

ФЕЙСБУК КАТО ИНСТРУМЕНТ ЗА МАРКЕТИНГОВИ ИЗМЕРВАНИЯ (НА ПРИМЕРА НА МЕСОПРЕРАБОТВАТЕЛНИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ В БЪЛГАРИЯ)

**Димитър Колев Колев,
Докторант, ФБМ, кат. „Икономика“
РУ „Ангел Кънчев“**

**Елизар Алексиев Станев
Докторант, ФБМ, кат. „Икономика“
РУ „Ангел Кънчев“**

Резюме: Значимостта на социалните мрежи за бизнеса като инструментариум на маркетинга постоянно нараства, което налага непрестанни наблюдения и изучаване на различни възможности за осъществяване на маркетингови измервания. В тази статия са представени няколко методи за извършване на маркетингови изследвания в социалната мрежа "Фейсбук" за фен-страниците на водещи месопреработвателни организации в България. Направена е съпоставка с някои от водещите Фейсбук-страници на други организации от България. На база на направения анализ са изведени някои основни изводи и препоръки.

Ключови думи: фейсбук страница, фейсбук активност, фенска страница, контент, харесвания, коментари, споделяния, социална мрежа

JEL: M3, M31

FACEBOOK USAGE FOR MARKETING MEASUREMENTS¹ (By the example of meat industry organizations in Bulgaria)

**Dimitar Kolev Kolev,
PhD, FBM, dep. "Economics"
Ruse University "Angel Kanchev"**

**Elizar Aleksiev Stanev
PhD, FBM, dep. "Economics"
Ruse University "Angel Kanchev"**

Abstract: The significance of social networks for the business as a part of marketing instruments is constantly growing, which requires constant observations and studies of different opportunities for conducting marketing researches. In this article some of the methods for marketing research in Facebook's fan pages for key meat industry producers in Bulgaria have been shown. A comparison between the selected fan

¹ **Dimitar Kolev compiled - Introduction, I. Pre-face, II. Methodical Framework, Conclusion; Elizar Stanev compiled- III. Results, IV. Discussion and Recommendations, Conclusion.**

pages and other leading Facebook fan pages from Bulgaria has been made. On the basis of that analysis some key prepositions have been presented.

Keywords: Facebook page, Facebook activity, fan page, content, likes, comments, shares, social network

JEL: M3, M31

Introduction

In modern community more and more organizations are sighted on promoting their products and brands in cyberspace. The opportunities of global networks are very diverse and their variety includes banners, links, online shops and catalogues and many others. Some organizations, not only seek advertising, but also - a possibility to receive feedback from customers by providing e-mail or chat channels on their official page. Others develop business blogs on which the consumers could share information about their products or services and can receive the necessary professional help online.

I. Pre-face

One of the key ways to communicate through the Internet is the so called “social networks”, and namely Facebook, Tweeter and so on. These networks got into the life of the modern virtual society very fast and have provided an opportunity for many small organizations to become popular². According to the information inside, social networks can be categorized in the following way:

- ✓ For sharing personal information (ideas, experiences);
- ✓ For sharing contact information;
- ✓ For sharing preferences;
- ✓ For sharing author's content (pictures, music, video, articles and so on);
- ✓ For the popularization of hobbies and interests;
- ✓ For references and reviews of products;
- ✓ For communication with friends, family and business partners³.

Some studies show that 54% of the people communicate more online than offline; for a mere 20 minutes in Facebook: 1 million links have been shared, 1 484 000 invitations have been send, 1 851 000 statuses have been changed, 2 716 000 messages have been send, 10 208 000 comments have been published and 1 587 000 new posts have been created⁴. At the same time there are more than 25 billion different forms of content like links, news, postings, messages, pictures and others being shared monthly in Facebook. An average user is connected with 60 pages, groups or events and people spend more

² Tsankova, M. Online marketing communications, S. 2011, Newmedia21.eu, pp. 4 (<http://www.newmedia21.eu/proekti/onlayn-marketingovi-komunikatsii/>)

³ Tsankova, M. Online marketing communications, S. 2011, Newmedia21.eu, pp. 4 (<http://www.newmedia21.eu/proekti/onlayn-marketingovi-komunikatsii/>)

⁴ Trimpe, A. FACEBOOK 2011 statistics by onlineschools.org, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7BqDIIdNno>)

than 500 billion minutes in Facebook for a month⁵. The same research also shows that Tweeter has an average of 300 hundred new users every day, about 180 millions unique visits every month, just over 600 million searches and 60% of the users are not from the USA⁶. These numbers just confirm the fact that social networks, and namely Facebook, are one of the greatest generators of information accessible to the whole world. As far as Bulgaria is concerned, about 75% of online users have a Facebook account which corresponds to approximately 36% of the population of the country or 2 582 280 people⁷ total. Other Facebook researches claim that:

- The most common reason for a person to join a fan page is to show to their friends that they support the current brand;
- 33% of people are inclined to research a chosen brand on Facebook;
- 51% intend to buy products from the business page they follow;
- 61% are willing to recommend given page to their friends;
- 68% are ready to buy products recommended to them by friends on Facebook⁸.

An interesting fact is that according to a Trend Micro research the number of people using social networks during work hours is growing. Their usage on the work place has risen from 19% to 24%, the most significant growth being in Germany – 10%⁹. In addition another research shows that in 2009 around 78% of the employees which have visited social network in the USA during work does it for a less than a half an hour a day and only 4% claim, that they are leaving the social network page on the whole day¹⁰. This further increases the interest of many organizations to explore the opportunity for advertising and publicity of their products in social networks. For 2011, according to **www.emarketer.com**¹¹, around 36% of all organizations are already exploiting different opportunities to promote their products in social networks.

These facts provided the main reason for the creation of this research on the usage of Facebook by selected Bulgarian organizations. This research includes some of the key meat industry producers in Bulgaria. **The main goals of this research paper are:**

- ✓ To establish the fan's activity of the given meat product brands and based on the results, conclusions about the social involvement of these organizations and their products could be made;

⁵ Danny Brown, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://dannybrown.me/2010/07/03/cool-facts-about-social-media/>>

⁶ Danny Brown, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://dannybrown.me/2010/07/03/cool-facts-about-social-media/>>

⁷ <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bulgaria> (last visit on 04.03.2013)

⁸ **Rusev, P.** Power of the people the new marketing, Varna 2011, E-academy, pp. 27

⁹ **Tsankova, M.** Online marketing communications, S. 2011, Newmedia21.eu, pp.4

¹⁰ Emarketer, last visit 04.03.2013,

<<http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?R=1007493#dLWrvX2OwDRy9oox.99>>

¹¹ Emarketer, last visit 04.03.2013,

<<http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?R=1007493#dLWrvX2OwDRy9oox.99>>

- ✓ To discover if the given organizations have been successful in "grabbing" the attention of their fans;
- ✓ To find what is the level of the diffusion in Facebook for these organizations.

II. Methodical framework

It is important to note, that most of the consumers out there are familiarized with the most of the major brands of the meat industry and the products, but rarely do they know the exact producer behind the product. One of the key reasons for that lies in the fact that the major meat producers in Bulgaria have similar products in the same category, each of them possessing specific branding, marketing mix and individual market positioning. "Bella Bulgaria" stands out as the largest meat goods producer, with brands like "Sachi", "Leki", "Naroden", "Perelik". Their main competitors are "Ken", "KFM", "Nikas", "Boni Oborot", "Tandem-B" and "Bravo"¹². To start off the analysis of the fan pages of the selected organizations the basic method of "content analysis" is employed. By definition content analysis is a descriptive method of gathering data and qualifies as an observational tool. Besides that, content analysis is a systematic method for examination of information. According to N.Vankov, content analysis is "a research technique, through which on the basis of the contents of texts, conclusions can be made and trends can be pointed out"¹³. The same author states that the basic advantages of this method come down to the possibilities of analyzing non-structured data regarding their meaning, contents, communicative purposes and others¹⁴. Taking these characteristics into account, content analysis is accepted as the most suitable method for this paper.

The research begins with determining the users' fan page activity in Facebook for the selected organizations for a period of 3 months. The creation of a fan page in a social network implies that the users of said page are already "fans" of the brand, meaning they are already connected with the product or the brand (or both). In the light of this fact, it could be assumed that the aforementioned users would share mostly positive information about said brand. But, there is always the possibility that negative or neutral information about the brand exists, which is taken into account. The specific methodology of fan activity analysis is as follows:

- 1) The choice of organizations (at least 2), whose data will be accounted for - the organizations "Leki" and "Sachi" have been chosen, because during the pre-check process, their main competitors "KFM", "Nikas" and "Boni oborot" did not possess a Facebook fan page at that moment; the other two competitor brands - "KEN" and "Tandem", having comparatively low fan activity on their

¹² Capital, last visit 04.03.2013,

<http://www.capital.bg/biznes/kompanii/2006/07/28/274541_agresivni_i_v_reklamata_i_v_razrastvaneto/>

¹³ Vankov, N. Marketing strategies and tactics in the virtual world (dissertation), UNSS, S.2012, pp. 25

¹⁴ Vankov, N. Marketing strategies and tactics in the virtual world (dissertation), UNSS, S.2012, pp. 25

fan pages, collected total activity for 2012 as high as a single month's worth of activity on Sachi's or Leki's pages.

- 2) For a period of three months, fan activity is closely monitored. On the second month of the chosen period, a parallel observation of two other organizations' fan pages occurs ("Cars.bg" and "Zayo Bayo") providing the possibility of a comparison between the selected meat industry brands' pages and pages belonging to organizations outside of the meat production industry, who are performing well with Facebook fan activity (data by Social Bakers¹⁵). In addition, for the same month, a comparison of the Facebook activity between the fan page of Bella Bulgaria, the owner of both chosen brands (Leki and Sachi), and the brands themselves, is made.
- 3) Selection of necessary data. This includes fan-generated "likes", "comments" and "shares", all of them Facebook categories, indicative of fan activity; total number of fans for the chosen period and number of posts made by the organization or its representatives for the given period.
- 4) Interpreting the data. The formulae below will be used:

- Average monthly fan activity

$$Facebook_{MA} = \frac{\text{likes} + \text{shares} + \text{comments (for a month)}}{\text{total number of fans (for a month)}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

- Average monthly fan activity per post

$$Facebook_{AAP} = \frac{\frac{\text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{shares (for a month)}}{\text{total number of posts by the organization (for a month)}}}{\text{total number of fans (for a month)}} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

- Facebook diffusion

$$Facebook_{DIF} = \frac{\text{total number of fans (for a month)}}{\text{total registered Facebook users from Bulgaria}} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

- During the categorization process of user comments, the shared informal information is analyzed. Manual processing is required for the data analysis to be complete, an adapted model used for the analysis of microblogs, based on the methodology of B. Jensen and his crew (Jensen B. Et al., 2009)¹⁶, is suitable for the task. In this case, the informational categories come down to three:

- ✓ *Negative* - in this category negative words and phrases are used, stronger emotional expressions are often present;

¹⁵ Socialbakers, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bulgaria>>

¹⁶ **Jensen, B.**, et al. Twitter Power: Tweets as Electronic Word of Mouth. // *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY*, 2009, 60(11): pp. 2169–2188

- ✓ *Neutral* - in cases where neither negative nor positive feedback is present or no particular opinion of a certain product is stated;
- ✓ *Positive* - when the user opinion holds mostly positive expressions and phrases directed at the product or the brand;

III. Results

The selected organizations' fan activity on their pages has been monitored for the months of December 2012, January 2013 and February 2013. Firstly, December has been chosen for the fact that there is a tendency of increased turnover and sales as a whole, concerning products of the meat industry, which is a premise for increased organization activity, which in turn strive to employ various marketing instruments to attract the attention of potential consumers. Secondly, December happens to be the month during which there are Christmas and New Years' holidays, which is a further a prerequisite for consumers and potential fans to spend more of their free time in social networks.

During the research the following tendencies have been discovered:

Parameters	Month	Leki	Sachi
Average fan activity per month	1	1.11%	3.55%
	2	1.59%	4.96%
	3	4.62%	2.87%
Average monthly fan activity per post	1	0.09%	0.12%
	2	0.12%	0.15%
	3	0.36%	0.32%
Total fan activity		7.31%	11.38%
Total fan activity per post		0.19%	0.16%

Table 1. Fan activity on Facebook fan pages for the brands "Leki" and "Sachi", 3 months period (source: www.facebook.com¹⁷)

From the data in Table 1 it becomes clear that monthly fan activity is generally low, only reaching levels of 4-5% for each of the two chosen brands of meat products. There are some differences between the two brands for the full 3-month period, with Sachi taking the lead in the category Average fan activity per month, with their activity growing from 3,5% to almost 5 percent, but at the end of the period declining down to less than 3%. At the same time, the lower activity of the other brand, Leki, prevails during the first two months, staying around 1,5%. An increase in fan activity during the last month of the chosen period is registered, with fan activity escalating up to 4,6%. As far as the other parameter - Average monthly fan activity per post - goes, both organizations register similar results during the first 2 months of the chosen period (0,09% to 0,15%), growing

¹⁷ Facebook page of Sachi, last visit 04.03.2013, <http://www.facebook.com/sachidobrozateb?ref=ts&fref=ts>; Facebook page of Leki, last visit 04.03.2013, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/LEKI/113145252069924>

parallel to each other. During the last month of the period, that indicator grows for both companies (increase of over 0,20%), but still stays within close range of each other.

It can be assumed that both compared brands are achieving similar results when it comes to Facebook fan activity and both have a tendency for improvement. Aside from that though, a conclusion can be formulated that both brands' total fan monthly activity per post is rather low (below 1%). At the same time, the Average monthly fan activity tends to be low as a whole (around 5%), compared to the total number of fans who have "liked" the page. Knowing that the aforementioned activity consists of likes, shares and comments, the following recommendation can also be proposed - both organizations should strive to increase their Average fan activity to employ a larger part of their fan base by improving their content variety.

For a comparison to be made, the month of January 2013 has been chosen as a control period, during which another 2 fan pages, belonging to Bulgarian organizations, present in the Facebook social network, have been observed. These pages, according to Social Bakers¹⁸ data, have some of the largest fan bases, consisting of primarily Bulgarian users. The very fact that these pages have some of the highest numbers of registered fans would suggest high levels of fan activity, which will be used as a comparison to determine the difference between fan and organization activity of these model pages and those of Leki and Sachi. Aside from the chosen benchmark pages (the pages of the organizations Zayo Bayo and Cars.bg¹⁹), another page is included into the comparison - the Facebook page of the mother-company of both brands Leki and Sachi - Bella Bulgaria. It is imperative to note that the page of Bella Bulgaria²⁰ promotes other types of products, which are not present in the product line of Leki and Sachi. The thing they have in common is their Facebook category status, both qualifying under the "Food and beverages" category.

The results of the comparison between these 5 Facebook pages can be seen on Figure 1. It is clear that the Cars.bg page gathers the highest amount of Average fan activity per month (19,58%). After Cars.bg, the page that holds the highest percentage of that parameter is Bella Bulgaria with 9,27%. At the same time, during the example period, the pages of Leki and Sachi show many times less activity, with only Sachi reaching a partially sufficient percentage of almost 5%, compared to the low average fan activity of Leki's page, which stays at 1,59%. In consideration of the comparison between all 5 of the organizations' pages by the factor "Activity monthly per post", the tendency for all of them is keeping a rather low fan activity on each individual post. This brings us to the assumption that all of the examined organization pages do not create enough customer value to provoke the fans to be more active. It should be noted that there are differences in the nature of business of the selected organizations, and this is also valid when

¹⁸ Socialbakers, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bulgaria>>

¹⁹ Facebook page of cars.bg, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/cars.bulgaria?fref=ts>>;
Facebook page of Zayo Bayo, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/zayobayo.bg?fref=ts>>

²⁰ Facebook page of Bella Bulgaria, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/BELLA/289049171164176?fref=ts>>

studying the usage of different marketing instruments and know-how on ways to attract additional page likes (for example - contests and other special events, which have the liking of the Facebook page as a prerequisite for participation), affects the total number of page fans. The problem with such marketing instruments may be that after the end of said event a large number of newly gained fans may remain inactive. Having these points in mind, there are many other specific aspects of each page - for example, Cars.bg, which is an organization based around online interaction, should be presumed to have a larger rate of sharing and distribution of content.

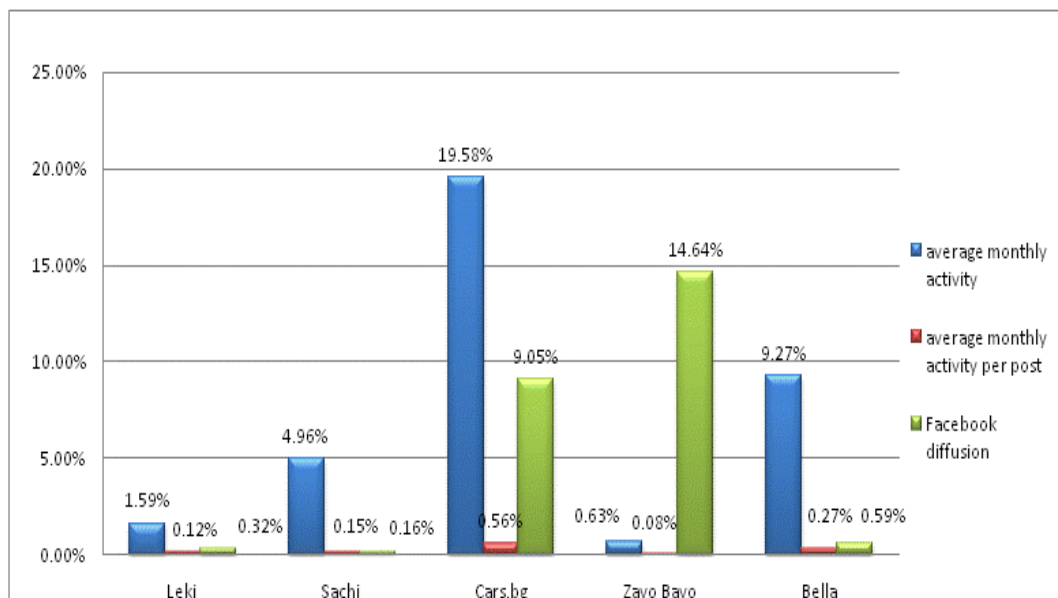


Figure 1. Fan activity for January, 2013 (source: www.facebook.com; www.socialbakers.com²¹)

In addition, examining the "Facebook diffusion" parameter, the data (according to Social Bakers) of the chosen benchmark organizations shows that Zayo Bayo and Cars.bg do, indeed, possess the greatest percentage of Facebook diffusion among Bulgarian Facebook users - 14,64% and 9,05%. An interesting fact to note is that the page with the highest percentage in Facebook diffusion, Zayo Bayo, happens to have extremely low fan activity associated with it. This can be attributed to the aforementioned page specifics and marketing instruments, which often cause a quick increase in the fan base, but after the organized event ends, only a fraction of all newly-gained members stay active on subsequent organization post and events.

²¹ Socialbakers, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bulgaria>>; Facebook page of Sachi, (last visit 04.03.2013) <<http://www.facebook.com/sachidobrozateb?ref=ts&fref=ts>>; Facebook page of Leki, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/LEKI/113145252069924>>; Facebook page of cars.bg, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/cars.bulgaria?fref=ts>>; Facebook page of Zayo Bayo, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/zayobayo.bg?fref=ts>>; Facebook page of Bella Bulgaria, last visit 04.03.2013, <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/BELLA/289049171164176?fref=ts>>

The next aspect of the analysis encompasses the most socially-charged parameter for the users of a certain Facebook page, namely - the "comments" category. It is considered an elevated social commitment to the given information when a user comments under an organization post on the fan page - by expressing their opinion, fans can enrich the content of a post and that of the page itself (user-generated content). Compared to the other two user-expressive categories, likes and shares, commenting has a higher threshold, requiring additional effort to express a personal opinion and point of view in writing, while the other two categories are all done with a simple click of the mouse. This cultivates the idea that commenting under posts should be considered the most important category of all three, the one that resonates the most with the social commitment of users on the chosen Facebook page.

During the study of the comments, the month of January 2013 was chosen again to represent tendencies in the category when comparing the fan pages of the brands Leki and Sachi. According to the Methodical Framework presented in previous chapters, the results of the analysis can be seen on **Figure 2** :

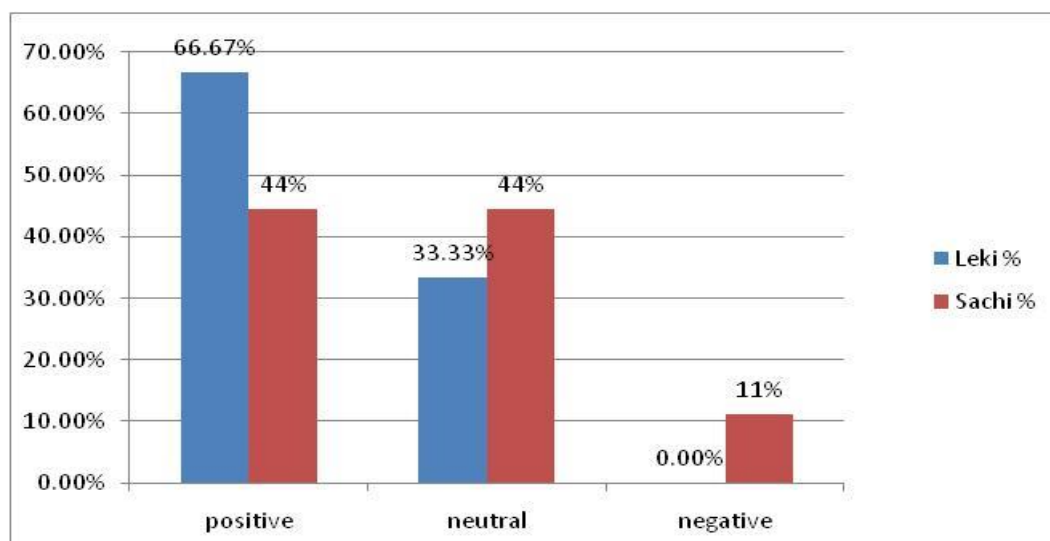


Figure 2. Categories of comments made by fans on the Facebook pages of the brands Leki and Sachi (source: www.facebook.com²²)

- The data analysis clearly shows that on both organizations' pages the positive comments are predominant. This is closely tied to the concept of "fan page" in a social network, and keeping in mind that this is a page for admirers of the brand, it can be assumed that most of the comments would be positive. In the case of the two chosen brands, Leki and Sachi, Leki have predominantly positive feedback - 66,67% of all comments for January, 2013, are positive in nature. As far as the organization Sachi is concerned, neutral comments hold 44% of all, while positive comments represent 33,33%.

²² Facebook page of Sachi, last visit 04.03.2013, <<http://www.facebook.com/sachidobrozateb?ref=ts&fref=ts>>; Facebook page of Leki, last visit 04.03.2013 <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/LEKI/113145252069924>>

- Negative comments can only be found on Sachi's page, comprising 11% of all comments for January, 2013. Negative feedback could be used by the organization as a guideline for improvement.

As a whole it could be concluded, that the Facebook fan page of the organization Leki is performing better than that of the competitor Sachi. From the analysis above it is made clear that fan activity remains low compared to other pages in the same sphere. This affects the Comments category too. It would be useful for the organizations or their representatives to seek options and opportunities to increase their fan activity, especially involving them to create more comments, which would, in turn, provide valuable feedback.

IV. Discussion and recommendations

Based on the results of the analysis, it is clear that according to both indicators (average fan activity per month and average activity per post) the two selected organizations' pages - those of Leki and Sachi maintain relatively similar tendencies - around 5% for average fan activity and below 1% fan activity per post. It appears that both pages have relatively low fan activity. After the comparison with other organizations' pages, which were used as benchmarks, a conclusion is drawn that both pages are no different from the benchmarks when it comes to average monthly activity per post. That is not the case when it comes to the indicator Facebook diffusion - the two brands lag behind severely. This leads us to the conclusion that both pages (Leki's and Sachi's) have not created content that was attractive enough for a larger audience. As described above, a larger fan base could potentially increase sales. A larger fan base can be achieved by the use of marketing instruments such as contests, lotteries, online games, and others, all of which should include a special term for participation - the liking of the page hosting the event. These instruments can be employed by representatives of both brands. Another recommendation that could be made is for various content solutions to be sought after and applied in such a way that they "provoke" the fans' attention on a regular basis, even if the content presented isn't directly connected to the brand or the promoted products on the page in any way.

Conclusion

The usefulness of having a large social network fan page audience presents itself in the form of an advantage for the main site of the organization and better search engine positioning (Google, Bing). A larger fan base in different social networks assists in the spreading of informal information between consumers concerning products and brands, offered by the given organizations. This is becoming an important condition for establishing a positive organizational image, transferring to brands and products, and the nurturing of a constant relationship with customers. An established and well-maintained fan base can be a reliable sign showing that the organization is socially committed and a responsible member of the society.

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