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Elements of Visual Communication of Educational Institutions on Social Networks

Abstract

The use of social networks in 2021 can no longer be described only as a trend of a properly set marketing strategy of entities, brands, or organizations, but as a marketing standard. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to perceive social networks as a unique tool of communication through which predetermined marketing goals can be clearly, distinctly and, above all, effectively met. The presented paper points out the necessity of the correct use of visual elements in the communication of educational institutions focused on the segments of media and marketing on social networks. The authors, based on a descriptive analysis of quantitative data on the communication of selected educational institutions on social networks, present the basic differences in the success of the communicated content over the selected period. The main aim of the paper is to point out the need to implement properly set up visual communication on social networks, which is even greater in educational institutions because their primary

target group belongs to the majority of the total population using the above-mentioned social media tools for reciprocal communication. The correct categorization and characteristics of individual elements of visual communication can ultimately determine the steps leading to the achievement of relevant results.

Key words

Facebook. Instagram. Social Media. Social Networks. Visual Communication.

Introduction

The presented paper *Elements of visual communication of educational institutions on social networks* points out not only the importance of the correct use of available channels on social media platforms, but also the need to increase the attractiveness of published content through selected visual elements. Within the historical context, authors such as N. Selwyn¹ dealt with this topic in 2011, in the same year authors L. Zailskaitė-Jakstė and R. Kuvykaite² dealt with the issue and A. Kaplan and M. Haenlein³ followed up. Ch. Davis and collective⁴ shed the necessary light on the issue of communities in education in connection with social media. The issue of digital solutions led by social media was addressed in 2017 by the leading author D. Dumpit⁵, who was later

followed by the authors A. Yanka and S. Parusheva in 2019⁶. Based on researched sources and available statistics of the portal *napoleoncat.com*⁷, it should be emphasized that the highest representation on the most popular social media platforms, the social network Facebook and Instagram, are especially young people aged 17 to 35 who are most likely to attend college or university. Of the total number of users on Facebook in Slovakia (3,3 million; December 2020), the above-mentioned age group is represented by 47,4 %, and of the total number of users on Instagram in Slovakia (1,4 million; December 2020) it is represented by 65,6 % in the said age group⁸. For this reason, we believe that it is essential for institutions operating in the academic environment to know how to communicate correctly or in a visually appealing manner with their target group on social networks. *“It is undeniable that social networks are a phenomenon of the present period”*⁹. It is therefore necessary

to correctly name, characterize and subsequently categorize the individual visual elements of communication on social networks, which could determine the steps towards the effective fulfilment of predetermined marketing goals. I. Piatrov describes communication by educational institutions on social networks in a certain way as slightly limiting but adds that even in this segment it is possible to *“adapt practically commercial types of content into the communication of the educational institution while maintaining the relevance and value of the content created”*¹⁰. His expression is inclined, adding that current trends in communication on social networks can be implemented in almost every segment precisely because they are mainly trends in terms of form of communication, not content. E. Du et al. on the other hand, speak of social media as important tools in the context of public education, not only in the fight against misinformation or false news, but also in general¹¹. K. Hsuan-Hsuan et al. point to the research of Schaefer and Schamari, who looked at social

¹ SELWYN, N.: Social Media in Higher Education. In SPECTOR, J. M.: *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*. California : SAGE Publications, 2011.

² ZAILSKAITE-JAKSTE, L., KUVYKAITE, R.: *Implementation of Communication in Social Media by Promoting Studies at Higher Education Institutions*. pp. 174-188. [online]. [2021-01-25]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266282627_Implementation_of_Communication_in_Social_Media_by_Promoting_Studies_at_Higher_Education_Institutions>.

³ KAPLAN, A. M., HAENLEIN, M.: Higher Education and the Digital Revolution: About MOOCs, SPOCs, Social Media, and the Cookie Monster. In *Business Horizons*, 2016, Vol. 59, No. 4, pp. 441-50.

⁴ DAVIS, CH. H., F., DEIL-AMEN, R. et al.: Social Media, Higher Education, and Community Colleges: A Research Synthesis and Implications for the Study of Two-Year Institutions. In *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 409-422.

⁵ DUMPIT, D. Z., FERNANDEZ, CH. J.: Analysis of the Use of Social Media in Higher Educa-

tion Institutions (HEIs) Using the Technology Acceptance Model. In *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 2017, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 5.

⁶ ALEKSANDROVA, Y., PARUSHEVA, S.: Social Media Usage Patterns in Higher Education Institutions - An Empirical Study. In *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 2019, Vol. 14, No. 5, pp. 108-121.

⁷ *Napoleoncat*. [online]. [2021-01-25]. Available at: <<https://napoleoncat.com>>.

⁸ *Social media users in Slovakia 2020*. [online]. [2021-01-25]. Available at: <<https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-slovakia/2020/12>>.

⁹ PIATROV, I.: Generation Y Communication Preferences of Environmental Topics on

Social Networks. In *Proceedings of the 7th European Conference on Social Media ECSM 2020*. Cyprus : University of Central Lancashire, 2020, pp. 206-211.

¹⁰ PIATROV, I., VANKO, M.: Beyond the edge of the established stereotypes of communication of educational institutions. In *Megatrends and Media: On the Edge: Conference Proceedings from the International Scientific Conference*, Trnava : Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie, 2020, pp. 421-432.

¹¹ DU, E. et al.: How Do Social Media and Individual Behaviors Affect Epidemic Transmission and Control? In *Science of The Total Environment*, 2021, Vol. 761, Article No. 144114.

networks in terms of positive and negative connotations within user-generated content and found that while positive UGC content also increases positive brand perception, negative UGC content does not change brand perception¹².

B. Schivinski and D. Dabrowski consider that the biggest advantage of user-generated content on social networks is that this type of content has no commercial focus and at the same time companies, brands and entities do not have a direct influence on it. According to the mentioned authors, users create the given content mainly due to self-promotion, natural pleasure or to change the general public perception of the issue¹³. L. Homér, a social media marketing expert outlines certain trends that companies, entities, organizations, or brands should follow in 2021 – in particular the consequences that a coronavirus pandemic can have in the online space. Within his recommendations, it is important to adapt the so-called 4C model to communication – community, contactless, cleanliness and compassion. “4C will be seen in different forms. Whether it is various beneficial live streams on Instagram and YouTube to various forms of customer support transferred to

social networks”¹⁴. M. Kubovics generally speaks of social networks as a kind of current phenomenon through which, in addition, large amounts of data can be collected. That is why it is extremely important not only to unilaterally produce the given content on social networks, but also to subsequently process or evaluate it¹⁵. At the same time, an appropriate part of properly set up communication on social networks is the adequate use of elements of visual communication. This is also confirmed by E. Adami and C. Jewitt, who compare visual communication on social networks to clothing or furniture – these elements can also be used to express our visual identity, as well as through what is visually presented on social networks¹⁶. “Visual presentation of an educational institution represents in the best way the institution’s history, scope of activity, culture, vision and all questions related to Corporate Identity creation and building”¹⁷.

14 HOMÉR, L.: *Trendy v social media marketingu na 2021: Na čo sa pripraviť?* [online]. [2021-01-28]. Available at: <<https://visibility.sk/blog/trendy-v-social-media-marketingu-na-co-sa-priprav-it/>>.

15 KUBOVICS, M., ZAUŠKOVÁ, A.: Possibilities of display and collection of marketing data from the social media. In *Proceedings of the 7th European Conference on Social Media*. Cyprus: University of Central Lancashire, 2020, pp. 144-153.

16 ADAMI, E., JEWITT, C.: Special Issue: Social Media and the Visual. In *Visual Communication*, 2016, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 263-270.

17 ČÁBYOVÁ, L., KUSÁ, A., ZAUŠKOVÁ, A., ĎURIŠOVÁ, L.: Visual Identity of Universities: Logo as a visual symbol of university. In *European Journal of Media, Art and Photography*, 2020, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 96-106.

1 Methodology

The presented paper entitled *Elements of visual communication of educational institutions on social networks* points out the communication of pre-selected educational institutions based on UniRank¹⁸ evaluation on social networks in a defined period between July 1 and December 31, 2020. The UniRank rating was chosen by the authors of the paper because it is a non-academic type of ranking, which does not evaluate the quality of science, research or education, but focuses on the credibility and popularity of websites and university profiles on social networks. In the first part of the paper the authors work with secondary sources based on currently available statistics and data in the context of the use of social media by people aged 17 to 35, which are assumed to form the majority of the student academic environment. Available data are then processed through qualitative content analysis of selected entities and their communication on the social network Facebook into individual tables and graphs, in which we present the output of qualitative research through categorization of published content and visual elements and quantitative analysis of number of posts, engagement rate (reactions, comments, sharing). These are

18 *Top Universities in Slovakia*. [online]. [2021-01-25]. Available at: <<https://www.4icu.org/sk/>>.

faculties and departments with a media or marketing-oriented study program in an academic environment. The authors of the paper focus their observations on the evaluation and interpretation of content published by individual educational institutions on the social network Facebook. Facebook pages were used for the analysis (the names are based on the names of individual departments and faculties on Facebook):

- “Kamako/Katedra marketingovej komunikácie FFUK”¹⁹ – Department of Marketing Communication of Faculty of Arts of Comenius University,
- “Inštitút slovakistiky a mediálnych štúdií”²⁰ – Institute of Slovak Studies and Media Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov,
- “KSSFaK”²¹ – Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies, and Communication of the Faculty of Arts of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University,
- “Katedra mediamatiky a kultúrneho dedičstva”²² – Department of Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage of the

19 Kamako/Katedra marketingovej komunikácie FFUK. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/Kamako-Katedra-marketingovej-komunikacie-FFUK-220128488006732>>.

20 Inštitút slovakistiky a mediálnych štúdií. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/ismks>>.

21 KSSFaK. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/kssfak>>.

22 Katedra mediamatiky a kultúrneho dedičstva. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/KatedraMKD>>.

- Faculty of Humanities of the University of Žilina,
- “Katedra masmediálnej komunikácie a reklamy UKF v Nitre”²³ – Department of Mass Media and Advertising of the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University,
- “FMK UCM v Trnave”²⁴ – Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius.

The authors present the results through statistical description in the tables and graphs below. Table 1 identifies the 12 most successful universities by position in UniRank with the definition of media and marketing-oriented study programs. Subsequently, Table 2 points out the current state of the researched educational institutions on social networks – the current number of fans of individual entities and the number of reactions, comments and shares in the context of the researched content between July 1 and December 31, 2020. The research topic in the presented paper was the communication of educational institutions on social networks with an emphasis on visual communication. In Table 3, the authors demonstrate the answer to the first research area *Do educational institutions use several types of social networks*

23 Katedra masmediálnej komunikácie a reklamy UKF v Nitre. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/kmkarukf>>.

24 FMK UCM v Trnave. [online]. [2021-02-25]. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/FMK.UCM>>.

for communication? The answers concerning the selected entities are marked in the mentioned table. The following is the second research area shown in Table 4 *Is the communication of educational institutions on social networks regular?* in which we relied not only on our practical experience in the field of social media marketing, but also on observing the regularity of published content on individual Facebook pages of selected institutions. In the third research area *What formats and how often do individual educational institutions use them?* we marked the data obtained from the performed content analysis on the social network Facebook in Table 5. In the text of the following Table 6, the data obtained in solving the fourth research area *What type of content do educational institutions publish on their social networks and with what frequency?* are marked in the frequency table. Answers to the last fifth research area *What categories of visual elements do educational institutions use the most?* are concluded in Table 7 at the end of the third part of the presented paper. The graphs in the Results section show the use rate of categorized content types as well as their success rate in the context of the engagement rate obtained. In conclusion, the authors of the paper point out not only the importance of a properly set communication strategy on social media platforms, but also the increased intensity of the use of several available content or format of messages regarding elements of visual communication.

12 HSUAN-HSUAN, K. et al.: Social Learning Effects of Complaint Handling on Social Media: Self-Construction as a Moderator. In *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2021, Vol. 59, Article No. 102343.

13 SCHIVINSKI, B., DABROWSKI, D.: The Effect of Social Media Communication on Consumer Perceptions of Brands. In *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 2016, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 189-214.

2 Results

Although the coronavirus pandemic has brought several changes in the transition from offline to online environments, educational institutions have adapted relatively quickly. In this paper, however, we point out the need for proper use of available channels of social media platforms, which can ultimately streamline the communication of individual academic entities with their current and future students, employees, or graduates. Although it may appear that several segments of society have been suspended due to COVID-19, education, especially at universities, does not belong there. Educational institutions entered the winter semester 2020/2021 as a “new normal” in which they were no longer limited by online teaching and the Internet environment. As a result, however, we would expect adequate activity of selected subjects on social media platforms and thus increased intensity of communication on social networks. O. Adetola and collective also agree with us, who mark communication on social networks as a viable way of communication with individual university students²⁵. If the target group of our subject spends most of their time in an online environment, they should also find there support

from their educational institution. Even more as we point out in our paper the marketing-oriented departments and faculties for which communication through social media should be natural. This is also confirmed by I. Zsigmond and T. Portik, according to whom it is necessary to pay attention to the image of educational institutions, especially due to the sharp increase in the competitiveness of the educational environment²⁶.

In the presented content analysis, the authors of the paper focus on the communication of pre-selected educational institutions on social networks in a precisely defined period between July 1 and December 31, 2020. The selected analysed subjects are Slovak educational institutions, which offer their potential students study in mass media or marketing-oriented fields. The research sample is based on the UniRank ranking, a non-academic type of ranking, in which individual institutions are evaluated based on the quality, credibility or popularity of websites and university profiles on social media platforms²⁷. Within the research sample, these are the highest ranked 12 Slovak universities, which

²⁶ ZSIGMOND, I., PORTIK, T.: Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Romania: Communication Management in Educational Institutions. In *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy and Humanistic Sciences*, 2017, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 27-37.

²⁷ Toto sú najlepšie vysoké školy na Slovensku za rok 2020 podľa rebríčka UniRank. [online]. [2021-02-19]. Available at: <<https://www.startitup.sk/toto-su-najlepsie-vysoke-skoly-na-slovensku-za-rok-2020-podla-rebricka/>>.

²⁵ ADETOLA, O. et al.: Social Communication of Students on Social Media Network Platform: A Statistical Analysis. In *Journal of Science Engineering Technology and Management*, 2020, Vol. 1, No. 01, p. 12.

are listed in Table 1 according to their position in UniRank 2020. In the case of identifying a mass media or marketing-oriented department, the given criterion is met by 6 educational institutions. These are the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov, the Faculty of Arts of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Žilina, the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. Due to more relevant data, in our analysis we focus on the departments of individual faculties, which are directly media or marketing oriented and at the same time have a profile created on the researched social network Facebook. In the case of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication in Trnava, it is an analysis of faculty communication since all its departments are oriented in the segment we examined and at the same time no department appears on social networks independently.

Table 2 clearly summarizes the summary of social media communication of the entities we selected in the period between July 1 and December 31, 2020, in the order in which they were also included in the UniRank evaluation. For each department/faculty, there is information on the number of fans, the achieved engagement rate within all published posts on the social network Facebook in the

Table 1: The most successful Slovak universities according to UniRank2020.

Name of the university	Name of the faculty with mass media / marketing focus	Name of the mass media / marketing department
1. Slovak University of Technology	x	x
2. Technical University in Košice	x	x
3. Comenius University in Bratislava	Faculty of Arts	Department of Marketing Communication (DMC)
4. Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica	x	x
5. University of Prešov in Prešov	Faculty of Arts	Institute of Slovak Studies and Media Studies (ISSMS)
6. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice	Faculty of Arts	Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies, and Communication (DSSSPC)
7. University of Žilina in Žilina	Faculty of Humanities	Department of Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage (DMCH)
8. Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra	Faculty of Arts	Department of Mass Media and Advertising (DMMA)
9. Trnava University in Trnava	x	x
10. Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra	x	x
11. University of Economics in Bratislava	x	x
12. University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava	Faculty of Mass Media Communication (FMMC)	Department of Marketing Communication

Source: own processing, 2021

researched period, the number of comments received and the sharing of individual posts. FMMC in Trnava has the most fans on its

social network (8,348), followed by ISSMS in Prešov (1,770), then DMC in Bratislava (1,449), the fourth educational institution with the

highest number of fans is DMMA in Nitra (1,326), the fifth is DMCH in Žilina (428) and the fewest fans on Facebook has DSSSPC in Košice (297). However, in the case of the engagement rate and comments or shares received, the order is not causally related to the number of fans – this is because some subjects published more posts during the researched period, thus the probability of obtaining more interactions, comments, or shares was higher. We observed the highest fan activity at FMMC in Trnava (6,543 reactions, 397 comments, 167 shares), followed by ISSMS in Prešov (993 reactions, 56 comments, 14 shares), then DMCH

Table 2: Results achieved on Facebook of individual educational institutions in the researched period.

Name of the faculty / department	Fans	Engagement	Comments	Shares
DMC in Bratislava	1 449	5	0	0
ISSMS in Prešov	1 770	993	56	14
DSSSPC in Košice	297	138	2	11
DMCH in Žilina	428	748	8	12
DMMA in Nitra	1 326	46	2	1
FMMC in Trnava	8 348	6 543	397	167

Source: own processing, 2021

Table 3: Do educational institutions use several types of social networks for communication?

Name of the faculty / department	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	LinkedIn
DMC in Bratislava	yes	yes	yes	no
ISSMS in Prešov	yes	no	yes	no
DSSSPC in Košice	yes	no	yes	no
DMCH in Žilina	yes	yes	yes	no
DMMA in Nitra	yes	no	yes	no
FMMC in Trnava	yes	yes	yes	yes

Source: own processing, 2021

Table 4: Is the communication of educational institutions on social networks regular?

Name of the faculty / department	Regular communication on social networks	Number of posts published in the researched period
DMC in Bratislava	no	2
ISSMS in Prešov	no	29
DSSSPC in Košice	no	18
DMCH in Žilina	yes	208
DMMA in Nitra	no	6
FMMC in Trnava	yes	113

Source: own processing, 2021

in Žilina (748 reactions, 8 comments, 12 shares), DSSSPC in Košice (138 reactions, 2 comments, 11 shares), DMMA in Nitra (46 reactions, 2 comments, 1 share) and DMC in Bratislava (5 reactions, 0 comments, 0 shares).

In the first research area on the margin of using several types of social networks for communication by educational institutions, we used current statistics on the popularity of individual social networks and therefore included within the observations the three most popular social networks Facebook,

Instagram, YouTube²⁸ and added the LinkedIn social network, which as a professional social network should play an important role in the communication of educational institutions towards the general or professional public. The use of individual social networks is directly proportional to the mentioned statistics on the highest numbers of active users of social networks

28 Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2021. [online]. [2021-02-20]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>>.

– all educational institutions use the most popular social network Facebook and the second most popular social network YouTube. However, the third most used social network Instagram is used only by DMC in Bratislava, DMCH in Žilina and FMMC in Trnava. However, based on our observations, it can be stated that the only active educational institution on Instagram is FMMC in Trnava, the other two faculties are only registered on this social network.

Based on our practice in the field of social network management not only in academia, but also in the environment of advertising agencies and marketing practice in general, we can consider regular communication on social networks such communication that brings fans on the social network new content at least on a weekly basis. This is also confirmed by the Dictionary Portal of Ľ. Štúr Institute of Linguistics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, which considers regularity to be repeated or happening at the same time intervals²⁹. In the second research area *Is the communication of educational institutions on social networks regular?* we therefore based our observations on individual content published on the Facebook pages of selected educational institutions in

29 Slovníkový portál Jazykovedného ústavu Ľ. Štúra SAV. [online]. [2021-02-20]. Available at: <[105](https://slovník.juls.savba.sk/?w=pravidelnost&sex-act&c=xaca&cs=&d=kssj4&d=psp&d=sss&d=ort-er&d=scs&d=sss&d=peciar&d=hssjV&d=ber nolak&d=nounb&d=orient&d=locutio&d=obce&d=prie-zviska&d=un&d=pskcs&d=psken#>>.</p>
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Table 5: What formats and how often do individual educational institutions use them?

Name of the faculty / department	Video	Photo	Infographics	Carousel	Link post	Live streaming	Text post	Event
DMC in Bratislava	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
ISSMS in Prešov	2	10	0	0	13	0	4	0
DSSSPC in Košice	0	4	3	0	8	0	0	3
DMCH in Žilina	2	40	50	0	102	0	0	14
DMMA in Nitra	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	0
FMMC in Trnava	4	23	40	8	16	5	0	17

Source: own processing, 2021

the period we studied between July 1 and December 31, 2020. In Table 4 we state that only communication of DMCH in Žilina can be described as regular communication, as within the researched half a year they published 208 posts on social networks (which we discuss in the next part of the paper), from which it is clear that DMCH in Žilina communicated with its fans several times a day within the research period and communication of FMMC in Trnava, which published 113 posts in almost 27 weeks and can also be described as regular communication. ISSMS in Prešov communicated with its fans irregularly (29 posts), as well as DSSSPC (18 posts), while DMC in Bratislava or DMMA in Nitra almost did not communicate with their fans (DMMA in Nitra 6 posts, DMC in Bratislava 2 posts).

As part of the next research area, *What formats and how often do individual educational institutions use them?* we focused on format diversity within social media communication as part of the observation of selected

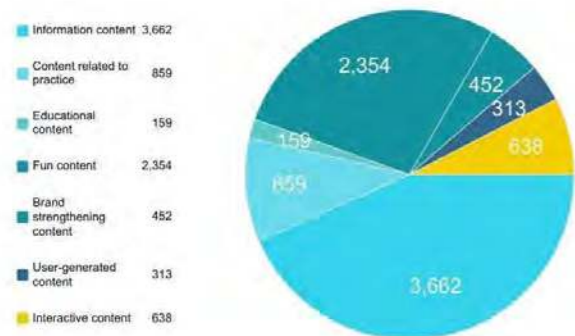
subjects and their communication on the social network Facebook. Individual educational institutions used one of the formats video, photography, infographics, carousel, link post, live stream, text post or event communication at least once. The most used format among the selected institutions is the link post, which was used 142 times in the period under review. In the case of a link post, it is not about sharing own content on a social network (third-party sites, whether on a social media platform or a website). This is followed by the use of graphic formats named infographics (93), communication via photos (79), communication via online events (34), both 8 times the video format and carousel format were used (static photos or infographics published one after the other, which can be up to 72 % more successful for mobile ads)³⁰. Based on the observation of the communication

30 A whirlwind romance with carousel ads. [online]. [2021-02-20]. Available at: <[of selected subjects on Facebook, among the least used formats we can include a text post \(7\) and live streaming, which, however, several experts in advertising and marketing practice describe not only as the current trend in communication strategy, but also as one of the most effective tools of social media communication.](https://www.facebook.com/business/success/lovoo#>>.</p>
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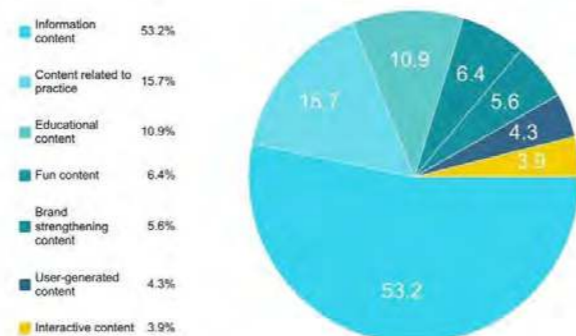
Before the results of the research area *What type of content do educational institutions publish on their social networks?* are presented it is necessary to categorize and characterize individual types of content. In identifying them, we use our own experience with content management on social networks and content analysis of published content of selected educational institutions. Published content can be divided into the following categories:

- **information content**, in which the main goal of educational institutions is to inform their fans about announcements and news concerning school, teaching and basic information from the academic environment;

Graph 1: Percentage use of individual types of content on Facebook. Source: own processing, 2021



Graph 2: Engagement rate of individual content types. Source: own processing, 2021



- **educational content**, through which educational institutions, even in the dimension of social networks, inform individual users, increase their credibility and educate them beyond the traditional teaching process;
- **fun content**, with which educational institutions can bring any information to their students or fans on social networks thanks to their close and popular messages;
- **interactive content**, in which there is a tendency for users to interact, in particular in order to obtain a reward, in which case it is an attempt to get closer to the subject with their fans;
- **content to strengthen the brand**, which not only increases awareness of the brand of the educational institution, but through which the selected entities can also communicate with the general or professional public in order to attract attention;
- **user-generated content**, content generated by the users themselves and may arise from

another form of interactive content, where users are called upon to take action in the context of publishing content on social networks, or arbitrarily created content based on experience; despite the fact that this type of content is perceived mainly in a positive direction, Kim A. J. and Johnson K. K. P. warn, however, that UGC content may also have a negative connotation, which is ultimately even more important than a positive one³¹;

- **content related to practice**, thanks to which educational institutions often offer their current students relevant offers for internships or work in the field they are studying.

³¹ KIM, A. J., JOHNSON, K. K. P.: Power of Consumers Using Social Media: Examining the Influences of Brand-Related User-Generated Content on Facebook. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2016, Vol. 58, pp. 98-108.

Based on this specification and the descriptive analysis, it can be stated that only one of the selected educational institutions used all 7 categories of content types (FMCC in Trnava) in the examined period between July 1 and December 31, 2020. Social media platforms can currently be considered as one of the most important communication channels - especially for the target group of university students. The presented analysis therefore offers a comprehensive view of the most effective ways of communicating with the target group on social networks. The most frequently used content was information content, which was used by each selected educational institution in the examined period. This was followed by educational content and content related to practice used by four institutions, followed by content to strengthen the brand, which was used by three subjects in their communication and the least used type of content in communication of educational institutions on social networks was fun and interactive content used by two researched institutions.

Table 6: What type of content do educational institutions publish on their social networks?

Name of the faculty / department	Information	Educational	Fun	Interactive	Strengthen the brand	UGC	Practice
DMC in Bratislava	yes	no	no	no	no	no	yes
ISSMS in Prešov	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes
DSSSPC in Košice	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
DMCH in Žilina	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
DMMA in Nitra	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
FMCC in Trnava	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Source: own processing, 2021

As part of the evaluation of the success of individual types of content, it is also necessary to point out the rate of success of the content published by the selected educational institutions. Graph 1 shows the number of uses of a given content type, and Graph 2 shows the engagement rate of a given content type. The most used type of content was information content (53,2 %) with an engagement rate of 3,662, followed by content related to practice (15,7 %) with an engagement rate of 859, then educational content (10,9 %) with an engagement rate of 159, followed by fun content (6,4 %) with an engagement rate of 2,354, content to strengthen the brand (5,6 %) with an engagement rate of 452, and the least used content type was user-generated content (4,3 %) with an engagement rate of 313, and interactive content (3,9 %) with an engagement rate of 638. Especially with fun or interactive content, despite their low usage rates, high engagement rates can be observed, which may be an incentive to set a new communication strategy

- better performing types of messages should as part of the strategy, have a larger proportion of space in regular communication. If we want to find out the most successful type of post, we need to divide the total number of reactions by the number of posts to find the average engagement rate per post - in which case we can evaluate the type of content that is the most successful. Based on the above, fun content can be considered the most successful with an average engagement rate of 98 per post, followed by interactive content (42,5), brand-strengthening content (21,5), user-generated content (19,6) and less successful content types included information content (18,3), content related to practice (14,6) and educational content (3,9). As part of the presented content analysis aimed at examining the use of elements of visual communication on social networks, we have created basic categories, thanks to which published and researched content can be identified in the context of visual communication. They are as follow:

- **graphics in photography**, where we included posts in which educational institutions work with their own logo in the image or in photography, with graphic elements reflecting the visual identity based on their design manual or various geometric shapes used equally in photographs or published images;
- **social media templates**, in which photographs or text are inserted, which may have a tendency to visually bring individual messages closer to the target audience;
- **the use of personalization elements**, including content with students' and pedagogues' own photographs, through which the messages can be communicated more effectively;
- **a uniform font in infographics**, which is important not to disturb the necessary attention expected of users when publishing individual types of content;
- **a colour filter in photographs**, through which the content can

Table 7: What categories of visual elements do educational institutions use the most?

Name of the faculty / department	Graphics in photography (logo, various elements, geometric shapes)	Social media templates	Personalization elements	Uniform font in infographics	Colour filter in photographs
DMC in Bratislava	no	no	elements	no	no
ISSMS in Prešov	no	no	no	no	no
DSSSPC in Košice	no	yes	yes	no	no
DMCH in Žilina	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
DMMA in Nitra	no	no	yes	no	no
FMMC in Trnava	yes	yes	no	yes	yes

Source: own processing, 2021

be more strongly associated with the brand or specifically the educational institution that communicates the content.

Table 7 shows the use of individual categories of visual elements by selected educational institutions. The most used element is the personalization of content used in their communication on social networks by four selected institutions, followed by the use of social media templates by three institutions, two universities use graphic elements in photos and images and a single filter in infographics and only one selected educational institution uses in selected messages colour filters supporting its visual identity.

Based on our research, it is not possible to assess the success of the use of individual elements, because based on our descriptive content analysis, we believe that the success rate is primarily related to the type of content and the correctly chosen form of individual messages.

However, visual elements may tend to increase brand awareness of selected educational institutions, which may lead to a positive change in the perception of their communication on social networks in the long run.

Our statements are also confirmed by A. Hrešová, an expert from practice, who recommends emphasizing the visual hierarchy in the context of illustrating the importance of the information communicated. *“Like punctuation and syntax, the hierarchy provides order and helps recipients to understand information more quickly”*³². Ultimately, it does not have to be primarily just about meeting quantitative marketing goals, but also about improving the overall communication with the target audience. M. Stáhl and H. Kaihovirta also agree with us,

32 HREŠOVÁ, A.: *Ako na tvorbu grafiky pre sociálne siete*. [online]. [2021-01-25]. Available at: <<https://madviso.sk/grafika-pre-socialne-siete/>>.

who emphasize that especially students are surrounded by visual elements in communication not only in the online environment, but also offline. For this reason, in conclusion, it is extremely important that the primary contact with their target audience is established by educational institutions on social networks, as the target audience of educational institutions – young people aged 17-35 can be described as an exotic generation in the context of various innovations and technologies³³.

33 STÁHL, M., KAIHOVIRTA, H.: Exploring Visual Communication and Competencies through Interaction with Images in Social Media. In *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 2019, Vol. 21, pp. 250-266.

Conclusion

In the second half of 2020, during the time of the pandemic “new normal”, social networks became an integral part of communication not only of people working in academia but also in all social segments. It was a challenge that educational institutions stereotyped by society and social media marketing could use to get even closer to their target audience – young people aged 17 to 35. The aim of this paper was to analyse the communication of selected educational institutions on the social network Facebook with emphasis on identifying the use of visual elements of selected entities in communication on social networks. At the end of the presented paper, we answer the research areas set out in the introduction. In addition to the most popular social network Facebook, all the researched institutions also use the social network YouTube, half of the subjects also use the social network Instagram, and one educational institution is also active on the social network LinkedIn within its social media communication. Of all the researched subjects, we observed regular communication on social networks only in two subjects – the Faculty of Mass Media Communication in Trnava and the Department of Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage in Žilina. The most frequent format among educational institutions is **link post**, followed by **infographics, photography, event, video, carousel, text post** and **live streaming**. Content that selected

educational institutions use can be categorized into **information, educational, fun, content to strengthen the brand, content related to practice, interactive content**, and **user-generated content**. The most frequently used category in the communication of educational institutions are **personalization elements**, followed by the use of **social media templates, graphic elements** in photographs and images, a **uniform font** in infographics and one of the selected subjects also uses a **colour filter** in published photographs. In conclusion, the authors state that the article is a partial output that approximates the current state of communication of educational institutions on social networks. Based on the submitted analyses, we found that Slovak educational institutions communicate inconsistently, irregularly, and primarily not with their own content (sharing articles from third-party websites, which does not generate interest and only a minimal engagement rate). At the same time, in the analysis, we pointed out the success of some types of content (fun, interactive or brand-strengthening content), which the selected institutions do not use to a sufficient extent. The output of the presented paper can be grasped in a complex model, but at the same time any part of it can be applied separately. Thus, there is a kind of appeal to the persons responsible for the communication of selected educational institutions – ultimately in this way it is possible to form a target group, which in this case are

young people aged 17 to 35 years, to whom the academic environment should show additional personal or professional direction.

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