are going to improve the situation that is being criticized.“

The current number of fans allows us to feel the needs of schoolchildren, to educate them and offer them a value (assist in choosing studies, introduce conditions of studies and etc.), also provides an opportunity to follow the consumers.“

According to representative from KUT, social media is most involving when visual material (photos, clips), also informal discussions, opinions about the university,

studies, professors (especially during entrance). „The project *“Ikraunam smegenis”* implemented by KUT on social network *“Facebook”* in summer of 2011 received an exceptional attention. The channel was created where students and graduates shared their experience.“

Representatives of VGTU confirm that video news receive the highest number of reviews:

*„The most appealing information for schoolchildren is provided in a concise, clear and funny manner by employing a large number of visual aids. Schoolchildren are interested in new and original information that cannot be found on other web pages and portals.“*

*„Portal <http://www.brendu.lt> is a tool which introduces pupils with values of VGTU – technicality, creativity, openness and curiosity. Therefore, tools of social media through which <http://www.brendu.lt> is communicated help to establish this relation and more reliable relationship with consumers. Consumers start to follow constantly the life of the university and may begin to relate their future with this particular environment. Reliable information provided in an appealing form prepared by consulting expert teachers becomes an important part of VGTU image to the pupil.“*

**Actions Monitoring.** HEI have to monitor communication in real time and to give a rapid answer for internet users, to use tools in internet which may help to monitor whether the message was successful.

VGTU and KUT on Facebook and Youtube channels follow the increase in the number of fans/ subscribers and evaluate the popularity of topics according to the number of “like” clicks or comments.

During the January of 2011 197 internet users joined the VMU schoolchildren community in Facebook. During January-February in this channel were 37 posts, 137 likes and 61 comments. Kaunas University of Technology and Gediminas Technical University channels were not so popular for prospective students/ schoolchildren in Facebook.

In the platforms of VGTU portal, designated to schoolchildren, <http://www.brendu.lt> consumers sometimes enter negative comments. According to the representative of VGTU: „When comments are obscene, vulgar, incite hatred or are threatening, they are removed.“

KUT also follows communication in social media and strives to immediately react to positive and negative comments.

**Assessment and Comparison of Results.** The service Facebook Insights is used by KTU to measure non-financial efficiency in social media. So far the university has not paid enough attention to the measuring of non-financial efficiency of social media. In future this university has plans to purchase software that would help to carry out a more detailed assessment of communication in social media.

„Google Analytics“ is used to follow the visiting rates of VGTU portal for schoolchildren <http://www.brendu.lt>. Furthermore, each year a student survey is conducted at the university in order to determine how many newly enrolled students know about the portal and whether or not this web page is useful to them in looking for information about future studies.

Case study revealed that just three out of fourteen state higher education institutions use social media for studies promotion in Lithuania. Only one university has linked its front page with social media channel designated to schoolchildren. The interactivity of universities in social media is low i.e. messages are rarely provided, there are few “Like” clicks, too few comments and responses.

HEI implement communication in social media on the basis of six stages (environment and competitors analysis, communication strategy, appropriate selection of channels, communication process, monitoring in real time, assessment and comparison of results) of implementation of communication in social media, that are characteristic to business companies.

The empirical study of communication in social media by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions proved that universities follow communication of one another in social media; select objectives of communication in social media individually; use the same channels Facebook and YouTube for communication with pupils; schoolchildren and prospective students are attracted the most by a visually provided information, which is new, adapted to the target audience and which cannot be found on other Internet pages, i.e. very important content; universities try to turn the negative messages into a positive information, delete obscene messages; the popularity of messages is measured by the number of “like” clicks or the number of comments; universities use different means to measure success. So far Lithuanian universities do not fully use the existing tools of social media to perform monitoring.

The most obvious way to realize the success of the study promotion of high education institutions is the analysis of admission results of these institutions. Objectives of communication in social media, as for example how much communication in social media can help to increase the number of entrants, should be determined in the process of strategy preparation. This would allow assessing the results of communication in social media by promoting studies in higher education institutions more accurately.

As the research showed Lithuanian universities still do not fully involve their internal audiences and departments into the process of communication in social media. When forming the strategy of communication in social media Lithuanian universities should pay greater attention to internal audiences and departments: to plan how they will include them in the process of communication and how they will relate their activities to implementation of the objectives. If universities successfully involve internal audiences and departments into communication in social media, then the messages will reach prospective students through more varied channels, direct communication with students and prospective students will be ensured and more active engagement of prospective students into communication will be ensured. The involvement of internal audiences into the process of communication in social media can also help to perform the better monitoring of communication in social media. For example, if students writing blogs informed the university staff responsible for communication about the reaction of consumers to the

provided information, their response and interpretation of messages, higher education institutions could react to comments more actively and direct communication in such a way that it would be useful for universities or would help to involve prospective students into relevant discussions.

Thus, when universities start to plan the process of implementation of communication in social media in order to link the communication of internal audiences and divisions with the overall communication strategy of the university, one will be able to expect better results of communication in social media.

## Conclusions

Social media describes a variety of collaborative online applications and technologies that are created, initiated, circulated and used by community on collaborative fashion and educating purposes about products, brands, services, personalities and other issues.

The emerging new internet-based communication may help to promote business if it is done in correct way: adding value, helping to solve problems, educating and etc. In other case may arise risks, which can have negative effect on organizations' actions. The most negative aspect of social media is lack of information control. Therefore organizations should plan social media implementation process.

When constructing the communication model in social media it is important to evaluate three aspects of communication in social media:

- communication between business organizations and consumers;
- consumer-to-consumer communication;
- communication between consumer and business organizations (feedback).

The prepared model of communication in social media includes six stages: environment and competitors analysis, communication strategy (goals and target audiences identification, strategy development and the strategy integration into general strategy of company), appropriate selection of channels, communication process (account creating, content building, community building and maintaining, consumers engagement and message shearing), monitoring in real time, assessment and comparison of results. The theoretical model of communication in social media includes not only the process of communication between the organization and consumers, but also the stages of preparation and assessment that are also important in the evaluation of implementation of the overall communication strategy.

The first three stages of the model (environment and competitors' analysis, communication strategy, selection of appropriate channels) include the preparation of the company for communication in social media.

The process of communication, content creation, attraction of consumers, maintenance of communication reflects *communication between business organizations and consumers*. When consumers receive a message from the company they start to communicate with each other. Communicative message can spread like a virus in the manner of word-of-mouth. *Consumer-to-consumer communication* is implemented in this way.

*Feedback, i.e. communication between consumer and business organizations*, is reflected in the model through stages of action monitoring, assessment and comparison of results.

Higher education institutions are following the business experience for social media implementation. Young people have interest in new communication possibilities and this interest enforces higher education institutions to look for more competitive advantages for study promotion.

A case study of Lithuanian state higher education institutions was used to reveal the possible application of the suggested model of communication in social media in the promotion of higher education studies in social media.

Case study revealed that just three out of fourteen state higher education institutions use social media for studies promotion in Lithuania. Only one university has linked its front page with social media channel designated to schoolchildren. The interactivity of universities in social media is low i.e. messages are rarely provided, there are few "like" clicks, too few comments and responses.

The study on communication in social media by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions showed that the suggested model of communication in social media of business organizations can be successfully applied to the communication of universities in social media. The popularization of higher education institutions and involvement of prospective students should involve all six steps: should originate from environment analysis and planning as well as benefit assessment that may be gained by social media.

The empirical study of communication in social media by promoting studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions proved that universities follow communication of one another in social media; select objectives of communication in social media individually; use the same channels Facebook and YouTube for communication with schoolchildren and prospective students are attracted the most by a visually provided information, which is new, adapted to the target audience and which cannot be found on other Internet pages, i.e. very important content; universities try to turn the negative messages into a positive information, delete obscene messages; the popularity of messages is measured by the number of "like" clicks or the number of comments; universities use different means to measure success. So far Lithuanian universities do not fully use the existing tools of social media to perform monitoring.

As the research showed Lithuanian universities still do not fully involve their internal audiences and departments into the process of communication in social media. When universities start to plan the process of implementation of communication in social media in order to link the communication of internal audiences and departments with the overall communication strategy of the university, one will be able to expect better results of communication in social media.

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## Komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje įgyvendinimas populiarinant aukštųjų mokyklų studijas

Santrauka

Naujosios technologijos skverbiasi į daugelį gyvenimo sričių ir keičia ne tik asmeninę komunikaciją, bet ir santykius tarp organizacijų ir jų klientų. Ekonominė krizė ne tik daro įtaką ryšiams tarp organizacijų bei jų klientų, tačiau kartu skatina organizacijas pasinaudoti interneto galimybėmis, kuriomis naudojantis galima taikyti mažesnes sąnaudas ir taip įgyvendinti marketingo sprendimus.

Naujosios komunikacijos galimybės internete suteikia organizacijoms daugiau galimybių informuoti vartotojus apie savo prekes ir paslaugas bei sparčiau įgyvendinti numatytas veiklas: didinti prekės ženklo vertę, didinti prekės ar paslaugos žinomumą ir pan. Naudojant socialinę žiniasklaidą galima marketingo strategiją, orientuotą į masinę rinką, nukreipti į mažesnes vartotojų grupes, pateikiant joms tikslingą ir įtikinamą žinutę, skatinančią veikti (Keller, 2009). Socialinė žiniasklaida keičia tradicinę marketingo paradigmą ir skatina naujų santykių tarp organizacijos ir vartotojų formavimąsi, t. y. vartotojai informacija tiesiogiai ir efektyviai keičiasi tarpusavyje.

Socialinė žiniasklaida, kaip tyrimų objektas, marketingo mokslų srityje yra gana naujas, todėl pasigendama išsamesnių tyrimų šioje srityje. Dažniausiai mokslininkai (Ashcroft, 2001; Mangold, Faulds, 2009; Hurme, 2001; Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, Li, 2008; Pan, Lan, 2009;) daugiau orientuojasi į socialinės žiniasklaidos grupavimą, pristato praktinius socialinės žiniasklaidos naudojimo pavyzdžius. Jie neanalizuoja būdų, suteikiančių galimybę organizacijoms sėkmingai pristatyti ar populiarinti prekes bei paslaugas. Išsamesni organizacijų veiklos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje tyrimai, rekomendacijos kaip efektyviau įtraukti socialinę žiniasklaidą įgyvendinant organizacijos tikslus, būtų naudingi siekiant pateikti informaciją tikslinėms auditorijoms apie prekes bei paslaugas. Tyrimai leistų numatyti ir taikyti geriausias priemones panaudojant socialinę žiniasklaidą

Išsamiau išanalizuoti socialinės žiniasklaidos tinkamumą komunikacijai tarp organizacijos ir vartotojų skatina ir skirtingi mokslininkų požiūriai į ją. Pasak Harris, Rae (2009), socialinės žiniasklaidos galimybės „Google“ kartos labai povertinamos, nes interneto vartotojai buvo pasirengę socialinę žiniasklaidą naudoti asmeninėms reikmėms ir skeptiškai vertino jos tinkamumą verslo pasauliui. Tuo metu Ranchhod, Gurāu, Lace (2002) teigia, kad interneto technologijos sukūrė prielaidas pačiai efektyviausiai žiniasklaidai, leidžiančiai naujai suformuoti auditorijoms pateikti duomenų, kurių jie tikisi. **Tyrimo tikslas** – parengti struktūrinę komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelį, pagrindžiant jo taikymo perspektyvas populiarinant studijas Lietuvos valstybinėse universitetinėse aukštosiose mokyklose. **Tyrimo objektas** – komunikacija socialinėje žiniasklaidoje.

Remiantis Ranchhod, Gurāu, Lace (2002), Mayfield (2008), Kurucz (2008), Mangold, Faulds (2009), Henderson, Bowley (2010), Lundin, Nilsson (2010) tyrimais, atskleidžiama socialinės žiniasklaidos conceptualioji esmė. Socialinė žiniasklaida apima daugybę kuriamų, inicijuojamų, platinamų ir naudojamų interneto technologijų ir platformų, kuriose vartotojų veikla yra paremta bendradarbiavimu siekiant gauti daugiau naudingos informacijos apie prekes, prekės ženklus, paslaugas, asmenybes ar kitais tikslais. Komunikacija vykdoma socialinės žiniasklaidos kanaluose, kurie įvardijami kaip socialiniai tinklai, forumai, mikrotinklaraščiai, tinklaraščiai, enciklopedijos internete, virtualūs pasauliai ir pan. Be to, socialinėje žiniasklaidoje komunikacija yra abipusė (angl. - *two-way*), t. y. gali skliti iš organizacijos į vartotoją ir iš vartotojo į organizaciją.

Socialinė žiniasklaida gali padėti užtikrinti tiesioginę ir efektyvią komunikaciją tarp organizacijos ir jos tikslinių auditorijų. Tačiau atsivėrusios galimybės socialinėje žiniasklaidoje formuojant santykius tarp organizacijos ir jos vartotojų turi ir neigiamų aspektų. Vienas iš esminių tokios komunikacijos internete negatyvių aspektų – kontrolės trūkumas. Organizacijos praranda galimybę kontroliuoti žinutės turinį, pateikti vartotojams ją per tam tikrą laiką, tam tikru dažnumu ir tam tikrai auditorijai. Kontrolės trūkumas gali lemti negatyvų virusinės marketingo kompanijos poveikį (Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, Li, 2008). Be to, informacijos gavėjas gaunama žinutę gali vertinti kaip „brukalą“ ir ją ignoruoti. Straipsnyje, remiantis Ashcroft (2001), Hurme (2001), Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, Li (2008); Mangold, Faulds (2009), Pan, Lan (2009) tyrimais, aptariami pozityvūs ir negatyvūs socialinės žiniasklaidos panaudojimo atvejai, į kuriuos organizacijoms, planuojančioms naudotis socialine žiniasklaida, vertėtų atsižvelgti.

Kitas aspektas, į kurį organizacijos, siekiančios pasinaudoti komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje galimybėmis, turėtų atkreipti dėmesį – kompleksinis požiūris į įgyvendinimą. Siekiant sėkmingo bei efektyvaus komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje įgyvendinimo, itin svarbus įvairių organizacijos padalinių įtraukimas, taip siekiant užtikrinti komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje atitikimą organizacijos bendrai komunikacijai ir paramą jai įgyvendinti. Organizacijos padaliniai turėtų įsitraukti į komunikacijos procesą ir užtikrinti socialinės žiniasklaidos panaudojimą srityse, kurios siejamos su klientų aptarnavimu, rinkos tyrimais, reputacijos vadyba, prekių ir paslaugų rėmimu, vartotojų mokymu, pardavimų plėtra bei vartotojų santykių vadyba.

Konstruojant komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelį, labai svarbu įvertinti tris komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje aspektus:

- komunikacija iš įmonės vartotojui;
- komunikacija tarp vartotojų;
- vartotojo atsakas įmonėi, t. y. grįžtamasis ryšys.

Sudarant modelį taip pat remtasi teoriniais ir empiriniais tyrimais komunikacijos socialinės žiniasklaidos srityje (Mangold, Faulds, 2009; Litvin, Goldsmith, Pan, 2007; Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, Wilner, 2010; Hollenhorst, Michael, 2009; Low, 2009).

Mangold, Faulds (2009) naujame komunikacijos paradigmos modelyje matyti, kad šalia tradicinio rėmimo komplekso atsiranda socialinė žiniasklaida, kurioje vartotojas tampa svarbiausiu komunikacijos dalyviu.

Litvin, Goldsmith, Pan (2007) conceptualus komunikacijos „iš lūpų į lūpas“ modelis apima tokius elementus: šaltiniai, iš kurių gaunama informacija, kintamas veiksnys, kurie daro įtaką komunikacijai, motyvaciją prisidėti ir siekti dalyvauti komunikacijoje „iš lūpų į lūpas“.

Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, Wilner (2010) pristatė bendradarbiavimo tinkle modelį, kuris apima naujas įgyvendinimo taktikas ir metrikas, nukreiptas tiesiogiai į vartotojus bei nuomonių lyderius. Žinutės šiame modelyje nesklinda viena kryptimi. Žinutėmis ir jų reikšmėmis vartotojai keičiasi vieni su kitais. Hollenhorst, Michael (2009) ir Low (2009) išskiria tokius socialinės žiniasklaidos įgyvendinimo etapus: klausytis ką kalba kiti ir analizuoti tuos pokalbius, planuoti, parinkti kanalus tinkamus bendrauti, formuoti bendruomenę, kontroliuoti pokalbius ir stengtis įtraukti kuo daugiau vartotojų, įvertinti sėkmę. Parengtas modelis apima šešis komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje įgyvendinimo etapus: aplinkos ir konkurentų analizė, komunikacijos strategijos parengimas (tikslų nustatymas, socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalų planavimas, integravimas į bendrą organizacijos strategiją), tinkamų kanalų parinkimas, komunikacijos proceso užtikrinimas (platformos kūrimas, turinio kūrimas, auditorijos formavimas, vartotojų pritraukimas ir išlaikymas, žinučių siuntimas), kontrolė ir rezultatų įvertinimas bei palyginimas. Teorinis komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelis apima ne tik organizacijos komunikacijos su vartotojais procesą, bet ir pasirėmimo ir vertinimo etapus, kurie taip pat svarbūs bendrai komunikacijos strategijai įgyvendinti.

Pirmieji trys modelio etapai (aplinkos ir konkurentų analizė, komunikacijos strategija, tinkamų kanalų parinkimas) apima įmonės pasirėmimą komunikacijai socialinėje žiniasklaidoje.

Komunikacijos procesas, turinio kūrimas, vartotojų pritraukimas, komunikacijos palaikymas atspindi *komunikaciją tarp įmonės ir vartotojų*.

Kai vartotojai gauna žinutę iš įmonės, tuomet ima komunikuoti vieni su kitais. Komunikacinė žinutė gali kaip virusas skliti „iš lūpų į lūpas“ (angl. *word-of-mouth*). Taip įgyvendinama *komunikacija tarp vartotojų*.

*Grįžtamasis ryšys*, t. y. *vartotojo atsakas įmonėi*, modelyje pateiktas veiksmų monitoringo, rezultatų įvertinimo ir palyginimo etapai.

Siekiant atskleisti siūlomo komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelio pritaikymo galimybes, populiarinant aukštųjų mokyklų studijas socialinėje žiniasklaidoje, pasitelkta Lietuvos valstybinių universitetinių aukštųjų mokyklų atvejo analizė.

Atliekant empirinį tyrimą, iškelti klausimai:

**RQ1.** Kaip Lietuvos HEI įtraukia vartotojus į komunikaciją socialinėje žiniasklaidoje?

**RQ2.** Kaip planuojama komunikacija socialinėje žiniasklaidoje, populiarinant Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų studijas?

Potencialių studijų įtraukimas į Lietuvos HEI komunikaciją socialinėje žiniasklaidoje ištirtas, remiantis turinio analizę, kuri apėmė šiuos etapus:

1. Piktogramų arba nuorodų į socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalus paieška aukštųjų mokyklų interneto tinklalapiuose.

2. Piktogramų arba nuorodų į socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalus paieška, pasitelkus paieškos sistemą „Google“.

3. Kanalo pasiekiamumas, bendruomenės dydis ir interaktyvumas socialinės žiniasklaidos kanaluose.

Siekiant išsiaiškinti kaip planuojama ir įgyvendinama komunikacija socialinėje žiniasklaidoje, paimitas interviu iš Kauno technologijos universiteto Viešųjų ryšių skyriaus vadovo bei Vilniaus Gedimino technikos universiteto Viešosios komunikacijos direkcijos direktoriaus pavaduotojų.

Atvejo analizė atskleidė, kad tik trys valstybinės universitetinės aukštojo mokslo mokyklos iš keturiolikos, studijų Lietuvoje populiarinimui naudoja socialinę žiniasklaidą. Tik vienas universitetas savo interneto pirmąjį puslapį yra susijęs su socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalu, skirtu moksleiviams. Universitetų interaktyvumas socialinėje žiniasklaidoje yra mažas, t. y. žinutės pateikiamos retai, sulaukiama mažai piktogramos „patinka“ paspaudimų, komentarų, atsakymų.

Komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje, populiarinant Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų studijas tyrimas atskleidė, kad universitetų komunikacijai socialinėje žiniasklaidoje gali būti sėkmingai pritaikytas siūlomas verslo įmonių komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelis. Studijų populiarinimas ir būsimųjų studentų įtraukimas valstybinėse universitetinėse aukštosiose mokyklose turi apimti šešis etapus, t. y. turi būti pradedamas įgyvendinti nuo aplinkos analizės ir planavimo ir užbaigiamas socialinės žiniasklaidos suteiktos naudos įvertinamu.

Lietuvos valstybinės universitetinės aukštosios mokyklos tyrimas patvirtino, kad universitetinės aukštosios mokyklos stebi vienos kitų vykdomą komunikaciją socialinėje žiniasklaidoje; komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidos tikslus pasirenka individualiai; bendravimui su potencialiais studentais naudoja tuos pačius socialinės žiniasklaidos kanalus *Facebook* ir *YouTube*; labiausiai būsimuosius studentus patraukia vizualiai pateikiama informacija, kuri yra nauja, skirta tikslinei auditorijai, kurios negalima rasti kituose interneto puslapiuose, t. y. itin daug dėmesio skiria žinutės turiniui: neigiamas žinutes universitetai siekia paversti į pozityvią informaciją, necenzūrinės žinutes – šalina. Pateikiamų žinučių populiarumas vertinamas pagal piktogramos „patinka“ paspaudimus ar komentarų skaičių; sėkmei vertinti universitetai naudoja skirtingas priemones. Tačiau kol kas Lietuvos universitetinės aukštosios mokyklos nepakankamai išnaudoja egzistuojančius socialinės žiniasklaidos būdus monitoringui atlikti.

Kaip parodė tyrimas, Lietuvos universitetai dar nepakankamai įtraukia savo vidines auditorijas ir padalinius į komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje procesą. Kai universitetai planuos komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje įgyvendinimo procesą, siekdami susieti vidinių auditorijų ir padalinių komunikaciją su bendra universiteto komunikacijos strategija, galima bus tikėtis sėkmingesnio užsibrėžtų tikslų įgyvendinimo.

Raktažodžiai: *socialinės žiniasklaida, komunikacijos socialinėje žiniasklaidoje modelis, aukštosios mokyklos, studijų populiarinimas.*

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