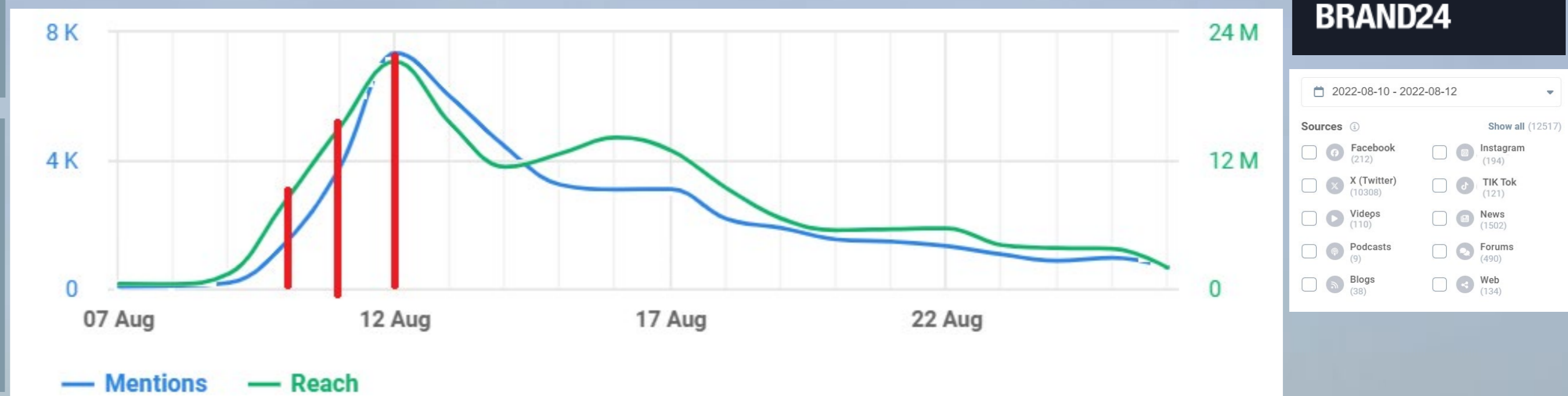


INFORMATION FLOW IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE BASED ON THE ODER RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

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Aim

Determining the trend of changes during public discussion during the ecological disaster on the example of the poisoning of the Odra River in August 2022



Materials and methods

Articles and posts on news portals and social media published on August 10-12, 2022 were retrospectively monitored using the Brand24 tool (an Internet and social media monitoring tool).

The time period was chosen due to the highest activity of users publishing under the hashtag "odra".

The 100 most popular publications each day were qualified for analysis.

Fluctuations in the popularity of particular types of information were examined as new facts became available to the public.

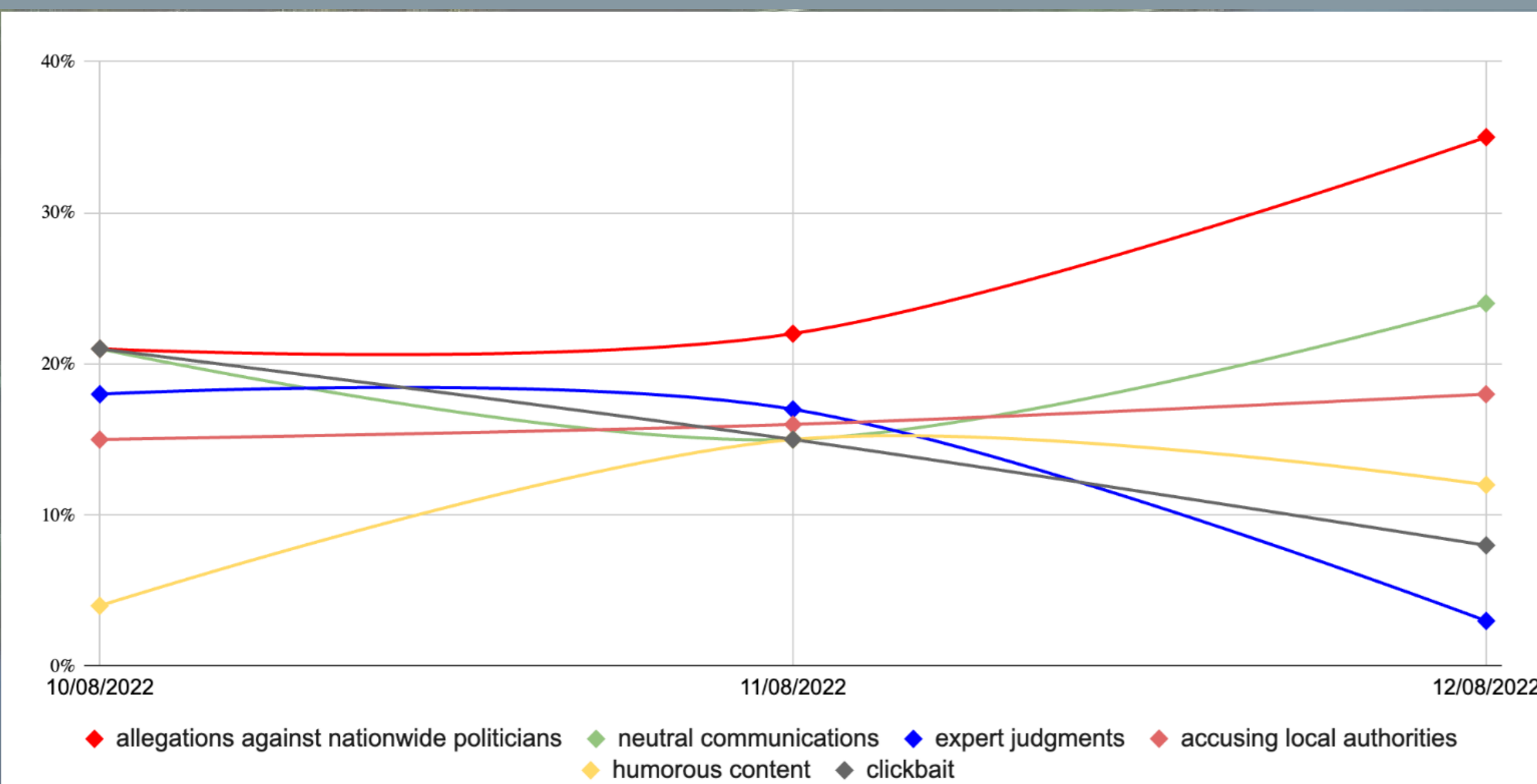
Results and conclusions

About 20% of data from #odra is clickbait content. Most of them occur at the beginning of the topic's popularity, then their number gradually decreases.

82% of mentions come from Twitter and 12% from news portals.



In the analyzed period, the Brand24 analysis defines the sentiment of 54% of the data as negative, 42% as neutral, and only 4% of messages with a positive sentiment occur.



Negative public sentiment coexists with greater engagement on social media.

Humorous posts have a specific ironic tone. In addition to providing entertainment, they point out current problems and absurdities that make it impossible to help the population or may lead to a threat to life and health.

The nature of the posts shows a pattern where initially the public looks for substantive information, then, after assessing the threat, humorous materials are created, and finally, they lose interest in the experts' positions and look for the culprits on their own.

TIMELINE

- 25/07/2022**
 - Residents of the riverside agricultural areas are complaining about extremely low water levels in the rivers and the problem of taking water to irrigate their fields.
- 27/07/2022**
 - The first noticed cases of dead fish on the border of the Lower Silesian and Opole provinces.
- 28/07/2022**
 - General Inspectorate of Environmental Protection collects water samples in strategic locations.
 - Decision to take no further steps beyond increased monitoring - cases are local and incidental.
- 03-08/08/2022**
 - Waiting for further results of water samples.
 - First negative reactions in social media.
 - The government in Warsaw is deliberately delaying information about the outbreak of the environmental disaster.
 - German media allude to the disaster.
- 09/08/2022**
 - The Provincial Inspector of Environmental Protection submitted a notification to the prosecutor's office.
 - No report on the situation in the state media.
- 10/08/2022**
 - Notice from the Polish Fishing Association about the need to avoid spending time near the Oder
- 11/08/2022**
 - The first mention of the problem on state television appears 15 minutes into the main edition of News. It takes less than a minute.
- 12/08/2022**
 - The peak of #odra popularity
 - Announcements about the activities of "Wody Polskie" are becoming number 1 among popular topics.
 - The prosecutor initiated an investigation under Article 182(1) of the Penal Code, i.e. significant environmental pollution. Investigations into the mass death of fish in the Oława commune were also taken over. The entire announcement was made public.