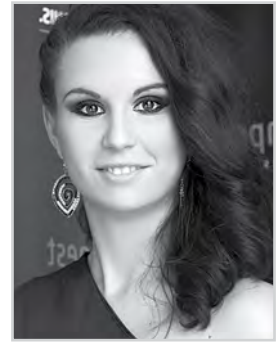


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## The phenomenon of social networks and the effectiveness of Facebook page measuring (the case of Slovakia)

**Abstract.** The authors aim to identify the latest opinions regarding theoretical backgrounds of the current review of available platforms in the field of social media with a focus on social networks and how companies can use them for marketing communications. At the same time, the authors present the evaluation of the effectiveness of communication activities of Slovnaft. Slovnaft is a part of MOL Group and one of the key businesses in the Slovak market. It is also an integrated refinery and petrochemical plant, which is among the key industrial business entities in Slovakia. The evaluation is based on data of Facebook, the most famous social network, through LikeAlyzer portal, which allows us to compare Slovnaft results with its largest competitor in the Slovak market - OMV Slovakia. The results of the analysis demonstrate the level of effectiveness of communication activities of Slovnaft on the Facebook page as the current phenomenon in the market of social media from the perspective of consumers with regard to the technology options for the assessment of the companies' communication activities effectiveness in the application of their innovative forms. The research was conducted in May, 2016. According to the data obtained from its Facebook, Slovnaft has more than 51,000 «likes» and its marketing communication, exercised through the social network Facebook, is set effectively within evaluations, overcoming its competitors.

**Keywords:** Interactive Marketing Communication; Social Networks; Facebook; Measurement of Social Media Marketing; SMM; LikeAlyzer; Slovnaft; OMV Slovakia

**JEL Classification:** M31; Z13

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### **Феномен соціальних мереж і вимірювання ефективності Facebook-сторінки (приклад Словаччини)**

**Анотація.** Метою статті є визначення сучасних підходів до використання доступних платформ у сфері соціальних медіа через призму використання соціальних мереж компаніями в галузі маркетингових комунікацій. Автори статті дають оцінку ефективності комунікаційної діяльності корпорації «Slovnaft», яка є однією з ключових компаній на ринку нафтопродуктів Словаччини та водночас нафтопереробним і нафтохімічним заводом. Оцінку комунікаційної діяльності «Slovnaft» у найвідомішій соціальній мережі Facebook та зіставлення її з показниками комунікаційної діяльності найбільшого конкурента на ринку країни – компанії «OMV Словаччина» – зроблено на основі даних порталу LikeAlyzer. Проведений аналіз дозволяє визначити рівень ефективності комунікаційної діяльності корпорації «Slovnaft» у соціальній мережі Facebook. Дослідження стосується інформації станом на травень 2016 року, яка засвідчує, що корпорація «Slovnaft» на своїй сторінці у Facebook має більше ніж 51000 «лайків», що вказує на ефективність її маркетингових комунікацій через соціальну мережу Facebook.

**Ключові слова:** інтерактивні маркетингові комунікації; соціальні мережі; Facebook; вимірювання маркетингу соціальних медіа; SMM; LikeAlyzer.

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### **Феномен социальных сетей и измерения эффективности Facebook-страницы (пример Словакии)**

**Аннотация.** Целью данной статьи является определение современных подходов к использованию доступных платформ в сфере социальных медиа через призму использования социальных сетей компаниями в области маркетинговых коммуникаций. Авторы статьи дают оценку эффективности коммуникационной деятельности корпорации «Slovnaft», которая является одной из ключевых компаний на рынке нефтепродуктов Словакии и одновременно нефтеперерабатывающим и нефтехимическим заводом. Оценка коммуникационной деятельности корпорации «Slovnaft» в известной социальной сети Facebook и сопоставление ее с показателями коммуникационной деятельности крупнейшего конкурента на рынке страны – компании «OMV Словакия» – сделана на основе данных портала LikeAlyzer. Проведенный анализ позволяет определить уровень эффективности коммуникационной деятельности «Slovnaft» в Facebook. В основу исследования положена информация по состоянию на май 2016 года, которая свидетельствует о том, что корпорация «Slovnaft» на своей странице в Facebook имеет более чем 51000 «лайков», что указывает на эффективность маркетинговых коммуникаций, осуществляемых через социальную сеть Facebook.

**Ключевые слова:** интерактивные маркетинговые коммуникации; социальные сети; Facebook; измерения маркетинга социальных медиа; SMM; LikeAlyzer.

## 1. Introduction

Under the current conditions of integration, interdependence and globalisation, with constantly growing competition in international markets, business rivalry plays a decisive role. Unceasing development and implementation of new technologies, intervening in all spheres, where business entities operate in international markets, determines modification of their strategies in order to maintain a highly competitive [1, 17]. The Internet as a new medium allowed the emergence and development of new forms of marketing communication based on the principles of integrity and interactivity. Social media have become a phenomenon of time and now they form an integral sphere for application of businesses marketing communication strategy. Given the rapid pace of changes in social media, their types, new features and options for still newer and more creative forms of marketing communication, it is quite difficult to bring a current overview of the available platforms [2, 6].

Slovnaft and OMV Slovakia are two prominent and important companies in the Slovak market dealing with the sale of fuel. Inc. Slovnaft is a Slovak refinery with a processing capacity of 5.5-6 million tonnes of crude oil a year; since 2004, it is a part of MOL Group, a leading vertically integrated oil and gas corporation in the Central Europe. At present, Slovnaft disposes a market share of 28% in Slovakia and operates 255 petrol stations (its market share and the number of petrol stations have increased after the recent acquisition of the Agip petrol station network). OMV Slovakia operates 94 petrol stations and has a 26% market share.

## 2. Brief Literature Review

Social media present the current platform for the implementation of marketing communication innovative forms. Social media is a form of online communication where individuals continuously and flexibly move from the role of the viewer to the role of the author while using the tools that enable them without any knowledge of programming to publish, comment, share content and form communities around their areas of interest [3]. Social media as still revolutionary communication tool in today's rapidly changing conditions of the international competitive environment are becoming an increasingly important part of the marketing communication strategy of businesses which tend to react flexibly to new trends and adapt to a more demanding consumer market. Under the influence of these factors the businesses are literally forced to transform traditional offline media to new, innovative online media - social media [4, 409; 5, 508].

C. Castronovo & L. Huang [6, 117] put together a compendium of diverse tools in the formulation of marketing communication strategy through social media. The authors suggested the optimal mix of social media and the respective objectives of these tools, which is presented in Figure 1.

In theoretical terms, the mentioned categorisation is very interesting, because social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc., are identified as tools for marketing strategies on social media. In our opinion, the authors did so deliberately to point out that even in the context of social networks can be distinguished several types of different marketing communication objectives, which are collectively identified as social networks.

Social media take precedence over social networks, and most social networks and their environment have brought a new effective way to spread the communication message of the business entities seeking to optimise the cost of marketing communication. V. Bush defines social networks as a means of providing opportunities for easy use of collaborative workspaces in the application of different communication tools [7, 119]. N. B. Ellison and D. M. Boyd consider social networks as service based on websites that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a closed system; make a list of other users with whom they are connected and ultimately to see and examine the links created by other users within the system [8]. In social networks, it is substantial to maintain interaction between users who develop contacts with each other and are merged into groups. Over the past years, social networks have become a popular

chat rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•improve services to customers</li> <li>•create system of recommendations</li> <li>•obtain customers' feedback</li> </ul>
Blogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•create communities for WOM (mouth to mouth)</li> <li>•build mainstream relationships</li> <li>•increase loyalty</li> </ul>
You Tube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•build attitudes to videos</li> <li>•the ability to share videos on other sites</li> </ul>
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•create an ad.</li> <li>•build communities</li> <li>•target specific segments</li> </ul>
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•provide a link with the professional communities</li> </ul>
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•build a relationship with your customers</li> <li>•allows conversations</li> </ul>
Google Wave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•improve cooperation and involvement</li> <li>•increase the involvement of a work team</li> </ul>
Four Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•increase the level of local and mobile connectivity</li> <li>•facilitate networking</li> </ul>

Fig. 1: Selected social media tools and communication objectives

Source: Own processing based on [6, 117]

way to generate profit and build a strong competitive position in the international market. Therefore, social networks are viewed as interactive web platforms where groups and individuals discuss, exchange information, make arrangements and create their content.

Social networks provide many options that make them an interesting tool for marketing. Here we should emphasise the function of brand awareness, increasing number of daily visitors to the website, customer loyalty, promotion of successful new products on the market, etc [9, 1011]. The most significant benefits of communication through social networks are their low cost, easy spread of communication range; effective creation of a brand image; a possibility to improve customer care and build long-term relationships with customers, to target all the relevant groups, and to monitor the effectiveness of marketing communications [10, 84]. The concept of a social network can be characterised more broadly as any social community connecting people with common interests who use a particular website to communicate with each other to share information or resources. In a narrow sense by a social network we understand a particular website, system or online service that the above-mentioned communication enables and also provides to users the opportunity to publish their own media content, create profiles and share them publicly, partly publicly or privately, using the full range of means, for example blogs, video, images, photos, friends lists, forums, messages, chats, etc [8]. E. Morgan and F. Gossieaux argue that marketing communications strategy on social networks can be successful only if the trader understands consumer discussion, follows their characteristics, listens to what the existing online communities say about products and services, and gets actively involved in ongoing conversations, and thus can effectively manage their customer relationships [11, 236]. The popularity of social networks is also evidenced in Figure 2, which shows a growing trend of social networks user base.

Businesses quite quickly realized the value and potential of the Internet, as well as new forms of marketing communication that the Internet has brought, and begin to make full use of alternative business and communications

practices that are more cost effective and efficient by much more active involvement of consumers than it was in traditional forms. The aim of one of the marketing communication traditional elements, «Word-of-Mouth» (hereinafter referred to as WOM), was to spread good name of the company, its brands, products based on the positive experience with it, to share this experience with the family, relatives, friends, and all that in an uncontrolled and spontaneous way. A. Cheema and A. Kaikati argue that information sharing is a key element of marketing communication process, because consumers tend to rely on the advice and recommendations of others when making purchasing decisions, particularly in situations that are financially or psychologically risky for them [13, 556]. It has been demonstrated that WOM presents a more effective way of disseminating ideas than a spread of the communication message through traditional media. WOM has one big disadvantage which cannot be regulated by businesses. A business entity can only affect it to some extent. Quality service, friendly staff, benefits, satisfied employees - those are the right motivating factors for WOM to work properly. Under the influence of the scientific and technological progress, and especially with the advent of the Internet, the ability of individuals and potential customers to share information with each other and thus to interactively communicate and share all the relevant information about brands and products has increased [14, 94].

WOM got a new innovative and interactive form that used the new environment based on principles of the Internet connection, thus enabling people to connect with almost no restrictions, either space or time. The new form of WOM is now called social media, which represent interpersonal communications networks and online communities, giving an opportunity to gain new customers in order to build long-term relationships because they allow extra interactive dialogue not only among consumers but also among consumers and businesses [15, 558].

### 3. Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this article is to identify a range of theoretical opinions professional public related to social media in connection with the development of new possibilities for the marketing communication strategy of businesses taking into consideration the example of Slovnaft, Inc., to evaluate the extent of the effectiveness of its communication activities on the most famous social network Facebook via portal LikeAlyzer and to compare its results with its largest competitor OMV Slovakia in the Slovak market.

Following the goal of this article, in the section below we provide the evaluation comparison of Slovnaft on the most famous social network Facebook through LikeAlyzer portal and

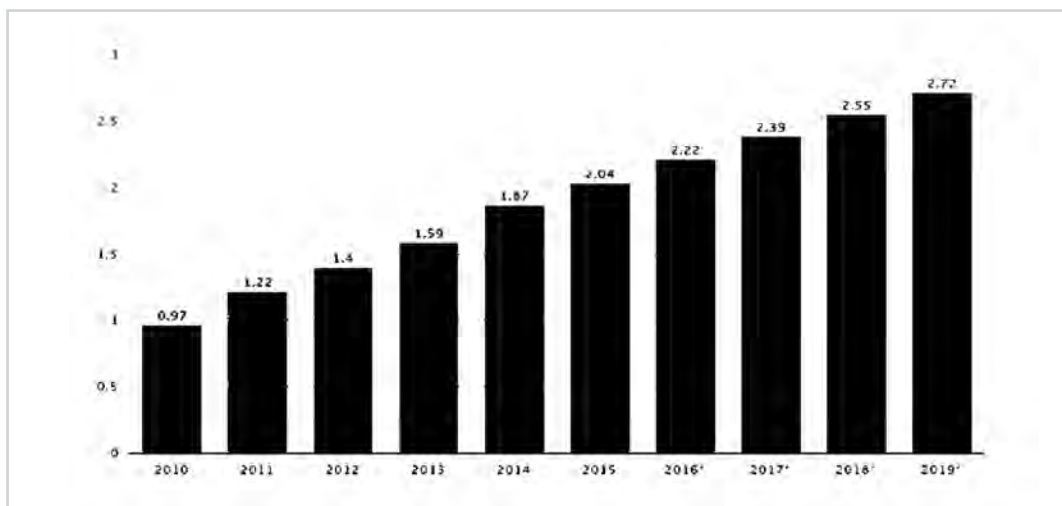
the effectiveness of communication activities of its largest competitor in the Slovak market, which is OMV Slovakia.

LikeAlyzer is currently a very popular tool for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing communication activities conducted on Facebook. LikeAlyzer provides feedback, as well as recommendations for trader action on Facebook, and on the basis of existing statistical metrics formulates recommendations for possible modifications of corporate communication activities on the Facebook site. LikeAlyzer is an online comprehensive platform for the analysis of the Facebook site and drawing up the subsequent recommendations for improving its ranking. Through the LikeAlyzer platform we can measure the success of the Facebook site based on various parameters. LikeAlyzer categorises businesses and their Facebook sites into basic categories, based on their business plans, their focus and specialisation, such as the sale of products/services, arts, sports, entertainment, organisations, political parties and so on. LikeAlyzer offers three basic categories of information on which it is possible to make conclusions related to the extent of effectiveness of communication businesses via the Facebook site and thereby determine the final score:

- Page Information: states «Page Name», «Category», «User Name», «Website», «About», «Milestones» - special dates, events and key moments within the historical development of the company presenting the story and approaching the company's history in an innovative way and «Pages liked» - other Facebook sites referred to «likes»;
- Page Performance: «Page Properties» - assesses the number of «likes», «Likes Growth» expressed as a percentage, PTAT - rates «talking about», - «Engagement Rate» - represents the percentage of the target group intervention, «Checkins» - shows the number of specific markings on the social network
- Posts by Pages: evaluates the average number of posts per day, the average number of «likes», comments and shares per post, percentage based on the type of contribution taking into consideration whether it is a picture, video or hyperlink, post per type, timing, length of posts, curiosity, hashtags and the final parameter is «Comments» where it evaluates the possibility of contributing the fan observations from the site and also time stamp when fans make the greatest contribution.

Obtained values are calculated from the date of site establishment on the Facebook and the average values are converted to the period of the existence of a company on the Facebook site.

Parameter optimisation, however, is questionable. Experts' opinions in this regard vary. There are rather different



\* An estimate for the year

Fig. 2: Evolution of the number of users of social networks in the world from 2010 with expected by 2019 (in billion)

Source: [12]

recommendations on how many posts per day should be published and in what time period. Optimisation is based on the recommendations of the LikeAlyzer portal for time periods when it is most appropriate to publish posts, which has the greatest impact and fans may positively assess them under which it is possible to modify and streamline the set operating rules for the success of the Facebook page.

#### 4. Results

Slovnaft Group is an integrated refinery and a petrochemical concern operating mainly in Central Europe. It is one of the key energy companies on the Slovak market and at the same time it is one of the major exporters of its commodities, as well as the major employer. Since this is a refinery and a petrochemical concern owning the most extensive network of gas stations in the Slovak Republic and its portfolio of products and services offered, it corresponds to the characteristics under the present study. Nevertheless, the company is often associated with a significant negative impact on the environment and community because of its activities. Therefore, besides the promotion of their products and services, Slovnaft is trying to declare positive attitudes and bring up its business activities to the principles of sustainable development and environmental protection. At the same time its philanthropic activities support the arts, culture, sport and education. All these activities are reported to the community by using the latest forms of marketing communication including Facebook. For these reasons, we have chosen to compare the Slovnaft page on Facebook and the page of its largest competitor in the Slovak market, OMV Slovakia, in terms of success via LikeAlyzer.

According to LikeAlyzer, the Slovnaft page on Facebook, is ranked 51st in the evaluation of communication activities of companies in Slovakia. The average ranking of the category of products/services is around 52 and the overall average in all categories is 53. Currently, it is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in its category, which we can evaluate as quite positive. According to LikeAlyzer, there are 49 similar brands in the Slovak Republic, which have their pages on Facebook. The current position is also given based on the number of «likes» from Facebook users compared with other similar entities included in that category, while the Slovnaft page on Facebook has currently 51,151 fans (as of 16 May 2016).

The OMV Slovakia page on Facebook is 63<sup>rd</sup> in the evaluation of communication activities of companies in Slovakia. Interestingly, LikeAlyzer ranked OMV Slovakia into the category of «Company». The average ranking in the company category is around 48 and the overall average in all categories, as

it has already been indicated, is 53. Currently, OMV Slovakia is ranked 16th in its category, which can be assessed positively. Its current position is also determined according to the number of «likes» from Facebook users compared with other similar entities included in that category, while the OMV Slovakia page has currently 35,683 fans (as of 16 May 2016).

While evaluating communication activities of Slovnaft on its page, we also analysed communication activities of its largest competitor in the Slovak market, which is OMV Slovakia. All parameters of evaluation are presented in Table 1.

The Slovnaft page provides fans with all the necessary background information with a detailed characterisation of its business activities and goals, which is considered to be «complete» information about the company. Its positive aspect is the number of fans on Facebook, while evaluation within the parameters «Curiosity» and «Extent of PTAT» that could be assessed positively. Nevertheless, it is a subjective opinion related to the absence of a metric of positive and negative assessments of individual parameters.

We negatively evaluate the average increase in «likes», as well as the engagement range (ER), which would need to be improved in order to target key segments more effectively. The ER Slovnaft is 0.2%, which is very low compared to the average range of successful sites, which is between 2% and 6%. The «Number of Signs» parameter shows the same insufficient evaluation - 609 in proportion to the number of Facebook fans on the Slovnaft page (51,151 fans of which only 609 mentioned Slovnaft in their posts). Thus, it would be appropriate to implement communication activities to support tagging of Slovnaft and its next mutual sharing.

The communication strategy of Slovnaft on Facebook is that the average number of messages per day is 0.44, which means that posts are published on alternate days. LikeAlyzer evaluated the average values for the period of existence of the company on its Facebook page.

Most experts on social networks suggest 1 post per day, possibly 5 posts per week, which means that the average number of posts per day should be 0.72. Sharing posts or commenting on posts is at the level of 131, of which 50% is images, videos comprise 4.2% and hyperlinks stand for 45.8%, from which it becomes clear that images are considered to be the most popular type of posts related to the Slovnaft Facebook page. They receive the greatest number of «likes» and create other social interactions. Most of the posts are published between 15:00 and 18:00. However, the time span of the greatest possible impact of the posts is between 12:00 and 15:00 o'clock. In this regard, it is necessary

to reconcile the time of posting with the time when most users are interested in posts.

The average content of posts is between 100 and 500 characters, which shows the essence and the spirit of a brief and concise manner, which is usually highly appreciated by users. Currently, all marketing communication activities are set towards Slovak football and social interaction. They are presented in a way that promotes the national team of Slovakia at the forthcoming European Football Championship by meeting with football stars and getting t-shirts with the logo of the national football team. It is likely that the evaluation parameters will grow during the football championships, which will improve the ranking of the Slovnaft Facebook page.

The OMV Slovakia page provides complete information about the company, defining five milestones of its history. The number of the company's fans is also sufficient. Another positive rate is the timing of the disclosure of posts, which is identical to the time when

Tab. 1: Ranking of the Slovnaft and OMV Slovakia Facebook pages by LikeAlyzer as of May 2016

Page name	Slovnaft	OMV Slovakia
Category	product/service	company
Web page	www.slovnaft.sk	www.omv.sk
Information	complete	complete
Milestone	10	5
Favourite page	>10	7
Number of «likes»	51,151	35,683
Average growth of «likes»	0,17%	0,99%
PTAT – extent of «talking about»	104	773
ER – outreach	0.2%	2.1%
Tags	609	278
Average posts per day	0.44	0.46
The average number of «like», share and comment on posts	131 (50% pictures, 4.2% videos, 45.8% hyperlinks)	215 (91.7% pictures, 8.3% hyperlinks)
The timing of posts	15:00 - 18:00	15:00 - 18:00
Time span of the highest reach of post	12:00 - 15:00	15:00 - 18:00
Average length of posts	100 - 500 letters	100 - 500 letters
Curiosity	Good	Good
Hashtags	Yes, lot of users	No
Possibility of posting by fans	Yes, mostly pictures	Yes, but rarely happens
Timestamp of posts	12:00 - 15:00	-

Source: Own processing according to data available on LikeAlyzer

posts are reported to have the greatest impact and most fans are active. The «Interest» parameter can also be rated positively, which indicates that OMV Slovakia's communication activities on Facebook are interesting for fans, but they do not attract new users because the ratio of «likes» stands at 0.99%.

Slovnaft and OMV Slovakia have the same low values in the category of PTAT. On the other hand, it should be stressed that OMV Slovakia in the value of extent is within the range of 2%-6%. Both companies have approximately the same value in the average number of posts per day. It is interesting that the posts to OMV Slovakia consist of pictures (91.7%), videos (0%) and hyperlinks (8.3%). Another negative trend in communication activities of OMV Slovakia is a very poor and weak post rate on the Facebook page. Nevertheless, while showing negative trends, communication activities of OMV Slovakia can be assessed positively.

From the published data, it is possible to say that Slovnaft, as well as OMV Slovakia, seeks to continually and substantially update communication content through Facebook, which helps the companies to build an interactive relationship with their fans based on loyalty. Communications are supported by various competitions through which more fans are engaged in social interaction and increase the effectiveness of communication through social networks.

### 5. Conclusions

Today, along with traditional communication, which has been applied by businesses and considered to be highly effective (advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, etc.), there appear new elements of the communication Under the influence of global changes in the business

environment, as well as changes in consumer behaviour and incredibly fast development of new information and communication technologies, the so-called progressive methods of marketing communication have developed. The Internet has become their essence.

The trend called Facebook mania on a global scale and accompanied by an enormous increase in internet usage, offers companies completely new possibilities for communicating corporate messages, supporting their expansion into new territories and representing a huge potential for the expansion of their business activities, thus increasing sales and winning new customers. Social networks as new media make it possible to break down the borders of intercultural communication. The Internet as a basic platform through which it is realised is giving an opportunity to freely send messages in time and space and thus affecting both domestic and foreign consumers. Therefore, we believe that the sphere of international marketing communication and effective use of social networks as a way to be successful and competitive in the uncompromising environment of international markets are open for businesses. Such conclusions also confirm our published evaluation of the effectiveness of the marketing communications carried out by Slovnaft, Inc. on its Facebook page and its largest competitor in the Slovak market OMV Slovakia.

The increasing application of the innovative elements of the marketing communication within the business strategy of companies enable them to have a strong competitive position in the market and build long-term and good relations with customers.

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