Summary

The subject of this dissertation is Polish virtual brand communities operating as social groups on Facebook. The essence of the novelty in the research is related to the communication channel, as since 2017, social groups on Facebook have become a communication tool widely used by brand communities. The project was aimed at exploring and deeply understanding this type of group, in particular in such aspects as communication within the group, relationships between members, and relationships between the community and the brand. The research was exploratory and interdisciplinary, however, the perspective of social communication and media sciences constitutes a kind of umbrella under which different approaches to the same research subject meet.

The research project was carried out in 2017-2022. Taking into account the research questions and the social nature of the phenomena, a natural step was to move towards a case study approach (multiple) and a mixed strategy, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The most important methods used in the project were netnography and content analysis.

The research project not only provided detailed answers to the research questions but also enabled the formulation of a number of conclusions about Polish, contemporary brand communities operating as social groups on Facebook. The most important finding relates to the communication within this type of group, which is not in the service of the brand, but around the brand. Brand communities are independent platforms for exchanging knowledge, opinions, support, services, purchases, and sales. The purpose of communication is not to deepen relationships with the brand but with other members of the community. In the research, there was also observed the impact of the communication channel on the nature of brand communities. At a time when establishing contact between a brand's fans required effort and costs, these groups brought together the most committed fans. Today, creating (and joining) a social group on Facebook is an almost effortless, making these communities also accessible to people with much lower levels of involvement.