



PRACTICE ABSTRACT NR. 75

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Online direct marketing channels developed by pioneering entrepreneurs in Romania's capital region

An increasing number of innovative fruit and vegetable growers from Romania's capital region (Ilfov, Giurgiu and Prahova) have developed an online sales presence in the form of either: 1) a web shop placed on their website (BioDumbrava, EcoKult, Prepelitu, Capitanu, Ograda lui Luca, EcoShopping.ro), or; 2) the creation and promotion of a Facebook page through which the producers take orders from consumers (BioSalati din Gradina Ursului, MacoBees). These pioneering entrepreneurs (often highly educated and coming from corporate backgrounds) have turned to farming as a side-activity or a lifestyle, thereby bringing new knowledge to the field of agricultural marketing. They have used their knowledge and urban networks of marketing experts to improve packaging, social media and website Search Engine Optimization (SEO) algorithms to reach specific urban niche markets (i.e. organic produce, rare plant varieties, gourmet recipes, wild varieties, speciality honey and lavender). For example, in 2017 a new App (Taraba Virtuala) appeared for Bucharest consumers who want to order fresh produce from smaller producers around the city. This offered a convenient interface for around 100 different producers to manage the 20 weekly orders from around 1000 active consumers. Taraba Virtuala considers its platform to be self-explanatory, and does not offer any additional farmer advisory services to the producers it works in partnership with. However, there is huge potential to develop public / private advisory services about innovative direct marketing channels, including accessible programmes / services for training farmers in branding, packaging, product differentiation and storytelling skills, as well as the use of social media.

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COUNTRY/REGION:

ROMANIA, GIURGIU

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the case of the direct marketing apps, connecting consumers and producers (such as Taraba Virtuala), the platform providers themselves conducted a scan of regional farmers and contacted them personally in order to bring them onto their app. Later on, the farmers themselves promoted the app with their acquaintances and personal networks. Taraba Virtuala relied on such an approach because, for platform-based business models, assuring that enough consumers and producers are present at the beginning on the app is an essential element of assuring its survival in the early stages. Secondly, the platform app entrepreneurs also set up stands during agricultural and consumer fairs around Bucharest. At the time of the interview (February 2019), the platform had around 100 producers on the app, but its owners think that it could gain a lot more producers if they simply had a budget to promote it on more expensive channels such as on TV. Besides informing farmers about the simple existence of such apps, its initiators focused on developing an intuitive design, which does not require much IT training from the side of the farmers. Producers must simply install the app on their phone and have a produce delivery system for the products which they advertise. Taraba Virtuala offers no further training to producers to support them in this respect.



ABOUT AGRILINK

AgriLink is a multi-actor project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It brings together 16 partners from 13 countries, including universities, applied research institutes, advisors and consultants from public organisations, private SMEs, a farmer-based organisation and specialists in communication and distance learning.

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