

DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS IN AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is the application of digital marketing tools, including SEO, content marketing, email marketing, social media, influencer marketing, and viral marketing, within the specific context of the agricultural sector. The topic was chosen with the aim of explaining the potential of digital marketing for transforming business in agriculture. The goal of the paper is to identify key digital tools and performance indicators that are significant for agricultural producers. It highlights the opportunities for enhancing the competitiveness of agricultural producers through digital marketing, exploring how digital marketing tools can help increase sales, improve branding, and better connect with consumers with the goal of creating a base of loyal consumers.

Keywords: *digital marketing, SEO, content marketing, email marketing, social media, influencers, agricultural sector*

INTRODUCTION

The application of digital marketing implies a necessity in the modern business environment. The use of digital marketing tools significantly affects the increase in agility and flexibility in business in terms of adapting to the needs and preferences of target consumer groups. The aim is to highlight the features of digital marketing that contribute to increasing the competitive advantage of agricultural producers.

The paper describes the evolution and concept of digital marketing and the role of digital marketing application in the agricultural sector. It then details the features of individual digital marketing tools as well as the indicators used to measure the success of digital marketing tool application. Special emphasis is placed on the conversion rate, which indicates the desired consumer behavior in purchasing products and services. The discussion responds to the set research goal, and the conclusion summarily presents the role of digital marketing application in the agriculture sector.

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1. EVOLUTION AND CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is a concept that encompasses economic, social, and technological dimensions. In the initial stages of digital technology development, especially the Internet, digital marketing primarily served as a promotional tool or a means of informing, persuading, and promoting the purchase of products and services through websites, email marketing, and social networks (Wymbs, 2011). With the advancement of digital technologies, the concept of digital marketing has undergone significant transformation and evolved into a comprehensive approach that uses digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives. Digital marketing is a process used not only to attract consumer attention but also to develop relationships with target consumer groups through long-term investment in the development of trust and loyalty towards products and services, as well as the business organization and the values it represents (Odden, 2012). Digital marketing enables companies to establish and strengthen their brand presence through inventive and interactive content on social networks and other online platforms. Due to the interactive and connectivity properties of digital marketing with target customer groups, businesses have the opportunity to generate additional value through post-purchase customer support (Krishen et al., 2021).

Digital marketing plays an increasingly important role in the contemporary business environment because it can adapt to changes in consumer behavior, technological innovations, and market dynamics. By using digital technologies, the marketing process becomes more efficient in engaging consumers through personalized messages as well as in processes of tracking the performance of digital marketing communication by applying analysis of behavior and consumer reactions in real time (Lies, 2021). Digital marketing includes more than just the interaction between businesses and consumers, as it also applies to collaboration with suppliers, partners, and other relevant entities in the business ecosystem. The collaborative approach developed through digital marketing facilitates collective creation, dissemination, provision, and maintenance of value for all involved parties. "Digital marketing can be defined as an adaptive, technology-enabled process through which companies collaborate with consumers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders" (Duka, 2017, p. 17). From this definition, it is evident that digital marketing encompasses several aspects of business, including promotion, building relationships with key stakeholders, and creating value through collaboration with stakeholders within the ecosystem.

The depth of transformation enabled by digital marketing is best described by the process of changing the role of the customer from a passive role to a more active, collaborative role, where customers can participate in decision-making about the final products and services. In such an approach, customers are promoted from consumers to the role of prosumers. The term prosumer refers to individuals who are both producers and consumers of products and services, as there have been significant changes in the creation, distribution, and consumption of products, services, and marketing content in the digital era (Lang et al., 2020). Through the engagement of

prosumers, the active role of consumers in creating and exchanging value, as well as the creativity of individuals in the digital age, is evident. Such a transformation has profound implications on the market, producers, and the way businesses communicate and connect with their target audience. In the agricultural sector, prosumerism is beginning to be expressed through personal communication between customers and producers, where customers pre-order products, thus reducing the gap between supply and demand for agricultural products (Ziemba et al., 2018). There are also other examples of innovative forms of collaboration. For instance, the modern customer who wants to follow and be engaged in all stages of the production of agricultural products they consume now has the option to rent a certain agricultural area and can be involved in all agricultural processes on the rented land through personal or video communication with the producer (Gruntek, 2023).

2. THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Digital marketing has the potential to increase competitiveness within the agricultural industry in various ways. Establishing digital communication channels such as websites or social networks allows farmers to secure their online presence and visibility in the digital socio-technological context. In this way, consumers are provided with access to information about their products and services. Digital marketing enables farmers to spread information about their products, services, business processes, and organizational values, mission, and vision through various platforms such as blogs, videos, and other forms of content. Such content promotes consumer education about specific agricultural entities and significantly contributes to attracting new customers, as well as establishing loyalty relationships with regular customers (Milanović Glavan & Glasnović, 2022).

Social networks, for example, provide farmers with opportunities to establish and build communities of consumers who value their brands, thus nurturing customer loyalty and facilitating direct collaboration between producers and consumers. Email marketing offers farmers the chance to engage in direct communication with their customers, enabling them to spread information about news, special offers, and upcoming activities taking place in the agricultural sector. The use of digital marketing tools allows farmers to differentiate from competitors by establishing an online presence and building a recognizable brand (Srivastava, 2022). Digital marketing primarily enables farmers to improve market communication, simplify business operations, and enhance competitive advantage in target markets. Therefore, the agricultural sector is encouraged to adapt to digital transformation as it allows them to effectively adjust to the growing demands of consumers, for example, in terms of production methods (ecological, organic) and product distribution management (preferences for local, "short" supply chains) (De Fazio, 2016).

3. DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The use of digital marketing tools is becoming increasingly important in modern agriculture, as these tools play a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of farmers, as well as in enabling effective communication with the desired audience. By allowing precise targeting and measuring the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, digital tools have the potential to optimize outcomes and increase sales volume, as well as the potential to create a base of regular, loyal customers who are the foundation of long-term competitive advantage. This section presents the application of SEO marketing (Search Engine Optimization – SEO), content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and influencer collaboration marketing.

SEO marketing refers to the practice of improving the visibility and positioning of websites in search engine results, primarily on search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The main goal of SEO marketing is to increase the online visibility of websites, thereby attracting a larger amount of traffic from search engines (Husin et al., 2022). This goal is very important because individuals often rely on search engines as a primary source of information about products, services, and local agricultural product and service providers (packaging, processing, delivery, etc.). SEO allows farmers to achieve higher rankings in internet search engine results, making it easier for them to reach potential customers searching for local products. Consequently, the accessibility of information about their businesses is significantly improved. Using SEO allows farmers to strategically focus on specific keywords and phrases that match their target audience's searches. This facilitates the attraction of target customer groups who show a genuine interest in local agricultural offerings and services, potentially increasing sales. SEO optimization is particularly important for farmers operating on a smaller or medium scale because it provides the potential to increase revenue and traffic. Optimization through SEO marketing also contributes to the rationalization of digital marketing costs and the increase in competitive advantage. Using search engine optimization (SEO) techniques can help farmers promote local products, events, and agricultural activities, with the aim of attracting the attention and interest of local consumers. By applying SEO strategies, farmers can achieve much better market results and develop sustainable business through collaboration with key customers and other stakeholders in the microenvironment.

Content marketing is a digital marketing tool that focuses on creating and sharing relevant content to attract and engage a target audience. The goal of content marketing is to provide information and pique the interest of the target audience to enhance sales, build trust relationships, and increase the loyalty of target customers (Du Plessis, 2018). Content marketing in the agricultural sector is significant because it enables the education of consumers through informative content related to agricultural products, processes, and practices, allowing farmers to familiarize consumers with the cultivation, use, and benefits associated with using local agricultural products. To improve brand recognition, farmers can increase awareness of their brand by creating content that showcases distinctive values and narratives associated with their products. Farmers have the opportunity to engage in direct communication with

customers through various online platforms such as blogs and social media, facilitating information exchange, inquiry resolution, and obtaining valuable feedback. Product demonstration through video content can be particularly useful for farmers as it lends credibility and credibility to target customer groups. Within content marketing, it is advisable to use storytelling (narrating products, services, and the producers themselves). Storytelling serves as a means to establish an emotional connection between the audience and the producers, encouraging consumer trust and loyalty (Kim et al., 2018). By using storytelling techniques, farmers can establish a stronger relationship with consumers, highlight the local and regional aspects of their business, emphasize sustainability and product excellence, thus deepening the emotional connection with customers. Narrative storytelling introduces authenticity to marketing efforts, allowing farmers to differentiate themselves in the market. By developing imaginative and authentic content, farmers can achieve a competitive advantage, captivate consumer interest, and gain their loyalty (Kim et al., 2018).

The goal of social media marketing is to promote brands using social networks to effectively attract a specific target audience, foster the development of relationships with consumers, and achieve business objectives (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Social media marketing facilitates agricultural producers in building a recognizable brand identity and increasing the visibility of the business entity and products to target customer groups. Social networks enable two-way communication between producers and consumers, which is of exceptional importance for successful marketing communication and building trust. Social networks also allow direct product promotion using various types of content such as images, videos, and reviews (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Agricultural producers have the opportunity to use social networks as a means for education and spreading information about different aspects of agricultural production, product quality, and cultivation methods. The practice of monitoring competitors' activities on social networks enables farmers to gain a deeper understanding of market dynamics and identify potential untapped market advantages. Social networks are important for farmers also because they contain analytical tools that allow tracking the effectiveness of the campaign and the level of audience interaction and engagement. Social media marketing is of particular importance for agricultural producers due to the possibility of direct communication with clients, promotion of local products and agricultural activities, and establishing relationships with consumers with the aim of building a base of regular customers.

Influencer marketing encompasses partnerships with individuals who have a significant number of online followers and wield considerable influence across various social networks. Agricultural producers have the opportunity to collaborate with influencers on social networks to effectively promote their products or services. Influencers play a significant role in persuading target customers through product evaluations, reviews, and recommendations to their followers. They persuasively influence target customers by generating visually appealing, engaging, practical, or informative content in the form of images, videos, and narratives, which serve to promote agricultural enterprises and their offerings. Choosing influencers whose target audience shows a great interest in agricultural products can enhance the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. This form of marketing helps farmers

establish trust with consumers by using authentic testimonials and narratives from influential individuals (Belanche et al., 2021).

Influencer marketing is often complemented by viral marketing. Viral marketing aims to generate a high level of consumer interest and brand awareness through the rapid spread of marketing messages or content via online platforms, especially through social networks. Viral marketing involves creating content that quickly gains popularity by spreading on social media and other digital platforms. For agricultural producers, this can include the development of innovative, humorous, or informative content designed to attract the target audience (Razali et al., 2023). For example, agricultural producers can achieve this by creating attractive and educational materials. Viral content provokes favorable reactions and captivates the interest of the target audience, leading to its wide circulation and significant viewership and sharing. Viral content can manifest in various formats such as videos, images, memes, infographics, narratives, or any other medium that can quickly grab attention. Creativity and originality are essential qualities of viral content, as it should possess unusual and innovative characteristics that evoke emotions such as laughter, surprise, or admiration among viewers. The shareability of viral content depends on its compatibility with popular social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Understanding the needs and interests of the target audience helps in developing appropriate viral content. Viral marketing often shows greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness compared to conventional marketing tools (Razali et al., 2023). Despite this, it cannot be guaranteed that every piece of content will become viral, as creating potentially viral content requires significant effort and creativity.

4. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Performance indicators for digital marketing in the agricultural sector are considerably more sophisticated and advanced compared to performance metrics in traditional marketing communication. Each of the previously described forms of digital marketing is associated with specific performance indicators, as outlined below.

In SEO marketing, the daily, weekly, or monthly search volume is tracked and measured as an indicator that signifies how often users search for keywords or phrases related to the products or services of a particular agricultural producer. A higher number of searches indicates a greater alignment of searches with selected keywords. The number of backlinks or links from other websites leading to the producer's website also indicates the level of SEO marketing success. Quality backlinks help improve search engine rankings because they signify the authority and relevance of the agricultural producer's website. The click-through rate (CTR) shows how often users click on a website after seeing it in search results. A high click-through rate indicates the attractiveness and relevance of the website to target users (Roumeliotis & Tselikas, 2022).

For measuring the effectiveness of content marketing, page views are used, indicating how many times specific content has been viewed. A higher number of views indicates

the popularity of the content. Time spent on page is an indicator that shows the average time visitors spend on a website. Longer time on page often indicates deeper engagement and interest of users. The conversion rate is an indicator that measures how often website visitors perform a desired action, such as signing up, subscribing, or making a purchase. A higher conversion rate typically indicates higher efficiency of content marketing (Rancati & Gordini, 2014).

For email marketing, the open rate is a significant indicator, measuring how often users open emails from the agricultural producer as the initiator of digital marketing communication. A high open rate indicates the effectiveness of email marketing. In email marketing, the click-through rate is also considered as a measure that shows how often users click on links within emails. A high rate indicates that users are interested in the content and respond to calls to action (Rancati & Gordini, 2014).

In social media marketing, the number of content views on social networks is important. A higher number of views indicates a larger reach of the target audience on social networks. The number of reactions in the form of "likes" and comments under posts is also tracked to assess the level of engagement and interest of the target audience, and the click-through rate of followers on social networks is also considered. The success and effectiveness of marketing in collaboration with influencers are also measured by the number of views to the potential audience, as well as through the engagement rate and the use of discount codes. The engagement rate measures how often the target audience reacts to content in terms of comments, likes, or the number of shares (Doney et al., 2020).

Although the number of performance indicators for digital marketing is extensive, measuring and monitoring the conversion rate certainly plays a central role. As previously mentioned, the conversion rate quantifies the frequency with which individuals visiting a website or landing page successfully perform the desired action after their arrival. The specific action taken can vary depending on the campaign's goal. However, typical examples of conversions include a range of activities, such as purchasing a product or service, filling out a contact form, or the registration process for promotional events in the agricultural sector. In the context of e-commerce, achieving a conversion can be observed when a visitor adds a desired item to their virtual shopping cart and successfully completes the transaction by making a purchase. To increase the number of subscribers, one possible method is to encourage visitors to provide their email address and subscribe to a newsletter. In the context of event organization, the registration process serves as the point at which individuals express their intention to participate in an event. The conversion rate is usually expressed as a percentage and is calculated as the number of conversions divided by the number of visitors, then multiplied by 100 (Saura et al., 2017). If a website has 1000 visitors per month, of which 50 make a purchase, the conversion rate would be 5%.

5. DISCUSSION

Digital marketing is crucial for increasing the competitive advantage of agricultural producers due to its interactivity, connectivity, or linkage of agricultural producers with target customer groups and due to precise performance indicators.

Digital marketing offers farmers the opportunity for direct interaction with consumers through various online platforms, such as social media networks, email, and websites. The interactive approach facilitates the collection of feedback, resolution of inquiries, and rapid fulfillment of consumer demands, increasing the level of communication customization to target consumers. A personalized approach increases consumer engagement and, consequently, the likelihood of converting potential into actual customers. The use of digital platforms provides farmers with the opportunity to create connections and collaborative relationships with customers, suppliers, and other interested stakeholders.

Measurement and analysis of performance in digital marketing provide farmers with precise metrics, including conversion rate, email open rate, or click-through rate. These data facilitate accurate tracking of marketing campaign performance and enable the identification of successful strategies and areas for improvement. Thanks to the availability of precise data, farmers can quickly adjust their marketing strategies in response to changing market conditions.

Conclusion

By utilizing a combination of interactivity, connectivity, and precise performance indicators, agricultural producers can reap various benefits from the use of digital marketing. Increasing consumer engagement and implementing precise strategies targeted at specific groups can lead to improved conversion rates and increased revenue. The analysis of marketing campaign outcomes allows for the efficient allocation of resources and the elimination of superfluous expenditures to minimize marketing costs. Digital marketing enhances the methods by which farmers conduct their business operations, promote their agricultural products, and establish effective communication channels with consumers. Digital marketing enables agricultural producers to improve their agility, adeptly respond to market fluctuations, and achieve long-term competitive advantage crucial for prosperity in the modern agricultural industry.

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