

## Development of Internet communication and social networking in modern conditions: institutional and legal aspects

*Desarrollo de la comunicación por Internet y las redes sociales en condiciones modernas: aspectos institucionales y legales*

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### Abstract

The development of the Internet, which has been active over the past two decades, is leading to the formation of new forms of human interaction on the World Wide Web. One of such forms is actually social networks, which from the beginning of their activity are used mainly as a way to ensure human communication. However, such big number of consumers with the usual ways of buying goods and services, lead to the search for new platforms for companies to do business, which in turn provokes the transition of social networks to a fundamentally new level of activity. At the same time, the necessity to structure activities in social networks provokes the need for the formation and application of communication strategies, which determines the relevance of this study. To conduct this research, we used methods of comparison, analysis and synthesis, graphical method, method of systematization and generalization, analyzed statistics concerning the share of the most popular social networks in the social media market, the number of users in different regions, as well as their age, composition and the level of income. The information base for the study was data published on the Global Stats website, the Statista portal, as well as Sprout Social for 2020. As a result of the study, it was found that communication through social networks is becoming increasingly popular. However, when preparing a strategy for their implementation, it is important to take into account a number of organizational and legal aspects, including the need to study very detailed the environment of future activities by social listening, the usage of content marketing methods. There is also a need to disseminate not only advertising publications, but informative ones, in which there is high-quality visual support. Among the legal aspects there is the possibility of disclosure of confidential information, the usage of unfair competition, illegal usage of intellectual property, and so on. At the same time, we have found that during the implementation of the communication strategy it is necessary to move away from standard social platforms, and look for new, unoccupied niches for activities, which are becoming more and more.



**Keywords:** Social Media, Communication Strategy, Organizational Aspects, Legal Aspects, Stages of Strategy Formation, Directions of Strategy Direction.

## Resumen

El desarrollo de Internet, que ha estado activo durante las últimas dos décadas, está conduciendo a la formación de nuevas formas de interacción humana en la World Wide Web. Una de esas formas son en realidad las redes sociales, que desde el inicio de su actividad se utilizan principalmente como una forma de asegurar la comunicación humana. Sin embargo, tal cantidad de consumidores con las formas habituales de compra de bienes y servicios, lleva a la búsqueda de nuevas plataformas para que las empresas hagan negocios, lo que a su vez provoca la transición de las redes sociales a un nivel fundamentalmente nuevo de actividad. Al mismo tiempo, la necesidad de estructurar actividades en redes sociales provoca la necesidad de la formación y aplicación de estrategias de comunicación, lo que determina la relevancia de este estudio. Para realizar esta investigación, utilizamos métodos de comparación, análisis y síntesis, método gráfico, método de sistematización y generalización, analizamos estadísticas sobre la participación de las redes sociales más populares en el mercado de las redes sociales, el número de usuarios en diferentes regiones, como así como su edad, composición y nivel de ingresos. La base de información para el estudio fueron datos publicados en el sitio web Global Stats, el portal Statista, así como Sprout Social para 2020. Como resultado del estudio, se encontró que la comunicación a través de las redes sociales se está volviendo cada vez más popular. Sin embargo, a la hora de preparar una estrategia para su implementación, es importante tener en cuenta una serie de aspectos organizativos y legales, entre ellos la necesidad de estudiar muy detalladamente el entorno de las actividades futuras mediante la escucha social, el uso de métodos de marketing de contenidos. También existe la necesidad de difundir no solo publicaciones publicitarias, sino informativas, en las que exista un soporte visual de alta calidad. Entre los aspectos legales se encuentra la posibilidad de divulgación de información confidencial, uso de competencia desleal, uso ilegal de propiedad intelectual, etc. Al mismo tiempo, hemos constatado que durante la implementación de la estrategia de comunicación es necesario alejarse de las plataformas sociales estándar, y buscar nuevos nichos de actividades desocupados, que cada vez son más.

**Palabras clave:** Redes Sociales, Estrategia de Comunicación, Aspectos Organizacionales, Aspectos legales, Etapas de Formación de la Estrategia, Direcciones de la Dirección de la Estrategia.



## Introduction

Every year, information moves faster and faster, and communication between people becomes easier, which ultimately affects the fact that the world seems smaller. As a result, the ways of communication between people from all over the world are changing, especially with the high level of popularity of social networks.

So, before the era of the Internet, and in particular social media, opportunities for communication were largely limited and were included only in the framework of personal acquaintance. Now, there is a process of global informatization as a basis for establishing strong relationships between all members of society, as well as their inclusion in the active exchange of information, which takes place along with the intensification of the process of creating information.

One of the key elements in this is the actual social networks. They have largely erased the boundaries of borders and allowed to establish communication between people in real time. The growth of social activity of information exchange participants has led to the reform of social networks from a source of communication to a three-dimensional platform for doing business. They provide an opportunity to establish communication with customers, as well as to develop the separation of the category of influencers and thoughts of the leaders. With the help of such a situation there is an indirect influence on users by various business representatives.

So, there is a need to structure and streamline the process of interaction between participants in the communication process through social networks, which is expressed in the need to form and apply a specific strategy, which in turn determines the high relevance of the study.

## Literature review

The study of the available literature concerning the usage of communication through social networks, allows us to draw conclusions about the high level of interest from both scientists and business representatives. The intensification of interest in the Internet, as well as its growing role can be traced back to the beginning of this millennium. Thompson (2002) noted that the Internet from the information network. This network will soon gain active commercial use. In particular, the author singled out social networks as one of the areas of future business activity. Studying the current situation, we can see the confirmation of the author's predictions.

In addition, Akimov et al. (2020) conducted a study and concluded that the rapid development of the Internet led to an intensification of online shopping, which took place along with increasing people's confidence in electronic payment systems. This is primarily about trading through company websites. However, this line of business is currently oversaturated with sellers and buyers, which makes it difficult for end consumers to choose from a wide range of manufacturers. This puts the platform of social networks on a fundamentally new level of communication between all participants.

Social media continues to be a major ever-growing component of the Internet, as its number of users grows daily. At the same time, social media presents the possibility of using additional channels to reach interested parties in the promotion of news, publications, products, programs and other resources. In addition to disseminating information, social media offers the opportunity to interact with interested parties and form online communities to bring people together with common interests. At the same time, social networks are not comprehensive and they are only a significant participant in the communication process, but not their only element (Iowa State University, 2017).

At the same time, Bhamare (2020) notes that the appearance of social media has created a new space to facilitate daily information and communication needs. With the development of technology and the expansion of communication, it is social media that become a vital tool for organizing daily social interaction. This, creates an opportunity for people to interact with each other in a way that stimulates people's social motivation.

The boom of digital communication technologies around the world has affected the transition of organizations to a fundamentally new level of activity. So, maintaining the image of transparency and responsiveness, business representatives are increasingly forming a dialogue with customers on their chosen platforms. This is especially true for NGOs (Mangini et al., 2020).

Bakker (2018) was studying the features of communication through social networks. He notes that the usage of communication strategies is one of the most pressing topics in marketing and public relations. As a result, companies are increasingly integrating influential social media into their communication and marketing strategies in order to achieve organizational development goals.

LePage and Newberry (2019), speaking about the communication strategy, emphasizes that it is an outcome of all the actions and goals that the company or organization plans to achieve and do in



the social network. Actions are managed through strategy, as well as an assessment of how successful the company is. Success assessment is based on available responses to publications in the form of likes and comments.

In addition, Eichmann (2020), speaking about the impact of social media on the activities of business representatives, notes that they allow to communicate with end users, spread positive feedback, new trends or products, coordinate efforts to communicate with the public, so as not to miss new opportunities for media exposure or attracting customers, etc. However, all these actions are made to increase the effectiveness. Their implementation requires the use of communication strategy.

### Data and methods

Methods of analysis and synthesis, comparison and graphical method were used to analyze the statistical data used in the work. In particular, the graphical method was used to analyze the share of the most popular networks in the social media market, as well as to determine the share of users of social networks in the different regions. The method of analysis and synthesis was used to study the distribution of users of social networks according to the age principle and their level of income.

In addition, the methods of systematization, grouping and logical generalization are used in this work for systematization of information, formation

of sound conclusions and proposals. The analytical basis for the study was data from Global Stats (2020), the Statista portal (2020), as well as Sprout Social (2020).

### Results

The necessity for communication is one of the basic needs of human civilization. The development of scientific and technological progress has caused a significant push in simplifying the process of human communication, in particular through the invention of telephones, the Internet, and as a result - all types of social networks.

However, over time, the niche of social networks began to grow from a source of communication into a broader concept, covering the field of advertising, marketing, sales, targeted influence and much more. Therefore, they are now used not only by ordinary people, but also by companies, shops, public figures, etc. Every year, the social media platform is expanding and developing the boundaries of its activities, and therefore requires the use of modern methods of planning activities, a clear example of which is the strategy, in particular communication.

However, before proceeding to consider the peculiarities of the formation and application of communication strategy, we analyze the rating of the usage of various social networks in percentage in the period from 2015 to 2020 (Fig. 1).

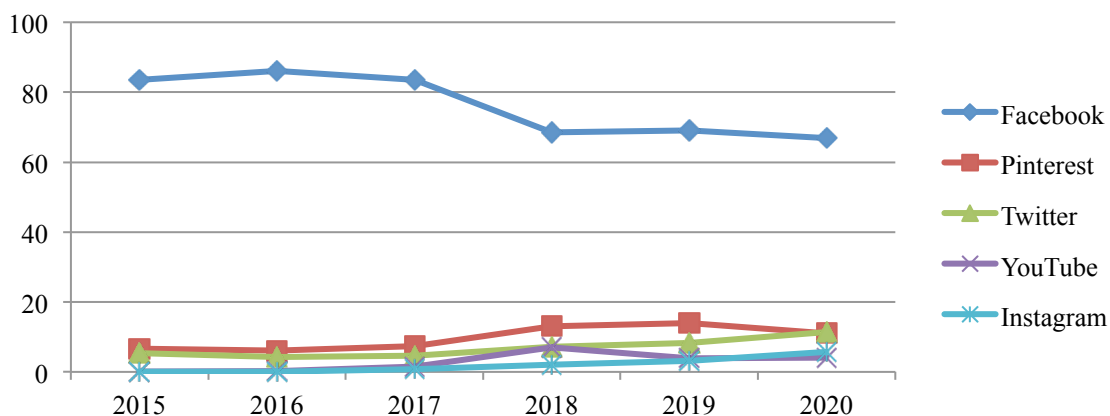


Figure 1. Share of the most popular networks in the social media market (%). Source: Statista (2020)

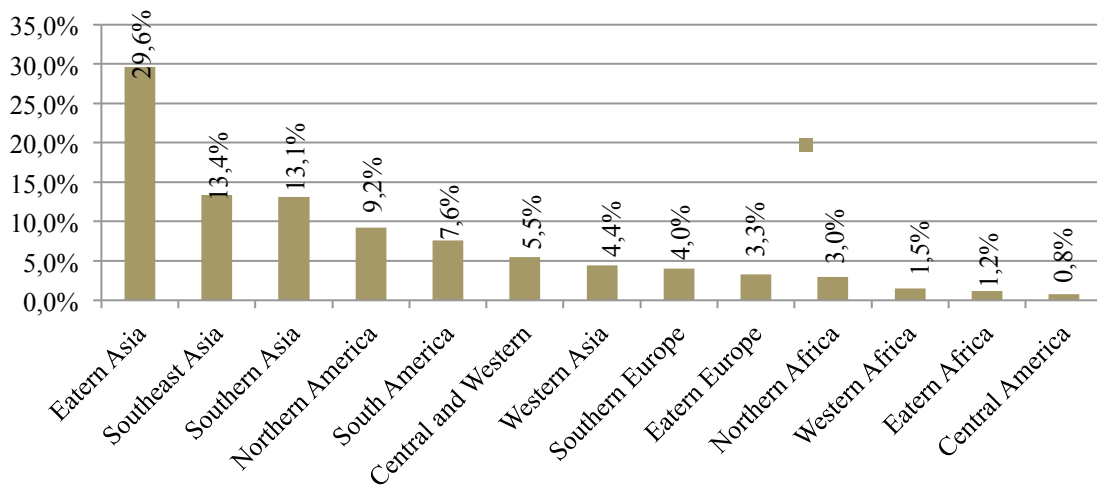
So, from the figure below we can see that the largest share of the social media market is Facebook, but over the past two years, the percentage of coverage is beginning to decline. In addition, there is an increase in the share of Pinterest and Twitter coverage until 2019, while in 2020 we can see a slight decline. However, the data for the last year are not final, so they cannot serve as a basis for drawing conclusions.

Along with this, we can see the growth of the share of YouTube coverage until 2018, and its gradual decline starting in 2019. There is one more social network - Instagram, we can see a steady upward trend.

At the same time, the number of users of social networks in the regions of the world varies

considerably. A clear reflection of the regional distribution of users of social networks in 2020 is

obtained from Fig. 2.

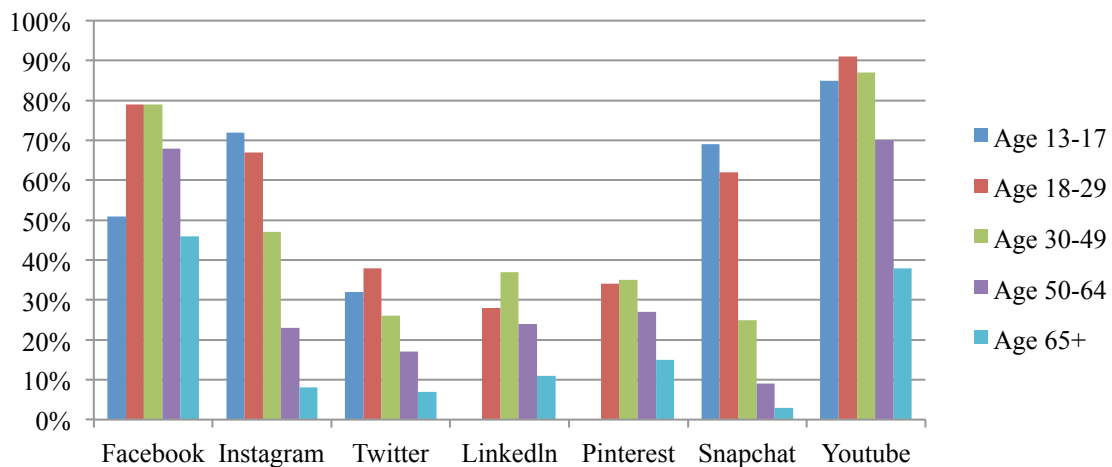


**Figure 2.** The number of users of social networks in the regional context

Source: Statista (2020)

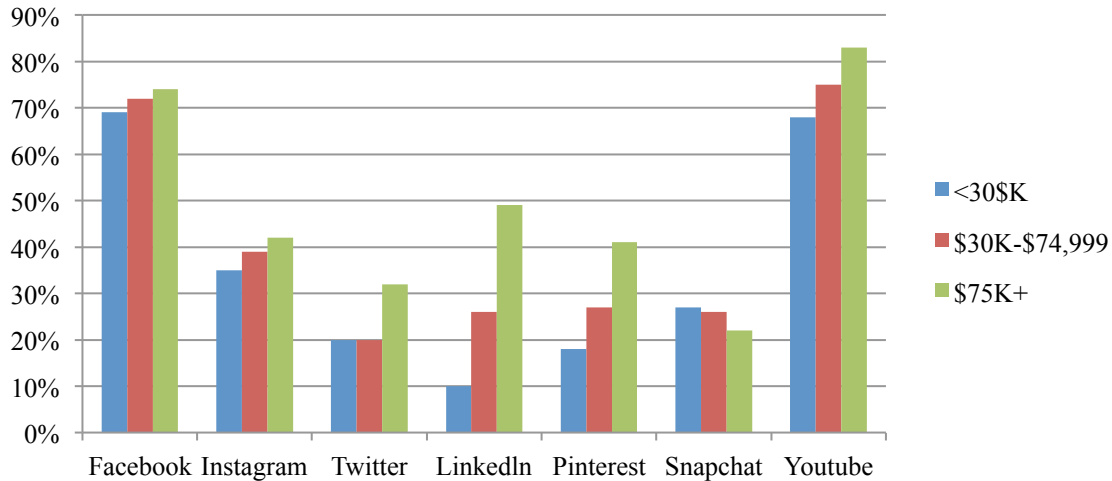
So, from the data shown in the figure, we can see that the largest number of social network users is concentrated in East Asia - 29.6%, as well as Southeast and South Asia - 13.4% and 13.1%, respectively. It is followed by North America and South America - 9.2 and 7.6%. In Central and Western Europe, 5.5% use social networks. The lowest number of social network users is tracked in Central America - 0.8%. In addition, to increase the effectiveness of the strategy, it is extremely important to take into account the target audience to which it will be directed. In this case, it is advisable to conduct a survey of users of the most popular social networks by age. The data will be displayed using Fig. 3. So, from the figure above, we can see that the largest number of users of almost all social

networks is from 18 to 49 years. There are some differences. So, the Facebook network is used almost on the same level by people aged 13-17 and those who are 65 and even older. The Instagram is mostly used by people aged 13-29, but people who are 65 and older do not use it. Now let's talk about LinkedIn, there are no users aged 13-17 at all or their number is negligible, as in Pinterest. On the other hand, Snapchat is hardly used by people over the age of 50. The highest level of usage by all ages is seen on Youtube, which is popular with both young and old people. In addition, it is important to take into account the income factor of users of social networks when formulating a strategy. Its distribution is seen in Fig. 4.



**Figure 3.** Age distribution of users of the most popular social networks

Source: Sprout Social (2020)



**Figure 4.** Distribution of users of the most popular social networks by income level

**Source:** Sprout Social (2020)

So, from the data above, we can conclude that users of almost all income levels actively use such social networks as Facebook and YouTube. At the same time, the highest level of income is dominated by users of Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and people with an income of up to 30 thousand dollars use Snapchat most of all.

After analyzing the environment of strategy implementation, which is not limited to our data, but can be much more thorough and detailed, depending on the activities of business or organization, we move to choosing the type of strategy from the list of possible social networks on the platform. In order to increase the effectiveness of communication strategies, the following recommendations should be followed:

1. Social Listening. Social listening involves the analysis of conversations about our brand and our products, as well as information about the market for our products and even the field of social media about competitors. Such monitoring helps to form an understanding of current interests and problems, as well as to identify potential customers along with increasing social interest. However, at the same time, active communication through social networks can negatively affect business through customer criticism. On the other hand, the company develops awareness of existing complaints, as well as the ability to respond to them (Tamble, 2019).

2. Content marketing. The actual usage of content marketing in the process of forming a communication strategy is caused by the daily growth of content in social networks, and hence the growth of competition between them in terms of quality. After all, the better the company knows its target audience, the better it will be able to

customize publications for it. It is a key element of success on the social media platform.

3. Integration of strategy in social media to *the general corporate integrated marketing strategy of communication*. This means using your social media block or page as a content hub to create, collect and publish marketing information, including creating new products and services to increase reach. In addition, you need to keep your social media accounts consistent and easily separated from other pages.

4. More interesting and informative publications, less sales. After all, in the era of social communications, customer relationships do not begin and end only with sales. Companies need to maximize their value among customers to stimulate customer-to-customer marketing and develop strong and long-term relationships. So, to increase the effectiveness of communication within the page in social media, it is necessary to provide answers to key questions and problems that arise during the sale and use of the product. It is necessary to offer advice to solve common problems and issues in the industry, develop innovations, templates and pieces of advice. The availability of useful materials and examples will show buyers the optimal use of the company's products and services (Tamble, 2019).

5. More visual information, less text, as images and videos are one of the most popular forms of Internet content and are much easier to perceive and remember by users (Barnhart, 2020).

6. Experimenting with media formats and social platforms. As the field of social media develops very rapidly, along with the popular Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, there are many communities and media formats for learning and

development, which will be much easier to implement a communication strategy due to lower competition (Barnhart, 2020).

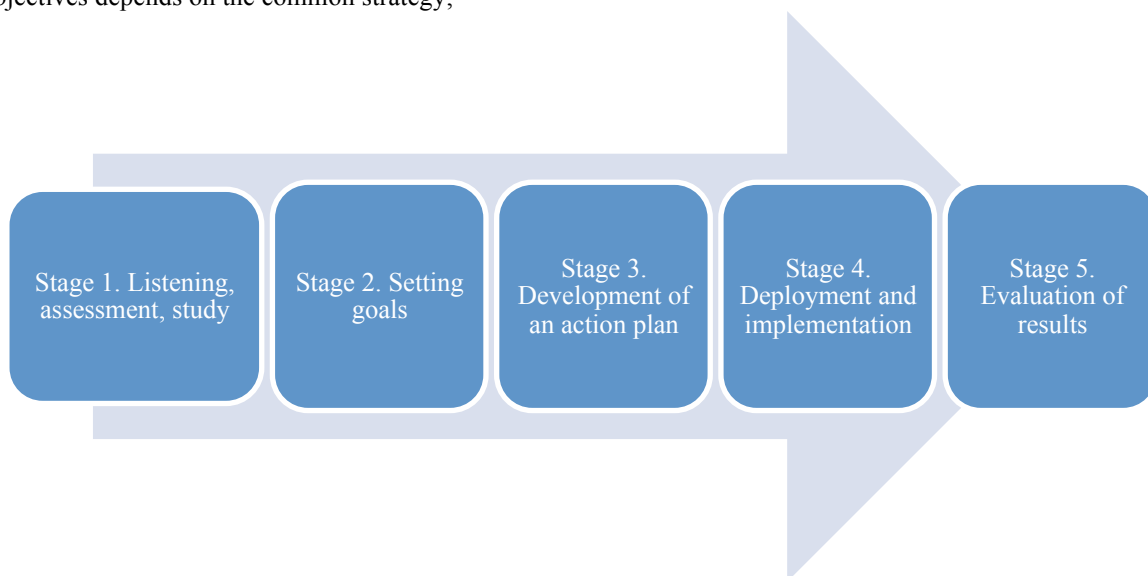
At the same time, Li and Bernoff (2011) in their work note that in the process of developing a strategy it is necessary to consider every individual case, rather than using general ready-made models. In addition, the authors stressed that the strategy in social media is based on four areas:

- people - what they are interested in, with whom they communicate, who they are, what are their age, gender, preferences, what is their hobby, level of involvement in social media, etc., because these factors further influence the communication strategy;
- goals, as the clarity of the definition of goals and objectives depends on the common strategy;

- strategy of interaction with clients, through the formation of answers to questions that the company wants to get as a result of communication; whether she is satisfied with the current level of communication, as well as what steps can be taken to increase brand awareness;
- technology that helps to reach target audiences through the use of blogs, content communities, video channels or social networks, etc.

At the same time, the ready-made strategy should be constantly revised and improved to maximize adaptation to the changing environment of its direction.

So, the whole process of developing a strategy for communication through social media can be generalized as follows (Fig. 5):



**Figure 5.** Stages of developing a communication strategy through social media

**Source:** European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2016)

It is worth noting that the process of developing and implementing a communication strategy is continuous. It is manifested in the fact that the evaluation of available results is closely interacted with the phase of listening, evaluation and study, which serve as a basis for further strategy development. So, the end of one communication strategy occurs along with the emergence of a new one, as a basis for effective and long-term activities in social media.

Along with a complex cycle of organizational aspects for the formation and application of communication strategy through social networks, it is common to highlight a number of legal features. In particular, among them we have:

- the possibility of disclosing confidential information. Any information can quickly spread

through an extensive network of social media due to negligence of employees;

- the possibility of illegal usage of trademarks, especially by companies that are just starting out intentionally or negligently. In this case, the interpretation of the situation can be from two positions - favorable, when the trademark owner considers the case as additional advertising and does not object to such use, or from a negative position, when the company intentionally uses the trademark to make a profit without permission. It may be legally liable (Pearce, Booth & Berry, 2016);

- expressing disrespect for competitors, which subsequently provoked prosecution. The specific of implementing a communication strategy is social networks. It does not exclude the possibility of prosecution for defamation or humiliation of honor and dignity. So companies need to build a communication strategy to reveal their own



strengths, rather than emphasizing the negative aspects of others (Pearce, Booth & Berry, 2016); - the possibility of prosecution for illegal use of audio, photos, videos. The severity of the problem is due to the frequent lack of reference to the owners of these materials in their posts on their copyright protection or a general lack of understanding among those who distribute reports on infringement of intellectual property rights.

In addition, it is extremely important to study the specifics of the social network chosen to implement the communication strategy. Without proper thorough analysis it may happen that the materials published by the company do not meet the requirements of the social network and the company can be prosecuted.

To eliminate the existing risks, the company's management must constantly monitor social media accounts for compliance with the rules and requirements of the social network and current legislation or choose a responsible employee for this purpose. In addition, it is important to train the all staff on the legal aspects of activities through social networks. In addition, the usage of online filters and digital security measures should not be neglected (Suthar, 2017).

Of course, such a wide range of measures will usually be taken by large companies with a large staff. Representatives of small business are recommended to be engaged in self-development in order to ensure their activities within the legal field. Any negative consequences of prosecution can have critical consequences for them.

### **Discussion**

The study has found that social media has increasingly shifted from a communication platform to a business platform over the past decade. They are increasingly used by companies to form a positive image among customers, as well as to spread positive feedback about them among users. However, the complexity and diversification of the environment of social networks requires the structuring of all further actions of companies, which is transformed in the necessity to form a communication strategy.

At the same time, the development of a communication strategy includes many features and stages. So, it is necessary to assess and study the environment during its formation, set goals that should be achieved in the end, develop a specific list of actions and then you can proceed to direct implementation and evaluation. At the same time, it is important to take into account the interests of the target audience when building messages for

communication, either in the form of posts or in the form of video appeals, to maximize their interest and form a positive image of the company. Modern marketing tools are useful in this case.

In addition to the above, it is extremely important to ensure the implementation of the communication strategy within the legal field, taking into account all possible legal aspects of social media.

### **Conclusions**

The research conducted within the framework of this scientific article allows us to draw conclusions that the rapid development of the popularity of social networks has provoked their transformation from a communication environment into a platform for doing business. Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear action plan for the successful organization of companies in social networks. One of such plans is a communication strategy, according to which the company's activities are coordinated in the process of communication with various target audiences.

However, the development and implementation of the strategy contains a complex list of preliminary actions. Among them we may underline the study of the environment of future activities, where an important element is the analysis of users, their interests, age, income level, education. This requires processing large amounts of information. Only after carrying out analytical actions we have an opportunity to proceed to the establishment of communication goals, development of an action plan and its direct implementation. The implementation of the strategy is completed by evaluating the achieved results. These results are gradually entering the stage of developing a new strategy.

At the same time, the scientific article identifies recommendations for strategy development. Here we include the usage of social listening, content marketing, integration of strategy in social media to the common, corporate and integrated marketing communication strategy, publication of more informative posts, rather than publications just for selling, with their visual reinforcement.

In addition, it should be noted that social media activities carry many legal threats that need to be investigated before starting activities in order to minimize risks, which in turn will significantly increase the beneficial effect of the strategy.

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