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## Social Media in Selected Business Models

**Abstract:** The development of the internet and the emergence of social media create completely new opportunities for enterprises, both traditional and those operating in the e-commerce industry. The widespread use of social media channels by the majority of consumers make them naturally want their favourite brands to be present there as well. However, an absence will not stop the discussion, so it is important for brands to realise that their presence on social media will allow them to become a part of it. This is an important aspect of managing organisations in various types of business model, B2C, B2B, C2B and C2C, although the specificity of using these channels differs. In this article, the authors identify and analyse how brands in selected business models use social media to achieve their strategic, communication and business goals, and which elements are the most interesting for its users and why. The authors used a literature review and a survey questionnaire in order to ask the respondents (n = 85 for individual respondents and n = 18 for brands) which posts they follow on selected brand social media. The authors found that brands mainly use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to post information about events, expert discussions or informational content. The article contributes to a deeper analysis of social media in the management of brands and how to be more competitive in the market through their use.

**Keywords:** business models; B2B; B2C; C2B; C2C; social media

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## Introduction

With the ever-increasing technological development and digitisation of many spheres of life, ways of running businesses, communicating with consumers, and advertising the products and services offered are also changing. One way to conduct business is to use social media which, nowadays, cannot only facilitate interactions between users but also between organisations and their customers (Ketonen-Oksi, Jussila, Kärkkäinen, 2016). The

number of internet users grew globally to 5.3 billion by the end of 2023 while the compound annual growth rate for the period from 2018 to 2023 was 6 percent. The fastest growth in this period was in 2019, with 300 million new internet users, and there was a growth rate of 7.7 percent in 2018 (Statista, 2023). In 2022, the average daily social media usage worldwide amounted to 147 minutes per day, up from 145 minutes in the previous year. Currently, the country with the most time spent on social media per day is the Philippines, with online users spending an average of three hours and 53 minutes. In comparison, the daily time spent on social media in the U.S. was just two hours and three minutes (Statista, 2023). Not surprisingly, many brands see social media as their path to success. In addition to the most common form, which is business-to-consumer (B2C), other models are also emerging in the market which establish relationships between customers and businesses (C2B), between businesses (B2B) or between individuals (customers) (C2C). This is because social networks have become a powerful marketing tool that is no longer used for promotional and advertising purposes only, but also to create strong and lasting relationships with customers and to build trust (Kotler, Keller, 2014). In addition to being able to reach the majority of current and potential 'contractors', social media attract brands due to their low communication costs and a high level of efficiency compared to traditional media such as television or radio. The most popular social medium is, of course, Facebook, which has been leading the market for many years, but other top networking sites include Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. These provide endless opportunities to reach target groups and this can guarantee the success of sales and marketing activities. However, for this method of communication to be effective, it must be well-suited to the organisation in question, the business model adopted, and to its audience. Each platform attracts a slightly different type of audience and has a different message.

In this article, the authors focus on the following research issues: Which social media platforms are most frequently used by brands and by consumers? What elements presented on social media platforms attract the target audience the most? Does the inclusion of specific posts on social media platforms depend on the type of business? Despite the growing body of literature examining the role of social media in business models (Breier et al., 2021; Cartwright, Liu, Raddats, 2021; Wibowo et al., 2020), there remains a notable research gap regarding the nuanced and comprehensive understanding of their impact on different business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C) and consumer-to-business (C2B) interactions. While some studies have explored the general influence of social media on business performance (Cartwright, Liu, Raddats, 2021; Manzoor et al., 2020; Tajvidi, Karami, 2021), few have delved into the attractiveness of different elements in each specific business model (Hamwi, Lizarralde, Legardeur, 2021). Furthermore, the majority of existing research predominantly focused on either B2C or B2B contexts, with limited attention given to C2C and C2B transactions. Thus, a significant research gap exists in comprehensively exploring how social media practices differ and likewise how they converge across these diverse business models, as well as the specific challenges and opportunities they present for organisations operating within these frameworks. Addressing this research gap is crucial for businesses and researchers alike to effectively harness the power of social media in developing tailored strategies that maximise engagement, customer satisfaction and, ultimately, business success across the entire spectrum of business models.

## Literature review

The online market is vast and constantly evolving, offering users increasingly innovative solutions. Businesses must adapt to these conditions and, above all, meet the expectations of their potential customers by adopting specific business models (Ritala et al., 2018; Slack, 2012).

Social media can be an effective tool to help brands function in all business models (Abuhashesh, 2014; Iankova et al., 2019). In order for them to fulfil their intended functions, they must be conducted properly in accordance with the characteristics of the medium, its functionalities and the specifics of the industry or a given brand. In the case of the B2C model undoubtedly the most important aspect of using social media is the ability to build a loyal and engaged community and to promote the offer and encourage purchase (Moore, Hopkins, Raymond, 2013). B2B brands are able to create their image of specialists in a particular field and reach a wider range of potential customers with their offerings than before (Silva, Duarte, Almeida, 2020). Social media also enable, in this particular case, more efficient communication with business partners and transfer of relevant information. Building brand trust is the main benefit that C2C brand's model gets from their presence and activity on social media (Wang, Baesens, Zhu, 2020). Positive feedback from satisfied users provides others with a guarantee that a particular brand's services are worth using. Social media in the C2B model can also serve as a tool for survey user feedback and improve offerings (Agarwal, 2020).

More and more brands, regardless of their business model, are using social media as a marketing tool through which they promote their image, products and services, and create a base of potential buyers (Sundstrom et al., 2021). Online presence also gives businesses a huge advantage in the form of ongoing information feedback on their offerings as communication is no longer one-sided, as in the case of traditional mass media, and enables dialogue. Web users can easily and quickly share their opinions (both positive and negative), while brands respond to criticism and adapt their services and products to the expectations and tastes of customers, thus creating more personalised offers (Nisar, Prabhakar, Strakova, 2019).

The most common uses of the most popular social media discussed in this article are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Social media and its use in business

Social medium	Classification according to Aicher & Jakob	Use in business
LinkedIn	Business networks	HR management, PR, R&D research, recruitment, branding, business contacts
Twitter	Microblogs	Informational content, branding, marketing, relations with clients, engagement of clients, PR, CSR
Facebook	Social services	Marketing, sales, engagement of clients, PR, R&D research, CSR, branding, information transfer
YouTube	Video services	Branding, product presentation, attracting of new clients, marketing, sales, PR

Source: authors own work

LinkedIn is a social media platform that has the most business-oriented nature of all the social media described in this article. Its main purpose is effective recruitment, strengthening business relationships and public relations activities. This is influenced by the characteristics of this platform's community of the educated and career-oriented (Cooper, Naatus, 2014; Quinton, Wilson, 2016).

Twitter is a social medium that is associated with business content because of the community it attracts (high-ranking individuals, politicians and journalists). Brands can use it primarily to build relationships with customers, communicate messages and for CSR (corporate social responsibility) and PR (public relations) activities (Zhang, Jansen, Chowdhury, 2011).

Facebook is mainly a social networking site which, however, offers many marketing opportunities, so communication with audiences, building a loyal community and brand image, and advertising are the most exploited areas of activity by businesses (Anshari et al., 2022; Kraus et al., 2022).

YouTube, which originated as an entertainment platform, has evolved in such a way that now even commercial and non-commercial organisations can successfully conduct business activities there, mainly in the areas of marketing, product presentation and sales support. Taking all of the above aspects into account, it is undeniable that social media are now an essential element in the management of brands operating in various business models and in many of their aspects (Teoh et al., 2022). To reap the benefits social media offer, businesses must properly select the best and most relevant media type for their activity and the skilfully create the content to be posted on it.

The authors do not include Instagram or TikTok, because their business models are relatively similar to Facebook and YouTube. As for Instagram, similar to Facebook, it earns money from advertisements through the use of user data for precise targeting. TikTok is partly similar to YouTube, because it is based on advertisements and monetisation of user content e.g. through partnership programmes. Moreover, the authors concentrated on platforms that have a more stable position on the market or those which were the pioneers of selected business models.

There are several academic articles dedicated to social media in business models, however the aim of this one is to compare and analyse the level of interest in using social media platforms by different target groups (both individuals and brands) and to indicate the social media platform elements of the utmost importance to the audience.

The motivation for undertaking this research is to:

- Identify a growing trend: the pervasive influence of social media on contemporary business practices cannot be ignored. It has transformed communication, marketing and customer engagement strategies across a wide range of industries. By conducting research in this area, we can gain valuable insights into the evolving landscape of social media usage in different business models which can inform organisations about emerging trends and help them adapt their strategies accordingly.
- Bridge the knowledge gap: while existing research has provided valuable insights into the impact of social media on businesses, there is still a substantial knowledge gap, particularly in relation to the diverse business models of B2B, B2C, C2C and C2B. Undertaking research in this area will contribute to filling this gap, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how social media practices differ and converge across these models. This knowledge will enable organisations to make informed decisions, optimise their social media strategies, and stay ahead of the competition.

- Address practical challenges: each business model presents unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to leveraging social media effectively. Research in this domain can shed light on the specific challenges faced by organisations operating within different models, such as building trust in B2B relationships or managing user-generated content in C2C interactions. By examining these challenges and identifying best practices, research can offer practical insights and recommendations to enhance social media strategies and improve overall business performance.
- Enhance customer experiences: social media have revolutionised the way businesses interact with customers, offering new avenues for engagement and personalised communication. Understanding how social media are used across various business models can enable organisations to tailor their strategies to enhance customer experiences. Research in this area can identify effective tactics for customer acquisition, engagement and retention, leading to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty and, ultimately, business growth.
- Contribute to theoretical knowledge: By undertaking research on the use of social media in diverse business models, there is an opportunity to contribute to the theoretical understanding of its impact on businesses. This research can uncover novel insights, develop theoretical frameworks, and advance the field of social media marketing, benefiting both academia and practitioners alike.

Researchers can convey the importance and relevance of studying social media's role in different business models, encouraging further exploration and investigation in this dynamic and rapidly evolving field.

## Methodology

In this article, as noted above, the authors focus on the following research issues: Which social media platforms are most frequently used by brands and by consumers? What elements presented on social media platforms attract the target audience the most? Does the inclusion of specific posts on social media platforms depend on the type of business?

The initial stage of the research involved selecting four real brands for each respective business model type with respondents indicating those that are the most popular and visible in their surroundings. Secondly, they chose those which are used in everyday life from respondents who use their products or services. Finally, brands that are related to the positive feelings of respondents, so taking into account experiences and loyalty towards them. To standardise the results, it was necessary to adopt specific time frames, therefore, the research was conducted between June 2022 and May 2023. To gather material for the analysis, the social media platforms of the following brands were examined (Table 2).

Table 2. Brands selected for the purpose of the research

Name of the brand	Description
DEVA Group	an advertising agency
NVIDIA	a company specialising in the production of graphic processors and integrated circuits
Shoper	e-commerce software for online stores
wFirma	software enabling independent accounting operations
Lidl Polska	a discount store chain

Tymbark	a brand in the FMCG industry
Zalando	an online clothing store
Żabka	a convenience grocery store chain
BrandBuddies	a marketing agency specialising in influencer marketing
Useme	a platform providing an exchange of orders for freelancers
Google Ads	an advertising platform
Fiverr	a platform connecting freelancers with entrepreneurs
Etsy	a service offering a possibility to sell handmade products
OLX Polska	a commercial platform specialising in local classified ads
Vinted	a classifieds website enabling clothing exchange between users
Otodom	a portal with real estate advertisements

Source: authors own work

The next step was to identify if these brands use at least one of the social media proposed (Table 3).

Table 3. Presence of selected brands on the social media platforms discussed

Business model	Brand	Facebook	LinkedIn	Twitter	YouTube
B2B	DEVA Group	+	+	+	+
	NVIDIA	+	+	+	+
	Shoper	+	+	+	+
	wFirma	+	+	+	+
B2C	Lidl Polska	+	+	+	+
	Tymbark	+	-	+	+
	Zalando	+	+	+	+
	Żabka	+	+	+	+
C2B	BrandBuddies	+	+	+	+
	Useme	+	+	-	+
	Google Ads	+	+	+	+
	Fiverr	+	+	+	+
C2C	Etsy	+	+	+	+
	OLX Polska	+	-	-	+
	Vinted	+	+	-	-
	Otodom	+	+	+	+

Source: authors own work

Based on the analysis of the content published by the selected brands, nine categories of post were identified, namely:

- Brand advertising – any publication promoting the brand.
- Event promotion – materials informing about and encouraging registration and/or participation in events organised in traditional or online formats.
- Expert knowledge – publications in which the brand shares industry knowledge or educates customers in the use of its services.

- Organisational culture – posts related to the brand’s achievements; CSR activities conducted by the brand.
- Offer advertisements – all advertising materials promoting specific products or the entire range of the brand.
- Informational content – informative posts, press releases, business announcements, etc.
- Job offers – posts encouraging participation in recruitment or providing information about ongoing recruitment processes.
- Contests and discounts – posts offering participation in contests organised, co-organised or sponsored by the brand, as well as those informing about unique product discounts and discount codes.
- Community activation – posts engaging the community gathered around the brand in communication through comments and reactions.

In the case of C2B and C2C models, respondents (individual consumers  $n = 85$ ) were asked which publications on the brand website are the most useful and interesting and which types of social media are crucial for them. The selection of the target groups included two elements: the frequent use of different social media platforms and knowledge about the presented brands. The interviews were conducted in two blocks: C2B interviews and C2C interviews. Before the interviews, the respondents were to get more familiar with the brands’ social media websites. As for B2B and B2C models, the authors asked brand representatives ( $n = 18$ ) to state which aspects of brand social media websites are important for them and why.

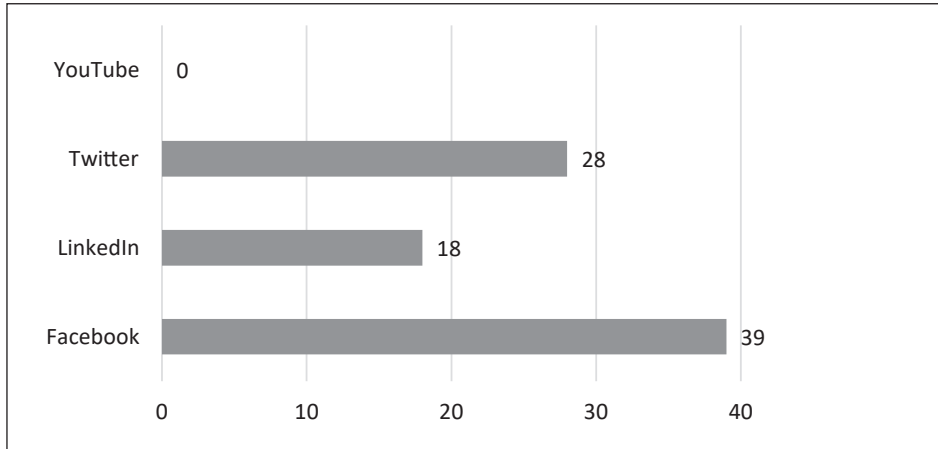
Due to limited research resources, sampling was random within the available population. A sample size of 103 (individuals and companies) was considered sufficient for preliminary results on material evaluations and social media. Random sampling reduced the risk of bias associated with participant selection. The key objective of the study was to draw qualitative conclusions and to identify key trends, and not to generalise the results to the entire population.

## Research results and Discussion

The research shows that in the case of the B2B model, 100% of the brands use the analysed social media platforms. In the B2C model, the rate is 93.75%, with only Tymbark not using all platforms (LinkedIn). This may be due to the fact that Tymbark is part of the Maspex group. The C2B industry’s presence on social media is at the same level (93.75%), with only Useme not using all types of platform (the brand does not use Twitter). The social media usage rate is lowest in the C2C model, where it stands at 75%. Two of the four brands do not use Twitter (OLX Polska and Vinted). Additionally, OLX Polska is also not presented on LinkedIn, while the brand Vinted does not have an account on YouTube.

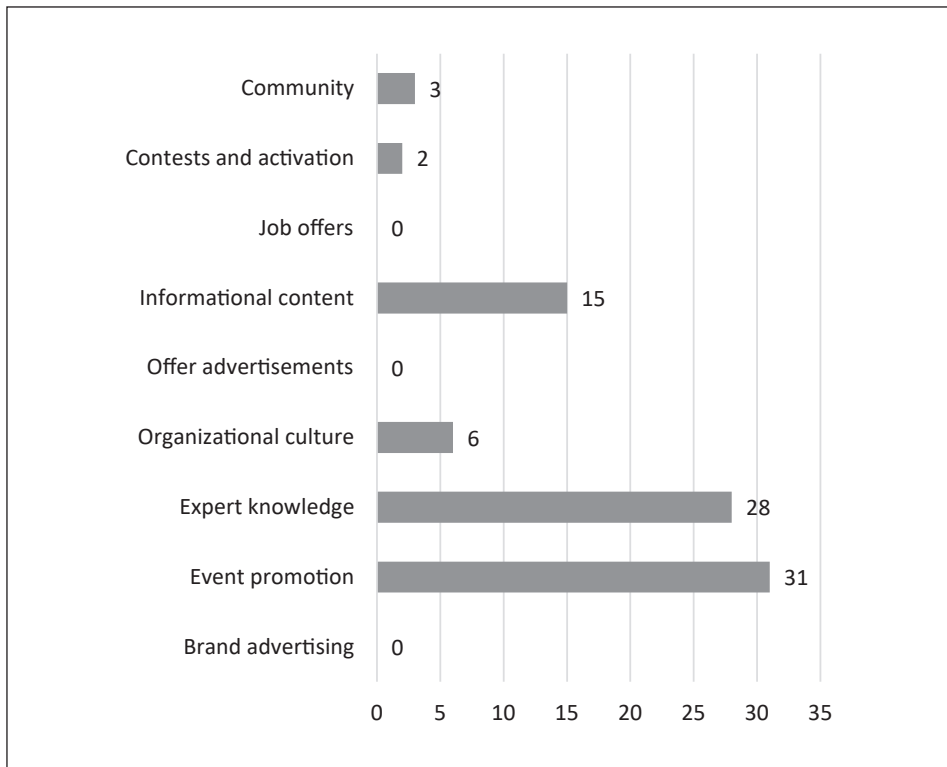
Based on the analysis of Table 3, it can also be observed that the most frequently used social media platform, regardless of the business model, is Facebook (100%), followed by YouTube (93.75%), LinkedIn (87.5%) with Twitter being the least used (81.25%). Starting from the analysis of the C2B model, it turned out that all four brands used Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as their main social media. The least often used is YouTube (Figure 1), while the most are Facebook (46% of the respondents), Twitter (33%), and LinkedIn

Figure 1. Use of social media by respondents in relation to C2B brands



Source: authors own work

Figure 2. Interests of respondents in different posts included by brands on social media



Source: authors own work



(21%). The social media posting frequency by selected brands is very high with up to 49 posts on Facebook by Google Ads per month (October 2022).

The respondents stated that they are especially interested in reading expert knowledge (Figure 2) highlighted by 28 of them (33%). This aligns with the theoretical assumptions that emphasise the use of social media channels to build trust and brand reputation as industry experts. Another group of posts focuses on event promotion (36%), which supports the two aforementioned functions. Visitors who come to the website to view training sessions or instructional content are much more likely to become regular and engaged users referring to both consumers and businesses. After familiarising themselves with the detailed opportunities offered by a particular platform, both parties are able to find a space for what they are interested in.

It is worth noting that for C2B brands, social media publications rarely involve contests, discounts or advertisements for products and services offered. This is due to the fact that in this business model, prices are usually determined directly between the two parties involved, and the platform acts only as an intermediary in the transaction (earning a specified percentage without interfering in the cost structure of the service or product). Additionally, job offers are also absent from the analysed materials, which is understandable considering that C2B brands focus on reaching out to users who use their services, rather than potential employees. For recruitment purposes, these organisations typically rely on external platforms specifically dedicated to such activities.

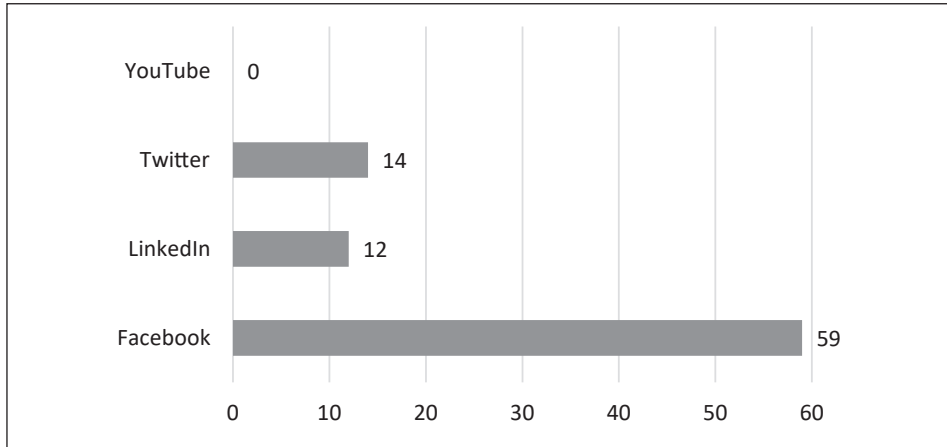
The scope of social media usage in the C2C model is presented in Figure 3. In this model, 59 respondents (69%) look for the information on Facebook, 14 of them use Twitter (17%), and 12 use LinkedIn (14%). The respondents do not use YouTube.

Based on the data in Figure 4, it can be inferred that the most interesting content categories in the C2C business model are community activation posts (46%), expert knowledge presentations (18%) and offer advertisements (21%). Community activation aims to engage the audience in the platform, since they are the ones creating the content and, thus, are a crucial element without which the platform could not generate profits. Expert knowledge conveyed through posts has a concise but informative form, making it easy to assimilate and requiring less time than participating in lengthy training sessions. This allows a larger group of users to benefit from it, as they understand the platform's operations better and develop trust in the brand due to its professional approach. On the other hand, offer advertisements serve as a way to encourage users to visit the website. Seeing an interesting post aligned with their interests, individuals are likely to click on the link to check the details of the offer. This is likely to end in purchase and generate profits for the brand.

As for the B2B model, social media usage by the respondents (brands) is presented in Figure 5. What is interesting is that three of the social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) have exactly the same usage rate.

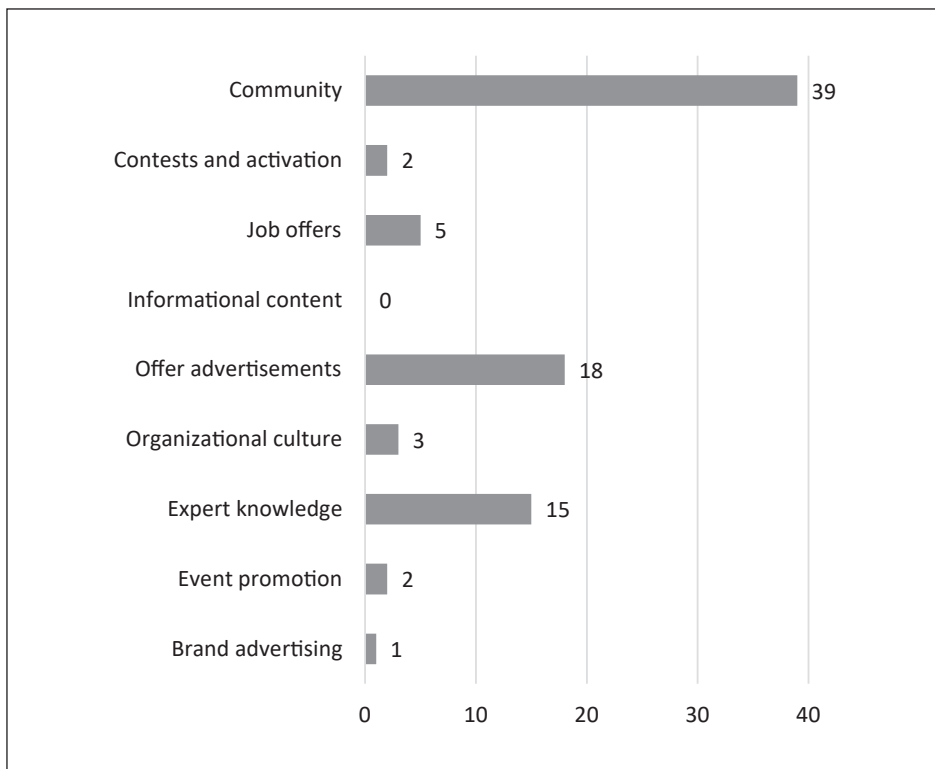
The respondents were asked to state which three types of post are followed most often on the social media of other brands. The analysis of the data contained in Table 4 allows the conclusion that brands operating in the B2B business model primarily focus on sharing expert knowledge in the industry in which they operate.

Figure 3. Use of social media by respondents in relation to C2C brands



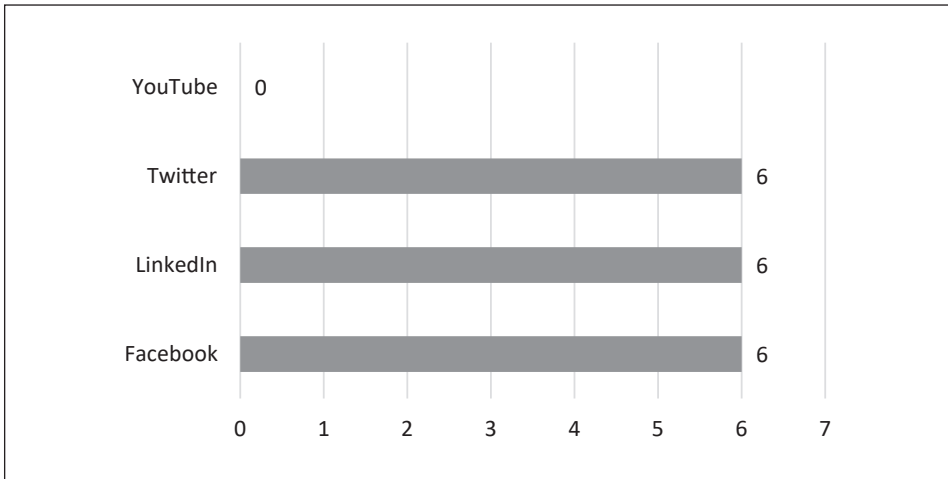
Source: authors own work

Figure 4. Interests of respondents in different posts included by brands on social media



Source: authors own work

Figure 5. Use of social media by brands of the C2C type



Source: authors own work

Table 4. Posts included on social media in B2B brands

Selected elements	Frequency (number of times)	Relative Frequency [%]
Brand advertising	4	7
Event promotion	14	26
Expert knowledge	16	30
Organisational culture	3	6
Offer advertisements	7	13
Informational content	4	7
Job offers	0	0
Contests and activation	0	0
Community	6	11

Source: authors own work

In total, for the four selected B2B brands expert knowledge is crucial compared to other types of content. The reason for this may be the fact that in the business relationship between brands, building an engaged community is less important, while the emphasis is on excellent product and service quality, and professionalism. Therefore, B2B brands share expert industry knowledge to encourage potential business partners to collaborate and demonstrate that they are specialists in their field. The second important thematic area comprises publications promoting events organised, co-organised or sponsored by the brand. Various traditional training sessions or online webinars allow existing business clients, who mostly appreciate staying up-to-date with the offerings of their contractors and industry news, to be maintained. Moreover, they can encourage potential clients to benefit from a particular brand's offer, since they can often participate in these events for free and assess how their knowledge, skills or values align with their business goals.

Having analysed the types of publication put on social media by B2B brands it turned out that the brands ( $n = 18$ ) were not interested in searching for information about contests and discounts. This is understandable, considering the level of professionalism in B2B brand communication. However, it is worth noting that organisations operating in this business model also refrain from advertising the brand itself, focusing primarily on a different type of promotion, namely, the aforementioned self-presentation as an expert. They do not use social media to advertise specific products or services either, due mainly to the high degree of product or service customisation. Such an approach can be the key to success in the B2B sector, as each organisation has different operational specificities, values, needs and expectations regarding the products or services they acquire.

A slightly different interest in social media was observed in the case of the B2C model (Table 5).

Table 5. Posts included on social media in B2C brands

Selected elements	Frequency (number of times)	Relative Frequency [%]
Brand advertising	4	7
Event promotion	2	4
Expert knowledge	2	4
Organisational culture	1	1
Offer advertisements	23	44
Informational content	11	21
Job offers	5	9
Contests and activation	6	10
Community	0	0

Source: authors own work

From the data presented in Table 5, it follows that the main topic of posts interesting for respondents in relation with B2C brands is offer advertising (44%). This aligns with the business profile of such firms, whose main objective is to sell their products and services to consumers. Therefore, these brands treat social media similarly to traditional media, that is as an additional channel for broadcasting advertisements. Another important element of communication for respondents is informational content (21%) as social media platforms allow them to reach the audience with messages about their ongoing activities (e.g. charity campaigns, promotions, new store locations). This meets the expectations of users, who nowadays search for information about brands primarily through these types of online platform. B2C organisations use such communication channels primarily to build a strong and engaged community of loyal customers, while for recruitment purposes, they rely on external job search websites. They often have up-to-date information about ongoing hiring processes on their brand website, along with the option to submit applications for specific positions.

Analysis of the above-presented data shows that, regardless of the business model and type of publication, brands most commonly use Facebook, and that this platform is the most interesting for the respondents. In the B2B model, this means that this is the highest likelihood of reaching potential (business) clients since the majority of them have a Facebook profile. In turn, in other business models where consumers play an important role,

the number of Facebook users becomes crucial, and it is highest among the social media platforms presented in this study.

As regards analysis of the characteristics of publications/posts by the selected brands on Facebook, it shows that in the case of the B2B model, brands were the most interested in getting publications concerning expert knowledge. What was typical for B2B and C2B models on Facebook is that they included information about events. These events typically involve meetings aimed at imparting knowledge, providing instructions and conducting training, which directly relates to expert knowledge. This allows us to conclude that B2B and C2B brands prioritise this aspect when it comes to using Facebook.

The other two business models, B2C and C2C, also exhibit similarities in terms of the characteristics of posts published on Facebook. The highest percentage in both cases pertain to advertising current offers. Long-term relationships, as seen, for example in B2B or C2B, are not present here, and consumer transactions are more often one-off. Therefore, it is important to keep the consumer up-to-date with the range of services and products offered by a brand. The second category in both cases is the posts that activate users. An engaged community centred around a brand leads to better sales outcomes and enables collecting data and obtaining feedback to improve the products and services offered.

In the case of B2C and C2B models, the second most frequently used platforms are LinkedIn and Twitter. This may be due to their characteristics, as it is considered a professional medium that can be used in B2C and C2B relationships (LinkedIn). This is evident from the nature of the publications posted by brands in both of these business models.

Twitter, like LinkedIn, is also considered one of the more professional or business-oriented social media platforms. As a result, it is more frequently used in outgoing communication from businesses, in B2B and B2C relationships. Twitter is a medium through which informational content can be published, which is confirmed by the analysis of the selected brands and their shared posts. In both business models, this category represents the largest portion of all shared tweets. Grouping posts by topic has yielded such diverse data that it is impossible to determine the main way Twitter is used by businesses whose model is based on the C2B and C2C relationships. Therefore, it can be stated that in this case, Twitter is a rather versatile medium, in which activation of communities offer advertising, informational content, organisational culture-related content and expert knowledge all play an important role.

## Conclusions

Social media, when used in a manner that aligns with a brand's profile, with well-thought-out publications addressed to the appropriate target audience, and tailored content that matches the characteristics of each platform, help build trust in the brand, loyalty and engagement. The above also influences the achievement of strategic and business goals, supporting brand awareness building and expansion, and providing the opportunity to reach both existing and potential customers. Skilfully conducted advertising campaigns on social media can generate more profits than those carried out through traditional media, while generating lower costs. All of this emphasises the importance of not only establishing a presence on social media through a corporate profile, but also engaging in regular communication within that framework.

Comparative analysis of the use of social media by selected brands in B2B, B2C, C2B and C2C business models, and the level of interest of the respondents as for different posts on social media, show that most brands are aware of the importance of their presence and communication. They also use them mostly in accordance with the characteristics of each specific medium.

It is worth noting that some brands do not engage in regular communication on social media or even have no corporate pages on social media. On the one hand, this may be due to the absence of their target audience on a specific platform, a lack of knowledge about the possibilities and benefits of its use, or through usage of alternative methods to contact and communicate with customers. However, this fact should also be viewed from the perspective of consumers who feel more comfortable when they are able to trust a brand, while building trust on digital space is not easy due to the large amount of unverified information.

The authors show how social media are used by selected brands and which elements attract individuals and other brands the most. However, the authors are aware of the limitations of the results as they only included a limited number for brands in the study. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised for all the existing brands. It can only be perceived as an example of the use of social media and a suggestion as to what to publish there.

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