

## ROMANIAN MEAT MARKET: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING EFFORTS AND RESULTS

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### Abstract

As the Romanian meat market expands, producers need to find new promotional tools. In recent years, more and more companies have an increasingly significant presence on social media. The aim of this paper is to correlate the type of message conveyed by the brand on social media with audience interaction. Five companies operating in this field were included in the study, analyzing the messages they send via social networks. Thus, a set of variables was established in order to analyze the correlation between messages and impact. In this respect, we have identified keywords related to the taste and the naturalness of the products. The study revealed that posts that ask for public interaction have a high impact. The results of the study show a high correlation between posts highlighting taste and naturalness qualities and the feedback received.

**Key words:** social media, audience interaction, promotional tools, digital marketing

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations predicts an expansion of the global meat supply of up to 377 Mt (million metric tons) for the year 2031. In this sense, an expansion of the international trade in meat products is expected. An aspect highlighted at the level of developed countries is represented by the growing number of consumers who exclude or reduce meat consumption.

These consumption habits are mainly motivated by animal welfare and health and environmental concerns. In this sense, manufacturers face an ever-increasing challenge in product promotion. Online promotion has become a distinct component of marketing in recent years, considering the boost that social networks have taken, researchers have addressed several aspects of social media marketing (De Vries L. *et al*, 2017; Schivinski B. and D. Dabrowski, 2016; Berthon *et al*, 2012; Abu-Rumman A. H. and A. Y. Alhadid, 2014). Unlike classical promotion methods, social media facilitates direct communication between businesses and customers (Aladwani A. M., *et al*, 2018; Kamboj S. *et al*, 2018).

This aspect represents a considerable advantage because it allows the brand to adapt its strategy to optimize results. Using social media tools, consumers have access to a variety of information to support their purchase decision. Thus, information about manufacturers can be

accessed from everywhere, comparing their products (Palos-Sanchez P. and Saura J.R., 2018). With easy access to information, companies don't have to focus on a general audience. Thus, companies must identify different target groups and adapt their message for each of them (López García J.J. *et al*, 2019). A positive conditioning relationship is created between the brand message and consumer interaction (Yang Y., and Kankanhalli A, 2014).

To analyze the effectiveness of the message transmitted by the brand, in the specialized literature, it is proposed to use the reaction ratio (number of reactions/total number of followers) or the comment ratio (number of comments/total number of followers) (Rana N. *et al*, 2020). Followers' interaction with the brand's posts contributes to the creation and maintenance of the brand-consumer relationship, later this aspect is reflected in the purchase decision.

The particularity of sending the message in social media is given by the possibility of transmitting the consumers' own experience. Thus, this aspect leads to the creation of a wide social circle that responds to the need for social affiliation. In the second quarter of 2022, Facebook counted approximately 2.93 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2022), an aspect that substantiates the potential of this social network and the need to define the presence of brands on this platform.

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**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Starting from the analysis of specialized literature, we set out to analyze the messages sent online by 5 of the most important brands active in the field of production, processing and preservation

of meat and meat products on the Romanian market.

Thus, we have centralized the posts made by the 5 brands, between January 1, 2022 - August 31, 2022, on Facebook. 609 posts were included in the analysis (*table 1*).

Table 1

Variables regarding the brands' online activity		
Category	Variables	Measure unit
I. Variables regarding the transmitted message	1.1 References related to the taste of the products - taste	Number
	1.2 References related to the natural source of the products - natural	
II. Variables regarding the ways of transmitting the message	2.1 Posts with photo content attached – photo	
	2.2 Posts with video content attached – video	
	2.3 Contest posts - contest	
	2.4. Posts where follower interaction is requested – interaction	
III. Variables regarding post impact	3.1 Recorded reactions - reactions	
	3.2 Shares of the post - shares	
IV. Variables regarding online activity	4.1 Posts	

The analysis of the established variables had the role of highlighting the effectiveness of the transmitted message by analyzing the generated impact, quantified in the number of reactions and distributions of the posts. The analysis of established variables was carried out using Analyse-it analysis tools. In this sense, the characterization of the variables distribution was pursued, as follows: the number of valid variables, the minimum value; maximum value and average value.

For the chosen variables, we carried out correlation tests to highlight the links that are created between the variables, their intensity and significance. In choosing the variables, the specificity of the field was taken into account, in this case - the importance given by consumers to the taste of the products, as well as their natural origin. Thus, we used the Google Trends platform to

measure the level of interest over a year for the term "natural".

The platform quantifies the search interest associated with the highest point in the chart, for the specified region and time. A value of 100 represents the maximum popularity of the term, while a score of 0 indicates that not enough data is available for that term.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the conditions of the continuously expanding market, but taking into account the premise of the reduction of meat consumption among specific categories of the population, it is necessary to highlight the interest of the population for products of natural origin.

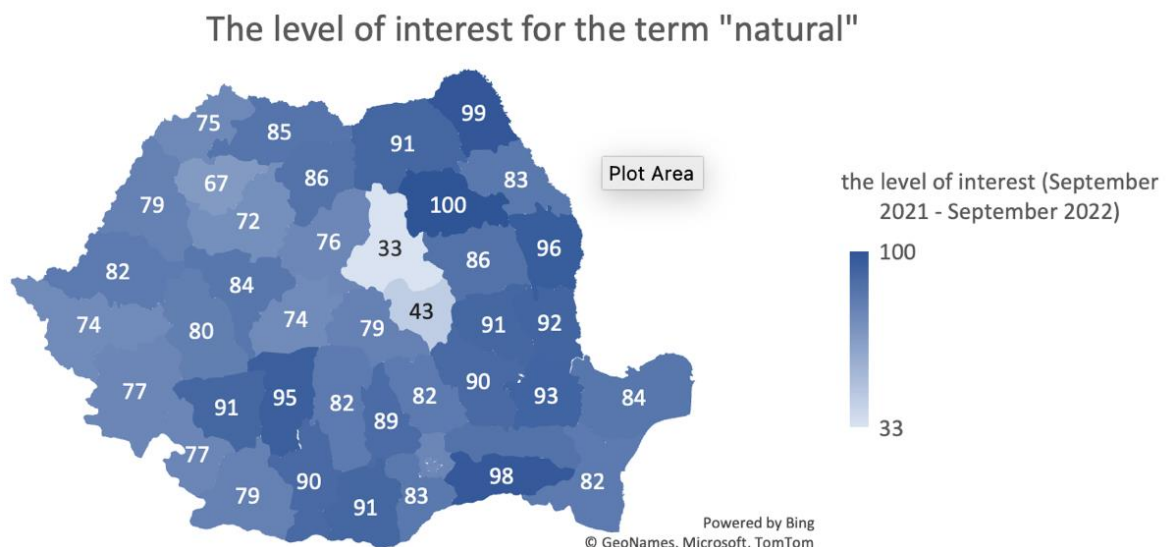


Figure 1 The level of interest for the term "natural" in Google searches in Romania, in the period September 2021 – September 2022

Using the tools of the Google Trends platform (*figure 1*), we analyzed the level of interest of the Romanian population for the term "natural". The analysis highlighted the fact that this term registers a high popularity at the level of the entire country, the highest values being highlighted at the level of the North-East Development Region. This aspect confirms the relevance of the analysis of the references to the natural source of the products, in

the analysis of the messages sent by the brands. In 2021, there were 1735 active companies in Romania in the field of production, processing and preservation of meat and meat products.

Depending on the visibility of the companies in the online environment, we selected the first 5 (*table 2*) of them and analyzed the messages sent through the posts they have made on Facebook.

Table 2

Analyzed data									
Brand	Number of posts	Taste	Natural	Contest	Photo	Video	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
B01	143	102	81	4	102	41	90	32258	2222
B02	124	66	0	2	118	6	21	8557	456
B03	120	89	0	3	87	33	43	29480	2385
B04	111	48	2	0	108	3	44	1132	281
B05	111	82	0	1	111	0	35	8917	2388

The B01 brand had 143 posts during the analyzed period. Of the 143 posts, 71.32% had references related to the taste of the products and 56.64% had references related to the natural origin of the products. The brand organized, during the analyzed period, 4 contests, registering a total number of 32,258 reactions to the 143 posts. The second analyzed brand made 124 posts, 53% of which had references to the taste of the products. A fact highlighted by the present study consists in the fact that this brand did not send messages related to the natural origin of the products through posts. Although the number of posts was 13.29% lower than the number of posts published by Brand B01, the impact recorded, quantified in the reactions of followers, was 73.4% lower. During the analyzed period, the B02 brand organized two contests. The B03 brand made 120 posts, 74% of which referred to the taste of the products. As it was highlighted in the case of the B02 brand, no references to the natural origin of the products were identified in the messages sent by the B03 brand. Although the B03 brand made 16.08% fewer posts than the B01 brand, the impact was only 8.61% lower. B03 organized 3 contests during the analyzed period.

Brands B04 and B05 recorded an equal number of posts. Although both brands made 111 posts each, the recorded impact was different. Thus, the B05 brand registered a 688% greater impact compared to the B04 brand.

Regarding the descriptive analysis of the variables (*table 3*), the 5 valid cases were analyzed. Thus, for the 5 analyzed brands, the average number of posts where references to the natural origin of the products were identified is 16.6, the maximum recorded being 81, two of the analyzed brands having no posts in this category. The average of the posts with references related to the taste of the products is 77.4, with a minimum of 48 and a maximum of 102.

Regarding the interaction requested from the followers, the average of the posts is 46.6, the minimum recorded being 21, and the maximum 90. The posts made by the 5 analyzed brands recorded a total number of 80,344 reactions and 7,732 shares. Thus, the average number of reactions was 16,068.8, with a minimum of 13,898.1 and a maximum of 32,258. In terms of the number of shares, the recorded average was 1,546.4 with a minimum of 281 and a maximum of 2,388.

Table 3

Descriptive analysis of variables						
Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Natural	5	16.6	36.0	0	0.0	81
Taste	5	77.4	20.9	48	82.0	102
Contest	5	2.0	1.6	0	2.0	4
Photo	5	105.2	11.7	87	108.0	118
Video	5	16.6	19.0	0	6.0	41
Interaction	5	46.6	25.9	21	43.0	90
Reactions	5	16068.8	13898.1	1132	8917.0	32258
Shares	5	1546.4	1079.1	281	2222.0	2388

Regarding the correlation analysis of variables for Brand B01 (*table 4*), it revealed a moderate positive correlation between the variables "taste" and "natural". Thus, through its

posts, the brand highlighted the natural origin and the taste of the products. The correlation test revealed that contest posts generate a large number of shares. Also, a moderate correlation was

registered between the variables "reactions" and "shares".

Table 4

**B01 activity correlation statistics**

Correlation B01								
Pearson's r	Taste	Natural	Photo	Contest	Video	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
Taste	-	0.537	-0.079	0.014	0.060	0.090	-0.088	-0.088
Natural	0.537	-	-0.006	0.063	0.024	0.147	-0.079	-0.059
Photo	-0.079	-0.006	-	-0.083	-0.983	-0.095	0.055	0.012
Contest	0.014	0.063	-0.083	-	0.080	0.042	0.185	0.615
Video	0.060	0.024	-0.983	0.080	-	0.102	-0.049	-0.012
Interaction	0.090	0.147	-0.095	0.042	0.102	-	0.001	0.071
Reactions	-0.088	-0.079	0.055	0.185	-0.049	0.001	-	0.514
Shares	-0.088	-0.059	0.012	0.615	-0.012	0.071	0.514	-

For the second analyzed brand (table 5), B02, the correlation test revealed a significant positive correlation between the variables "Reactions" and "Shares", calculating a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.689$ . Also, the positive correlation

relationship between the contest-type posts and the number of shares of the posts was highlighted. B02 had no references related to the natural origin of the products in its posts, therefore the correlation test for this variable was not performed.

Table 5

**B02 activity correlation statistics**

Correlation B02							
Pearson's r	Taste	Contest	Photo	Video	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
Taste	-	-0.137	0.241	-0.241	-0.051	0.066	0.021
Contest	-0.137	-	0.029	-0.029	0.284	0.025	0.418
Photo	0.241	0.029	-	-1.000	0.102	0.064	0.061
Video	-0.241	-0.029	-1.000	-	-0.102	-0.064	-0.061
Interaction	-0.051	0.284	0.102	-0.102	-	-0.053	0.053
Reactions	0.066	0.025	0.064	-0.064	-0.053	-	0.689
Shares	0.021	0.418	0.061	-0.061	0.053	0.689	-

The correlation test performed for B03 (table 6) confirmed the strong positive correlation of the variables "reactions" and "shares". Also, the correlation test revealed a strong correlation between the number of shares and the "contest"

posts. For the analyzed brand, no references were identified regarding the natural source of the products, this variable being excluded from the correlation test.

Table 6

**B03 activity correlation statistics**

Correlation B03							
Pearson's r	Taste	Contest	Photo	Video	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
Taste	-	-0.027	-0.022	0.022	0.004	-0.012	-0.001
Contest	-0.027	-	-0.260	0.260	0.214	0.957	0.350
Photo	-0.022	-0.260	-	-1.000	-0.085	-0.197	0.348
Video	0.022	0.260	-1.000	-	0.085	0.197	-0.348
Interaction	0.004	0.214	-0.085	0.085	-	0.164	0.063
Reactions	-0.012	0.957	-0.197	0.197	0.164	-	0.497
Shares	-0.001	0.350	0.348	-0.348	0.063	0.497	-

For the B04 brand (table 7), the correlation test revealed a moderate correlation between the number of posts with attached video content and the number of reactions recorded, calculating a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.4589$ .

The correlation test also confirmed the correlation between the variables "reactions" and "shares". No "contest" posts were made for the B04 brand, this variable being excluded from the correlation test.

Table 7

**B04 activity correlation statistics**

Correlation B04								
Pearson's r	Taste	Natural	Contest	Video	Photo	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
Taste	-	0.155	-	0.079	-0.079	0.036	0.171	0.251
Natural	0.155	-	-	-0.023	0.023	-0.110	0.046	0.047
Contest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Video	0.079	-0.023	-	-	-1.000	-0.021	0.459	0.267
Photo	-0.079	0.023	-	-1.000	-	0.021	-0.459	-0.267
Interaction	0.036	-0.110	-	-0.021	0.021	-	-0.111	-0.036
Reactions	0.171	0.046	-	0.459	-0.459	-0.111	-	0.571
Shares	0.251	0.047	-	0.267	-0.267	-0.036	0.571	-

No references related to the natural origin of the products were identified in the posts of the B05 brand (table 8), this variable being excluded from the analysis. Likewise, the brand has not published video content, excluding this variable as well. The correlation test confirmed that "contest" posts generate a high number of reactions and shares.

Thus, a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.998$  was calculated between the variables "contest" and "reactions", while the calculated Pearson coefficient was  $r=0.964$  between the variables "contest" and "shares", highlighting a strong positive correlation relation.

Table 8

**B05 activity correlation statistics**

Correlation B05						
Pearson's r	Taste	Contest	Photo	Interaction	Shares	Reactions
Taste	-	-0.160	0.076	0.139	-0.129	-0.150
Contest	-0.160	-	-	0.141	0.962	0.998
Photo	0.076	-	-	-0.024	0.466	0.267
Interaction	0.139	0.141	-0.024	-	0.106	0.126
Shares	-0.129	0.962	0.466	0.106	-	0.964
Reactions	-0.150	0.998	0.267	0.126	0.964	-

The correlation test performed for the 609 (table 9) analyzed posts revealed a strong positive correlation between the variables "contest posts" and "reactions", calculating a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.942$ . The study also revealed a strong correlation between posts with video content attached and recorded feedback, calculating a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.762$ . Also, the correlation test revealed a moderate positive correlation between the variables "natural", "taste" and "reactions". Thus, between the variables "natural" and "reactions" we calculated a Pearson correlation

coefficient  $r=0.640$ , while between the variables "taste" and "reactions"  $r=0.898$ . The study also revealed a higher impact of posts with video content attached compared to the impact of posts with photo content attached. Another highlighted aspect consists in the strong positive correlation between the "taste" and "shares" variables, with a Pearson coefficient  $r=0.883$  being calculated. Also, a moderate positive correlation was identified between the number of posts asking for follower interaction and the number of reactions recorded, calculating a correlation coefficient  $r=0.671$ .

Table 9

**Correlation statistics**

Pearson's r	Natural	Taste	Contest	Photo	Video	Interaction	Reactions	Shares
Natural	-	0.641	0.694	-0.151	0.714	0.939	0.640	0.336
Taste	0.641	-	0.868	-0.502	0.777	0.617	0.898	0.883
Contest	0.694	0.868	-	-0.487	0.909	0.609	0.942	0.568
Photo	-0.151	-0.502	-0.487	-	-0.729	-0.392	-0.731	-0.595
Video	0.714	0.777	0.909	-0.729	-	0.762	0.965	0.550
Interaction	0.939	0.617	0.609	-0.392	0.762	-	0.671	0.426
Reactions	0.640	0.898	0.942	-0.731	0.965	0.671	-	0.721
Shares	0.336	0.883	0.568	-0.595	0.550	0.426	0.721	-

**CONCLUSIONS**

Considering the direct interaction that takes place between the brand and the end consumer, in online communication it is necessary for brands to focus on the transmitted message. Thus, brands

need to identify those key messages with which to convince the audience and attract consumers to their products. The present study highlighted the fact that the method of transmitting the message plays an important role, with posts with attached video content generating a higher impact. In

communicating with followers, brands must take into account the usefulness of the information transmitted to followers, as well as the feedback. The recorded reactions and the number of shares of the posts provide relevant information about the effectiveness of the transmitted message.

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