

The Use of Social Media as a Marketing Communication Channel by the Largest Ports of the Baltic Sea Region

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ABSTRACT: Social media is used by more and more organizations, including seaports, because digital communication channels are an important tool in creating the brand image and one of the ways to build good relationships with stakeholders. Despite the fact that seaports are an important factor in the economic development of individual countries – which largely affects many groups of potential stakeholders – the issues of analysing marketing communication activities carried out by seaports using social media are not sufficiently recognised. Therefore, the main objective of the article is to analyse the business use of this marketing communication channel by the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region in order to assess the potential impact of this marketing communication channel on stakeholders. In order to achieve the aim of the study, the research used the desk research method and the method of observation via the Internet (a.k.a. web-based ethnographic research, or netnography). The results show, among others, that seaport profiles that are highly active on social media have the highest number of followers for a given profile. This demonstrates that regular and systematic maintenance of one's social media accounts results in increased interest from the audience and can thus influence potential stakeholders. Publishing audience-engaging content on your accounts can raise your organisation's profile, generate more interest in the content on your website, and contribute to building trust and audience bonds with your organisation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social media, including websites, have been around for over 20 years and have significantly influenced the dynamics of interactions between companies and customers. Increasingly, businesses are effectively using social media in their marketing strategies [1]. In addition, social media constitute an extremely important tool in creating the brand image. Consequently, the skilful combination of traditional and digital communication channels is increasingly contributing to achieving sustainable competitive advantage [16]. Therefore, social media - as a form of communication with the public - is being used by more and more organisations, including seaports. It is crucial

for companies to remain active on social media, as it is also one way of building stable relationships with stakeholders [8]. In the case of seaports, the above-mentioned stakeholders, who are often mentioned by ports, e.g. in reports on the social responsibility of organizations or stakeholder management policies [28, 29], are primarily: the local community, employees, partners, customers, suppliers, shareholders. Through the use of social media, seaports can not only bring the reality of their operations closer to the public, provide updates on their activities, but also engage in dialogue with different stakeholder groups. Although seaports are an important factor in the economic development of individual countries, which largely affects many groups of potential stakeholders (generating, among

others, many thousands of jobs), the issues of analysis of activities related to marketing communication conducted by seaports using social media are not sufficiently recognized in the literature of the entity. The main objective of the article is, thus, to analyse the business use of social media as a marketing communication channel by the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region in order to assess the potential impact of this marketing communication channel on stakeholders.

2 THE LARGEST BALTIC SEAPORTS

The Baltic Sea region is not clearly defined in the literature. It consists of countries and their territories located directly on the Baltic Sea, but sometimes catchment areas are also included. Most commonly, however, the Baltic Sea region includes the nine countries located directly on the Baltic Sea, i.e. Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark [3]. Each of the countries mentioned has thriving seaports along their coastlines. The total transshipments of the ten largest ports of the Baltic Sea region amounted to 510 million tonnes in 2024, which means a 3.9% increase compared to the previous year [15]. In 2023, 489.5 million tons were transhipped in Baltic seaports, which was 1.5 percent more than in 2022 [25]. Table 1 shows the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region in terms of cargo volume for 2022-2024.

Table 1. Summary of the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region in terms of cargo volume in 2022-2024.

No	Port	Handling volume [thousands tons]		
		2022	2023	2024
1	Ust-Luga (Russia)	124 100	112 500	135 000
2	Gdańsk (Poland)	68 220	80 957	77 400
3	Primorsk (Russia)	57 100	63 100	60 700
4	St. Petersburg (Russia)	38 800	49 600	52 400
5	Gothenburg (Sweden)	40 492	36 300	40 000
6	Szczecin-Świnoujście (Poland)	38 810	35 323	32 400
7	Klaipėda (Lithuania)	36 100	32 668	35 200
8	Rostock (Germany)	28 975	30 900	30 100
9	Gdynia (Poland)	28 190	29 397	26 900
10	Riga (Latvia)	23 500	18 794	19 400
TOTAL		482 287	489 539	510 000

Source: based on [18, 15].

The share of the three largest Russian Baltic ports was around 46-48 per cent in 2023 and 2024, while the three Polish ports accounted for around 27-30 per cent of the share of all Baltic seaports in terms of cargo volume.

According to the overview provided, the largest port in the Baltic Sea is the Russian port of Ust-Luga, which is located on both sides of the Luga River, on the north-western coast of Russia, approximately 130 km south of St. Petersburg. It is a new deep-water port occupying an area of about 130 hectares and has 12 specialized transshipment terminals for coal, sulfur, containers, multipurpose cargo and wood. In the port of Ust-Luga, both bulk, liquid, general cargo, ro-ro and containers are handled [11].

The next port in terms of transshipment volume is the Polish port of Gdańsk. The port area covers a total of 1091.6 hectares (including 679 hectares of land area) and is divided into two areas: the inner port, located

along the Dead Vistula and the harbour channel, and the outer port, located directly on the waters of the Bay of Gdańsk. The port in Gdańsk is a deep-water, universal port, able to handle all types of cargo groups such as: general cargo, coal, liquid fuels, other bulk cargoes as well as cereals, wood and ore (general cargo also includes containerized and ro-ro cargo, as well as ferry and cruise passenger traffic) [20].

The third largest Baltic port is the Russian port of Primorsk located on the Björkö Sund mainland in the Gulf of Finland in the Baltic Sea (5 km south-east of Primorsk), which covers a total area of approx. 3450 ha (including a land area of approx. 250 ha). The port exclusively handles oil products transported by Russian oil exploration and refining companies and is the largest Russian oil transshipment port in the Baltic Sea [11].

Just behind the podium of the largest seaports is another Russian port located in St. Petersburg, which is one of the three main ports in Russia. The St. Petersburg port is located on islands at the mouth of the Neva River on the border of the Gulf of Finland and the rest of the Baltic Sea [14] and currently covers a land area of about 120 hectares (including the area of the reservoir: approx. 16 580 ha). It is a multipurpose port with various cargo terminals, including ro-ro and container terminals. Cargoes handled at the port include ferrous metals, non-ferrous metals, scrap metal, mineral fertilisers, roll-on/roll-off cargo, bulk materials, liquid cargo, general cargo, containers and oversize cargo. The port of St. Petersburg is also a major passenger port where cruise ships dock [11].

Another of the Baltic Sea's largest seaports is located on either side of the Göta älv estuary in Gothenburg, Sweden. It is the largest freight hub in Scandinavia, handling all types of cargo and also offering passenger services. Exports include mainly: steel, vehicles, forest products: paper, pulp and wood products, while imports include mainly consumer goods such as clothing, furniture, food, electronics, etc. Virtually all Swedish export trade is based on maritime transport, with almost 30% passing through the quays of the port of Gothenburg, which is also responsible for half of all container traffic throughout Sweden. As such, the port of Gothenburg plays a key role in Swedish imports and exports and is a leading player when it comes to strengthening Sweden's competitive strength [22].

The next largest ports in the Baltic Sea are those located at the mouth of the Oder river in the westernmost Polish cities of Szczecin and Świnoujście. These seaports form one of the largest port complexes in the Baltic Sea region. The port of Świnoujście is located directly by the sea and specializes in handling ferry connections with Scandinavia, as well as handling dry bulk cargo and ships with LNG fuel. The port of Szczecin, on the other hand, is situated 68 km inland, is of a universal nature and handles both general cargo and bulk goods. This port also specializes in handling and storing containers, metallurgical products, oversized loads, as well as paper and cellulose. The port of Szczecin is the largest transshipment centre for granite blocks in Poland. The port also handles dry bulk cargoes such as coal, coke, aggregates, grain, fertilisers and liquid cargoes (e.g. tar). The Port of Szczecin-Świnoujście is one of the most important organisations in the region and holds a

strategic position for the Polish economy, being a place of employment for around 350 employees [24].

Next on the list is the Lithuanian seaport located in Klaipėda, which covers a total area of 1442.8 ha (including a land area of 557.9 ha) and is the closest to the ports of Western and Northern Europe and the ports of southern Scandinavia. The Port of Klaipėda is a deep-water, multi-purpose and multi-functional port handling petroleum products, containers, general cargo, bulk and liquid cargoes, ro-ro cargoes, bulky cargoes and many other cargoes (such as fertilisers, mineral and chemical materials, agricultural products, metal products, liquid and frozen food products, construction materials, wood, peat). The Lithuanian port also serves cruise ship passengers [11]. The port is the largest port in Lithuania and contributes to the country's economy and is important for its development, as evidenced by the fact that it generates 6.18 per cent of Lithuania's total GDP and provides more than 58,000 jobs [23].

Another of the largest ports of the Baltic Sea basin is located in the German city of Rostock. Its total area is approx. 750 hectares. The Port of Rostock handles both general cargo such as steel and timber products, heavy and oversize cargo and so-called project cargo, dry bulk cargo such as coal, building materials, fertilisers and cereals, and liquid bulk cargo: fuels, crude oil, liquid fertilisers. In addition, the Port of Rostock handles passenger ferries and ro-ro vessels and is a thriving cruise centre. The aforementioned seaport is one of the most important maritime transport hubs in eastern Germany with a large impact on the economy due to the fact that there are about 150 enterprises operating in the port and its surroundings, which are directly or indirectly related to the maritime economy, being the place of employment of about 16,000 people [13, 27].

Another of the largest Baltic seaports is the port of Gdynia, located on the Bay of Gdańsk. It is one of the leading ports in the southern Baltic Sea covering a total area of 2996.3 ha (including a land area of 903.1 ha). The Port of Gdynia is a multi-purpose port specialising in general cargo, including mainly unitised, containerised and ro-ro cargo. An important segment of activity is also the handling of bulk cargo based on specialized terminals, as well as ferry and passenger service. The Port of Gdynia is one of the largest employers in Pomerania with an international profile [21].

The last of the ten largest ports in the Baltic Sea is the port located in the Latvian capital, Riga. It is the main port on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, which is located at the mouth of the Daugava River in the Gulf of Riga and currently covers an area of 6348 hectares (including 1962 hectares – land area). The port handles petroleum products, coal, container and general cargo, dry cargo, liquid cargo, chemicals, agricultural products, metal, roll-on/roll-off cargo, construction materials, timber, peat [5, 11]. The port of Riga is the largest port in Latvia, delivering more than 50% of the volume of cargo handled at Latvian ports annually. It covers more than 200 companies, including, among others, transshipment and storage terminals, manufacturing, shipbuilding and repair companies and ship agencies, and employs more than 4,000 people [5].

To sum up, ports are integral elements of the transport and logistics system of each coastal country, which play an important role in its economy, actively influencing not only the efficiency and effectiveness of the TSL sector [7], but also influencing to a large extent many groups of potential stakeholders (by generating, among others, many thousands of jobs or impacting the local community). And building good relationships with stakeholders can be achieved, among other things, by companies maintaining social media activity, which companies are increasingly using effectively in their marketing strategies [1].

2.1 Research methodology

In order to achieve the assumed goal of the work, the desk research method and the observation method were used in the research. First of all, in order to verify the current state of knowledge, a desk study was conducted, including content analysis and available statistical data, and a cross-sectional analysis and comparison of historical data [2] was carried out, focusing particularly on the topic of the largest Baltic seaports.

In the next step, an observational survey was conducted to identify marketing activities carried out on popular social media sites by the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region. This method is considered to be the most elementary method of empirical cognition, consisting in the purposeful and systematic perception of the object, process or phenomenon under study [17]. A type of covert observation was used in this study, as the social networks are publicly accessible [6] and the administrators of the selected profiles were not informed that their activities were being studied.

The observation process carried out consisted of several stages. Firstly, a survey site was selected where the objectives could be met - these were popular social media sites/websites such as: Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn. All of the aforementioned sites (except LinkedIn) are ranked as the most used social media platforms in the world. According to Digital 2024: Global Overview Report, Facebook is used by 3049 million users, Instagram by 2000 million and X by 619 million (with the caveat that users may not represent unique individuals) [4]. LinkedIn, despite not being included in the aforementioned ranking, was included in the analyses due to the fact that it is a professional social platform designed for the business community. The study was conducted in the period December 2024-January 2025. The next stage of observation was to perceive, collect and record the data obtained, in order to then move on to the final stage of drawing conclusions from the observations and interpreting the data obtained as part of the analysis.

Within the framework of this study, observation was carried out via the web, which is also referred to as web-based ethnographic research [10] or netnography, or sometimes virtual ethnography [9]. The advantage of ethnography is the ability to conduct observations in completely natural circumstances, where the researcher is invisible to the observed, because he uses qualitative data available to the public (e.g. on Internet forums or social networks). The object of observation was the profiles of the largest seaports in the Baltic Sea region in terms of volume of cargo

handling in 2022-2024, the characteristics of which are outlined in the subsection above.

As part of the observation carried out in social networks, the following activities were recorded:

- a review of the profiles of the largest seaports run on social networks and determining user interest in them;
- quantitative analysis of posts/posts published on the profiles of selected seaports.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis regarding the occurrence of profiles of the largest seaports of the Baltic Sea region in selected, most popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn. The table also shows the portals' use of their profile names and usernames (in the case of Instagram and X) on the social networks. The most commonly used social networks by ports are Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn - 70-80% of the ports surveyed maintain their profiles there. X, on the other hand, is used less frequently, with only 50% of the entities surveyed having an account available on this service.

While analysing the profile names used by seaports, in the case of Facebook, we find that these names are in the native language of the port in question, using letters specific to the language, such as 'Facebook'. Rīgas Brīvosta (for the Latvian port of Riga) or Port Szczecin-Świnoujście (for the Polish port). Only the port of Klaipėda used a double name in both Lithuanian and English in its profile name - 'Klaipėdos

uostas / Port of Klaipėda'. In the case of social networks such as Instagram or X, in addition to the profile name, there is also a username. On Instagram, most ports use their native language in their names as well as in their usernames, e.g. the Swedish port in Gothenburg: "Göteborgs Hamn" and "goteborgshamn", but also several ports use the English-language name in these media, e.g. the Polish port in Gdynia: "Port Gdynia Official" and "portgdyniaofficial". On the other hand, the names used by almost all the examined ports on the social networking sites X and LinkedIn are in English. It is worth noting at this point that the use of profile names and usernames by ports in their native languages on social networks can cause difficulties for potential other users or stakeholders to find a port's profile. The preferred language used for profile names should be English, which, as a means of communication in global business, provides one convenient method for people to communicate around the world [30]. English is the first language for communication in a globalised world, even in the European Union, where a small percentage of the population is native English speakers (just over 10%) 51% of people speak English [12]. And it is worth noting that the processes of globalisation and integration are also significantly changing the seaport environment, which has now become a complex, multi-factorial system of dependencies and interrelationships of economic, social, environmental, political and cultural elements [26].

Another aspect of the analysis was to determine the interest of users in profiles run by seaports in social networks. Table 3 shows the number of followers of the port's profile on each social network.

Table 2. Result of an analysis of the incidence of profiles of the largest seaports in the Baltic Sea region on selected popular social networks.

No	Port	Facebook	Social profile name (Facebook)	Instagram	Social profile name (Instagram)	Social profile name (Instagram)	X	Social profile name (X)	Social profile name (X)	LinkedIn	Social profile name (LinkedIn)
1	Ust-Luga (Russia)	PRESENT	Порт "Усть-Луга"	PRESENT	Порт Усть-Луга	portustluga	PRESENT	Ust-Luga Company	Ust_LugaCompany	ABSENT	-
2	Gdańsk (Poland)	PRESENT	Gdańsk	PRESENT	Port Gdańsk	portgdansk	PRESENT	Port of Gdańsk	PortGdanskZMPG	PRESENT	Port of Gdansk Authority
3	Primorsk (Russia)	ABSENT	-	PRESENT	ООО «Транснефть-Приморск»	transneft_port_primorsk	ABSENT	-	-	ABSENT	-
4	St. Petersburg (Russia)	ABSENT	-	ABSENT	-	-	ABSENT	-	-	ABSENT	-
5	Gothenburg (Sweden)	PRESENT	Göteborgs Hamn	PRESENT	Göteborgs Hamn	goteborgshamn	ABSENT	-	-	PRESENT	The Port of Gothenburg
6	Szczecin-Świnoujście (Poland)	PRESENT	Port Szczecin-Świnoujście	PRESENT	ZMPSiŚ	port_szczecin_swinoujście	PRESENT	Zarząd Morskich Portów Szczecin i Świnoujście	ZMPSiŚ	PRESENT	Szczecin and Świnoujście Seaports Authority
7	Klaipėda (Lithuania)	PRESENT	Klaipėdos uostas / Port of Klaipėda	PRESENT	Klaipėdos uostas	portofkleipeda	PRESENT	Port of Klaipėda	portofklaipeda1	PRESENT	Klaipėdos uostas/Port of Klaipėda
8	Rostock (Germany)	ABSENT	-	ABSENT	-	-	ABSENT	-	-	PRESENT	ROSTOCK PORT
9	Gdynia (Poland)	PRESENT	Port Gdynia	PRESENT	Port Gdynia Official	portgdyniaofficial	PRESENT	Port Gdynia Official	PortGdynia	PRESENT	Port of Gdynia Authority S.A.
10	Riga (Latvia)	PRESENT	Rīgas Brīvosta	PRESENT	Rīgas osta	rigasbrivosta	ABSENT	-	-	PRESENT	Freeport of Riga

Table 3. Summary of the number of followers of a given seaport's profile on social networks.

No	Port	Number of observers [Facebook]	Number of observers [Instagram]	Number of observers [X]	Number of observers [LinkedIn]
1	Ust-Luga (Russia)	1000	1469	8	-
2	Gdańsk (Poland)	13000	3705	2187	8000
3	Primorsk (Russia)	-	525	-	-
4	St. Petersburg (Russia)	-	-	-	-
5	Gothenburg (Sweden)	1700	3444	-	15000
6	Szczecin-Świnoujście (Poland)	7300	624	1237	2000
7	Klaipeda (Lithuania)	13000	1747	272	6000
8	Rostock (Germany)	-	-	-	3000
9	Gdynia (Poland)	13000	3705	1936	7000
10	Riga (Latvia)	4900	1412	-	2000

*as at 30.12.2024 r. „-” - if a port does not have a profile on a social networking site

The profiles of the ports of Gdańsk, Klaipeda and Gdynia are the most popular among users on Facebook. On Instagram, on the other hand, port profiles in Gdańsk and Gdynia also have the most followers, but the port in Gothenburg also has a comparable number of followers. As far as X is concerned, the Port of Gdynia and the Port of Gdańsk lead the way here as well, but it is worth mentioning here that in the case of this social network, only five ports have their profiles there. On LinkedIn, on the other hand, the profile of the Swedish port in Gothenburg has the most followers. The ports of Gdańsk, Klaipeda and Gdynia also have a large number of followers on this social networking site, but their numbers are about half that of the Swedish port.

Another issue that was subject to analysis was to determine the activity of the social media activities carried out by the largest ports in the Baltic Sea region through a quantitative analysis of posts made on social media profiles. Fig. 1. presents a graph showing the average number of posts per month published on social media profiles on Facebook, Instagram and X is presented. The average number of posts was calculated based on an analysis of the number of posts in three months in 2024, i.e. January, June and December. The graph does not include ports that do not have profiles on the aforementioned websites and those that did not show any activity on their profiles in 2024. Such an example is the Russian port of Ust-Luga, which had the last activity on its accounts: on Facebook and Instagram - last post 31 March 2022, X - last post 7 November 2017. Also, a similar situation exists for the Russian port of Primorsk, which has a profile on Instagram, but the last post on the account was recorded on 8 March 2022. The cessation of activities on social networks by the aforementioned ports is most likely due to the fact that, as a result of the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine, some social media platforms have restricted the functioning of Russian accounts [19]. This is also confirmed by the Digital 2024: Global Overview Report [4], which points out that Russia ranks low in a comparison of the average number of social media platforms used by internet users in a country. For example, for Poland the average number of social media platforms used is 5.9, for Sweden 6.7 and for Russia: 4.8 [4].

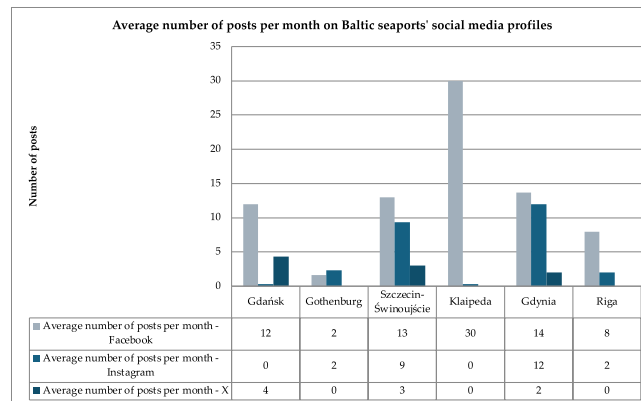


Figure 1. Average number of social media posts on Baltic seaport profiles per month.

Analysing the data obtained, it can be seen that the greatest activity of the surveyed seaports occurs with the social networking site Facebook. The port of Klaipeda publishes the most posts during the month (on average one post every day), while on average every 2-3 days, i.e. about 12-14 times a month, Polish seaports from Gdynia, Gdańsk and Szczecin-Świnoujście post posts on their profiles. The Latvian port of Riga posts on its profile a little less frequently, on average eight times a month, while the Swedish port of Gothenburg posts on average two times a month.

The activity on the Instagram social network is lower than in the case of Facebook. Some of the ports surveyed post one or even fewer posts per month and therefore the average monthly number of posts for ports such as Gdańsk and Klaipeda is zero. The port of Gothenburg and Riga publishes an average of one post every two weeks, while the Polish ports of Szczecin-Świnoujście and Gdynia publish about 9-12 posts per month, i.e. on average every 3 days. On the other hand, the lowest activity of seaports in the case of the surveyed social networks occurs on X. Some of the surveyed ports do not have profiles on X at all (Gothenburg, Riga), and the remaining ports conduct their activities on this website with moderate or low frequency. It is worth noting, however, that social media is mainly used by seaports to provide updates on current events taking place in the port as well as to bring the reality of seaport businesses to the audiences of these platforms. Table 4 presents exact data on the number of posts/entries involved in given periods in selected social networking sites.

Analyzing the activity of selected seaports in all the social networks surveyed, it should be noted that the profiles of Polish seaports in Gdynia, Gdańsk and Szczecin-Świnoujście are the most active. The port of Klaipeda also shows a lot of activity on its Facebook profile, but omits activity on the other available sites. And it is crucial for companies to maintain social media activity, as it is one way of building good relationships with stakeholders [8]. Social media, including websites, have been around for over 20 years and have significantly influenced the dynamics of interactions between companies and customers. Increasingly, companies are using social media effectively in their marketing strategies [1]. Furthermore, with the use of social media, feedback can be obtained quickly and easily and from customers and business partners [8].

Table 4. Data on the number of posts stirred up by seaports on selected social networks.

No	Port	Number of entries			Number of entries			Number of entries		
		[Facebook]			[Instagram]			[X]		
		1/2024	6/2024	12/2024	1/2024	6/2024	12/2024	1/2024	6/2024	12/2024
1	Ust-Luga (Russia)	last entry – March 31, 2022			last entry – March 31, 2022			last entry – Nov 7, 2017		
2	Gdańsk (Poland)	11	12	13	0	1	0	3	4	6
3	Primorsk (Russia)	-	-	-	last entry – March 8, 2022			-	-	-
4	St. Petersburg (Russia)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Gothenburg (Sweden)	0	3	2	2	3	2	-	-	-
6	Szczecin-Swinoujście (Poland)	10	14	15	7	8	13	4	2	2
7	Klaipėda (Lithuania)	12	47	31	1	0	0	last entry – Dec 7, 2022		
8	Rostock (Germany)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	Gdynia (Poland)	8	19	14	3	19	14	0	6	0
10	Riga (Latvia)	8	9	7	2	3	1	-	-	-

The results also show that the profiles of seaports (such as the ports of Gdynia, Gdańsk and Klaipėda), which are very active on social media, have the highest number of followers of a given profile (the only exception is the profile of the port of Gothenburg, which, despite its low activity, has a large group of followers on Instagram, for example). This proves that regular and systematic maintenance of their accounts on social networks results in increased interest on the part of the audience. Therefore, it can be concluded that the impact of this marketing communication channel may affect stakeholders, which may be, among others, the local community, employees, partners, customers, suppliers, as well as shareholders. By publishing audience-engaging content on their accounts, an organisation or brand becomes more visible and memorable to potential stakeholders, resulting in increased recognition of the organisation. In addition, social media activity may generate more interest in the content contained on the website, as social media profile accounts allow you to easily redirect your audience to the main websites, where ports usually have information on issues such as port services, general information, safety, environmental protection, as well as any news. Moreover, regular marketing communication on social media can contribute to building trust and a bond with an organisation or even create a community around these organisations, e.g. by audiences that are the port's local community, port employees or its customers. It is often the case that social networks are one of the first places where interested parties look for information about an organisation, hence the presence and activity in these media demonstrate an organisation's commitment to connect with potential stakeholders and its desire to create its image in modern marketing communication channels.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The article addresses the issue of the use of social media as a marketing communication channel by the major ports of the Baltic Sea region. The research shows that the most commonly used social networks by ports are Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, while X is used less frequently. The work also focuses on the analysis of the names of profiles used in social media by seaports. While the preferred language used for profile names should be English - which, as a medium of communication in a global business, provides one convenient method of communication - not all ports follow this principle, which can make it difficult for potential users or stakeholders to find a port's profile. Based on the obtained results, it can also be concluded that the profiles of seaports (such as ports in Gdynia, Gdańsk or Klaipėda), which are characterized by high activity in social media, also have the largest number of followers of a given profile among the respondents. This demonstrates that regular and systematic maintenance of one's social media accounts results in increased interest from the audience and can thus influence potential stakeholders. Publishing audience-engaging content on your accounts can raise your organisation's profile, generate more interest in the content on your website, and contribute to building trust and audience bonds with your organisation. Therefore, organisations, including seaports, that want to focus even more on creating a brand image and building good relationships with stakeholders should include the effective use of social media as part of their marketing strategies.

The subject matter presented in the article is very contemporary and subject to development. The authors believe that this article can contribute to further discussion and research on the use of social media as a modern marketing communication channel by seaports and its benefits. The directions of further research can be indicated, among others, a qualitative analysis of the content of posts published by seaports on social media, including the identification of content that most engages audiences. It would also be interesting to explore the attitudes of stakeholders (as well as their opinions) towards the marketing communications used by seaports on social media.

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