



**BALKANS
GROW**

green resilient organic wisdom



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TRAINING MATERIAL

MODULE 5

DIGITAL MARKETING IN THE NEW AGRICULTURE



TITLE

BalkansGrow Training Material - Module 5: “Digital Marketing in the New Agriculture”

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CONTENT

This training material is part of a six-module manual developed within the BalkansGrow Project. It serves as a practical guide designed to support professionals and educators in teaching sustainable farming. This specific module addresses the following topics:

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1. Introduction

The overarching purpose of this module is to equip professionals, educators, and VET students with the practical digital marketing skills needed to effectively promote and sell organic agricultural products. Specifically, this module aims to provide specialized training materials covering digital strategies and social media dynamics, bridging the educational and labor market gap by aligning vocational education and training (VET) with real-world green economy demands. Furthermore, it facilitates practical e-commerce applications to prepare learners to actively manage and sell real organic products on the project's digital marketplace, while empowering educators to confidently teach these modern concepts within their vocational centers.

The core challenge this module addresses is the critical gap between market demand and the agricultural sector's digital capabilities in the Western Balkans. Although consumer demand for organic products is rising rapidly, only 20% of agricultural businesses effectively use digital marketing tools, creating a major disconnect in market practices. This low integration hinders small-scale farmers from accessing broader markets and limits their competitiveness. The adoption of digital technologies remains slow due to a lack of financial and technical capacity, compounded by low digital skills in the current agri-food workforce. Additionally, there are significant educational gaps in VET programs, which currently fail to provide structured training in highly demanded marketing and digital sales skills.

Upon successful completion of this module, trainers, VET learners, and farmers will acquire essential knowledge and practical skills. In terms of knowledge, learners will understand the impact of the digital ecosystem on agriculture, recognize core digital tools like basic SEO and Google Business Profile, and grasp the dynamics of content marketing, social media storytelling, and e-commerce fundamentals. Practically, they will develop the skills to set up and manage online visibility strategies, design and execute targeted social media campaigns, optimize digital sales and online listings, and apply pedagogical tools to effectively deliver this training to others.

The transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems is a cornerstone of the Green Agenda. Organic farming is highly knowledge-intensive, requiring expertise in



both production and consumer connection. By utilizing digital technologies and e-commerce, organic farmers can communicate their sustainable practices directly to the market, bypassing traditional intermediaries, improving supply chain efficiency, and ensuring economic viability.

This is particularly crucial for the Western Balkans, where the agricultural sector faces deep structural challenges, including reliance on traditional methods, small-scale production, and limited digital integration. While retail sales of organic products in the EU have doubled, the share of organic farmland in North Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro remains extremely low. By addressing the lack of dedicated organic farming and digital skills programs in VET, this module upskills the workforce to connect local rural producers with broader, lucrative markets, directly supporting the region's green economic transition.

Finally, this training material is part of a comprehensive six-module program designed to modernize vocational education (WP2). The manual is highly interconnected: while the four modules dedicated to Regenerative Agriculture teach the technical principles of sustainable food production, and the module on Management provides financial planning tools, this Digital Marketing module equips learners to successfully promote and sell those goods online. Together, they provide a complete, holistic toolkit that prepares VET students and educators to actively participate in modern agricultural entrepreneurship and to manage real products on the project's digital marketplace.

2. Digital Marketing in the New Agriculture

2.1 Key Concepts

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital technologies and online communication channels to promote products, services, or brands and connect with consumers. These channels include websites, search engines, social media platforms, email, online advertising, mobile applications, and digital marketplaces (Investopedia, 2024; Adobe, 2023).

Unlike traditional marketing, which primarily relies on physical channels such as newspapers, television, and local markets, digital marketing enables businesses to



communicate directly with consumers in real time, reach wider audiences, and measure the effectiveness of promotional activities using digital data and analytics (UCD Professional Academy, 2023).

Digital marketing is often referred to as *online marketing* because it focuses on promoting brands and engaging customers through internet-based technologies and electronic media. It includes a variety of tools and strategies such as search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, and online advertising (Adobe, 2023).

In the 21st century, digital marketing and social media have fundamentally transformed how people access information, interact with businesses, and make purchasing decisions (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015). Consumers increasingly rely on online platforms to search for products, compare alternatives, read reviews, and communicate directly with producers.

According to Pandit (2020), digital marketing reduces geographical and communication barriers by connecting consumers and businesses across different locations through accessible online technologies. This transformation enables businesses to access larger and more dispersed markets while facilitating online communication and commerce.

In the context of the “New Agriculture,” digital marketing plays a particularly important role in bridging the gap between traditional farming practices and modern consumer expectations. While traditional agricultural marketing often depends on local physical markets and intermediaries, digital marketing allows farmers and agri-food businesses to reach broader local, national, and international audiences through digital ecosystems.



	Traditional marketing	Digital marketing
Examples	Print add, newspaper, TV	SEO, Social media,
Reach	Local/limited: Relies on physical proximity, local markets, and word-of-mouth.	Global / broad: connection with the international / EU market
Target	Broad / Generic: Information is shared with everyone in a specific area, regardless of specific interests.	Precise/Niche: Targets consumers seeking "organic," "regenerative," or "sustainable" products.
Cost	Higher/Fixed: Costs for print materials, physical stalls, or traditional media can be high for small farms.	Flexible/Scalable: Tools like SEO and social media enable high visibility at lower entry costs.
Engagement	One-way: Communication is mostly a broadcast (signs, radio) with little immediate feedback.	Two-Way/Interactive: Allows for direct storytelling, consumer feedback, and community building.
Data & Tracking	Estimation: Difficult to measure exactly how many people saw a sign or bought because of it.	Measurement: Real-time analytics on platform usage, user clicks, and conversion rates.
Speed	Slow: Changing a physical advertisement or print takes time and additional resources.	Instant: Updates to product listings or marketing messages on the marketplace can be done immediately.



Digital marketing offers several transformative advantages:

Increased Market Access & Reduced Intermediaries: Farmers can bypass traditional intermediaries, using online channels to more easily connect with local, national, and international consumers (Adobe, 2023).

Cost-effectiveness, Flexibility, and Speed: Digital campaigns (e.g., SEO, social media) require relatively low financial investment (Kotler et al., 2021) and can be adjusted instantly based on budget and real-time performance.

Better Customer Targeting: Businesses can segment audiences based on demographics, interests, and purchasing habits to deliver personalized and highly efficient communication.

Improved Customer Engagement: Unlike traditional advertising, digital platforms foster two-way communication, building community, loyalty, and direct relationships through instant feedback and interaction.

Measurable Results: Tracking metrics such as website visits and social media engagement provides data-driven insights, enabling businesses to continuously refine their marketing strategies.

Building Brand Trust and Transparency: Direct communication of sustainable practices and farming methods meets modern consumers' growing demand for food quality and traceability (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015).

Challenges

Limited digital skills and knowledge: Many farmers and rural entrepreneurs lack the technical knowledge needed to use digital marketing tools effectively. Skills such as managing social media accounts, creating online content, using SEO, or analyzing digital performance data may require additional training and support.

Changing algorithms: Platforms like Google and social media frequently update their algorithms, which can affect your SEO, paid campaigns, and visibility. As a result,



businesses must continuously adapt their digital marketing strategies and stay informed about new trends and platform updates.

Data privacy and legal compliance: Digital marketing often involves collecting and managing customer data. Businesses must comply with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, to ensure that customer information is handled responsibly and securely. Failure to comply with these regulations can lead to legal and reputational risks.

Difficulty Building Customer Trust: Consumers are exposed to large amounts of online content and advertising every day. Because of this, gaining and maintaining customer trust can be challenging. Businesses must therefore focus on transparency, authenticity, consistency, and reliable communication in order to build credibility and long-term customer relationships.

Need for Continuous Learning: Digital marketing tools and technologies evolve rapidly. Businesses and professionals must continuously update their knowledge and skills to remain effective and competitive in the digital environment.

Types of digital marketing

Digital marketing includes several complementary strategies and tools that businesses use to communicate with consumers, improve online visibility, and promote products or services. Each type of digital marketing has a different objective and can be adapted to the needs of agricultural businesses and organic producers.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): the practice of optimising digital content so that a website, product, or business appears higher in search engine results, such as Google. SEO involves using relevant keywords, high-quality content, optimized images, and website improvements to increase online visibility and attract potential customers.

Primary goal: ensure that a business appears among the best matches when consumers search for specific products or services online.

Agriculture application : Ensuring that a local organic farm appears on Google Maps or in Google search results when consumers search for terms such as “fresh organic vegetables near me” or “local honey in the Balkans.” Tools such as Google Business Profile can significantly improve local visibility.



Pay-per-click advertising (PPC): a paid digital advertising model where businesses pay each time a user clicks on an advertisement. PPC includes Google Ads, sponsored social media posts, banner advertisements, and promoted search results.

Primary goal: Generate immediate visibility, website traffic, and sales.

Agricultural application: Running a targeted five-day Instagram or Facebook advertising campaign to promote seasonal organic berries or local farm products through an e-commerce platform.

Email Marketing: a direct communication channel that allows businesses to send personalized messages, updates, promotions, and newsletters to consumers.

Primary goal: Customer retention and loyalty

Agriculture application: Sending weekly or monthly newsletters to local customers announcing seasonal harvests, farmers' market schedules, new organic products, or discounts available through an online marketplace.

Content marketing: focuses on creating and sharing valuable digital content to attract, inform, and engage a target audience. Instead of directly promoting products, content marketing aims to educate consumers, build trust, and strengthen brand awareness. Common formats include written content (blogs, ebooks, whitepapers), visual content (infographics), and audio/video content (podcasts, YouTube videos).

Primary goal: brand awareness, trust, and consumer education.

Agricultural application: Publishing blog articles or short videos explaining organic farming methods, seasonal production, sustainable practices, or the story behind a family farm.

Social media marketing: involves using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) to promote products, communicate with consumers, and build online communities. Social media enables businesses to interact directly with customers through comments, messages, photos, videos, live streams, and stories. It also supports storytelling and helps businesses create stronger emotional connections with consumers.

Primary goal: Build community engagement, visibility, and customer relationships.

Agricultural application: Sharing daily farm activities on Instagram, promoting seasonal products on Facebook, or posting short educational videos about sustainable farming on TikTok.



Influencer marketing: a subcategory of social media marketing where businesses collaborate with content creators, chefs, bloggers, or local influencers to promote products to their audiences.

Agricultural application: Partnering with eco-conscious chefs, nutritionists, or food bloggers to showcase local organic products and sustainable farming practices.

One of the key concepts in modern marketing is the understanding of the **customer journey**. The customer journey refers to the different stages a consumer goes through when interacting with a brand, from the first contact with a product to becoming a loyal customer and advocate.

Understanding the customer journey is essential because each stage requires different communication strategies, marketing tools, and types of content. By taking the customer journey into account, businesses can move beyond simply “selling a product” and instead build long-term relationships with consumers.

This is particularly important in sustainable agriculture and organic farming, where trust, transparency, and customer loyalty play a major role in purchasing decisions. Digital marketing allows agricultural businesses not only to attract customers but also to maintain relationships after the purchase through ongoing communication and engagement.

Unlike traditional marketing, which often focuses mainly on the sale itself, digital marketing enables businesses to manage the entire customer relationship cycle, including retention and advocacy, where long-term business growth often occurs.

The customer journey is commonly divided into five main stages:

1. **Awareness** : beginning of the customer journey. At this stage, potential customers become aware of a product, brand, or need for the first time. Consumers are generally looking for information, inspiration, or solutions rather than direct sales messages.
2. **Interest / consideration** : During this phase, consumers actively search for more information and compare different products or brands. They evaluate



available options and try to determine which business best matches their needs, values, or expectations.

3. **Purchase:** the customer is ready to buy the product or service. The main objective for businesses is to make the purchasing process as simple, secure, and convenient as possible. process easy) and offering clear pricing are critical to closing the deal.
4. **Retention:** focuses on maintaining customer satisfaction and encouraging repeat purchases through ongoing communication and value creation. Businesses aim to build long-term loyalty by providing good customer experiences, personalized communication, and post-sale support.
5. **Advocacy:** this occurs when satisfied customers become active promoters of the brand. Loyal customers recommend products to friends and family, share positive experiences online, and contribute to the business's reputation through reviews and social media interactions. This stage is particularly valuable because recommendations from real customers are often more trusted than traditional advertising.

Agriculture scenario:

Awareness	A consumer decides they want to eat healthier, pesticide-free food. They search Google for "local organic farms" or see an Instagram reel showing your farm's regenerative soil practices. They are now <i>aware</i> that your farm exists.
Interest	The consumer visits your digital marketplace profile. They are interested in your seasonal vegetable box, so they read your "About Us" page to verify your organic certifications and compare your prices with the local supermarket.
Purchase	A customer places an online order for seasonal organic produce through a farm's digital marketplace or social media shop. The transaction is seamless, and they receive a clear confirmation email regarding delivery or farm pickup.
Retention	A week after the customer receives their vegetables, you send a



	marketing email with a recipe featuring the seasonal ingredients they bought. You also offer them a 10% discount on their next digital order to encourage them to return.
Advocacy	The customer loved the quality of the organic produce so much that they left a 5-star review on your Google Business Profile and posted a picture of their meal on social media, tagging your farm. Their friends see the post, and the cycle begins again.



CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS

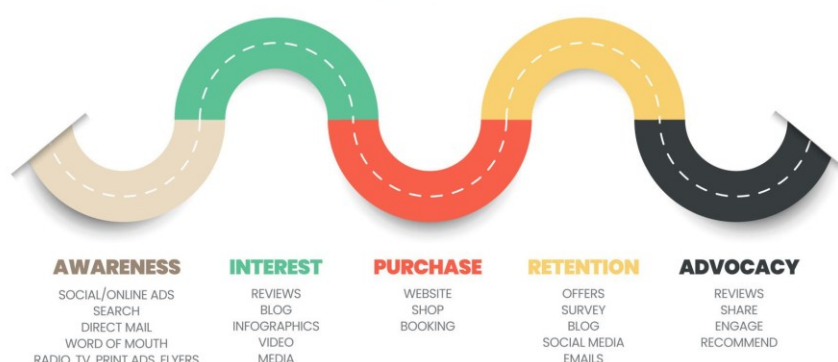


Figure 1. Customer Journey Map Diagram: This infographic illustrates the continuous flow of the five customer journey stages: Awareness, Interest, Purchase, Retention, and Advocacy.

2.2 Current Situation and Challenges

Agricultural marketing has evolved significantly over the past decades. Traditionally, agricultural marketing mainly focused on the physical movement of products from farms to consumers through activities such as storage, transportation, packaging, sorting, and distribution (Ravi, 2023). Farmers generally sold their products through local markets, wholesalers, cooperatives, or intermediaries, with limited direct communication between producers and consumers. In this traditional system, marketing was primarily product-oriented. Success depended mainly on production volume and physical access to markets rather than on branding, communication, or



customer relationships. Promotion methods were mostly offline and included local markets, printed advertisements, radio, and word-of-mouth communication.

However, **globalization**, technological development, and changing consumer behavior have progressively transformed agricultural marketing systems. According to Ravi (2023), agricultural marketing has experienced major changes over the last sixty years due to:

- increasing market surplus;
- rising rural incomes;
- stronger connections with international markets;
- and growing demand for marketing services.

At the same time, consumers have changed the way they search for information, make purchasing decisions, and interact with brands. Digital technologies and social media platforms now play an important role in influencing consumer behavior, especially for food and agricultural products (Pandit, 2020). As a result, agricultural marketing has **shifted from a purely transactional activity to a more customer-oriented, relationship-based approach**. The emergence of digital marketing has accelerated this transformation. Digital tools such as websites, social media, e-commerce platforms, and mobile applications enable farmers and agricultural businesses to communicate directly with consumers, promote products online, and access broader markets at lower cost.

Challenges in the Western Balkans to adopt digital marketing

In the Western Balkans, agriculture remains an important sector for employment and rural development, although its economic contribution has gradually declined in some countries (Dimitrijević et al., 2023). Serbia, for example, remains more dependent on agriculture than several neighboring Balkan countries (Dimitrijević et al., 2023). Despite global digitalization trends, the agricultural sector in the Balkans still faces relatively slow adoption of digital technologies and digital marketing practices. Many farmers continue to rely on traditional sales channels such as local markets and intermediaries. Digital marketing tools are increasingly recognized as important, but



their use remains uneven across the region due to various economic, social and environmental barriers.

Economic Barriers

One of the main obstacles is the **financial limitation of small-scale farmers**. Many agricultural businesses operate with low profit margins and therefore prioritize production costs over marketing investments. As a result, spending on digital tools, advertising, or training is often seen as a secondary priority.

Additional economic challenges include:

- **High initial investment costs** for smartphones, computers, software, and internet access;
- **Cost of training and capacity building**, which is often not accessible in rural areas;
- **Unequal access to digital infrastructure**, especially between urban and rural regions;
- **Limited economies of scale**, making it harder for small farms to justify marketing investments.

These financial constraints make it difficult for many farmers to adopt and sustain digital marketing strategies.

Social Barriers

Social and human factors play a major role in limiting digital marketing adoption in agriculture. Key challenges include:

- **Low digital literacy**, meaning many farmers lack the skills to use online platforms effectively;
- **Resistance to change**, especially among older generations who prefer traditional marketing methods;



- **Low trust in online transactions**, particularly in e-buying and e-selling of agricultural products (Balkrishna & Deshmukh, 2017);
- **Lack of structured training in agricultural education systems**, where digital marketing is often not fully integrated into curricula;
- **Generational gaps**, where younger farmers are more digitally active than older ones.

In addition, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) highlights that adoption depends on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Chuttur, 2009; Dwivedi et al., 2017). If farmers do not see clear benefits or find tools too complex, adoption remains low.

Environmental and Structural Barriers

Environmental barriers in this context refer mainly to **infrastructure and geographical limitations**, rather than ecological impacts. These include:

- **Poor internet connectivity in rural and remote areas**, limiting access to digital platforms;
- **Geographical isolation of farms**, making continuous online engagement more difficult;
- **Seasonality of agricultural work**, which reduces the time available for managing digital marketing activities;
- **Limited access to digital support services in rural regions**;
- **Dependence on physical production conditions**, meaning farmers cannot fully digitize their operations like other industries.

These structural limitations create an unequal digital landscape between rural and urban areas. Despite these barriers, the use of digital marketing in agriculture is gradually increasing in the Western Balkans, particularly through social media platforms. Farmers are increasingly using Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube to promote products, communicate with consumers, and access agricultural information. Research also shows that social media improves information sharing, reduces marketing costs, and enhances sales performance in agriculture (Mwangi & Wagoki, 2016; Uitz, 2012). The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the



importance of digital tools, as farmers who used online platforms were often better able to maintain sales and connect directly with consumers during market disruptions.

2.3 Best Practices and Methodologies

To successfully use digital marketing in agriculture, farmers and agri-food businesses should adopt practical, consumer-oriented strategies. The following techniques are considered among the most effective approaches for improving visibility, strengthening customer relationships, and increasing sales in the agricultural sector.

Storytelling is the practice of creating and sharing meaningful content that communicates the identity, values, and activities of a farm or agricultural business. Instead of only promoting products, storytelling focuses on building emotional connections with consumers. Every business has a story to tell, and it is important to take the time to identify the values, ambitions, traditions, and projects that drive it. Effective storytelling increases transparency and trust, which are essential factors influencing consumer decisions in food markets. In agriculture, storytelling is especially important because consumers increasingly want to know where food comes from, how it is produced, who produces it, and whether production methods are environmentally sustainable. Storytelling allows farmers to transform simple products into meaningful experiences. Instead of selling only vegetables, milk, or honey, producers can communicate the human and environmental stories behind these products.

For **example**, instead of simply announcing that tomato season has started, producers could share videos or photos showing:

- when the seeds were planted;
- how the crops evolved through the seasons;
- organic or regenerative farming practices;
- harvesting activities;
- and the people working on the farm.

There is always a story to be told around a product or service, which helps consumers feel involved in the journey. This emotional connection often increases customer loyalty and trust.



Targeted outreach refers to adapting marketing messages and communication strategies to specific audiences based on their needs, location, interests, or purchasing behavior.

In agriculture, different consumer groups may have different expectations:

- local Balkan consumers may prioritize freshness, price, and local identity;
- while international or EU consumers may focus more on organic certification, sustainability, and environmental impact.

Digital marketing tools allow businesses to segment audiences and create personalized communication strategies. This improves marketing efficiency and increases the chances of attracting the right customers. It is essential for businesses to understand who their customers are, what their needs are, and how their products contribute to their customers' lifestyles, health, or values. Today, digital platforms provide many metrics that help businesses better understand their audience, including:

- age;
- location;
- interests;
- online behavior;
- and purchasing habits.

The right targeting strategy is often the reason why some businesses can sell products at higher prices than supermarkets, even when offering similar items. These businesses specifically target consumers willing to pay more. This demonstrates an important marketing principle: businesses do not always need the “best” product, but rather the right product for the right audience. Targeted outreach can be done through:

- targeted social media advertisements;
- personalized email campaigns;
- localized websites;
- and language adaptation.

Research shows that digital marketing is more effective when communication is adapted to the cultural and economic context of the target market.



A **multi-channel approach** involves using several communication and marketing channels simultaneously to reach consumers more effectively. Instead of relying on a single platform, businesses combine different digital and traditional channels to create a more consistent customer experience. Consumers today often interact with businesses across multiple platforms before making a purchase, and each channel serves a different purpose:

- **Social media** builds engagement with the community and allows easy interaction through stories, comments, and videos;
- **Websites** provide detailed information about products, the business, certifications, and contact details;
- **Email marketing** supports customer loyalty by reminding customers about the business and sharing updates or discounts;
- **Online marketplaces** facilitate sales through structured product catalogs and payment systems.

Research highlights that a coordinated multi-channel strategy improves communication efficiency and strengthens brand presence in agricultural markets.

One of the most important principles in digital marketing is **consistency**. Consumers are more likely to trust and remember businesses that communicate regularly and maintain an active online presence. Examples of consistent communication include:

- weekly Facebook posts;
- monthly newsletters;
- regular Instagram stories during harvest periods;
- or short TikTok videos showing seasonal activities.

Consistency does not mean posting every day; rather, it means creating a realistic and sustainable communication schedule. Having a schedule is essential to not lose yourself. Moreover, consistency is also important because social media algorithms tend to favor active accounts, increasing the visibility of regular content.

Step-by-step procedures



Starting in digital marketing doesn't require a large budget or advanced technical knowledge; it requires a simple, realistic, and consistent strategy.

- **Define your Identity and objectives:** Clearly articulate who you are and what you stand for (e.g., organic production, animal welfare, or local traditions). Simultaneously, establish specific goals (e.g., increasing sales, building loyalty) and set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as website visits or engagement rates, to measure your progress.
- **Identify the target audience:** Understand who you want to reach, as different groups have varying priorities (e.g., local consumers value freshness and affordability, while international buyers focus on sustainability and organic certification). You don't need to reach everyone, just the right people.
- **Set a budget and time:** Evaluate the financial investment (ads, tools, websites) and the time required for regular content creation and community management. A sustainable, long-term approach is more effective than trying to do too much quickly.
- **Create your branding:** Develop a recognizable visual and emotional identity (colors, logos, tone). For instance, using green and earth tones often conveys nature and sustainability. Good branding builds trust through consistency across all channels.
- **Select communication channels:** Avoid the mistake of trying to be everywhere without enough resources. Choose platforms that match your audience: Instagram for visual storytelling, Facebook for local communities, TikTok for short entertainment, or YouTube for educational content.
- **Adapt Content to the Platform and Customer Journey:** Tailor your messages to fit platform characteristics and the customer's current stage. Focus on educational content during the *awareness* stage, and simple ordering systems during the *purchase* stage. Using a posting schedule ensures organization and consistency.
- **Engage with the community:** Build relationships by replying to comments, answering questions, and sharing customer feedback. Authentic, responsive interaction increases customer loyalty and boosts post visibility through platform algorithms.



- **Check the metrics:** Leverage the ability to measure results in real-time. Use tools like Instagram Insights or Google Analytics to track engagement, visits, and sales, using this data to improve future marketing decisions.
- **Learning by doing:** Digital marketing is a continuous learning process of experimentation and adaptation. Since trends and algorithms constantly evolve, the most important step is simply to begin and remain flexible and authentic over time.

Examples adapted to the Balkan context

A small family farm in North Macedonia produces organic vegetables and homemade products. Until now, the farm mainly sells products through local markets and word-of-mouth recommendations, but the family wants to start using digital marketing to become more visible and attract more customers online.

- **Step 1 - Define farm identity and objectives:** To determine what makes the farm special, why people should buy from them, and what values to communicate, they identify their strengths: local production, organic farming methods, traditional family know-how, and fresh seasonal products. Their objectives are to become more visible locally, attract younger customers, and increase direct sales gradually.
- **Step 2 - Identify target audience:** The target audience includes local families seeking healthy, fresh vegetables and young consumers interested in sustainable, organic products. The farm understands that digital marketing is not about reaching everyone, but reaching the right people.
- **Step 3 - Decide time and budget:** The farm decides to dedicate about 3 hours per week to creating content, taking photos during routine farm activities, and posting regularly without striving for perfection.
- **Step 4 - Create small branding:** They choose natural colors, a simple logo, and a friendly communication style.
- **Step 5 - Select main platforms:** They select Instagram (for photos, short videos, harvest stories, and behind-the-scenes content), Facebook (for local promotion, customer communication, and practical information), and Emails.



- **Step 6 - Create and adapt content:** The content plan includes photos of vegetables growing, short harvesting videos, stories about organic farming, customer reviews, and seasonal updates.
- **Step 7 - Engage with the community:** They focus on building relationships by replying to comments, answering customer questions, thanking people for reviews, and sharing customer photos.
- **Step 8 - Observe what works:** They check their metrics and notice that short harvest videos receive more views, customer stories create more engagement, and authentic photos perform better than heavily edited content.

2.4 Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how digital marketing strategies can help agricultural businesses improve visibility, strengthen customer relationships, and increase sales. These examples demonstrate that even small farms can successfully use digital tools when communication is authentic, consistent, and adapted to their audience.

2.4.1. Digital Agriculture Entrepreneurship in Montenegro

Background

Agriculture remains an important sector in the Western Balkans, but many small farmers still struggle with limited market access and low digital visibility. In Montenegro, young entrepreneur Marko Maraš identified the need for stronger digital connections between farmers and consumers. With support from the FAO and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), he developed a digital agricultural platform to help local farmers promote and sell their products online.

Problem identified

Many farmers in Montenegro relied mainly on traditional selling methods such as local markets and intermediaries. This limited their visibility and reduced direct access to consumers. Additional challenges included low digital skills, a weak online presence, limited marketing knowledge, and difficulties reaching younger consumers



Solution implemented

The project introduced a digital marketplace and communication platform where farmers could promote products online, connect directly with consumers, and share information about their farms. Digital tools and social media were used to increase visibility, improve communication, and modernize agricultural marketing practices. The initiative also encouraged storytelling and direct interaction between producers and consumers.

Outcomes

The platform increased awareness of digital agriculture in Montenegro and helped demonstrate how digital tools can support rural entrepreneurship. The initiative gained strong media attention across the Balkans and showed that even small agricultural businesses can benefit from digital innovation. The project also contributed to improving farmer visibility, strengthening local agricultural networks, and promoting digital transformation in rural areas.

Lessons learned

This case study shows that digital marketing and e-commerce can help small farmers overcome geographical limitations and connect more directly with consumers. It also demonstrates that digital innovation is possible even in rural areas, younger generations can play a major role in agricultural digitalization, and simple digital platforms can significantly improve market access.

2.4.2 Campo y Tierra (Spain)

Background

Campo y Tierra is one of Europe's largest cherry exporters, based in Spain. The company has a strong agricultural tradition and produces cherries and related products for both national and international markets. Despite its long history and product quality, the business needed to modernize its image and strengthen its online presence to adapt to changing consumer behavior and the growth of digital commerce.

Problem identified



The company faced several challenges, including limited digital visibility, outdated branding, low online sales performance, and increasing competition in the agricultural sector. Although the company already had a strong production capacity, it lacked a modern digital strategy capable of attracting consumers online and supporting e-commerce development. The business also wanted to modernize its image, reach new consumers, and reduce dependence on traditional sales channels.

Solution implemented

Campo y Tierra implemented a complete digital transformation strategy focused on rebranding, e-commerce development, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), social media marketing, and digital advertising. The company redesigned its visual identity to create a more modern and professional image while still keeping its agricultural and family roots. The strategy included a new website and online store, storytelling content, professional photography and videos, social media campaigns, and data analytics tools to better understand customer behavior. The company also used content marketing to highlight product quality, agricultural tradition, and the origin of its cherries.

Outcomes

The digital strategy produced significant results: online sales increased by 200%, website traffic increased considerably, and millions of digital impressions were generated through campaigns and online communication. The business improved brand visibility, customer engagement, and digital sales performance. The project also helped the company better understand its customers through analytics and online metrics.

Lessons learned

This case study demonstrates that even traditional agricultural businesses can modernize successfully through digital marketing. Several important lessons can be identified: strong branding helps agricultural businesses stand out in competitive markets; storytelling and visual communication increase consumer trust; combining e-commerce with social media strengthens online sales; and digital marketing allows



producers to reach consumers far beyond local markets. The case also shows that agriculture and tradition can successfully coexist with innovation and digital transformation.

2.5 Useful Tools and Resources

Digital marketing in agriculture does not require expensive or highly technical systems; many free or low-cost tools can effectively help farmers improve communication, promote products, and manage online visibility.

Design and Content Creation Tools

Once you have your branding in mind, you need to actually create templates for your posts and get ideas for your marketing strategies. To help you, here are some design and content creation tools you can use to facilitate the process if you are not creative and don't have the time to start from scratch.



Figure 2. Canva Logo: This image features the official logo for Canva, introduced as an accessible graphic design platform for beginners

Canva is one of the most accessible graphic design platforms for beginners. It allows users to create professional-looking visual content without advanced design skills. With the free version, you already have access to many templates in the right format, along with pre-made visuals. You only need to adjust the colour and text according to your brand and the story you want to tell. Canva offers ready-made templates adapted for Instagram, Facebook, YouTube thumbnails, and marketing campaigns. It ensures that you have great, professional visuals even for beginners. Farmers and agricultural businesses can use Canva to create social media posts, logos, flyers, posters, presentations, product labels, and promotional materials (<https://www.youtube.com/@canva>).



Artificial intelligence tools can help simplify content creation, communication, and marketing tasks. AI tools are especially useful for small agricultural businesses with limited time or marketing experience.

AI Tool	Main Strengths	Main Weaknesses
ChatGPT	Excellent for content creation, brainstorming, storytelling, social media captions, marketing ideas, and educational explanations. Easy to use and versatile.	Can sometimes generate inaccurate information (“hallucinations”). Requires good prompts for high-quality results. Limited access to real-time information in free versions.
Claude	Strong for long-form writing, document organization, summarizing, and structured explanations. Produces natural and detailed text.	Less integrated with external tools and multimedia features. May be slower for quick creative tasks or image generation.
Google Gemini	Strong integration with Google ecosystem (Docs, Gmail, Search). Useful for research, productivity, and information gathering.	Responses may sometimes be less detailed or creative. Performance can vary depending on task complexity.
Microsoft Copilot	Very useful inside Microsoft Office tools (Word, Excel, PowerPoint). Good for productivity, reports, spreadsheets, and presentations.	Works best within Microsoft environment. Less flexible for creative storytelling and social media content.



AI Image Generators (e.g., DALL·E, Midjourney, Canva AI)	Quickly create visual concepts, illustrations, promotional designs, and marketing visuals without design skills.	Generated images may look artificial or unrealistic. Authentic farm photos are usually more effective for building trust in agricultural marketing.
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Some AI tools can also generate images from text descriptions, helping to create marketing visuals, product concepts, illustrations, and social media content. However, authentic farm photos are usually more effective for building consumer trust.

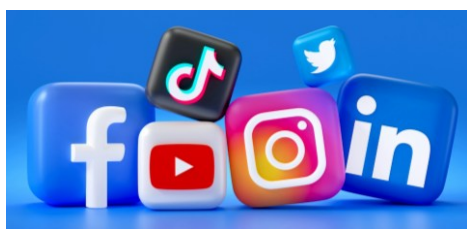


Figure 3. Social Media Platform Icons: This graphic displays a 3D cluster of popular social media logos, including Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Social media : 1 platform = 1 type of content

Each platform has different strengths and audiences. Content should therefore be adapted rather than copied identically across all channels, including Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, YouTube, and Email.

Google tools and analytics



Figure 4. Google Workspace Tools Icons: This image showcases the central Google "G" logo surrounded by icons for various free Google tools, such as Gmail, Drive, Docs, and Calendar.



Google provides several free tools that can help agricultural businesses improve their online visibility, better understand customer behavior, and evaluate the effectiveness of their digital marketing activities. These tools are especially useful for small farms and agri-food businesses because they are accessible, beginner-friendly, and require little financial investment. Using analytics and digital visibility tools allows businesses to make better marketing decisions based on real data rather than assumptions.

Google Business Profile: This is one of the most important free tools for local businesses. It allows farms and agricultural businesses to appear on Google Search, Google Maps, and local business results. A complete profile helps customers easily find location, contact information, opening hours, website links, photos, and customer reviews. For small farms, this tool improves local visibility and helps consumers discover nearby producers when searching for terms such as “organic vegetables near me”, “local honey”, or “farm products in Serbia”. It also provides basic analytics showing how many people viewed the profile, how customers found the business, and what actions they performed (calls, website visits, directions).

Google Analytics: A free tool used to track and analyze website traffic. It helps businesses understand how visitors find the website, which pages are most visited, how long users stay on the site, and what content attracts the most interest. For agricultural businesses, it can help identify which products attract the most attention, whether social media campaigns generate traffic, and how consumers interact with online stores or marketplaces. This information helps businesses improve their communication and marketing strategies over time.

Google Trends: Allows users to explore what people are searching for online. Businesses can compare keywords and identify seasonal trends. For example, a farmer can analyze when searches for “organic tomatoes” increase, which products are trending, or what consumers search for in different countries. This tool helps businesses adapt marketing campaigns and content to consumer interests.

YouTube Educational Channels and Tutorials

YouTube offers many free tutorials that explain digital marketing tools step by step. Useful topics include how to create Instagram content, how to use Canva, how to



improve SEO, how to create Facebook advertisements, and how to analyze website traffic.

2.6 Practical Activities

2.6.1. Analyze an agribusiness Social Media Presence

Objective

The objective of this activity is to help learners critically analyze how agricultural businesses use social media for communication, branding, storytelling, and customer engagement. Learners will identify good digital marketing practices and reflect on how online communication influences consumer perception.

Required materials

Internet access, a smartphone, tablet, or computer, access to Instagram or Facebook, and a worksheet or notebook for observations. Suggested examples of agricultural businesses include Campo y Tierra (Spain), The Irish Flower Farm, and [TaniHub Indonesia](#).

Step-by-step instructions with time

1. Introduction and Group Formation (10 minutes): The trainer briefly explains the importance of social media in agricultural marketing and divides learners into small groups of 2–4 people. Each group selects one agricultural business social media account to analyze.
2. Social Media Observation (20 minutes): Learners explore the selected account and observe its visual identity, posting style, storytelling approach, post frequency, interactions with followers, and the types of content shared. They should also identify what makes the page attractive, whether the communication feels authentic, and what audience the business seems to target.
3. Group Analysis and Discussion (20 minutes): Each group discusses what works well, what could be improved, whether the business creates trust, which posts generate the most engagement, and whether this communication would encourage them to buy the product. Groups then prepare a short summary of their observations.



4. Presentation and Feedback (10 minutes): Each group presents its analysis to the class. The trainer facilitates discussion and highlights key digital marketing practices identified during the exercise.

Evaluation Criteria

Learners will be evaluated based on their ability to identify digital marketing strategies, the quality of their observations and analysis, participation in group discussions, and their ability to justify their opinions using course concepts.

2.6.2 Customer Journey Strategy Exercise

Objective

The objective of this activity is to help learners understand how digital marketing strategies change depending on the stage of the customer journey. Learners will learn to select appropriate communication strategies for each stage and explain why these strategies are effective.

Required materials

A printed customer journey diagram or worksheet, pens or a digital document, and examples of social media posts or marketing campaigns (optional).

Step-by-step instructions with time

1. Introduction to the Customer Journey (10 minutes): The trainer briefly reviews the five stages of the customer journey (Awareness, Interest/Consideration, Purchase, Retention, Advocacy) and explains that different marketing strategies are needed at each stage
2. Scenario Selection (10 minutes): Learners choose or receive an agricultural business example, such as an organic vegetable farm, honey producer, dairy farm, vineyard, or local farmers' cooperative.
3. Strategy Development (25 minutes): For each stage of the customer journey, learners must propose one digital marketing strategy and one type of content, and explain why each fits that stage.



4. Group Discussion (15 minutes): Learners present their strategies and discuss similarities and differences between approaches. The trainer encourages reflection on customer behavior, platform choice, and communication objectives.

Evaluation Criteria

Learners will be evaluated based on their understanding of the customer journey, the relevance of selected strategies, the quality of their explanations, and their participation in discussions.

3. Conclusion

Digital marketing has become an essential tool for the future development of sustainable agriculture and agri-food businesses. As consumer behavior increasingly shifts toward digital platforms, agricultural producers must adapt their communication and sales strategies to remain competitive and visible in both local and international markets.

This module introduced the fundamental concepts of digital marketing and explained how digital tools can support the modernization of agriculture, particularly in the Western Balkans. Learners explored the differences between traditional and digital marketing, the various types of digital marketing, and the importance of understanding the customer journey. The module also highlighted the growing role of social media, storytelling, branding, and online engagement in building trust and long-term customer relationships.

Particular attention was given to the current challenges facing the agricultural sector in the Western Balkans, including low digital literacy, limited market access, infrastructure constraints, and economic barriers. At the same time, the module demonstrated that digital marketing offers important opportunities for small farms and agri-food businesses by improving visibility, reducing dependence on intermediaries, and facilitating direct communication with consumers.

The best practices and methodologies presented throughout the module showed that successful digital marketing does not necessarily require large budgets or advanced



technical expertise. Consistency, authenticity, targeted communication, and storytelling are often more important than highly sophisticated campaigns. The case studies further illustrated how agricultural businesses from different regions of the world successfully used digital marketing tools to strengthen their activities and connect with consumers.

The practical activities included in the module allow learners to directly apply the acquired knowledge through real-life exercises such as social media analysis, customer journey strategies, and content creation using tools like Canva. These activities encourage experimentation, creativity, and critical thinking while developing practical digital skills adapted to agricultural contexts.

After completing this module, learners should be able to:

- understand the role of digital marketing in modern agriculture;
- identify appropriate communication channels and strategies;
- create simple and effective digital content;
- analyze customer behavior and online engagement;
- and apply practical marketing techniques to support agricultural businesses and sustainable food systems.

Most importantly, learners should understand that digital marketing is a continuous learning process. Even small actions — such as creating a Google Business Profile, sharing authentic farm stories, or interacting regularly with customers online — can progressively strengthen visibility, trust, and economic opportunities for agricultural producers in the Western Balkans.

4. Glossary

Agri-Digitalization: The integration of digital technologies into agricultural production, communication, and sales activities.

Algorithm: A system used by social media platforms or search engines to decide which content users see first.

Analytics: Data and statistics used to measure online performance, such as website visits or social media engagement.



Audience: The group of people a business wants to reach through marketing activities.

Branding: The creation of a recognizable identity for a business through visuals, colors, values, and communication style.

Call-to-Action (CTA): A message encouraging users to take an action, such as “Buy now,” “Contact us,” or “Learn more.”

Content Marketing: The creation and sharing of useful or engaging content to attract and retain customers.

Customer Engagement: Interaction between a business and its audience through comments, messages, likes, shares, or reviews.

Customer Journey: The different stages a customer goes through when interacting with a business, from awareness to loyalty.

Digital Marketing: The use of digital technologies and online platforms to promote products and communicate with customers.

E-commerce: Buying and selling products online.

Engagement Rate: A metric showing how actively people interact with online content.

Google Business Profile: A free Google tool that helps businesses appear in Google Search and Google Maps results.

Hashtag: A keyword preceded by “#” used on social media to categorize and make content easier to find.

KPI (Key Performance Indicator): A measurable value used to evaluate the success of a marketing activity or objective.

Marketplace: An online platform where multiple sellers can offer products or services to customers.

Multi-Channel Marketing: Using several communication channels simultaneously, such as social media, email, and websites.

Organic Reach: The number of people who see content naturally without paid advertising.

Paid Advertising: Online promotion where businesses pay to increase the visibility of content or products.

Regenerative Agriculture: Farming practices focused on restoring soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem sustainability.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization): Techniques used to improve a website’s visibility in search engine results.



Social Media Marketing: The use of social media platforms to promote products, communicate with consumers, and build communities.

Storytelling: A marketing technique that uses stories and emotions to communicate values and create stronger connections with consumers.

Sustainable Agriculture: Farming methods that protect the environment while remaining economically and socially viable.

Target Audience: The specific group of consumers a business wants to reach.

Targeted Outreach: Adapting marketing communication to specific audiences based on their interests, needs, or location.

Visual Identity: The visual elements representing a brand, such as colors, logos, and design style.

Website Traffic: The number of visitors accessing a website.

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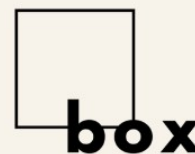
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