

# The use of social media in the communication and teaching process at Polish universities

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## Abstract

Higher education facilities currently operate in a strongly-competitive market, with determined unfavorable demographic processes, and have to compete for students. The strategic role, in addition to the service offer, when creating a positive image, is attributed to the adopted forms of communication. The most important environment, from the perspective of a higher education facility, is the student environment, being part of the Generation Millennials. The young generation of students use social media every day. In the social media they are looking for information, entertainment, communicate with friends. The authors carried out research among students and lecturers at a Polish university. The research was carried out in the area of the use of social media in the relations between lecturers and students in the field of communication and didactics.

## Keywords:

social media,  
higher education,  
university,  
communication

## Schlüsselwörter:

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## 1 Introduction

Higher education in Polish facilities currently operate in a strongly-competitive market, with determined unfavorable demographic processes, and have to compete for students. The strategic role, in addition to the service offer, when creating a positive image, is attributed to the adopted forms of communication. The most important environment, from the perspective of a higher education facility, is the student environment, being part of the Generation Millennials (generation C).<sup>2</sup> The young generation of students use social media every day, in the social media they are looking for information, entertainment, communicate with friends.<sup>3</sup>

A defining characteristic of new media is dialogue, transmit content through connection and conversation.<sup>4</sup> It enables people around the world to share, comment on, and discuss a wide variety of topics. Unlike any of past technologies, new media is grounded on an interactive community.<sup>5</sup>

Especially social media have a new specificity, the media are available around the clock, and based on interactivity, allows personalization of communications.<sup>6</sup> Social media gains a special value after the emergence

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<sup>2</sup> Hardey M., Generation C: content, creation, connections and choice, "International Journal of Market Research", Vol. 53, No. 6, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Garwol, K., Rola mediów społecznościowych w edukacji – stan obecny i perspektywy rozwoju, *Dydaktyka Informatyki* no. 12 (2017), p. 52

<sup>4</sup> Aghaei S., Nematbakhsh M.A., Farsani H.K., Evolution of the World Wide Web: from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0, „International Journal of Web & Semantic Technology”, Vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-10.

<sup>5</sup> Vogt, B., 2011, *The Church and New Media*, Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Inc, p.222.

of Web 2.0.<sup>7</sup> The evolution of the Internet helps us understand the emergence of this participatory platform that conceptualizes the importance of producing (or co-producing), distribution and democratization of information.<sup>8</sup> Social media are interactive means of communicating, collaborating and sharing information in virtual environments.<sup>9</sup> They are a very good resource that can be used in education and communication with students at the university. Social media may take the form of a variety of tech-enabled activities, include - photo sharing, blogging, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, business networks, virtual worlds, reviews and much more.<sup>10</sup>

The directions of communication mediated by new media at higher education facilities primarily include: university - students, university – employees, university - the external environment,, teachers - students, teachers - external environment, teachers – teachers. In fact, the only that remains beyond the control of higher education facilities is their students' communication via social media between themselves and between the students and the environment outside the university.<sup>11</sup> The two most important planes of communication are: students - students and lecturers - students.<sup>12</sup>

## 2 Method

The element important from the cognitive perspective, requiring a close-up and a diagnosis, part of the new reality, is the use of Web 2.0 in the teacher-student, student-student communication. Students, in the vast majority, come from the network generation for which the digital media and new technologies are inscribed in everyday life. However, the implementation of social media in the processes of communication and education at universities is still not widespread, although it is seen as an obvious consequence of the Web 2.0 era. The use of social media in communication at Polish universities is an important issue, but it is still relatively poorly analyzed.

The authors carried out research among students and lecturers at a Polish university. The research was carried out in the area of the use of social media in the relations between lecturers and students. The first survey was conducted at the end of 2015. the second study was carried out at the end of 2019. The research was conducted at the three largest universities in the Silesian region. The choice was dictated by the specifics of the region, it is one of the most developed provinces in Poland and the most industrialized region, it also stands out with the highest number of employees in the industry. The demographic, economic and market factors force Silesian universities to compete for students.

The research was carried out using the questionnaire method. 360 students took part in the study, 348 questionnaires were analyzed because some of the questionnaires were poorly completed, in 2019 - 351 questionnaires were analyzed. The sample size was set for a population of 60,000 students, with the confidence level  $\alpha = 0.95$ , fraction size at 0.5 and a maximum error of 5%. Among the surveyed students, the vast majority (87,4%) were young people aged 18 – 25. The lecturers also took in research, 104 university teachers were examined. The article presents a part of the data.

<sup>6</sup> Adamski A., Media w analogowym i cyfrowym świecie, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa 2012, p.43.

<sup>7</sup> Tess, P., The role of social media in higher education classes (real and virtual) – a literature review. Computers in Human Behavior, no. 29 (2013), p. 63. Available AT: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.09.11.2019>

<sup>8</sup> Romero, O. C., Social media as learning tool in higher education: The case of Mexico and South Korea. Revista Electronica Sinectica, no. 44 (2015), pp. 1–15, available at: [scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1665-109X2015000100011](https://scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1665-109X2015000100011) (09.11.2019)

<sup>9</sup> Mazurek G., Media społecznościowe w pracy akademików marketingu w Polsce – badania empiryczne, Studia Oeconomica Posnaniensia, 2018, vol. 6, no. 5, p.48

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan A.M., Haenlein M., Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media, „Business Horizons”2010, no. 53, pp. 59-68

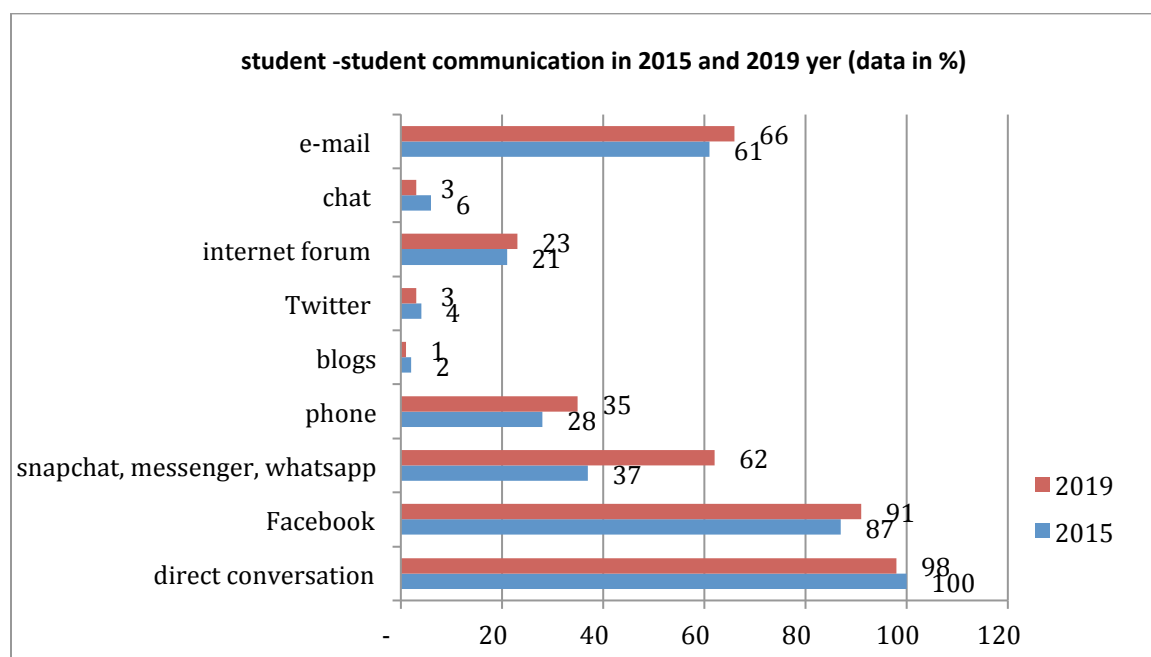
<sup>11</sup> Koszembar-Wiklik M., Public relations and relationship marketing of higher education facilities in the time of new media, Handel wewnętrzny, nr 4 (363), rocznik 62 (LXII), lipiec - sierpień 2016, s. ISSN 0438-5403

<sup>12</sup> Buchnowska, D., Wykorzystanie mediów społecznościowych przez uczelnie wyższe i studentów w świetle badań własnych, Management Sciences 2(15), 201, p.39

### 3 Results

Students were asked about the ways of communication with lecturers and other students in the teaching process. The surveyed students usually communicate with other students through a personal conversation, in the second place was Facebook - similar results were in 2015 and In 2019 year. The role of communicators (such as - snapchat, messenger, whatsapp) has increased over the past three years in communication - increase from 37% to 62%. and communication via e-mail remains popular.

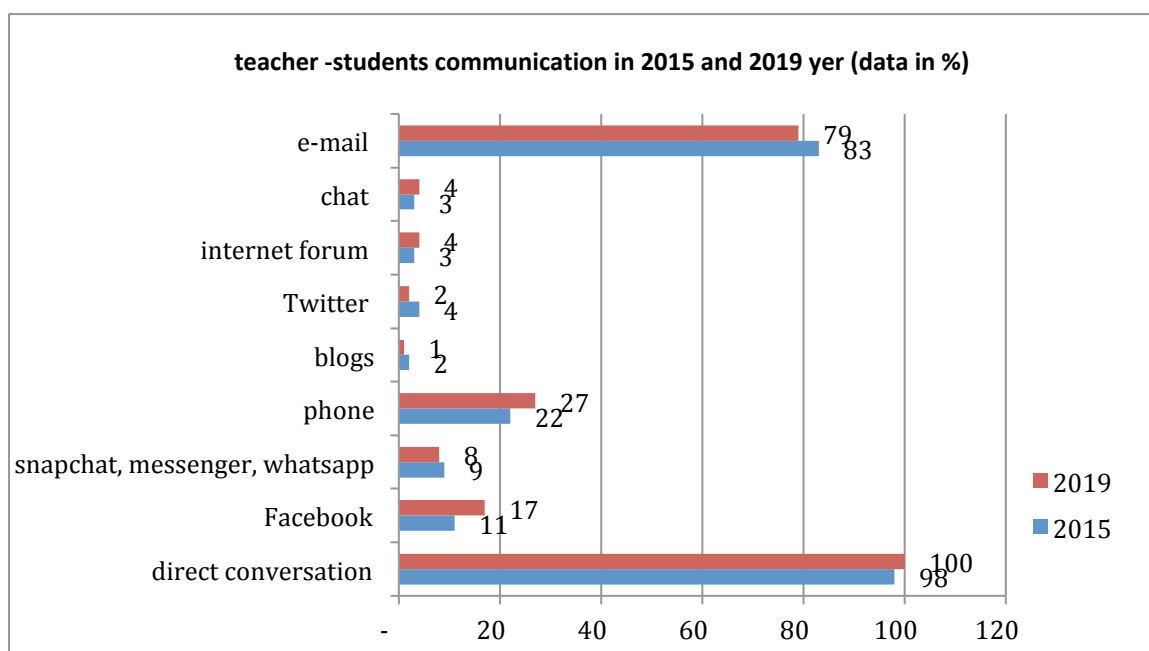
Figure 1. Communication tools between students



Source: own study

The use of social media in the communication of students with lecturers at Polish universities is still at a low level. E-mail and direct communications it still remains the dominant form.

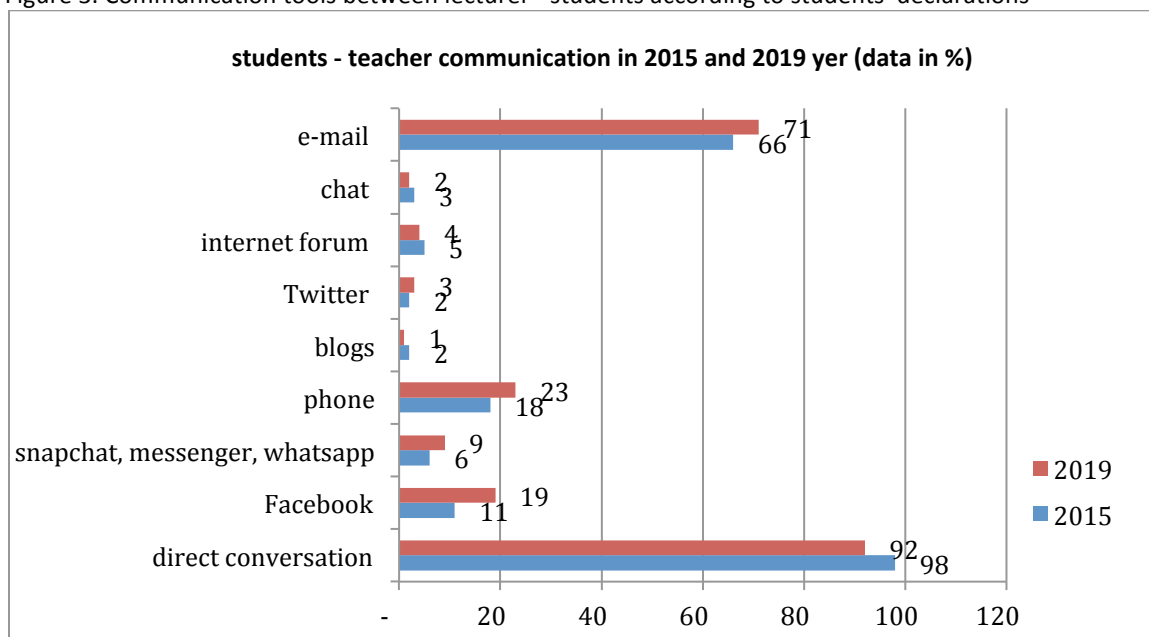
Figure 2. Communication tools between lecturer - students according to the declaration of academic teachers.



Source: own study

The situation was similarly assessed by students. They stated that they rarely communicate via social media with lecturers.

Figure 3. Communication tools between lecturer - students according to students' declarations

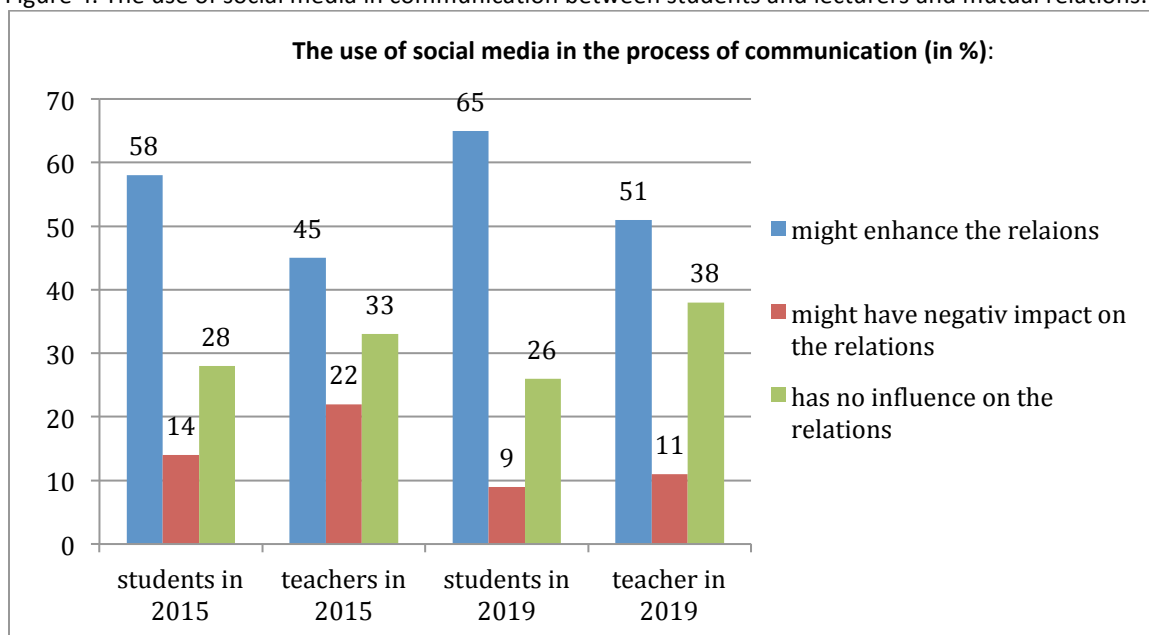


Source: own study

Lecturers who communicate with students through social media assess this form of communication very well. Nobody judged her badly. Also, students are satisfied with this form of communication. The younger academic teachers are more eager to use social media in communication.

In the opinion of the respondents, the use of social media in communication between lecturers and students could improve mutual relations. Over half of the surveyed students considered this way in 2015 - 58%, in 2019 this percentage increased to 65%, and almost half of the surveyed teachers in 2015 - 45% and more than half in 2019 - 51%. In the both groups the percentage of people who believe that the use of social media in communication could worsen mutual relations decreased.

Figure 4. The use of social media in communication between students and lecturers and mutual relations.



Source: own study

The authors investigated the barriers which, according to the respondents, make it difficult to use social media in communication with lecturers. The students were asked to indicate the most important of the given barriers. Barriers to the use of social media in communication between teachers and students according to students' opinions:

1. Formalization of the relationship (2015 - 55% and 2019 - 51%) - a high degree of formalization of mutual contact between lecturers and students.
2. Competences of teachers (2015 - 72% and 2019 - 69%) - lagging behind technological change on the part of teachers, insufficient skills in the use of new communication channels.
3. Competences of students (2015 - 11% and 2019 - 8%) - lagging behind technological change on the part of students, insufficient skills in the use of new communication channels.
4. Old communication habits (2015 - 62% and 2019 - 59%) - fixed old habits of faculty teachers, old habits among teachers.
5. The perception of social media as personal (2015 - 27% and 2019 - 36%) - for students social media are a personal, private communication channel with their friends.
6. Technical barriers (2015 - 4% and 2019 - 1%) - lack of adequate equipment, software.
7. Reluctance of teachers (2015 - 60% and 2019 - 58%) to use this type of communication with students.
8. Reluctance of students (2015 - 37% and 2019 - 31%) - a negative attitude on the part of students to use this type of communication with lecturers.

Within three years, the perception of barriers in communication has hardly changed. It is interesting that the number of students, considering social media as a personal media, has increased.

The students gave reasons that, according to them, cause poor use of social media in communication with lecturers, most often they were:

- Perception of social media as personal, used to communicate with friends.
- No need for this form of communication with lecturers
- Reluctance associated with ignorance how to behave
- Lack of time among lecturers for this type of communication
- Too intimate information shared on the profile,
- Fear of wrong assessment of posted posts
- Fear of insight into the student's life by lecturers
- Special production by lecturers of distance to students
- Age of lecturers,
- Lack of experience in this type of communication among lecturers
- The fear that lecturers will judge a student after what he has on facebook profile
- Too open way of communication

- A common language used in social media
- Unwillingness to interact with lecturers.

In the lecturers' answers, the most frequent answers were (ranked from the most frequently occurring answer):

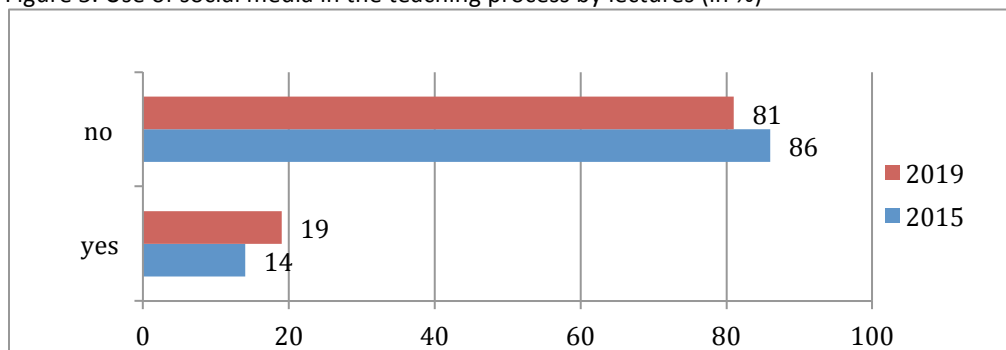
- Perception of social media as personal, used to communicate with friends.
- Old communication habits of lecturers
- Lack of security of transmitted information in social media.
- Technical barriers - lack of appropriate equipment or software at the university.
- Lack of time, related to the accumulation of other official duties.
- Underestimation of the use of this type of communication in the employee evaluation.
- Lack of encouragement from the faculty / university authorities for this type of communication behavior.

The second problem in the research was identifying the role of social media in didactic work. Social media tools facilitate informal learning through the acquisition and management of information, creation of open space for discussion, conversation, and to perform tasks beyond the lecture hall. The students have the ability to connect to a network to create, edit, transform or share content with others through virtual learning communities.

The students were asked two questions: Do the lecturers with whom you have classes use social media in didactics? Do you use social media in the learning process?

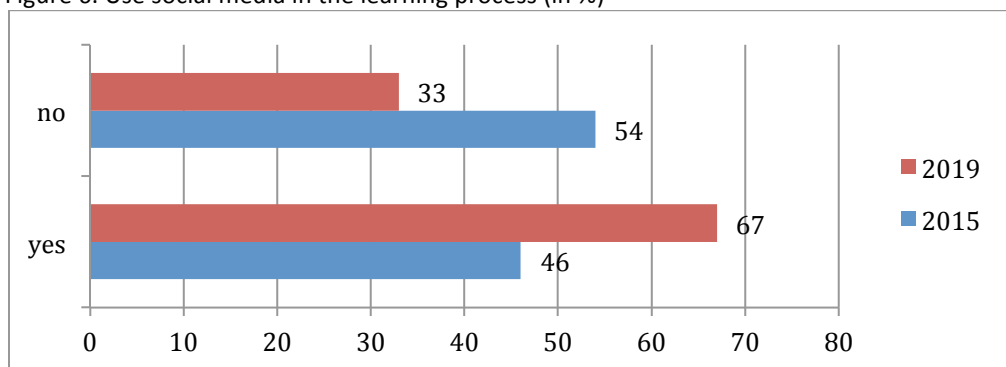
Below are the students' answers to the questions.

Figure 5. Use of social media in the teaching process by lectures (in %)



Source: own study

Figure 6. Use social media in the learning process (in %)



Source: own study

Social media are rarely used by lecturers in teaching processes, while students use them increasingly in the learning process.

One question was added to students in the 2019 study - How do you use social media while learning in college?

The main ways of using social media in the didactic process by students:

- I am looking for information to prepare presentations, exercises
- I verify information obtained for classes

- I discuss the problem with other students
- while learning for the exam
- I search for curiosities from the subject

## 4 Conclusion

The research conducted shows that social media are used in communication between the students and teachers to a minor extent. Social media is also used to a limited extent in teaching. The use of social media in communication and didactics within 4 years has changed to a small extent. The importance of communicators (snapchat, messenger) in student communication has increased the most, in the case of communication teacher - the student remains the most popular e-mail. The problems of adapting to the new media in the lecturers – students relationships include: the formalization of relationships, fossilized organizational culture of the university, well-worn habits of the communication of the generation of lecturers, and not including the evaluations of this type of activities or the lack of motivation on the part of lecturers. Most of the students do not want to communicate with teachers via Facebook. The reluctance of the students to communicate with teachers via Facebook results, among others, with the fact that Facebook is perceived as a personal medium, used for communication with friends as well as concerns about the possibility of violations of privacy and surveillance of the profile by lecturers and the possible consequences related to grading. Students much more often declared that they want to use social media in the education process - during lectures and exercises. Over half of the surveyed students believe that the use of social media in communication with lecturers could improve their mutual relations.

Academic teachers are predestined for the role of initiators and specific centers with which students consult the main problems and propose their own solutions to tasks, take up scientific discussions or make comments. The privileged position of lecturers in relation to students allows you to inspire you to set up groups such as Facebook. The network form of social media, such a bilateral exchange of opinions, with the axial position of the lecturer, allows like no other media. Social media is a good environment for communication in the relationship of lecturer - lecturer and student - student, within which students communicate both within dean groups and between groups. While the latter arrangement presents the state of things already existing, the level of communication between lecturers, in the framework of professional cooperation, is low with the help of social media. The communication system in the interactive media environment is not a closed system, but in the lecturer's relations - students and student - the student communicating with the use of Facebook portals has a tendency to encapsulate and usually takes place using closed groups. In addition, lecturers, from the position of "master", have a great opportunity to demonstrate inventiveness and activity in co-creating university profiles and as a stimulus for students to interact more deeply on the university's profiles. The problem, however, is the low communication competences of the generation of "digital immigrants", who themselves, while not showing activity on university profiles, can not constitute a normative reference group for the generation of "digital natives" in this respect. Students a stronger digital culture to the university and they are able to carry out tasks and learning activities more efficiently using technology.

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