

STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES IN PROMOTING LOCAL AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS

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Abstract: Digital marketing strategies have proven to be highly effective in promoting local agri-food products by increasing visibility, expanding market coverage and encouraging consumer engagement. These strategies use various digital tools and platforms to directly connect manufacturers with consumers, bypassing traditional distribution channels. The integration of digital marketing in the agricultural sector not only stimulates competitiveness, but also empowers local producers to adapt to the digital economy. The following sections detail the key aspects of these strategies. The integration of digital marketing in the agricultural sector is not only an economic opportunity, but also a step towards sustainability and resilience. This allows small producers to compete with big brands, promote traditional products and help preserve local food heritage in the digital age.

Keywords: digital marketing, online promoting, local agri-food products, agrotourism.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of economic transformations driven by digitalization, digital marketing has become an essential tool for the development and promotion of local agri-food products. Local agri-food products constitute a significant sector of the rural economy, characterized by authenticity, quality, and a strong connection to regional traditions and communities. However, these products often face constraints related to distribution, visibility, and access to broader markets [1].

The globalization of markets and changes in consumer behaviour compel producers to adopt innovative solutions to maintain their competitiveness and visibility. Thus, digital marketing strategies provide the opportunity [12]. to establish direct connections between local producers and final consumers, eliminating intermediaries and reducing distribution costs [2].

Local agri-food products frequently encounter challenges in promotion, limited visibility, and restricted access to larger markets. Through the use of digital environments such as social media, e-commerce platforms, and online advertising campaigns [10], producers can overcome these obstacles and establish a direct, authentic, and transparent relationship with their target audience.

Moreover, such strategies increase awareness of the value of local products, thereby supporting the rural economy and the sustainability of local communities [18]. For example, the promotion of agri-food products through social media marketing facilitates the creation of a loyal consumer community, interested not only in the product itself but also in its accompanying story [9]. At the same time, content marketing and digital branding strengthen the visual identity and credibility of producers, contributing to differentiation in a competitive marketplace.

Online advertising (Google Ads, Facebook Ads) and search engine optimization (SEO) support the expansion of market reach and the attraction of new customer segments, including those outside local areas [5]. In addition, data analytics and performance-monitoring tools provide precise insights into consumer behaviour, enabling real-time adjustment of marketing strategies [6].

In the context of economic transformations generated by digitalization, digital marketing has become a fundamental instrument for the development and promotion of local agri-food products [4]. The globalization of markets and changes in consumption patterns drive producers to adopt innovative solutions to maintain competitiveness and visibility [11].

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies implemented by local agri-food producers [13], as well as to identify the main benefits, challenges, and avenues for improvement [14].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out over a period of approximately two and a half months, between 20 August 2025 and 1 November 2025, and focused on a targeted sample of local producers and consumers from the North-West region of Romania. This geographical focus was chosen due to the region's significant presence of small-scale local producers and the increasing relevance of digital tools in promoting regional products.

The study adopted a predominantly quantitative research approach, relying on data collected through an online questionnaire. A total of 55 respondents participated in the survey, including both local producers and consumers of local products. Although the sample size is relatively limited, it is considered appropriate for an exploratory study aiming to identify trends and relationships rather than to generalize results at a national level. To enrich the quantitative findings, the research was complemented by qualitative observations concerning the ways in which digital channels are used by producers, particularly in terms of communication style, content presentation, and audience engagement.

In addition to consulting relevant academic literature, the primary research instrument used was an online questionnaire developed using Google Forms. The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended and multiple-choice questions designed to capture key aspects of digital marketing practices among local producers. Specifically, the questions addressed: the types of digital channels used (such as Facebook, Instagram, official websites, and e-commerce platforms); the frequency of posting and the types of content shared (informational, promotional, visual, or interactive content); perceived performance indicators, including visibility, sales growth, and customer interaction; as well as the main challenges encountered in using digital channels, such as financial costs, limited digital skills, and lack of time. These dimensions were selected based on prior studies in the field and are consistent with established digital marketing performance frameworks [7].

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Percentage indicators were employed to highlight response distributions, while graphical representations were used to facilitate the interpretation and comparison of results across different variables. This approach allowed for a clear and accessible presentation of trends related to digital channel usage and perceived outcomes.

The design of the questionnaire and the overall research framework were guided by two central research questions. The first question aimed to assess whether the active use of social media channels contributes to increasing the visibility of local products. The second question focused on determining whether producers who implement diversified digital strategies by combining multiple online channels achieve better results in terms of sales performance and customer loyalty. Together, these research questions provided a coherent structure for the study and ensured alignment between the data collected and the research objectives.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results indicate that the majority of local producers (approximately 90%) use Facebook and Instagram as their primary promotion channels, due to their low costs and direct access to the target audience.

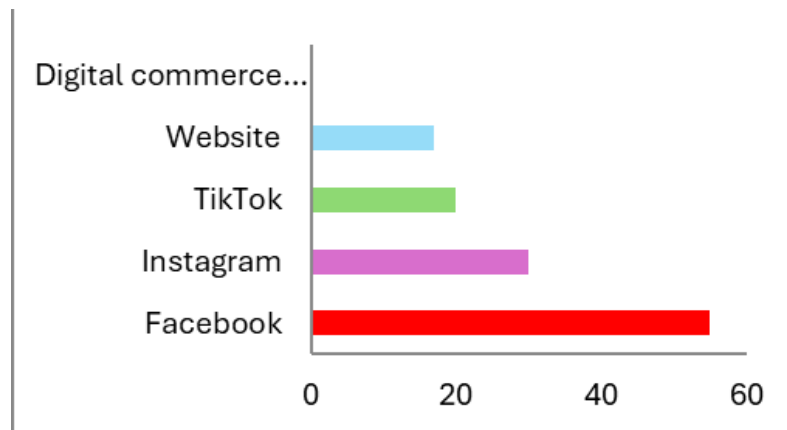


Figure 1. The platforms used to promote agri-food products

However, only a small proportion of them (approximately 10%) have their own website or use e-commerce platforms.

It was also observed that the type of content with the greatest impact is visual content (photographs and videos showcasing the production process, the product story, and customer testimonials- Figure 2).

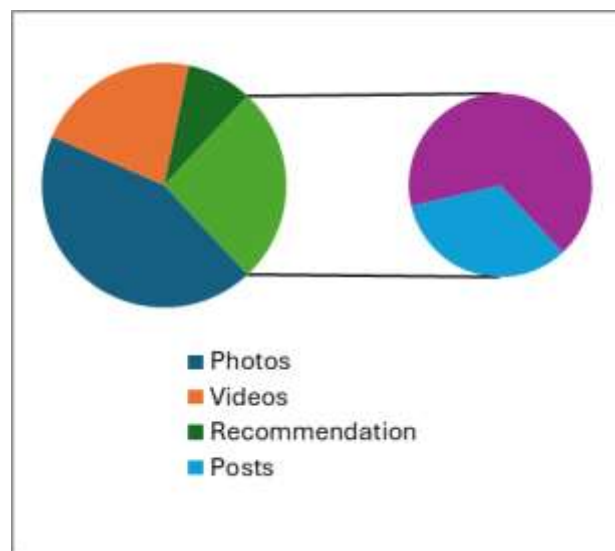


Figure 2. The type of content that most influences sales

Regular, authentic, and interactive posts [16] contribute to increasing consumer engagement and to the formation of a digital community around the local brand [15].

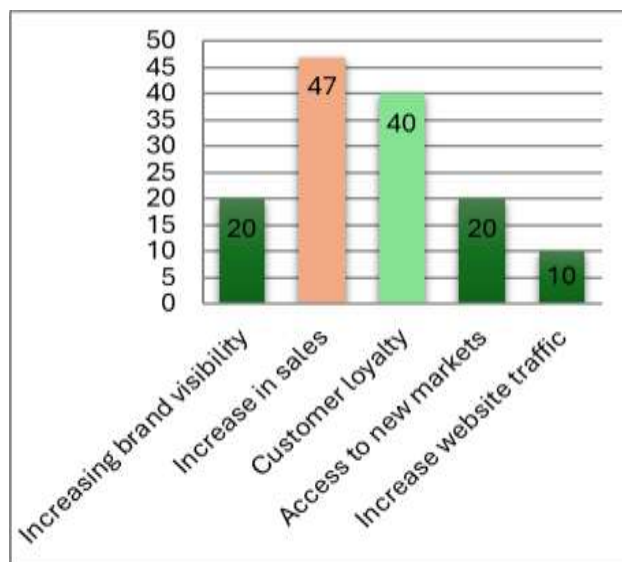


Figure 3. The resulting benefits

The data analysis also highlighted a series of challenges:

- a lack of digital skills among producers;
- limited financial resources for paid advertising;
- difficulties in monitoring campaign effectiveness [17].

Nevertheless, producers who have consistently invested in their digital presence reported increases in sales of up to 30–40% and higher visibility in regional markets. (Figure 3).

The results confirm the hypothesis that digital marketing is a decisive factor for the competitiveness of local agri-food products.

CONCLUSIONS

Although digital marketing strategies have proven effective in enhancing the visibility and competitiveness of local agri-food products, their large-scale implementation still faces significant obstacles. Digital marketing has demonstrated itself as an effective tool for promoting local agri-food products, contributing to increased visibility, strengthening producer–consumer relationships, and facilitating adaptation to the digital economy.

For maximum effectiveness, it is recommended to:

- diversify promotion channels (social media, websites, marketplaces);
- enhance the digital skills of producers and utilize performance analysis tools (e.g., Google Analytics, Meta Insights);
- foster collaboration among local producers for joint promotional campaigns.

The integration of these strategies can support sustainable rural development and transform traditional products into competitive assets in the global market. Limited access to technology remains one of the primary barriers, particularly in rural areas where digital infrastructure is underdeveloped. Unstable internet connections, high equipment costs, and the absence of specialized technical support reduce the capacity of local producers to adopt modern marketing tools. Another critical factor is the low level of digital literacy among many farmers and local producers. Many lack the necessary knowledge to manage social media platforms, create engaging content, or interpret data from digital campaigns. As a

result, although there is interest in using online channels, insufficient technical skills often lead to superficial and sometimes inefficient use of these tools.

This situation highlights the urgent need for digital training and advisory programs targeting local producers. Training in online marketing, visual communication, and performance analytics could help reduce the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, public institutions and non-governmental organizations can play a key role by developing integrated platforms that facilitate collective promotion of local products and provide continuous technical support. Public policies should also support the digitalization of agriculture through investments in infrastructure, subsidies for acquiring digital equipment, and incentives for developing technological competencies. Only through an integrated approach that combines access to resources, digital education, and institutional support can the sustainable adoption of digital marketing among farmers and local producers be ensured.

Survey respondents indicated challenges related to their digital knowledge and the difficulties they face in adapting to digital tools. They recommended the development of workshops and courses to provide practical guidance and digital training.

In conclusion, the potential of digital marketing in the agri-food sector is significant; however, its full realization depends on reducing the digital divide and creating a rural ecosystem that encourages innovation. Addressing these challenges will not only enhance the effectiveness of promotional strategies but also contribute to the sustainable development of rural communities by integrating them effectively into the digital economy.

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