



## EFFECTS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF A SMALL SERVICE COMPANY ON INSTAGRAM

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### Abstract

A social media platform such as Instagram plays an important role in online marketing, enabling businesses to reach a wide audience. Academics and practitioners have long acknowledged the importance of proper marketing communication in creating long-term bonds between existing and new customers. However, the importance of promotional techniques used in the beauty industry on the Instagram platform as a tool to increase customer engagement remains under-explored, as addressed in this study. The aim of the research was to identify the promotional techniques that most increased customer engagement rates on the social media platform Instagram. The research used a case study method for a small service company operating in the beauty industry. In the analytical process, the data source was statistics describing the effects of the beauty salon's marketing activities on the social media platform Instagram. The results of the study showed that the key element of marketing communication is sharing posts presenting the result of the work, i.e. the results of beauty treatments presented in the photos of clients, and organising competition posts that engage both existing observers and arouse the interest of new users. Sponsored posts, on the other hand, are particularly important for reaching new potential customers.

## EFEKTY KOMUNIKACJI MARKETINGOWEJ MAŁEJ FIRMY USŁUGOWEJ NA INSTAGRAMIE

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### Abstrakt

Platforma społecznościowa, jaką jest Instagram, odgrywa istotną rolę w marketingu internetowym, umożliwiając przedsiębiorstwom dotarcie do szerokiego grona odbiorców. Naukowcy i praktycy od dawna podkreślają znaczenie właściwej komunikacji marketingowej w tworzeniu długoterminowych więzi między obecnymi i nowymi klientami. Znaczenie technik promocyjnych wykorzystywanych w branży beauty na platformie Instagram jako narzędzia zwiększającego zaangażowanie klientów pozostaje jednak niedostatecznie zbadane, na co zwrócono uwagę w artykule. Celem zaprezentowanych badań było zidentyfikowanie technik promocyjnych, które w największym stopniu zwiększyły wskaźniki zaangażowania klientów na platformie społecznościowej Instagram. W badaniach zastosowano metodę studium przypadku małej firmy usługowej funkcjonującej w branży beauty. W procesie analitycznym źródłem danych były statystyki opisujące efekty działań marketingowych salonu kosmetycznego na platformie społecznościowej Instagram. Wyniki badania wykazały, że kluczowym elementem komunikacji marketingowej jest udostępnianie postów prezentujących wynik pracy, czyli rezultaty zabiegów kosmetycznych prezentowane na zdjęciach klientek, oraz organizowanie postów konkursowych, które zarówno angażują obecnych obserwujących, jak i wzbudzają zainteresowanie nowych użytkowników. Posty sponsorowane natomiast mają duże znaczenie, szczególnie w przypadku docierania do nowych klientów.

## Introduction

Contemporary marketing trends are undergoing a dynamic evolution, and the development of social media plays a key role in this process. Prominent among these platforms is Instagram, which has become not only a popular social media tool, but also a powerful marketing instrument (Vinaika & Manik, 2017, p. 12-16).

The modern consumer has largely become an e-consumer, using widely available online tools to perform a variety of activities related to the purchasing process. In virtual spaces, the e-consumer searches for information about products and services, reads the opinions of other users, compares the offers of different suppliers, and ultimately makes a purchasing decision (Kopera, 2022, p. 7).

The implementation of promotional activities in social media is becoming essential for modern businesses. One of the commonly used tools in this field is the company fanpage. It is a strategic step that enables companies to establish a direct dialogue with their customers. The company fanpage, as a virtual communication centre, enables a company to present its identity, values and

offerings. The key benefits of maintaining such a space are building engagement, gaining customer loyalty and responding quickly to their feedback and needs (Werenowska, 2019, p. 99).

The Polish market for cosmetic services is characterised by high dispersion and enormous competition. It is dominated by micro and small private enterprises (Kryczka, 2021, p. 226). In order to function effectively and efficiently in such a highly competitive market, it is very important to adequately promote the beauty salon. One may think that social media are a good tool for this, as they allow the creation of an uninterrupted stream of marketing messages and at the same time act as an effective distribution channel. With the help of social media, a beauty salon can present (Pastuszek, 2021, p. 467-472):

- impressive portfolio (demonstration of the effects of treatments);
- staff profile;
- behind the scenes of the salon's work;
- clear presentation of the offer;
- price list;
- recording of testimonials;
- information on promotions.

The cosmetic services market is one of the dynamically developing markets in Poland. This development is fostered by global trends concerning the increased awareness of a pro-healthy lifestyle and beauty care (Kryczka, 2021, p. 225-233). The increasing affluence of Poles is also a favourable trend. At the same time, the small number of scientific publications on the cosmetic services market in Poland and the lack of publications dedicated to the effects of marketing communication of beauty salons on Instagram prompted the author to take up this topic. There is a need for a better understanding of effective ways to use social media to increase the visibility of the offer, engage customers and potentially generate sales growth.

## **Literature Review**

### **Marketing communication**

Marketing communication is an important component of social communication. For a long time, it was mainly identified with promotion as one element of the marketing-mix. Nowadays, it should be seen as a dialogue that a company has with the actors in its environment. It is a process that involves both parties, enabling companies to better understand their customers' needs and expectations, and to build lasting relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. Thus, in the context of contemporary marketing, communication becomes not only a promotional tool, but also a key element of brand building and customer loyalty (Taranko, 2018, p. 17-19; Mruk, 2004, p. 17, 18).

Within marketing communication management, formal elements such as advertising, promotion or public relations can be distinguished. These are important in communicating key information about products or services. However, informal elements such as customer feedback, recommendations or customer service experiences are equally important and also influence brand perception.

A key objective of marketing communications is not only to attract the attention of customers, but also to build long-term relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. Therefore, it is essential that organisations take steps to engage with customers in an authentic and valuable way (Rosa *et al.*, 2016, p. 217-220; Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2018, p. 413-438).

### **Social media and its functions**

Social media (SM) represents one of the most important innovations in 21st century communication (Kaznowski, 2008, p. 29). Social media refers to a set of practices, activities and behaviours of groups of people gathering online to share information, knowledge and opinions through conversational media. This definition refers to online applications that facilitate the easy creation and transformation of content into different forms, such as words, images or audio material. The result is the notion of 'interactive media', allowing users to co-create content by commenting on publications or supplementing information (Kachniewska, 2013, p. 106-120).

Social media is an excellent tool to promote brands and a communication platform to provide consumers with rich information about services, products and brands. The internet creates a space for building relationships at different levels, whether between an organisation and a customer, between different organisations or between customers themselves. Users can find advice on specific products, information on methods of use and expert articles describing technical aspects of equipment on websites. Social media allows companies to communicate with their customers in real time and to create interactive relationships (Matwiejczyk, 2020, p. 171).

The effectiveness of social media marketing lies in its ability to precisely target advertisements. By analysing user data, marketers can tailor content to specific target groups, which increases the effectiveness of the advertising message. In addition, the ability to monitor data analysis allows for continuous improvement of the marketing strategy. It is also worth noting that the rapid growth of social media has made it the place where conversations about brands and products take place. An important element of effective marketing in this environment is actively participating in the dialogue with users and creating a positive brand image (Dziwulski & Tkaczuk, 2021, p. 65-67; Mirchandani & Gaur, 2019, p. 123-130).

## **Characteristics of the Instagram platform**

Instagram is a social media platform mainly dedicated to sharing photographs and short video clips. Its aesthetics and interface focus on visual elements. From an initial focus on photography, this social media platform has gradually expanded its capabilities, becoming a place not only to share photos, but also to create and share a variety of video content and short life stories, which has helped to increase its popularity and diversify the options offered to users (Chobot, 2019, p. 49, 50).

More than 90 per cent of Instagram users follow accounts of different types of companies. This demonstrates the site's growing role as a marketing platform. Instagram enables companies to showcase products and create a compelling narrative around the brand. Thanks to the visual nature of the platform, businesses can focus on aesthetics and creating a consistent image online. Interactive features such as surveys, questions or the ability to purchase directly from a post further enhance user engagement (Lojza & Wolniak, 2021, p. 37-59). Many companies choose to conduct their marketing activities on this platform. This service offers a range of opportunities to reach current and potential customers, which makes it an attractive tool in the marketing strategy of companies. Creating a company profile on Instagram enables companies not only to post photos of the products or services they offer, but also to establish a wider connection with consumers. The platform provides a simple and aesthetically pleasing way of presenting visual content, which is particularly beneficial for companies whose offers rely on the visual aspect (Górecka, 2019, p. 10).

Today, Instagram is one of the fastest-growing social networks. At the beginning of 2024, the number of its users exceeded 2.4 billion people. Instagram has 500 million active users on a daily basis. It is also the seventh most-viewed website in the world (*Instagram Statistics...*, 2024).

## **The market for cosmetic services**

The beauty industry is one of the most dynamically developing market branches in the Polish economy (Kisiel & Wiśniewska, 2016, p. 227). The Polish cosmetics market is ranked 6th in Europe in terms of revenue generated from the sale of cosmetics. The cosmetic market is divided into two, smaller markets: the cosmetic goods market and the cosmetic services market (Piotrowska & Szczechowicz, 2021, p. 47, 48). Cosmetic services are provided by beauty and cosmetology salons (surgeries), spa and wellness centres, as well as aesthetic medicine surgeries (*Report on the State of the Cosmetic Industry...*, 2017, p. 16). The cosmetic goods market in Poland reached revenues of more than EUR 4.0 billion in 2019 and revenues in 2023 should reach EUR 6.5 billion (*The Cosmetics Sector – report PAIH*, 2023).

Beauty salons are based on the provision of basic services, but the number of specialised salons has been increasing in recent years. Prices in the market for cosmetic services vary greatly due to the type of treatment and the location in which the salon operates (Kryczka, 2021, p. 227).

The development of the market for cosmetic services is accompanied by a rapid expansion of vocational education in cosmetology. This is particularly true of academic education. As a result, the total number of beauty parlours and hairdressing salons in Poland is estimated at around 100,000 (Kryczka, 2021, p. 225). The barriers to entry into this market are relatively low, which means that many entrepreneurs are able to start their own salon with relatively modest financial resources (Pastuszek, 2021, p. 465).

The rapid development of this market is favoured by worldwide trends concerning a pro-healthy lifestyle and a 'cult of beauty'. Also of great importance is the increasing affluence of Polish consumers and the changes taking place in the ways they spend their leisure time, among which leisure activities have a significant place, positively stimulating expenditure on cosmetic services (Alejziak *et al.*, 2021, p. 16).

## Methodological Assumptions

The research used a case study method, where the research subject was a small service business – a beauty salon. The subject focuses on providing high-quality eyebrow and eyelash lamination services and comprehensive eye care. The salon actively and systematically publishes its achievements, advice and recommendations to its clients.

The analytical process observed the marketing activities carried out by the salon in the fourth quarter of 2023. The data source was the statistics available in the professional profile of the account, describing the effects of the salon's marketing activities on Instagram. The measures of the effectiveness of the marketing communication activities were the number of impressions, reactions (likes), comments and shares of the post. Direct access to these statistics made it possible to objectively assess the reach and engagement of users with the content presented.

Reach among observers refers to the number of people who are direct subscribers to the salon's profile and who had access to the post in their content stream. Reach among non-watchers, on the other hand, refers to the number of non-subscribers who also had the opportunity to see the post, perhaps through the interaction activity of their friends or through the social platform's algorithms.

The number of impressions includes the total number of views of a post, whether or not the user has interacted further with the content. The number of engaged accounts reflects the number of unique user profiles that have taken any action related to the post, such as likes or comments. Likes and comments

represent indicators of user engagement with content published by the salon. Likes represent the number of positive interactions a post has received, while comments are an indication of active engagement.

### **Research Findings – Effects of Activities on Instagram**

Table 1 summarises the statistics for the various posts. In the first stage, two posts were analysed in the form of a photo showing the effects of the client’s eyebrow and eyelash styling. The first post showed the client’s full face after the treatment. It had a reach of 693 people. The split between followers and non-watchers is key, as it allows us to understand that a post has the potential to reach both an established community and a new potential audience outside of the current follower group. The number of people watching the salon’s account who saw the post was 275. In contrast, 418 people, were not connected in any way to the salon’s profile. This demonstrates the high potential for the photo posted to attract attention. This post was viewed a total of 1,118 times.

Table 1  
Statistics of analysed posts

Techniques	Coverage		Displays	Commitment	
	Watching	Non-observant		Likes	Comments
Full face picture	275	418	1,118	67	5
Photo focused on the effect of the work	290	338	706	41	0
Promoted photo	489	4,175	-	121	24
Competition photo	356	308	846	72	51
Report	214	138	482	-	-
Roller	5,119			42	2

Source: own elaboration.

The relatively high number of likes of a post at 67 is indicative of the general acceptance of the content presented in the post. This is an important indicator of positive community response, suggesting the attractiveness and value of the content being communicated. Although the number of comments at 5 may seem small, it illustrates the activity of the community in interacting with the post.

The second post in the form of a photo focused solely on the customer’s eyes gained a reach of 638 accounts, which is similar to the previous photo type. Of the 638 accounts, 290 were people previously observing the researched profile. In contrast, 338 were people previously not observing the salon’s account. The total number of views of the post showing the effect of the treatment in this

way was 706. This shows that the post attracted a fairly high level of interest from users, although not as much as in the case of a post with the client's full face. The number of 41 likes under the post is an indication of the average level of interest in the content presented. Compared to the previous post, a noticeably lower number of likes and no comments were obtained here.

In the process of analysis, an evaluation of another technique was undertaken, namely a promoted post that featured the profile founder. This publication aimed to promote the account and initiate a relationship with users through a form of personalisation of the institution, which is a beauty salon.

A promotional campaign was run for a period of six days to reach the target audience and increase the visibility of the account. The advertising budget was set at £8 per day for the entire campaign period, which totalled £48. This moderate amount made it possible to exploit the potential of the platform, achieving the result shown. The reach of the post reached the number of 4664. The significant number of ad impressions among people who do not observe the salon's profile (4,177) proves the effectiveness of the campaign in attracting the attention of Instagram users. The cost of reaching one person with the message was approximately one penny (PLN 48 per 4,664 viewers). The high number of impressions among observers (489) also signals that the content was also attractive to them. The number of 121 likes indicates the acceptance of the post by users. In addition, 24 comments express a desire to interact with the profile.

A competition post was also used in the communication strategy. The competition photo reached 664 users. This included 356 people who already follow the salon's profile and 308 non-watchers. The terms of the competition included three main steps:

- designation of two people in the comments section;
- to observe the profile and to like the competition photo;
- sharing the competition photo on your story.

The prize of the competition was a substantial discount on the salon's services. This created an environment conducive to increasing community engagement and reaching new potential followers. The total number of impressions of the post was 846, proving that the post gained a lot of interest and reached a wide group of Instagram users. This type of post can effectively influence community interaction. The number of likes of 72 shows that many people showed interest in the competition and the beauty salon's services. The number of comments of 51 confirms users' engagement and their willingness to take part in the competition according to the announced terms and conditions.

A video reel showing the effects of the eyebrow and eyelash lamination treatment on the client's face was also assessed. The reach of the rollout was 5,119 accounts, which proved to be a significant result. The attractiveness of the content presented in the roll attracted the attention of a large number of people. When analysing the results of the interaction with the roll, it was noted that it received 42 likes and 2 comments. The number of likes of 42 with



a large number of impressions was relatively low. Although the content attracted attention, not every viewer chose to interact by liking it.

In the final stage, an evaluation of the coverage posted on Instastories was undertaken. The reach of the relationship reached 352 accounts, of which 214 were people who already follow the salon's profile and 138 were users who do not yet follow the profile. This result suggests that the coverage attracted both regular followers and new audiences from outside the current community. The total number of one-off impressions of the relationship was 482, which is a significant number, but this did not necessarily translate into active engagement with the profile.

Of the posts examined, the photo showing the client's full face achieved relatively high reach among observers (275) and among non-observers (418). In contrast, the promoted photo achieved the highest reach among non-observers (4,175), suggesting the effectiveness of the promoted paid posts in reaching a wider audience beyond those observing the salon's profile. In terms of total number of impressions, the photo showing the client's face achieved the highest number (1,118). Analysis of user interactions revealed that the competition photo generated the highest number of comments (51), suggesting that competitions can effectively encourage users to engage with the service provider.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The aim of the research presented in the article was to identify best practice from the wide range of marketing activity opportunities available on Instagram from the perspective of increasing the number of followers and their engagement rate. The monitoring of audience reactions to content included the number of likes and comments issued. The research process was conducted using the example of a small service business such as a beauty salon. The paper concludes by outlining key implications that arise from this research.

The key to successful promotion on Instagram is to use a variety of techniques. Holding competitions and investing in promoting posts are particularly effective strategies, generating high engagement and increasing the visibility of the promoted profile. Video content, such as reels, can attract attention, but it is important to ensure they are of high quality and creative to effectively encourage interaction. Showing the results of your work and creating relationships can build trust and authenticity in your profile, which is key to attracting potential customers. Regularly publishing high-quality content that is attractive, engaging and of value to the community helps to maintain consumer interest. Organising competitions and promotional activities encourages existing observers to share the company's profile and attracts new users.

Key practical implications arise from this research. The analysis of the data collected shows that, in the context of customer acquisition and increasing the popularity of an account on the Instagram platform, sharing competition posts is an effective strategy. These showed a relatively high reach among observers and non-observers and generated user engagement in the form of the number of likes and comments. It was also important to regularly publish posts showing the results of treatments given to clients. It can therefore be concluded that this type of content can particularly attract the attention of the audience. Sponsored posts can also be an effective tool in raising awareness of a company's existence and promoting the services it offers to new potential customers. With paid content promotion, a greater reach can be achieved and potential customers outside the existing circle of observers can be better reached. The results of the study therefore lead to the conclusion that, in order to effectively increase the popularity of an account and attract new customers on the social media platform Instagram, it is worth employing a strategy based on regularly sharing posts showing the results of treatments performed on clients, occasionally sharing competition posts and occasionally publishing sponsored posts.

This study has some limitations, while also providing a starting point for further research. The conclusions are based on only one research subject, so it would be advisable to conduct research on a larger research sample. It would be advisable to broaden the scope of future research to include other industries and social media. Comparative studies from different countries would also be of cognitive interest.

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