

## Article

# Twitter in Marketing Practice of the Religious Media. An Empirical Study on Catholic Weeklies in Poland

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**Abstract:** This article presents the partial conclusion of the research project devoted to marketing activity of Polish Catholic opinion-forming weeklies on the social media platforms. The main aim of this article is to present the results of the study on the use of Twitter as a marketing tool by Polish nationwide Catholic opinion-forming weeklies. The basic research questions concerned the extent of utilizing the platform by the magazines' editors to create and distribute the content of their media product, maintain and develop brand communication and self-promotion. The case studies and the content analysis of the accounts of the three magazines—*Gość Niedzielny*, *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela* and *Przewodnik Katolicki*—show that there are three different ways in how the editors of the magazines understand the role of the Twitter account of the title they represent—as an 'active communicator', 'active communicator and community supporter' or 'community supporter'. The conclusions show that the studied media fairly efficiently use the visual and distributional potential of the platform as well as some of its features, at the same time missing the chance to build a brand-loyal community. They also limit the role of Twitter to that of a supplement for the main communication channel, which is the printed weekly and its website.

**Keywords:** Polish Catholic press; religious media; Twitter; social media; marketing communication; media marketing; social media marketing; brand communication



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## 1. Introduction

Marketing communication of the Catholic Church, as well as the Catholic media associated with it, has been evolving for years towards digitization and the use of online tools. As early as in 2011, the authors of a report on the presence of religious websites online (*Megapanel PBI/Gemius 2011*) stated that "the Internet has become a legitimate channel for disseminating religious content" (p. 258), with nearly 800,000 Poles reported to visit faith- and religion-related websites regularly. As described in the report, at that time 31 websites were maintained by more than 40% of over 10,000 parishes in the country (p. 258).

According to the 2019 data, this number has increased significantly: 62.6% of parishes have a website, while another 6.4% declare that a website is being created (*Institute for Catholic Church Statistics 2020*, p. 39). This shows that the Catholic Church has been taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet for years—as evidenced by numerous publications on the mediatization of religion (*Helland 2000; Hjarvard 2008, 2011, 2016; Bratosin 2016; Andok 2018; Adamski et al. 2020; Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. 2020*). Seeing the growing worldwide impact of social media on societies and media industries in autumn 2019, the authors of this article formed a research team to gather data concerning the attempts by Polish traditional magazines to be visible and influential on social media platforms. Their efforts strongly caught the attention of the Catholic weeklies, which are in a somewhat difficult situation—with the Catholic Church expected by many to accept

the need of change from conservatism to inclusiveness and openness (see e.g., [Resende and Henning 2021](#)) on the one hand, and with a changing audience on the other (see e.g., [Kopiec 2020](#)), still trying to promote Catholic values in turbulent times and fulfil their mission as the Catholic press despite these challenges. The authors have already published two articles based upon these data and have examined the marketing use of social media platforms by selected Polish Catholic weeklies. The first article presented the theoretical and methodological framework of the research project (see [Adamski et al. 2020](#)), including detailed literature review on relations between religion, Catholic media and social media, especially on the mediatization of religion as well as religious and social media marketing. The second article focused exclusively on the communication of nationwide Catholic weeklies on Facebook (FB) (see [Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. 2020](#)). This article is devoted to the marketing use of Twitter (hereafter: TT) by Catholic weeklies in Poland.

This article follows the interdisciplinary approach of the two previous articles and uses media and social communication studies, marketing studies and religious studies. The theoretical framework (especially terms and content analysis approach) was based on American functionalism ([Merton 2002](#)) and the notion of the given function of the media (functional potential contained in the analyzed message) ([Bartoszcze 2006](#)). This approach still seems relevant in the era of new media, when the position and impact of social media platforms is widely accepted ([McQuail 2007](#), p. 111). It is worth emphasizing that in 2020 there were more than 3.6 billion social media users all over the world. This figure is expected to reach more than 4.4 billion by 2025 ([Clement 2020](#)). The research framework for the entire project, concerning the marketing use of social media platforms by Polish Catholic opinion weeklies, has already been indicated in the first article concerning this research project, where the authors presented its specific objectives, questions and research methods ([Adamski et al. 2020](#)), yet the main research questions need to be listed here as well.

The basic aim of this part of the research is to analyze how the media selected to be examined in this research project (*Gość Niedzielny*, *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*, *Przewodnik Katolicki*, *Idziemy* and *Tygodnik Rodzin Katolickich Źródło*) use TT to create a media product, distribute its content and potential content evaluation and brand communication in order to build and to maintain relations with the public, and to pursue self-promotional activities. The main focus of this article, like the one on FB, is therefore on the marketing approach to the use of TT by the Catholic weeklies rather than on the often adopted historical, apologetic and evangelizing context or—as in the case of TT—research on journalism and sources of information. What needs to be stressed, only three of the five analyzed weeklies have their profiles on TT—*Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*, *Przewodnik Katolicki* and *Gość Niedzielny*. *Idziemy* and *Tygodnik Rodzin Katolickich Źródło* do not maintain a presence on TT. However, at this stage of development of social media platforms and the widespread use of them, it should be embedded in the brand management strategy, including the media one ([Iwańska-Knop and Szymczak 2017](#), p. 320). Literature research proves that there are no research-based and theory-grounded publications regarding the use of TT by Catholic media<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Twitter in Poland

TT, a microblogging social service (see [Kaplan and Haenlein 2010](#)), was founded in 2006 and has gathered nearly 300 million users in less than a decade ([Kemp 2015](#)). It is now actively used worldwide by 330 million people per month and 145 million per day ([Lin 2020](#)). The leader is still the United States, where more than 60 million people use the platform (as of July 2020, [Statista 2020](#)).

In Poland, there were approximately 2.6 million TT users in January 2015. According to data from 2018–2019, there were already more than 4.5 million Poles having accounts on the service ([Kunat 2018](#)). However, it is worth mentioning that out of 18 million social media users in Poland, only under a million use TT actively ([Kemp 2019](#)), which is fewer than Instagram (6.8 million active users; IG further in the text) or FB (17 million active users) ([Kemp 2019](#)). According to [Kunat \(2018\)](#), the majority of Polish TT users are men

(61% compared to 66% for all users—see [Lin 2020](#)) and people over 25, with secondary and higher education<sup>2</sup>.

TT research in Poland has been developing relatively slowly, probably due to the initial low popularity of the service among Polish users (cf. [Pająk 2011](#); [Wachnicki 2013](#); [Woźniak 2015](#)). It is only in the recent few years that the work of Polish researchers in this area has become more intensive. As can be seen from [Table 1](#), during the 5-year period from 2006 (when the platform was launched globally) till 2010, the number of scientific publications in Polish somewhat related to this topic<sup>3</sup> reached only 1100, while at the same time more than 600,000 publications were published in English. Given the range of both languages, this is quite obvious; therefore, what is more of interest than the absolute numbers in this context is the rate of increase in the number of publications in successive years. Thus, it can be observed that in the second five years of TT's existence, the number of publications tripled in both Polish and English; in the last five years there was a twofold increase in the number of publications in Polish compared to the previous five years, while the number of papers and books in English even slightly dropped and stabilized, though obviously at an incomparably higher level. In other words, the interest in various aspects of TT research among Polish researchers has been growing in recent years.

**Table 1.** Number of search results for academic publications containing the term “Twitter” from the year the service was created to the end of 2020 in the Google Scholar search engine.

Period	Number of Search Results in Google Scholar	
	Only in Polish	Only in English
2006–2010	1090	660,000
2011–2015	3410	1,900,000
2016–2020	6360	1,890,000

Source: the authors' own research based on Google Scholar search on 23 March 2021.

Scholars focus on several themes, mainly enriching the media and communication studies literature in the areas of linguistic pragmatics ([Szews 2013](#); [Adamska 2015](#); [Leonowicz-Bukała and Martens 2015](#)), professional pragmatics of journalists, and media functioning ([Chrzastek 2013](#); [Łokić 2014](#); [Machnik 2014](#); [Szews 2014](#); [Leonowicz-Bukała and Martens 2016](#); [Palczewski 2013, 2016](#); [Przywara 2014](#); [Majorek and Du Vall 2016](#); [Leonowicz-Bukała and Przywara 2020](#)). In linguistic research, TT is also sometimes used as a tool to study public sentiment (e.g., [Ołtarzewska 2017](#); [Czarkowska and Gumkowska 2017](#); [Matulewska et al. 2020](#)) or the health of Poles (see e.g., [Malesińska 2016](#)). Research on political communication, including social and political mobilization ([Mołodziejko 2017](#); [Sawicka 2017](#)), as well as its use in political marketing, is also an important thread in Polish TT studies ([Aleksandrowicz 2016](#); [Rapacz 2012](#); [Kuźniar and Filimoniuk 2018](#); [Gackowski 2014a, 2014b](#); [Gackowski et al. 2018](#)).

An important part of TT research in the West, i.e., its analysis in the context of Big Data and machine learning, has also appeared in Poland ([Ogrodniczuk and Kopeć 2017](#); [Chlasta 2019](#); [Augustyniak et al. 2020](#)), including the issue of COVID-19 spread ([Jarynowski et al. 2020](#)). The marketing use of TT outside the political context has also been explored, for example in the activities of Polish airports ([Juszczuk 2015](#); [Iwańska-Knop and Szymczak 2017](#)).

Following Polish social media specialists, one can speak of the specificity of the “Polish TT”. As [Neuman et al.](#) stated, “diverse social media platforms undoubtedly develop local cultures of expressive style which will influence the character of what people choose to say” ([Neuman et al. 2014](#), p. 196), which may clearly be related to who uses a particular service and why, and, therefore, how much interest it arouses among researchers. As [Woźniak \(2015\)](#) suggests, Poles appreciate the possibility of publishing longer statements that will additionally receive attention and engagement from their friends and relatives—as is the case on FB. There are a great number of tweets on TT which go completely unnoticed. As a result, Polish TT has been described almost from the beginning as a platform for politicians, journalists, celebrities and marketers ([Pająk 2011](#))—in other words, users interested in

active participation in the public sphere, seeking publicity and promotion for their views and activities. An analysis of the most recent data shows that not much has changed in this regard—according to Sotrender, one of the leading institutions monitoring the Web in Poland, in 2020 the most frequently mentioned and most active profiles on TT were still those belonging to news services, politicians and athletes (Żyłka 2021).

### 3. Twitter and Traditional Media—The Factors of Effective Relationship

As a communication tool, TT has qualities which are highly valued and desired in the world of the media and journalists. Since the beginning of the last decade—as Hermida writes—“industry surveys suggest social media, and specifically TT, has become part of the everyday toolkit of journalists” (2013, see also Kwak et al. 2010). There are several reasons why it has become an everyday part of editorial work and media operations, such as the speed and ease of delivering information; easy, mobile and public access; interactivity and synchronicity of communication.

Designed as an instant messaging service for mobile phones (Hermida 2013), this portal is very fast. Back in 2009, Paul Levinson described it as the fastest writing-based medium ever (Levinson 2009). For several years, it was commonly claimed that TT was faster than any other source of information<sup>4</sup>, which is still being discussed today (Leetaru 2019). In-depth research from the last few years suggests that TT favors fast dissemination of false information rather than true information (see e.g., Allcott and Gentzkow 2017; Vosoughi et al. 2018; Shahi et al. 2021), but this does not change the fact that real hot news spreads through the service at a staggering pace (compare with Kalsnes and Larsson 2018). The speed of TT manifests itself not only in the distribution of information, but also in the very limited, short time one has to devote to preparing a tweet. The character limit imposes conciseness and precision on the author, and time is of great value in the media world.

As Vargo argues, “in a world of social media, TT differentiates itself in two ways: its messages are public<sup>5</sup> and short. The majority of this data is open for all to examine” (Vargo et al. 2014). The speed of TT is enhanced by the network structure of the service, based on the so-called tweets (messages of a maximum length of 280 characters), retweets (posts which are forwarded, shared) and comments. It is also strengthened by the public nature of the TT content—as Thomases writes, “Twitter isn’t private by any means” (2010, p. 9), unlike FB, where the content is largely private (cf. Facebook 2021). Another feature of TT is that published resources can be used multiple times. Tweets are visible to anyone who visits the profile (unless this is deliberately restricted) and their content can be easily reproduced through the retweet function. Streams of information are also categorized through the feature of the hashtag, or keyword, which allows tweets on the same issues to be found and users to gather around specific discussions without the need to create groups. There is also no need to ask permission to follow the account owner, as is the case with FB, which is based on a system of friends and followers<sup>6</sup> (see Colleoni et al. 2014). As a result, as Veenstra stated, “the vast majority of tweets are part of the broad public flow of information contained within Twitter” (2015).

Another important feature of TT is the interactivity and synchronicity of messages, which has de facto transformed contemporary communication in the public sphere, of which the professional media and journalists are participants: receivers, senders and, at the same time, transmitters. As Hermida stated, “new social media technologies such as Twitter facilitate the instant, online dissemination of short fragments of information from a variety of official and unofficial sources” (Hermida 2010). According to Colleoni, through the social platforms’ interactivity, synchronicity, rapid dissemination of messages across geographical borders, and the ease with which content went viral—both FB and TT posts were reproduced by many users without the interference of the source. This made the platforms important tools for political communication (Colleoni et al. 2014; Rafaeli and Sudweeks 1997; Honey and Herring 2009; Williams and Gulati 2009) as well as for socio-political and citizen mobilization (see e.g., Hermida et al. 2014; Murthy 2011, 2018; Sawicka 2017). Thanks to the features of the sites, a multidirectional information

flow has been created between public figures, journalists (both professional and citizen ones) and ordinary users. In this circulation, journalists can, on the one hand, use the content publicized by politicians and, on the other hand, refer to the way and extent to which it is received. As Neuman et al. writes, “the social media represent an important, perhaps increasingly important, instantiation of public opinion [ . . . ]” (Neuman et al. 2014, p. 196). Surveys of traditional media journalists also show that, over time, the use of tweets in the daily work of editorial boards has become the norm in covering political events and scandals involving public figures (Chadwick 2011; see also Broersma and Graham 2013). This gives journalists and the media direct and immediate access to important and significant sources of information on the position of all participants in the public communication process, both personal and institutional (since institutions such as embassies or chancelleries of politicians and rulers also use this communication channel). Thanks to the service, journalists themselves become sources of information, thus omitting the editorial boards and their official communication channels. As Veenstra (2015) notes, this gives journalists great opportunities not only to promote the content produced by the editorial office or station which employs them, but also to promote their own names (Veenstra 2015). “In less than a decade of existence”—the cited author writes—“Twitter has become a dominant part of the modern journalist’s toolbox, providing a distribution channel, access to sources, and a mode of feedback from the public”, along with providing “a constant stream of updates to their followers, guaranteeing nearly instant audience awareness for any new piece they put online” (Veenstra 2015).

Lasorsa et al. (2012) consider that one of the key features of social media is precisely the possibility of obtaining immediate feedback from the audience and entering into a dialogue with them, or even inviting TT users to “participate in the news production process” (Lasorsa et al. 2012, p. 26). As Baruah states, “social media is media for social interaction as a superset beyond social communication” (Baruah 2012, p. 2).

Like all social media, TT is easily and instantly accessible (see Murthy 2018, p. 3). Anyone with an Internet-connected device can report and receive information on TT in real time. This feature has turned the platform not only into a tool for live work, done by journalists from places where important events are taking place (see e.g., Vis 2013), but also a tool for citizen journalists (Johansson 2016; see also Murthy 2018, pp. 43, 56) or ordinary users who wish to communicate important things they are witnessing.

#### 4. Twitter as a Marketing Tool—The Theoretical Approach

As a marketing tool, TT is quite different from other social media platforms. According to Thoring, this “powerful and sophisticated new kind of channel [ . . . ] makes marketing more precise, personal and social” (Thoring 2011, p. 157). It is also believed to be based on the power of collectivism and people’s tendency to be a part of community (Thomases 2010, p. xxii). On the other hand, it seems to be quite complicated as a marketing tool—it requires strategy and planning, as well as very well analyzed actions (Evans 2010; Mistewicz 2014; Lisowski 2018; Czaplicka 2019; and others) and really good copywriting skills (Thomases 2010, p. 21). The platform’s great marketing potential lies in the possibility of comprehensive research into the needs of the recipients and their perception of the messages published by the sender. Apart from obtaining information about the public opinion on any studied phenomenon, one can directly and quickly identify the moods and attitudes of the given recipients towards the content offered<sup>7</sup>. According to Emery, TT is “the world’s largest focus group, providing a platform for unfiltered expression” (Emery et al. 2014; see also Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). This applies not only to the press, but to all contemporary organizations. As Baruah puts it, “immediacy offers the public the ability to be present, to communicate, to influence and retain a stronger position towards brands. [ . . . ] Social media is transforming the way organizations communicate—the many social tools that are available today are very cost-effective [ . . . ] Blog posts and tweets enable businesses to create communities, offer immediate feedback or assistance, and promote their products and services” (Baruah 2012, p. 1). Thanks to the information

published by the users themselves, a customer profile can be created and an appropriate communication message can be targeted at the customer (Halpern 2012).

Nowadays, social media profiles are also replacing customer service desks, offering faster contact with the company employees, as well as the exchange of opinions between other customers of the company (Brzezińska-Waleszczyk 2015). Social media have transformed marketing from a monologue to a multilogue, in which it is possible not only for the company to interact with its customers or customers with each other, but also for customers and the company to interact with the whole community (Falls and Deckers 2012). HubSpot's guide for businesses wishing to develop their social media presence clearly states that the main aim of the business activity on TT should be "relationship building, relationship management, and customer service" (How to Use Twitter for Business n.d.). The widely discussed advantages of TT lead many companies to take it for granted that having a profile will automatically generate a positive image for the company (Deloitte report, p. 7). As indicated, however, this tool requires appropriate skills on the part of the sender, who should be able to take advantage of the specifics of both the platform and its users (such as their above-average interest in news; cf. Farhi 2009).

According to Leung et al. (2013), marketing communication effectiveness, planning a social media communication process which provides users with a positive experience, is crucial in social media marketing (Leung et al. 2013). Meanwhile, back in 2011, 85% of the Fortune 50 companies (2009) which used TT applied it to disseminate information, whereas it was much more rarely used for promotional and marketing purposes (Carl and King 2011). Nowadays, the platform is used by a variety of industries, such as wine (Bello-Orgaz et al. 2020), sports (see Eddy et al. 2021), museums (Kydros and Vrana 2021), B2B (Salo 2017; Juntunen et al. 2020) or IT (Evans et al. 2021).

When analyzing the communication industry, TT, due to the shortness of the message, the fast pace of information delivery and its wide use by journalists, seems to be a suitable tool for the communication of media institutions. After all, their main product is information, news and opinions—the basic content of TT. If it is properly presented using the features available in the service, and served with appropriate frequency and at the appropriate time, it can be a real tool for building a community of recipients of a given medium. This community may be connected by common interests and attitudes, with the latter connecting, to some extent, the recipients of the Catholic press. It is worth noting that the platform may serve to promote a medium not only through its official account, but also through the individual activities of the journalists employed there, who implement the instructions of their home editorial offices in various ways, including building their own personal brand (cf. Canter 2014; Molyneux and Holton 2015; Molyneux et al. 2017).

From the point of view of media editors, the main purpose of their presence in social media is branding. A study regarding the use of TT by the media conducted in Argentina shows that online newspapers' main goal seems to be focused on enhancing brand recognition (Raimondo Anselmino and Bertone 2013) as well as driving traffic from TT profiles to the main websites and digital versions of the titles. According to the research in the UK, "interactivity and engagement are on secondary focus, viewed as important only in the context of brand loyalty and extension" (Canter 2020; see also Brzezińska-Waleszczyk 2015). Therefore, media brands should recognize the potential they are losing when, for example, they refrain from engaging in community building or discussions. As the study conducted by Cha et al. (2010, p. 17) shows, "influence is not gained spontaneously or accidentally, but through concerted effort. In order to gain and maintain influence, users need to keep great personal involvement", whether they are private users, politicians or media institutions. In conclusion, communication on TT cannot be merely part of a marketing plan.

There are studies on the use of the media to present the image of religion (e.g., Häger 2021) or the use and the influence of social media on Church or religious communities (e.g., Henry 2021), but none of them examine the use of social platforms by Catholic media

institutions. In view of the above, an academic gap was identified which this article aims to bridge.

### 5. Methodology of the Study—The Empirical Approach

Like the previous article on the marketing use of FB, this one also includes the theoretical analysis of the topic, followed by the empirical research based on the description and comparison. This analysis focuses on the TT profiles of the Polish, nationwide, opinion-forming, Catholic weeklies. Only three of the previously five chosen titles were observed, because two of them did not have TT accounts. This said, the following TT profiles were analyzed: *Gość Niedzielny*, *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*, and *Przewodnik Katolicki*.

The overarching research question focuses on exploring the marketing functions of Catholic media profiles on TT. The aim of this paper is also to deepen the knowledge of the marketing potential of this social media platform so that it might be used by the publishers of the Catholic print media. The following research questions were asked in favor of this text:

RQ1: Are the TT profiles of Catholic weeklies emanations of their media brands and the carriers (additional channels of distribution) of their content, or, apart from marketing, do they have additional functions of evangelizing, apology or community-forming?

RQ2: Is the content of TT profiles original or copied from the content published in other distribution channels of these magazines (such as websites)?

RQ3: Are the TT profiles managed regularly, according to a specified certain schedule? How large is post reach and is there a noticeable connection between their topics and the reactions of the audience? Do people who post comments accept the convention of the profile as a place of marketing the weekly's content, or do they treat the profiles as a place of expressing religious feelings, evangelization, apologetic-polemic activities?

RQ4: Do the TT profile administrators interact with those who comment? How do they react to possible polemic, apologetic, evangelistic behavior of their users?

RQ5: Do the administrators use TT features? What is the scale of using the profiles for self-promotional purposes?

RQ6: Which types of posts (video, graphic, text, mixed) are the most common?

RQ7: What are the topics of tweets? How do the issues related to self-promotion compare against this background?

RQ8: Are there any differences and similarities between the marketing methods of TT used by the Catholic weeklies?

RQ9: Is there a deliberate concept behind TT management, or is it a chore which needs to be treated as a burden due to the lack of a clear concept and management strategy?

Due to the explorative character of the study, there have been no hypotheses formulated. In order to answer the research questions, the authors used three research methods: a theoretical one (literature review regarding the marketing use of TT by traditional media), and two empirical ones: a case study of the three TT profiles of the Catholic weeklies mentioned above and a content analysis (quantitative, qualitative, comparative) of these profiles.

The data observed for description included the names of the profiles, the bios, the numbers of tweets, the numbers of followers (people who decided to follow the account, visible on the user's profile page) and the profiles followed, as well as visual presentations of the profiles (avatars representing the profile, cover images). All the three profiles were compared according to these factors.

Afterwards, the quantitative, qualitative, and comparative content analysis of TT posts was conducted (the authors use the term *posts* in the meaning of *tweets*: see [Murthy 2018](#), p. 214). The research was implemented for the 18th–24th November 2019 period. The three most interesting elements for the authors were the content of the posts, the form of the posts (textual, visual, mixed, etc.) and the reactions of TT users.

The collected material was coded with the use of an extended categorization key. Therefore, it should be explained that the abovementioned research tool was unified for all

the social media studied within this project. It means that FB (the second article, already published) and TT (the third one) profiles were coded according to common codification assumptions. This solution will allow the authors to compare all social media platforms.

The first stage of coding involved the aggregation of data on the following variables: the date of tweet, the time of publication, the type of posts (text, video, mixed, etc.), the number and types of reactions (heart-shaped likes in TT) and comments, the media's reactions to these comments, using hashtags (using emoticons, tagging/mentioning other accounts, the authorship and origin of the tweet, the geographical origin of the posts and their belonging to thematic macrocategories (such as religion, society, politics, economy, culture, sport, law, self-image, and other). Detailed data is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Content coding schedule—adaptation for TT profile (Stage I).

Variables	Research Question	Description
Date of tweet	RQ3	Specifies the systematics of profile management
Specific time of tweet publication	RQ3	As above
Format of tweet (text, graphic, video, link, mixed, etc.)	RQ1, RQ5, RQ6:	Specifies the relation (visual, textual) between social media profiles and media brands; allows to specify the proficiency in creating different types of posts
Total number of reactions to a tweet	RQ3	Specifies the post reach and connection between posts' topics and the reactions of the audience
Number of 'like' reactions to a tweet	RQ3	As above
Number of shares/retweets of a tweet	RQ3	As above
Number of comments on a tweet	RQ3	As above
Does the profile respond to comments	RQ4	Specifies the quality of the interaction between administrators and those who comment
Use of hashtags (#)	RQ5	Specifies the proficiency in creating different types of social media posts
Use of emoticons	RQ5	As above
Use of special background	RQ5	As above
Use of tagging/mentioning other accounts	RQ1, RQ5	As above + specifies whether the medium tries to engage other accounts and—if yes—which
Post authorship (original/external source)	RQ1, RQ2	Specifies the range of posts prepared exclusively for TT + posts linking to other components of the analyzed media brands
Geographical references in posts	RQ1	Specifies the topics of the posts on the profiles (also the extent to which published post are related to self-achievements when comparing it to other topics)
Assignment to macrocategories: religion, society, politics, economy, culture, sport, law, self-image, other (each post could belong to several thematic categories)	RQ7	As above

Source: the authors' own collection.

At the second stage of coding, each of the thematic macrocategories was split into more specific categories, which meant that each selected social networking site was examined according to 61 thematic threads: religion (faith, homosexuality in the Catholic Church, Church events and celebrations, the Ten Commandments, history and important figures of the Catholic Church, moral scandals in the Catholic Church, other); society (up-bringing/education, health, migration, LGBT/gender, euthanasia/abortion/contraception, patriotism, non-corporate media, moral scandals, history, other); politics (elections, activities of the government/the ruling party, activities of the president, activities of the

opposition, EU activities/relations with the EU, US activities/relations with the US, activities of other countries/relations with other countries); economy (state budget, financial condition of Poland, financial condition of the EU, condition of the global economy, the euro currency, social benefits, new taxes, other); culture (events, books, films, theatre, painting and sculpture, music, people of culture, cultural laws, other); sport (events, sports promotion, athletes, sports laws, other); law (legislation, CJEU, judges, Polish Constitution, criminal and civil cases, other) and the magazine's own achievements (event—including patronage, market success, success/information about employees, next issue of the magazine, insert to the magazine, patronage granted, social campaign, link from the magazine's own medium, other).

Additionally, the aggregated tweets were analyzed in the context of text (for example emotional sentiment) and visual aspects (specificity of illustrations and their emotionality). Tables 1 and 2 show close links between the research questions (No. 1–7) and content analysis. Research questions no. 8–9, due to their summarizing nature, are answered in the conclusions.

To ensure the integrity of the research, the coded information was cross-checked by all the researchers and—in case of any doubts—unclear data were discussed, and the final code was agreed upon together.

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1. Case Studies

Detailed information about the studied magazines was included in the first article presenting the research project devoted to the marketing communication of Polish Catholic weeklies in social media platforms (Adamski et al. 2020)—therefore now only short descriptions will be presented, focusing especially on the TT accounts of the weeklies *Gość Niedzielny* (GN), *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela* (TKN) and *Przewodnik Katolicki* (PK).

*Gość Niedzielny* is the main Catholic weekly opinion magazine in Poland and has almost a century of history (Wilkoń 2018). It has a printed and digital version, a website, a free mobile application, a newsletter and an RSS channel as well as channels on impactful social media (IG, TT, YT9 and FB). The TT profile, available on [https://twitter.com/Gosc\\_Niedzielny](https://twitter.com/Gosc_Niedzielny), was created in October 2011—and from this time to November 2019, 65.1 thousand tweets were published there (there were 68.5 thousand up till December 2020, so 3.4 thousand tweets were released during 13 months. It means that more than nine tweets a day were posted; it seems appropriate according to the specialists, who strongly suggest between 7 and 15 tweets a day; see e.g., Kot 2020). At the end of the analyzed week (on 24th Nov 2019) it had 29.5 thousand followers (on 19th Dec 2020—32.9 thousand), both private accounts and the profiles of Church institutions, organizations, priests and journalists of other media, not only Catholic. It also had 695 different followed accounts (now 708), i.e., official accounts connected with the Catholic Church (like the profile of the Polish Episcopal Conference, archbishops, dioceses and convents), as well as priests, monks and nuns, members of the Polish government, political parties, politicians and scholars, other media, programmes and journalists.

The list of the followed accounts was widened quite slowly—which may suggest choosing them carefully, as well as 'liking' the tweets from other accounts. On the mentioned date, the profile had 51 'liked' tweets of other accounts while in December 2020 this number was 73, which suggests that the editors of the TT account are not very likely to be active followers of other profiles. In the case of GN, 'liked' tweets were mostly those from private accounts, often about private issues and points of view, sometimes even critical for the editorial office of GN, but in the same area of interest as the GN editors have: public affairs, especially concerning the Church in Poland and outside the country, and faith. What is characteristic of the private profiles following the magazine's one is that their owners very often declare their right-wing and/or Catholic/Christian/pro-life point of view.

In the bio, the motto in November 2019 was “We are the most popular opinion weekly in Poland”. It has been changed from that time and now is almost the same as the motto on the FB profile of the magazine “At the centre of events since 1923” (on FB, the words “for you” are added to that).

The profile is consequently graphically coherent, the profile photo and the cover photo show the logo (and it has been so from the beginning, although the logo has been changed from that time). The obvious goal of such use of visual frame of the account is to expose the brand and to empower brand recognition. Unlike on the FB account, apart from the link to the website of the magazine ([gosc.pl](http://gosc.pl)), TT does not offer any additional buttons or tabs redirecting to other channels managed by the editors of *Gość Niedzielny*.

*Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela* is the second largest Catholic weekly opinion magazine in Poland, with a long tradition beginning in 1926. The brand covers not only the printed version, but also few thematic websites, online TV and radio stations, a bookshop, a foundation, a newsletter, as well as profiles in social media such as FB, YT and TT—[https://twitter.com/niedziela\\_pl](https://twitter.com/niedziela_pl)). The last one was created in February 2014 and until 24 Nov 2019 gathered 18.4 thousand tweets, 3803 followers and 751 followed accounts (respectively, 24.4 thousand, 6761 and 950 in Dec 2020. This data may suggest that last year was quite busy in terms of gaining new audiences). It is worth mentioning that during the months between the time of gathering the research material (Nov 2019) and the time when this paper was written (Dec 2020), the editors published 6 thousand posts—which means about 15–16 tweets a day. In comparison with *GN*, this account is twice more active in posting (according to the marketing specialists, it is even right at the upper limit of suggested frequency of tweeting, see [Kot 2020](#)). Among the following accounts—as in the case of the former magazine—there are private followers, often expressing faith and right-wing values, as well as official and professional accounts of people of the Catholic Church, politicians, activists and other Catholic media. *TKN* follows other media and profiles of journalists, including Catholic ones, press officers, religious foundations and organizations, convents, sanctuaries and dioceses, governmental and state institutions, and politicians. At the end of the analyzed period, on 24th Nov 2019, the TT account of *TKN* declared interest in 83 tweets from other profiles and till 20th December it made this number more than four times bigger—to 353, which also suggests intensive recent attempts to engage more on this platform. *TKN* also showed its interest in the matters of the Church and Catholics, often tweeted by other accounts owned by the same brand (like local mutations of *TKN*). In the case of *TKN*, it may be also seen that the ‘liked’ posts were visibly more often concerning pro-life issues and connected to the state-owned Telewizja Polska’s TT profile @ReligiaTVP (the editorial office of Catholic programmes), Caritas Polska and—sometimes—the ultraconservative Radio Maryja.

The information in the bio in Nov 2019 was “Welcome to the official Twitter website of *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*” and has been changed from that time into “*Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*—BELIEVable media since 1926”. This shift suggests that there has been some work put into editing of the profile—and the decision was to stress the long tradition of the magazine (like in the case of *GN*). Another feature that *TKN* has in common with *GN* is that its TT profile is visually consistent and focused on brand exposure. What is needed to be said is that a year ago, when the material was gathered, the situation was different. On the background graphics, one could see the current cover of the magazine, changed every week. Now the background photo is permanent, so the visual message remains more coherent.

The last analyzed title is *Przewodnik Katolicki*, the oldest Polish Catholic magazine, created in 1895. It is now available as a printed and digital version, a website, a mobile application, a newsletter and—like the two formerly mentioned titles—social media channels on IG, FB, YT and TT as well. The TT account (<https://twitter.com/PrzewodnikKatol>) was registered in February 2014—the same as in the case of the former magazine. On 24th Nov 2019 there were 2037 tweets (on 20th Dec 2020—2149, which gives the average of about 1 tweet for two days. This is much fewer than the suggested 7–15 tweets a day.

Furthermore, the last tweet on the profile comes from 29th May 2020 and the account seems to be abandoned). Until 24th November 2019 the account gathered 2234 followers and 315 followed accounts (respectively, 2482 and 393 on 20th December 2020). As with *GN* and *TKN*, the followers and followed profiles include a number of private, official and institutional accounts representing different areas of public and social life, obviously including the Church.

Until 24th Nov 2019, *PK* editors 'liked' 1159 posts on TT (1218 until 20th Dec 2020), which is the biggest number among the analyzed titles. It may indicate comparatively intensive involvement of the magazine's editors in showing their interest in other accounts' shared content. In the case of *PK*, the majority of 'liked' tweets might be classified as current affairs concerning the Church and tweets of official Church institutions (such as archdioceses and the Polish Episcopate), Catholic media and journalists, Pope Francis and priests, monks and nuns. What is specific for *PK* is 'liking' its own tweets, which seems to indicate a lack of professionalism. It could be important for the administrators of the profile to consider the potential impact of such actions on the brand image.

The motto—the same as in the cases of the former two magazines—was changed last year from "It's about you" into "Search | Understand | Believe". Visually, the profile is consequent and coherent: the brand is exposed by using the logo both on the avatar and on the cover graphics; the latter, however, is adjusted to the actual context: in 2019 it was the current edition of the magazine (printed and digital), while on 20th Dec 2020 it promoted the online edition with the hashtag "#stayathome". It is worth adding that *PK*'s TT refers to the magazine's website ([przewodnik-katolicki.pl](http://przewodnik-katolicki.pl)) by embedding a proper link to it. Comparison of the three magazines' TT profiles is presented in Table 3.

Summarizing the comparison of the TT profiles of the three weeklies studied, although there is a lot in common among the studied accounts, it may be stated that their administrators represent **three different attitudes to managing the content and actions on their social media platforms**. As TT does not offer as many ways of commercializing the content as FB (see [Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. 2020](#)), actions taken on this platform need to be even more planned and consequent.

Seemingly, the *GN* editors are quite conscious of managing the TT account—one may call their attitude '**active communicator**'. The *GN* account has many more tweets and followers than the other two (although it needs to be taken into account that the *GN* profile was created as the first one almost 3 years earlier than the other two—so it had more time to gather more followers and 'likes'). The number of tweets released on the *GN* account a day is—as mentioned before—appropriate according to the frequency recommended by social media marketing specialists. Although the editors tweet actively, they are not strongly engaged in showing their interest in others' posts (i.e., news and opinions), although they follow as many accounts as *TKN*. The attitude of the latter magazine could be called '**active communicator and community supporter**'. Along with posting even more than the required number of posts a day, the editors are engaged in appreciating the content shared by other members of their community, they also show interest in Catholic issues. The last magazine—*PK*—presents the third different strategy of managing the TT profile, which may be called '**community supporter**'. In the analyzed period, the editors were visibly engaged mostly in supporting other accounts by 'likes', almost totally neglecting posting.

What may be added to this summary is that the attention given to other accounts' content by the so-called 'likes' should be coherent with the editorial policy—and the analysis on the 20th Dec 2020 showed that it was so in all the three cases. Furthermore, all the magazines quite consequently expose their brands' visual identities on their TT accounts—both on the profiles' avatars and in the cover photographs. All of them have changed their mottos since November 2019—two of them decided to stress their long tradition on the market (surprisingly, it was the oldest magazine that did not decide to emphasize its long publishing tradition). All the mottos indicate the profiles as media accounts, interested in current affairs and reliable information.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the profiles—analysis results (24th Nov 2019–24th Dec 2020).

Basic Information	GN		TKN		PK	
	24th Nov 2019	20th Dec 2020	24th Nov 2019	20th Dec 2020	24th Nov 2019	20th Dec 2020
Date of profile creation	Oct 2011		Feb 2014		Feb 2014	
Date of print magazine foundation	Yes (1923)		Yes (1926)		No (1895)	
Motto/bio	We are the most popular weekly of opinion in Poland	At the centre of events since 1923	Welcome to the official Twitter website of Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela	Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela—FAITHful media since 1926	It's about you	Search   Understand   Believe
Website link	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Brand exposure on profile avatar	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Brand exposure on the profile cover graphics	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Number of tweets	61,500	68,500	18,400	24,400	2037	2149 *
Number of followers	29,500	32,900	3803	6761	2234	2482
Number of followed	695	708	751	950	315	393
Number of liked tweets from other accounts	51	73 **	83	353	1159	1218
Average tweets per day	Approx. 9		Approx. 15		Approx. 0.5	

Source: the authors' own collection. \* The last tweet from 29th May 2020. \*\* On 20th Dec 2020 the history of 'liked' tweets was cleaned—there is only one currently 'liked' tweet.

This part of the analysis already brought the authors to some conclusions about moderate professionalism in introducing the marketing approach into the TT profiles of the magazines studied. However, to conclude whether their editors are successful or not requires taking into account the more detailed and quantitative data concerning posting, form and authorship of the tweets as well as the content of the posts.

## 6.2. The Magazines' Perspective and Activity on Twitter—Posting

### 6.2.1. Frequency of Posting

The first part of the quantitative analysis covers the posting activity. A total of 114 posts published between 18th and 24th November 2019 were taken into account. Almost half of the sample were the tweets of GN—66, with 43 of TKN and only five of PK. Table 4 presents the total number of tweets per day in the week under study.

**Table 4.** Share of the number of tweets on subsequent days of the week (N = 114).

	18th Nov	19th Nov	20th Nov	21st Nov	22nd Nov	23rd Nov	24th Nov	
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
GN	3	6	10	19	7	21	0	66
TKN	6	7	4	9	6	5	6	43
PK	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	5*

\* Source: the authors' own research.

GN is visibly the most active title, tweeting from 3 posts on Monday to 21 posts on Saturday—but not working on Sunday that week (observation of the December 2020 Sundays suggest that Sunday is still the day of the fewest number of posts in comparison to other days of the week).

TKN publishes posts with the greatest regularity. The number of posts per day remains similar during the week studied: between four and nine.

The last weekly—PK—is the least active account. It published no more than two posts a day. On 3 of 7 days of the analyzed week no new tweets were released, including the weekend. As it was mentioned, the last tweet on this account comes from the end of May 2020—the editors have apparently suspended the activity (without removing the profile).

All the three weeklies start their communication on TT between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. and stop it around 10:00 p.m. (Table 5). It is worth noting that there is no great regularity in posting, but the right time to post is mostly “before noon”. GN seems to distribute its activities usually around 9:00–11:00 a.m., TKN somewhat later: around 10:00–11:00 a.m., while PK is more likely to be active before 3:00 p.m. (although the number of posts seems to be too low to evaluate it with confidence).

**Table 5.** Share of number of tweets at a given time throughout the week (N = 114).

Time	GN	TKN	PK
6:00–6:59 a.m.	1	0	0
7:00–7:59 a.m.	4	2	0
8:00–8:59 a.m.	6	0	0
9:00–9:59 a.m.	10	1	2
10:00–10:59 a.m.	7	6	0
11:00–11:59 a.m.	5	5	1
12:00–0:59 p.m.	5	2	0
1:00–1:59 p.m.	3	4	0
2:00–2:59 p.m.	2	2	2
3:00–3:59 p.m.	4	1	0
4:00–4:59 p.m.	2	5	0
5:00–5:59 p.m.	7	4	0
6:00–6:59 p.m.	4	0	0
7:00–7:59 p.m.	2	4	0
8:00–8:59 p.m.	1	2	0
9:00–9:59 p.m.	2	5	0
10:00–10:59 p.m.	1	0	0
Total	66	43	5*

\* Source: the authors' own research.

## 6.2.2. Use of Twitter Communication Tools

The implementation of marketing activities on social media platforms, including TT, involves the use of hashtags, mentions and emoticons (Chaney 2016). According to Huang et al. (2010, p. 173), “a hashtag is the specific name for a tag in TT. Hashtags derive their name from the fact that they are preceded by the symbol ‘#’, also known as a hash mark, e.g., #nowplaying”. Hashtags were firstly associated with TT, but now are used in the whole Web. They are “labelling the tweet as being of a certain type. In that sense, hashtags are a kind of metadata. [ . . . ] Adding a hashtag is therefore a way of labelling one’s tweet

as part of a broader theme—and of linking oneself with other users interested in the same topic, thus creating networked publics” (De Cock and Pizarro Pedraza 2018, p. 3). Thus, it may be said that the hashtag is a kind of free promotion of the post—there is no cost to use this label and it is ‘affordable’ for everyone. With no hashtags, there is little chance that anyone who does not follow the profile will ever find it. The stream of posts for those not following is simply ‘invisible’ and the free credit offered by the platform to be more present in the stream of posts every day is merely wasted. Besides this labeling function, hashtags may also be “employed as complexly multifunctional linguistic devices for [ . . . ] structuring information, playing games, and engaging in reflexive meta-commentary” (Wikström 2014), which seems to be specifically useful for media creative narratives. As shown in one of the studies of Polish journalists’ communication on TT (see Leonowicz-Bukała and Martens 2015, 2016), using hashtags as creative way to comment on the current situation is quite common.

The second way of making posts more meaningful is by using emoticons: graphic, iconic symbols or animated gifs representing emotions, reactions and attitudes of people using them, which have been applied in computer-mediated communication since the early 1980s (Spina 2018). According to this author, “one of the consequences of this growing use of emoticons in online conversations is the increasing differentiation of their functions” (Spina 2018; see also Vandergriff 2014). Spina mentions five functions of emoticons. They: “replace existing spoken language resources, preserving part of what happens in actual speech”; serve as “social markers of familiarity”, allowing the author to be perceived as more dynamic and friendly; “provide information on how to interpret a verbal message” and “act as politeness markers”, “softening requests, mitigating verbally expressed negative affect, or signaling a joke”; “signal and preserve syntactic organisations and act in this sense as structural markers, just as punctuation marks” and “can be used as a creative resource, aiming at generating a visual salience of the text, so that the message raises an interest in other participants” (Spina 2018, pp. 2–3).

According to Ahn, the use of emoticons mostly changes the interpretation of the text message (Ahn 2010), which is also culturally dependent (Spina 2018). As the last feature which the author stated in her study, emoticons should be treated “as linguistic resources that play [ . . . ] important pragmatic and social functions in digital written communication, such as conveying the intentions of the writer, supporting social relationships among participants, and providing new opportunities for creative expressions” (Spina 2018, p. 3). This shows that emoticons may be very useful in TT communication in order to build close relations with the audience.

Another way of attracting attention of the TT users is tagging (mentioning) other accounts—i.e., making references to other accounts on TT. The tag of a profile always appears automatically at the beginning of the comment under someone else’s tweet—when the user is responding. In original tweets, the editor needs to tag other accounts manually by using the @ symbol before the name of the account. According to Hu et al. (2012), “those trying to spread information on TT or to influence public opinion should target one of the ‘opinion leader’ groups such as celebrities”. In the case of the media, a reasonable way to draw attention and inspire a discussion should be by mentioning profiles possibly interested in the released content.

As presented in Table 6, all the weeklies studied hardly use these tools in their TT profiles.

**Table 6.** The scope of enhancing posts by the Catholic weeklies’ profiles (N = 114).

	Tweets Using Hashtags	Tweets Using Emoticons	Tweets Using Mentions of Other Accounts	Total	Total Number of Tweets on This Account
GN	4	3	3	10	66
TKN	17	0	9	26	43
PK	2	0	0	2	5*

\* Source: the authors’ own research.

As can be observed, among the weeklies studied, only *TKN* used hashtags more often: more than 1/3 tweets contained a hashtag, and half of these—even more than one. It also seems that the editors of the Catholic weeklies neglect to use emoticons—*TKN* and *PK* did not use them even once during the whole week, while *GN* used them three times (so-called ‘smileys’). Regarding the mentions, *TKN* used them quite often in its posts (mentioning the accounts of archbishops, foundations and priests, once even tagging the Prime Minister’s account), whereas *GN* did it very sporadically (mentioning the profiles of authors of the linked texts).

### 6.3. The Perspective of the Weeklies—The Form and Source of the Posts

#### 6.3.1. The Form of the Posts

One of the most important factors which determine the reactions to a tweet, is its form. In the era of image culture, visual aspects play a significant role in selection of content the user is ready to choose, devote his/her time, engagement and share. As professionals advise, “tweets that contain links, pictures, animated gifs, and videos get retweeted more than those that only contain text” ([Chaney 2016](#)). Using various multimedia in posts supports reaching new audience and helps to gain more citations. The forms of the posts published were also analyzed (Table 7) and the results show that the most often used format is a tweet composed of text, link and graphical image or photograph (which is embedded in the tweet straight from the original linked source). All the weeklies seemingly prefer graphic multimedia and convergent posts. Although *GN* used other forms (such as purely textual tweets or tweets with a videolink), a further analysis has shown that these posts were just part of the discussion: either answers to another account’s comments or retweets of textual tweets posted by other accounts (for instance of Pope Francis).

**Table 7.** Form of posts published on TT (N = 114).

	Only Text	Only Photo/ Graphics	Only Video Link	Text + Photo/ Graphics	Text + Video Link	Text + Photo + Video Link	Text + Link + Photo/Graphics	Only Link	Total
GN	9	1	2	0	4	0	48	2	66
TKN	1	0	0	0	1	0	41	0	43
PK	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	5*

\* Source: the authors’ own research.

#### 6.3.2. The Source/ Authorship of the Tweets

Since in almost all posts links were used, the source of these links and the authorship of the posts were also examined. The question was whether the posts were prepared as original tweets or whether they were just retweets (based on borrowed content). As may be seen in Table 8, the majority of the content on the weeklies’ TT accounts was edited originally by the editors.

**Table 8.** Post preparation (N = 114).

	Post Prepared Especially for TT (No External TT Content)	Only Shared Post (Retweet)	Mixed Post (Retweet with a Comment)	Total
GN	57	7	2	66
TKN	43	0	0	43
PK	4	1	0	5*

\* Source: the authors’ own research.

Although original content is obviously more attractive for the audiences of the weeklies’ TT accounts, retweeting (as well as mentioning) creates the atmosphere of close and personalized interaction with others on the platform. According to professional sources, retweeting shows that the editor of the profile is ready to engage in discussion (see e.g., [Chaney 2016](#)). In this case (the same as for ‘mentions’) the weeklies do not obey the effective

marketing rules. Again, it seems that the TT account is not perceived as a tool important enough to be used for discussion and building up real virtual community.

On the other hand, the magazines quite consciously use another function of social media accounts: linking and redirecting to their own websites (the main page or subpage). According to [Canter \(2014, p. 11; 2020\)](#), TT media accounts editors (both in official and private profiles of journalists) should ensure that users are redirected to their own content. The analysis done by the authors shows that the vast majority of the posts on each profile transfers their audiences to the magazines' websites (successively: [www.niedziela.pl](http://www.niedziela.pl), [www.tygodnik-katolicki.pl](http://www.tygodnik-katolicki.pl) and [www.gosc.pl](http://www.gosc.pl)) or other websites from the same media corporation (like [www.niedziela.tv](http://www.niedziela.tv) television or its YT channel, or—in the case of *GN*—to the regional sites of the magazine or the magazine's blog). The results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** The published links (N = 103) transfer to.

	Magazine's Own Website	Magazine's Own Media (Other Than the Magazine Itself)	Other Media	Total Number of Tweets Containing a Link	Total Number of Tweets on the Account
GN	47	9	0	56	66
TKN	40	2	0	42	43
PK	4	0	0	4	5 *

\* Source: the authors' own research.

#### 6.4. Post Topics—Geography, Macrocategories and Self-Promotional Posts

##### 6.4.1. The Geography of the Tweets' Content

The authors also studied the topics of the posts in geographical and thematic contexts. Geographically (Table 10), in all the three analyzed accounts, the topics concerned Poland, Europe and the rest of the world—except *PK*, which published only five posts in the period under study, including four connected to Poland. The posts concerning Europe are mostly about Italy and the Vatican, France (Notre Dame Cathedral), the Netherlands (the euthanasia issues) and—as regards the world topics—to Pope Francis' pilgrimage to Thailand and Japan.

**Table 10.** Post topics—geographical aspect (N = 114). Each post could be assigned to more than one category—the results do not add up to 114.

	Poland	Europe	The World	n.a.
GN	26	4	12	25
TKN	14	3	13	8
PK	4	0	0	1 *

\* Source: the authors' own research.

##### 6.4.2. The Thematic Content of the Tweets

Regarding the thematic content of the TT profiles of the Catholic weeklies, it needs to be stressed that all the 61 topics have been assigned to nine different macrocategories, and the tweets might be tagged as matching more than one macrocategory and topic. The detailed information about the number of tweets assigned to the thematic macrocategories is presented in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Post topics (N = 114).

	Religion	Society	Politics	Economy	Culture	Sport	Law	Self-Promotion	Other
GN	7	6	4	3	5	2	0	4	1
TKN	36	16	7	1	0	1	1	2	0
PK	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 *

\* Source: the authors' own research.

GN seems to be the most multithreaded—religious tweets are represented quantitatively at almost the same level as society, culture and self-promotional posts.

In the case of TKN, there is a strong trend to focus on religion and society, with politics in the context of the Church in the third place, which proves strong coherence between the Catholic character of the magazine and the problems its editors focus on. Religious topics mostly concern general problems of Catholic faith (1/4 cases), special occasions in the Catholic Church (for example pilgrimages) or anniversaries of events such as births or deaths of saints (1/3 cases), history of the Church and important living (like Pope Francis) and historical figures (almost 1/3 cases). Tweets about scandals were much less frequent (there was only one concerning the funeral of Archbishop Juliusz Paetz, who was accused of sexual harassment of children). As for the posts devoted to social problems, they mostly redirected to articles about topics perceived to be central to the Church's social doctrine: health and illnesses, people with disabilities, abortion, suffering of sick people (e.g., 22.11.19, 4:32 p.m., @niedziela\_pl: *Suffering evokes fear and anxiety in us, and we fear suffering. How can we make suffering a blessing? Is it possible? @ks\_jgrabowski*), etc. Political posts informed about the news on the Church—state relations or the public activity and statements of politicians.

The last analyzed weekly published four posts on religion: two concerning the funeral of Archbishop Paetz, one about the Pope's pilgrimage and one on the late Bishop Bronisław Dembowski.

#### 6.4.3. Self-Promotional Tweets

What is interesting in the context of the marketing use of TT is the collection of self-promotional posts which (based on the analysis of the content of the weeklies' FB promotional communication, see [Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. 2020](#)) the authors have defined as those announcing patronized events, the success of the magazine, the success of the magazine's journalists, news on the journalist of the magazine, calling to buy and read new printed editions, announcing premieres of patronized books/music albums or movies and social events (excluding post strictly linking to the magazine's website). As it turned out, all these tools were not very commonplace among the analyzed weeklies' accounts, although all the three titles posted at least one tweet on their own brand.

TKN had only two such self-promotional posts during the whole studied week. The first one concerned promotion of the article published in the latest edition of the printed magazine (23.11.19, 7:57 p.m., @niedziela\_pl: *The quality of the Church community depends on the proper proportion between its two fundamental components: the clergy and the laity... In the new Niedziela: The Laity in the Church.* <https://niedziela.pl/prezentacja> accessed on 2 June 2021—Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** A self-promotional tweet by *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*, 23.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.

The second one was a strictly a promotional slogan, calling to read the weekly due to its long history and devotion to Catholic tradition (22.11.19, 10:42 a.m., @niedziela\_pl: #niedziela is 93 years of history and tradition. For generations, we have been trying to convey to you reliable information, defend Christian values and be faithful to the doctrine of the Catholic Church. We want to combine tradition and modernity. We want to be effective. Details coming soon. #iamreadingniedziela—Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** A self-promotional tweet by *Tygodnik Katolicki Niedziela*, 22.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.

PK tweeted within the promotional thread once—calling its audience to read the newest online edition of the magazine. The post consisted of the chosen headlines and the link (21.11.19, 2:03 p.m., @PrzewodnikKatol: *Kingdom not of this world; The Church in Poland is not persecuted; Abp Juliusz Paetz: Ambiguity; The courage of dialogue—Bp. Bronisław Dembowski; Tax digital giants The circus of suffering. Midlife crisis—what’s next?; Biennale in interesting times.* <http://e.przewodnik-katolicki.pl> accessed on 2 June 2021, see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** A promotional tweet by *Przewodnik Katolicki*, 21.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.

GN posted five tweets which may be classified as self-promotional. What is also easily observed is that the tweet with the highest rate of the users’ reactions was the visual one, with the graphic by the magazine’s late author of satiric drawings, Zbigniew Jujka. This post gained 24 reactions (‘likes’, shares, comments), when usually the tweets of GN got less than 10 ‘likes’. The mentioned tweet did not only contain the image, but also an editorial comment about Jujka and the link to the article presenting more cartoons by him (19.11.19, 1:55 p.m., @Gosc\_Niedzielny: *See his last 10 drawings in Gość Niedzielny. His jokes have entertained the readers of Gość since January 2005.* <https://gosc.pl/doc/5991542.Zobacz-10-ostatnich-rysunkow-Pana-Jujki-w-Gosciu-Niedzielnym> accessed on 2 June 2021). The sample of the post is presented in Figure 4.

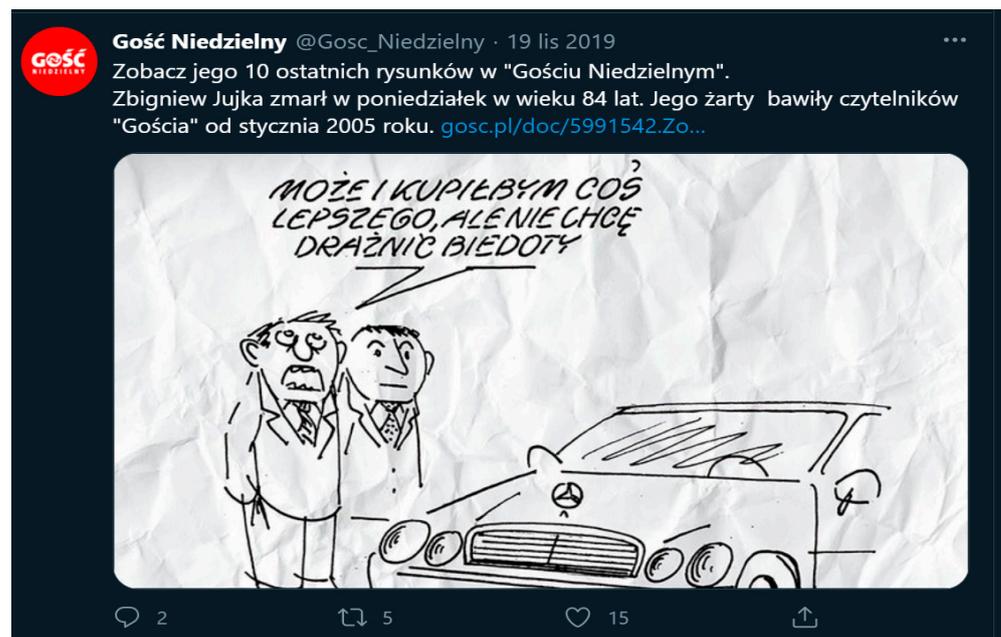


Figure 4. A self-promotional tweet by *Gość Niedzielny*, 19.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.

On the other hand, the next day the magazine posted a tweet strictly referring to its market success. It was a simple, uncommented and non-visual link to the article on the magazine's website, presenting the ranking of Polish weeklies (Figure 5, 20.11.19, 9:21 a.m.), in which *GN* took the lead. Several hours later, the editors tweeted again on the same topic (Figure 6), linking to the outside original source of the mentioned ranking with the comment "We have loyal readers:-) Thank you!" (20.11.19, 2:03 p.m.).

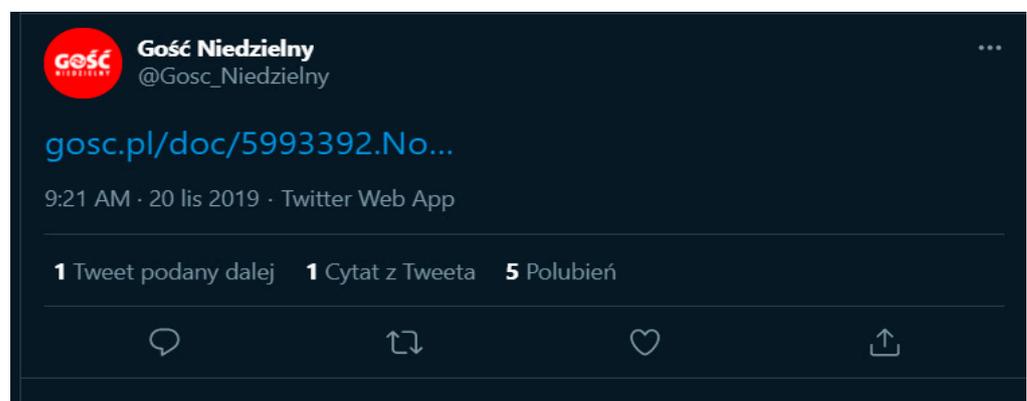


Figure 5. A self-promotional tweet by *Gość Niedzielny*, 20.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.



Figure 6. A self-promotional tweet by *Gość Niedzielny*, 20.11.2019. Source: Twitter/screenshot.

The last self-promoting post announced the newest edition of the printed version with the free insert—a calendar.

## 7. Conclusions

Before the era of the Internet and social media platforms, the media world was a relatively well-organized system of information exchange, based on trust in the professionalism of news selectors, gatekeepers, researchers, and news presenters. Roles in the creation of messages were clearly established, with the flow of information running from the sender to the recipient at a fairly strict pace measured by morning editions, fixed-timed news services, with only occasional interruptions by reports of extraordinary events.

The new media, based on interactivity and equal access to communication opportunities, have shattered this order by redefining who can be the source of information, the sender, who decides whether any information will be published. It is the recipients, called users, who decide whether a piece of information is important or interesting, and who are equipped with a set of tools for public discussion on any topic publicized by the media.

In this new reality, the media—including Catholic media—have been challenged to re-establish and struggle for their position, for example by being active on social media, including TT.

A very general, but at the same time significant, conclusion is that out of the five magazines analyzed in the research project, two do not manage an account on TT, whereas one of the studied magazines has suspended its updating. This seems surprising, given the widespread digitalization of reality, including the media reality. A closer look at the Twitter activity of the remaining three weeklies also fails to inspire optimistic conclusions.

It should be emphasized that in their basic scope, the weeklies implement the “brand-creating” potential of the presented service fairly well, i.e., they maintain visual coherence, display their logos, website addresses and mottos/slogans. Moreover, in their posts they systematically redirect the audience to materials published either on their websites or in other media belonging to the publishers. In addition, through the thematic selection of tweets (focusing on religious themes) and the selection of entities they follow, they also maintain brand integrity (the content published on the portal corresponds with the concepts of their editorial policies, reinforces them and stabilizes their digital identity). In the above area, it can be confirmed that the TT profiles of the Catholic weeklies are the emanations of their media brands and the carriers (additional channels of distribution) of their content (RQ1, RQ7).

On the other hand, these media do not use the full marketing potential of the platform: they do not commercialize it, and the promotional aspect in the content of the posts is very modest. It can be noted, naturally, that the magazines are conscious of TT’s self-promotional function, but hardly use it—or use it, but not professionally. The most effective realization of a ‘brand-centric’ profile is not finished at the phase of building an account—ongoing communication should also be constantly built up around the brand and monitored as well (Chaney 2016). Therefore, as far as the analyzed media are concerned, there is no systematic encouragement to buy the new issue of the magazine or e-magazine by promoting particular publications, nor is there a regular habit of presenting the current cover in tweets or emphasizing the uniqueness of the current issue; there are no self-promotional references to the backstage of the editorial teams’ work or the journalists’ activities, which could create their own brand ambassadors. Comparing the number of self-promotional posts against posts on other topics, such as political or social ones, one can conclude that the image potential of TT has not been fully exploited (RQ1, RG7).

The evaluation of the tool aspect of running a TT account also remains ambivalent (RQ2, RQ3, RQ5, RQ6). As mentioned, the publishers work well with linking, they develop content dedicated mainly to TT, they publish systematically throughout the week (allowing for ‘Sundays off’), they also use graphic materials in their tweets. On the other hand, they rarely use short videos or emoticons. It can be seen, therefore, that the multimedia format of their accounts is mainly photographic-textual, rather monotonous and static, essentially

typical of the average website. On the whole, the use of hashtags is not fully professional either: the publishers do not use this feature regularly, thus abandoning the opportunity to build their reach.

The analyzed weeklies almost completely overlook the possibility of building user engagement and loyalty. Instead, they limit themselves to one-way (with minor exceptions) communication aimed at distributing the content of the magazine itself. In this case, the TT profile does not fulfil the community-forming role: it remains solely an additional distribution channel, instead of being an agora for evangelization, apologia, exchange of views, or strengthening the relationships with Internet users (RQ1, RQ3, RQ4). This is not just a problem for this particular media category. Recent studies of e.g., the activity of television on TT (Kozman and Cozma 2020) show that it also neglects the interactive functions of the platform, giving priority to those related to increasing the reach of its information.

Comparing the Twitter activities of the magazines studied, it can be concluded that in the analyzed period they were similar to one another (RQ8), although it can be seen that the individual weeklies put emphasis on different possibilities of communication within the service; it is also necessary to mention that one of the accounts ceased its activity after the first archiving of the profile content in 2019. Some similarities include consequent exposure of the brands' visual identity, neglecting emoticons or hashtags (except *TKN*) or using the self-promotion potential of the platform analyzed. The weeklies also share a preference for graphic multimedia, linking and redirecting to their own websites as well as the fact that they abandon the possibility of building up a real virtual community. There are hardly any differences between the weeklies. The *GN* editors are quite conscious of managing the TT account: it has far more tweets and followers than the other two, it is visibly the most active title, and the most multithreaded in its content. *TKN* publishes posts with the greatest regularity. It also uses hashtags and mentions more often. *PK* runs the least active account; what is specific is that it likes its own tweets, which seems to indicate a lack of professionalism.

Considering the above conclusions, it can be stated that the Catholic weeklies manage their TT accounts in a moderately professional manner (RQ9). They fairly efficiently use their visual and distributional potential as well as some features of the platform (linking). On the other hand, they miss the chance to build a community of users focused around media brands, they do not apply a systematic and deliberate self-promotion strategy, nor do they use important TT mechanisms, such as hashtags and emoticons. It can therefore be concluded that the editorial boards of Polish Catholic weeklies do not take full advantage of the marketing possibilities of TT, which is reflected in a small number of interactions and low reach of tweets. Thus, TT's functions are limited to supplementing the main communication channel, which is the printed weekly and its website.

What is interesting in this context is that building a very strong and bound community of audience around the account of the magazine could also lead to something possibly dangerous for each religious organization—and we can easily consider Catholic weeklies to be such organizations. According to Kołodziejska, "the presence of religious expression is perceived differently online than offline. The online environment seems to be more democratic, open, and hospitable to individual forms of expression than traditional Catholic settings (like the parish). The Internet becomes a space for voicing courageous opinions which can be both coherent and contradictory to the teachings of the Church. It facilitates personal, individual expressions of faith, shared within a heterogeneous community of believers and nonbelievers" (Kołodziejska 2014, p. 163). In practice, the customers—the readers and the followers—can easily communicate with one another to talk about topics which are difficult to be discussed on the magazine's pages, such as scandals in the Catholic Church (usually not the main focus of these magazines, which was also mentioned in the analysis). Such a possibility may be perceived to be unnecessary and problematic for the editors of the Catholic press—therefore the authors may cautiously hypothesize that what can be observed is not the lack of skills but a planned conservative strategy of

information management, which the Catholic Church in Poland is so often accused of using as a standard. Nevertheless, this is a topic for separate research, analysis and paper.

A phenomenon that has already been described for a decade in the context of social media, mobile apps and editorial work is the so-called “privatisation of journalistic communication” (Flasiński 2018), which involves the use of tools designed for private communication in order to present messages related to journalists’ professional activities and editorial work (see also Bruns 2012). In addition to presenting the journalist’s private image, privatization also entails giving access to the behind-the-scenes work of the newsroom (for example to the premises of the editorial office, which are not usually accessible to the public), but also using interactive tools provided by mobile applications to engage the user and hold a dialogue (Flasiński 2018). The latter is the basis of brand intimacy, which can be important from the marketing point of view as part of the image strategy of a media institution (237). The analyzed media do not apply or use this strategy on their profiles. In-depth research would be required to determine whether their journalists do so.

This article was intended to examine how printed Catholic weeklies in Poland use the marketing potential of TT. It can be said that this objective has been achieved, despite the limitations of the research, with the most important one being that the research sample is based on posts aggregated over a single week of 2019. Yet, despite the short time of data collection, the final number of tweets is quite substantial, and all days of the week that could differentiate activity were also analyzed. TT is also an extremely dynamic medium, requiring interactive activity at least several times a day; therefore, it seems that the time span covered by the study is sufficient to draw conclusions about the typical activity of the studied profiles. Additionally, the paper includes updates in the context of 2020. Moreover, according to the authors, the data collected in 2019 could serve as comparative material in studies focused on how the pandemic affected the marketing activities of Catholic magazines on social media. Such a comparison of the state before and during the epidemic could be an interesting thread for future academic research, relating not only to TT but also to other social media platforms.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Catholic media term was defined in (Adamski et al. 2020).
- <sup>2</sup> It should be borne in mind, however, that a large number of Twitter accounts are fake, used for political fight or other purposes, often through the so-called astroturfing, i.e., creating the impression of genuine citizen support for a particular idea. In order to detect fake accounts, Twitter uses tools such as artificial intelligence algorithms; such accounts are systematically deleted (Gurajala et al. 2016; Erşahin et al. 2017).
- <sup>3</sup> It is not certain that all results from Google Scholar refer directly to publications specifically about Twitter; however, those included in the table include the word “Twitter” in the title, abstract or keywords.
- <sup>4</sup> The first mention of an important event occurs on Twitter within 20 min, while on FB it takes 4 h (Wachnicki 2013; Woźniak 2015).

- <sup>5</sup> Unless the user protects his/her account, tweets are public by default (according to <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/public-and-protected-tweets> accessed on 2 June 2021). The latest data from 2016 say that about 10% of the accounts on TT are protected (see <https://www.quora.com/How-many-Twitter-users-have-a-private-profile-How-many-have-a-public-profile> accessed on 2 June 2021). In the case of public institutions, which intend to self-promote, protecting the account is obviously pointless.
- <sup>6</sup> Which do not mean the same. See (Correia 2021).
- <sup>7</sup> Twitter's API also makes it possible to download large amounts of data from tweets and use it for analysis using the Big Data technology.

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