



The world of the use of network marketing and influencer marketing in companies selling agricultural implements

El mundo de la utilización de marketing de redes y marketing de influencia en las empresas de venta de implementos para el agro

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ABSTRACT

This final degree project, aims to analyze the valuation and motivating causes of the uses of social media marketing and the influence marketing by companies dedicated to the sale of agriculture implements. In the first stage, a bibliographical review and relevant background information related to the mentioned case was carried out. Followed by three investigations: two of them are exploratory focused on the representatives of selected Argentinian brands and the profile analysis of agroinfluencers; and the third, is a descriptive quantitative research aimed at 384 individuals who follow the companies accounts under analysis. Among the outstanding results, it was obtained that 100 % of the analyzed companies have a social media strategy, which is not coincident with the use of an influencers strategy since it is only being adopted by multinational companies but not by national ones. Likewise, it was observed that 34 % of the target audience does not follow agroinfluencers accounts.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Influencer Marketing; Agroinfluencers.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo final de grado, tiene como objetivo analizar la valoración y las causas motivadoras de uso del marketing de redes y marketing de influencia por parte de las empresas dedicadas a la venta de implementos para el agro. En una primera etapa se realizó un recorrido bibliográfico y de antecedentes relevantes de los temas relacionados con el caso seleccionado. Luego, se llevaron a cabo tres investigaciones; las dos primeras consistieron en investigaciones de tipo exploratorias enfocadas en los representantes de las marcas del agro argentino seleccionadas y el análisis de los perfiles de los agroinfluencers; y la tercera, consistió en una investigación de tipo cuantitativa descriptiva dirigida a 384 individuos que siguen las cuentas de las compañías bajo análisis. Entre los resultados obtenidos, se destacan que el 100 % de las empresas del rubro analizadas utilizan estrategia de redes, lo cual, no es coincidente con la utilización de la estrategia de influencers ya que la misma solo está siendo adoptada por las empresas del tipo multinacional, y no así por las del tipo nacional. También, se pudo observar que un 34 % del público objetivo no sigue cuentas de agroinfluencers.

Palabras clave: Agroinfluencers; Marketing de Redes Sociales; Marketing de Influencia.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of history, human beings have needed to communicate. This need has evolved over time, and ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) have given rise to different and new forms of relationships and communication.

In the past, traditional communication was the norm; the sender (medium) was responsible for sending or transmitting information to the receiver (reader, radio listener, or television viewer), and feedback was difficult to quantify, measure, and manage. Traditional media such as radio and television operated according to this formula.⁽¹⁾

In addition to being difficult to quantify, measure, and manage, this formula did not provide any other benefit to companies that invested practically their entire marketing and advertising budgets in these media.

Subsequently, with the emergence of ICTs, millions of individuals worldwide gained easier access to and the ability to handle large volumes of information.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) made a strong impact on both social environments and business behavior, transforming many sectors, including the world of companies devoted to selling equipment for Argentine agriculture.

In recent years, marketing in general and marketing communications in particular have undergone a remarkable transformation. The arrival of social networks, or social media, dramatically changed in a short period of time the way companies or institutions communicate and interact with customers. In other words, it changed the way they relate to one another. Companies were forced to question not only the communication models and paradigms they had established over the years, but even the very meaning of the concept of “media,” significantly affecting how investments are made in communication, marketing, and services.⁽²⁾

The development of these social networks is changing the way people relate to one another, producing an impact both on their daily lives and on society in general.

Digital communication, or New Media, develops in a world interconnected through the Internet and made up of digital citizens referred to as “users.” This interconnection among users (receivers) substantially transforms the way the message transmission process takes place because it adds interaction as added value. This means that new media not only make it possible to transmit a message or idea, but also enable interaction and collaboration among all people who use and are interconnected through the network.⁽¹⁾

Consumers’ search for information through social networks is commonplace, since they are increasingly informed and require immediate responses to satisfy their needs.

Companies need to be solid and effective in their use of these networks because they understand that they are useful for establishing ties with their audiences, improving brand recognition, and even influencing purchasing behavior.

The possibility of connectivity has enabled the development of a new space in which countless transactions are carried out, ranging from the simple exchange of information to commercial activities.

These advances in communication paradigms, generated by the profound change that the Internet has brought about in the information process used by consumers, can be summarized according to (1) as follows:

- From audience to user: electronic media are able to segment message recipients by topic. New online communication and information tools make it possible not only to target communication at specific targets, such as similar demographic, professional, or economic profiles, as is also done with traditional advertising, but also to target individuals, since the Internet makes it possible to respond to the specific information demands of each individual user.
- From medium to content: with the arrival of digital media, the importance placed on the medium shifts toward the importance placed on content. The principle becomes: value no longer lies in the supporting medium but in the content it conveys. This gave rise to the concept of content marketing, which, in the words of Germán Piñeiro Vázquez (Most common content marketing formats), consists of creating and distributing relevant content for customers and potential customers with the aim of attracting them to the company and connecting with them. It is therefore not promotional content, but useful and relevant content for users and for the company, delivered through appropriate formats.
- From medium to multimedia format: the digital world enables the integration of all traditional information formats. Thus, text, audio, video, graphics, photographs, and animations converge in Internet media, which are multimedia in nature. Newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels, and even films have been integrated into the multimedia world

and have combined previously atypical formats, enriching the medium.

- From periodicity to real time: the Internet never stops, and the ability to respond to any event occurring during the 24 hours of the day is instantaneous, 365 days a year. This differs from previous media, which largely followed scheduled periodicity and gave rise to terms defining such media and their cycles: journalism, daily newspapers, hourly bulletins, monthly newspapers, biweekly magazines, midday or evening newscasts, weekly reports, yearbooks, etc. The era of real-time information began with the Internet, which makes it possible to follow current events minute by minute.
- From scarcity to abundance: space in print media and time in electronic media have traditionally been scarce resources in the communication sector. Digital media also transform the logic of scarce resources because they multiply the available channels. This phenomenon entails a greater amount of information in less time, while the scale of dissemination is universal even in a context where resources are scarce.
- From intermediation to disintermediation: ordinary users can access information without the mediation of editors. The new mediation paradigm multiplies the number of voices, but at the same time dilutes their authority because the system of editorial control prior to the public dissemination of information has been fractured.
- From distribution to access: this refers to the freedom to choose the content one wishes to view rather than adhering to programming established by a traditional medium.
- From one-way communication to interactivity: unlike the one-way communication characteristic of the previous content dissemination model, in which the sending company delivered a message to its target audience and the latter lacked the capacity for an immediate response, new technologies enable users to respond immediately.
- From linearity to hypertext: this refers to the opportunity to link or hyperlink content through links.
- From information to knowledge: participation, “understood as the freedom” to select information, turns the sender into a social manager of knowledge.

The expansion of the Internet and the widespread corporate communication enabled by today's digital media have generated changes in the communication strategies of all companies. They have had to incorporate tools such as web banners, social media, emailing, influencers, and YouTubers, among others, which are now essential to any communication strategy.⁽¹⁾

A new trend is growing and being adopted by different brands and sectors: the use of influencers. Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent external endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social networks.

An influencer is a person who has a certain degree of credibility regarding a specific topic and whose presence and influence on social networks make them an ideal advocate for a particular brand.

There are different types of influencers according to (3), based on the content they share.

According to the social network they use: influencers, like other people, may

have several active channels, but they generally stand out more strongly on one of them.

Accordingly, depending on this factor, influencers may be Instagrammers, YouTubers, Twitter users, among others.

According to the size of their audience: there are multiple variants, with intermediate categories or even differentiated levels depending on the number of followers on each social network. Broadly speaking, however, they can be divided into:

Nano influencers - between 2K and 5K: these are individuals with a small community of between 2000 and 5000 followers and, although they are not celebrities, they usually have a loyal audience.

Micro influencers - between 5K and 100K followers: these are people who have between 5K and 100K followers. In general, they were not previously famous but became known through what they share on social networks, standing out mainly because of their knowledge of the topic and their natural style. This type of influencer is among the most sought after by brands because they connect very well with their audience and have a highly segmented niche. In addition, they usually achieve high levels of engagement and their costs are affordable for small and medium-sized companies.

Macro influencers - between 100K and 1M. Considered leading figures in their segment, they have a highly loyal community. Working with them can increase visibility and sales, rapidly attract customers, and raise awareness of products and services in a short period of time. However, their fees are not affordable for everyone.

Mega influencers - +1M. These individuals have the ability to reach a very large number of

consumers and can increase sales of any product or service in record time, although the costs are high. In addition, given their level of popularity, they often devote themselves exclusively to content creation.

The downside? They have a very broad and diverse audience, so it is not always easy to categorize their followers.

According to their profile: they can be divided according to their personal and professional profile:

- Celebrities or famous personalities: these types of influencers are public figures who use their visibility to create communities on social networks, interact with their fans, and share experiences.
- Experts: people who specialize in a particular sector, such as marketing, gaming, or travel.
- Explorers: those who search for trends and share their opinions.
- Consumers: users who use social networks to express their opinions about different products or services.

Influencer marketing, understood as “collaboration between the influencer and the business,” offers numerous advantages for brands, among which the following stand out.(3)

- They provide visibility for your brand.
- They add value to your products or services.
- Their followers can become customers of your company.
- In many cases, investing in collaborations with influencers is more economical than other media, such as advertising through traditional channels.
- Greater brand presence on social networks.
- Increase in positive comments about your business's products and services.
- Improvement in positive brand image.
- Increase in traffic to the website or landing page.

Clearly, achieving success requires an appropriate strategy in which the objectives and values to be conveyed are defined, as well as knowing how to select the influencer best suited to the company.(3)

Based on all of the above, it can be understood that we are immersed in the age of influence rather than the age of information. Patricia San Miguel, in her book

“Influencer Marketing: connect your brand with your audience,” discusses how human beings live in the age of influence and argues that their purchasing decisions are completely influenced by friends, family members, brand communications, and the hundreds of influencers with whom we interact daily on social networks.

Among the relevant background studies for this research are the following: social media allow marketers to refine their segmentation strategy in order to reach a narrower target audience. For example, Pinterest, a social network whose user base is predominantly female, attracts companies whose products are primarily aimed at women.

Social networks also reveal large amounts of information about interest in products or services. Today, new semantics, analytics, and technology allow marketers to detect purchasing signals based on shared and published online content. Understanding these purchasing signals can help sales professionals target a relevant group of people and conduct microtargeted campaigns.

In addition, social media in business allow anyone anywhere in the world to express and share an opinion or idea somewhere within the company's market. Through social networking sites, brands can hold conversations and interact individually with followers.

This personal interaction can instill and strengthen brand loyalty among followers and potential customers. In this way, every customer becomes part of the marketing department, as other customers read their comments or opinions. Torres R.(4)

A social media study (5) reports that 85 % of Internet users aged 17-70 use social networks, representing nearly 27 million individuals. Other noteworthy findings from this study include:

- 31 % like to be shown advertising tailored to their interests.
- 50 % research products on social networks before making a purchase.
- 50 % state that social networks influenced their final purchase of products/services.
- The content most frequently generated on social networks and generating the greatest traffic consists of promotions.

The same study reports the following findings regarding the influencer phenomenon:

- Following influencers is strongest on Instagram, followed by YouTube and, lastly, Facebook.
- 50 % of users follow an influencer.
- 33 % consider the influencers they follow to be credible.
- 43 % consider the comments made by this group to be fairly or highly promotional.

According to the “In Brands We Trust” Barometer study, 63 % of people trust influencers more than brand advertising.

Another relevant finding from a study conducted by GFK (6) is that 58 % of consumers purchased a new product in the previous 6 months because of an influencer’s recommendation.

On the other hand, according to the book “Vivir de las redes,” it is true that there is no written rule defining who can or cannot be considered an influencer, or from what point a creator is considered an influencer. However, agencies do use minimum quantitative and qualitative criteria when searching for influencers. The 2 variables usually considered for this distinction are the number of followers and the engagement rate, which is calculated by dividing the interactions on a post, or their average, by the number of followers and multiplying the result by 100.

Thus, they can be classified according to the different networks as follows:

- Instagram: from 10 000 followers and with a minimum engagement rate of 3-5 percent.
- YouTube: from 10 000 subscribers and with average views equal to 20-25 percent of the audience.
- TikTok: from 100 000 followers and with a minimum engagement rate of 10 percent.

Even so, these figures are approximate and are not 100 % binding, since ultimately the decision whether to work with an influencer belongs to the brands themselves. It is also stated that influencer marketing has been shown to be one of the most profitable advertising channels, fundamentally for 2 reasons:

1. Brands have a problem of proximity to consumers, and influencers allow them to connect with consumers and obtain more qualitative results from the campaigns they generate compared with other traditional media. The recommendation power a content creator exerts over their audience is greater than that of other traditional media and, despite costing more than other digital channels such as SEM or display advertising, the results are better.
2. Hiring an influencer means hiring a content creator, scriptwriter, camera operator, model, and distribution medium, which undoubtedly implies a lower investment cost for brands. Barreda (7).

Companies devoted to selling agricultural supplies have also recognized these trends as an opportunity to strengthen their businesses. These companies are increasingly expanding their activities on social networks, although in their case the sale of the product is not as straightforward as, for example, consumer goods.

Implementing social media strategies in this sector requires considerable effort and analysis because people who work in agriculture are not a homogeneous group, unlike what may sometimes occur in other professions where activities are much more specific and direct. Farmers may be fairly similar to one another in some respects, but they are not homogeneous in their consumption patterns or interests outside work. Nor are they homogeneous in age, geographic region, or consumption habits.(8)

On the other hand, although agricultural marketing strategies do not differ from those of any other sector covered by digital marketing, the sector’s products and services have an important differential advantage: in the new economic context of a global and hyperconnected market, producers and consumers are closer than ever, and this opportunity must be leveraged.(9)

The purpose of this research is to understand whether companies in this sector adopt social media and influencer strategies, the reasons why they do so, and above all how this highly specific audience views Social Networks and influencer marketing; whether or not they influence purchasing decisions, what reactions they generate, among other aspects.(10)

Based on all of the above, the following are the main research questions addressed in this study:

- What types of social networks are most frequently used by companies devoted to selling equipment for Argentine agriculture?
- What advantages do they find in these networks?
- Is the presence of these companies on social networks important to their target audience?
- Do the advertisements and posts made by these brands influence the purchasing behavior of this type of audience?
- What is the effect of using social networks on the sales of this type of company?
- What benefits do social networks provide to this type of company?
- Who are the main influencers among the Argentine agricultural audience?
- On which social networks are they present?
- Does incorporating influencers into these companies’ strategies enhance brand positioning and image?
- Which companies work with influencers?

- What profile do influencers have in order to be selected?
- Is the number of followers more important than the content they provide?
- Does the audience consider influencers credible?
- What type of content does this audience value?
- Do influencers affect purchasing decisions? How do they do so?
- What image can an agricultural company convey if it has no online presence?

Objectives

General objective

The general objective of this manuscript is to analyze the perceived value and motivating factors underlying the use of social media marketing and influencer marketing by companies devoted to selling equipment for agriculture, targeting an audience aged 18 to 60 years who follow this type of company.(11,12)

Specific objectives

- To verify whether social media and influencer strategies are being considered by this type of company.
- To evaluate whether the campaigns and posts viewed both on company social media accounts and on influencer profiles affect the target market's purchasing decisions.
- To identify which social networks are used by this type of company and by agricultural influencers.
- To determine the reasons why people follow agricultural influencers.

METHODS

After defining the general and specific objectives, the research will begin with a qualitative, exploratory stage intended to provide information about the research problem. For this purpose, the study subjects will be selected influencers and representatives of Argentine agricultural brands.

For the final stage, quantitative research with a descriptive approach will be conducted. In this case, the study universe consists of 276 280 followers of the Instagram accounts of the 8 companies under analysis.

The research will focus on 3 stakeholder groups:

1. Entrepreneurs and/or representatives of agricultural brands: qualitative, non-experimental exploratory research. The technique used will be in-depth interviews directed at owners or representatives of different brands devoted to selling agricultural equipment and that use social media marketing strategies. The sample size will be 8 interviewees, and the data collection instrument will be an interview guide.
2. Influencers: qualitative, non-experimental exploratory research. The technique to be used will be social media monitoring of the profiles of the main agricultural influencers. The sample size will be 17 profiles, and the data collection instrument will be observation.

Table 1. Stakeholder group 1

Design	
Scope	Exploratory research
Approach	Qualitative
Technique	In-depth interview
Data collection instrument	Interview guide
Population	Entrepreneurs and/or representatives of companies devoted to selling agricultural equipment
Sampling procedure	Non-probability convenience sampling
Sample	8

Table 2. Stakeholder group 2

Design	
Scope	Exploratory research
Approach	Qualitative
Technique	Social media monitoring
Data collection instrument	Observation
Population	Main agricultural influencers
Sampling procedure	Intentional non-probability sampling
Sample	17

3. Target audience: quantitative, non-experimental descriptive research. The technique to be used will be an online survey of men or women aged 20-70 years who follow the accounts of the selected companies. The stratified probabilistic random sample, with a 95 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error, will comprise 384 observation units, proportionally allocated according to the number of followers of each account: company 1, 15 observation units (3.91 %); company 2, 15 observation units (3.91 %); company 3, 14 observation units (3.64 %); company 4, 20 observation units (5.21); company 5, 68 observation units (17.71 %); company 6, 70 observation units (18.24 %); company 7, 90 observation units (23.40 %); company 8, 92 observation units (23.98 %).

Data analysis

Regarding data analysis, the interpretations from each component of the research will be analyzed separately in order to obtain sound and precise conclusions. For the in-depth interviews, an excerpt of the interviewees' opinions will be presented for each question, together with a final conclusion containing the main findings.

Table 3. Stakeholder group 3

Design	
Scope	Descriptive research
Approach	Quantitative
Technique	Online survey
Data collection instrument	Questionnaire
Population	Followers aged 20-70 years of the selected companies' accounts
Sampling procedure	Probability sampling, stratified with proportional allocation
Sample	384

For the target audience surveys, the data will be processed using Google software in order to produce charts, tables, and cross-tabulations and thus reach the corresponding conclusions.

RESULTS

Two exploratory studies were conducted: 8 in-depth interviews with managers of companies selling agricultural equipment; observation and analysis of the different social networks and the presence of influencers on them; and analysis of 17 Instagram and TikTok profiles.

A total of 100 % of interviewees stated that they use social networks and consider their presence on them very important because it is the way to remain connected with their audience and improve and strengthen their market positioning. They use Instagram and Facebook.

These companies do not believe that the use of social networks directly generates specific sales, but they do consider that it helps keep the companies in the audience's top of mind for future purchases.

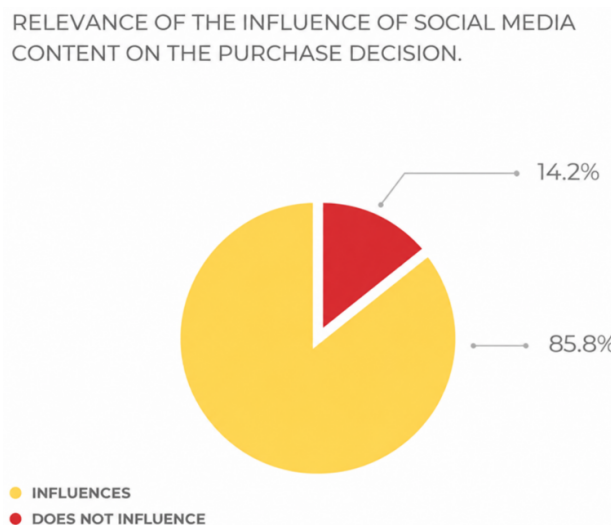
It can be observed that influencers are young people aged 18 to 35 years who love rural life and communicate this through their networks. They primarily use Instagram and, secondarily, TikTok. Their audience consists of 65 % men and 35 % women.

Multinational companies choose influencer marketing and investigate profiles in order to select the person best able to convey their values. Only 20 % consider the number of followers important, whereas 80 % believe selection should depend on a mix of followers, views, likes, and comments. They see these profiles as a tool for strengthening their brands and market positioning and also agree that they generate brand awareness among young people who may purchase their products or recommend them in the future.

National companies, in contrast, have not yet incorporated influencer marketing. However, 80 % agree that their 2023 strategies will include working with at least 1 influencer in order to begin testing results.

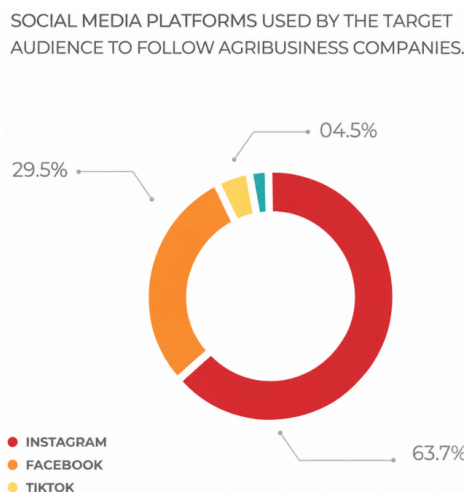
Regarding the conclusive research, 384 surveys were conducted among men and women who follow the accounts of the selected companies. The following results were obtained:

Figure 1. Relevance of the influence of social media content on purchasing decisions



A total of 85 % of respondents confirmed that the content published by these companies would influence their purchasing decisions, and 98.1 % of respondents indicated that the use of these tools by companies is extremely important to them. A total of 54.1 % reported that they would use social networks to resolve questions and obtain advice when purchasing agricultural equipment; another substantial proportion, 30.6 %, stated that they might do so, and only 15.3 % stated that they would not.

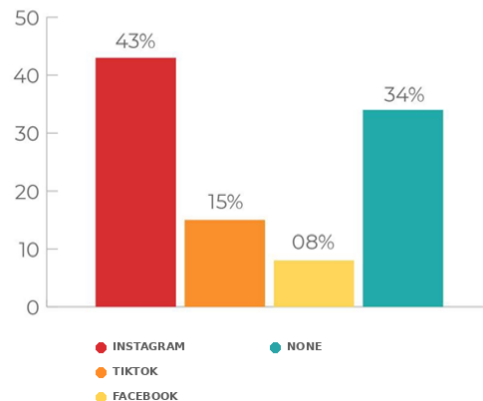
Figure 2. Social networks used by the target audience to follow agricultural companies



The social network most frequently used to follow this type of company is Instagram, at 63.7 %, followed by Facebook at 29.5 %, and TikTok at a lower percentage of 4.5 %. In the previous figure, it was confirmed that the content companies publish before a purchase is important to the audience. In this regard, the most sought-after content on social networks is technical information at 25 %, followed by training at 18 %, advertising at 16 %, events at 15 %, promotions at 14 %, and entertainment at 12 %.

Figure 3. Social networks used by the target audience to follow influencers

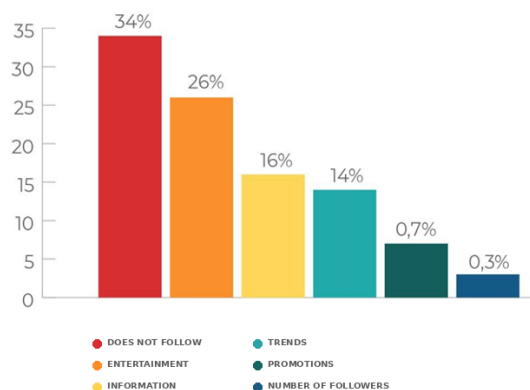
SOCIAL MEDIA USED BY THE TARGET AUDIENCE TO FOLLOW INFLUENCERS.



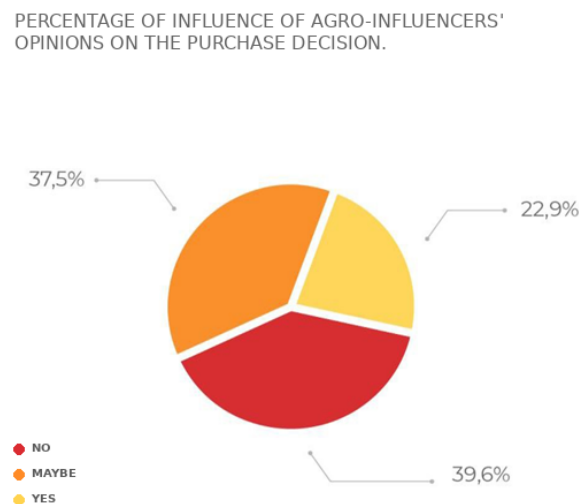
It can be observed that the social network most frequently used to follow influencers is Instagram, at 43 %, followed by TikTok at 15 %, and Facebook to a lesser extent at 8 %. A relevant finding is that 34 % do not follow influencers on any social network. However, there is awareness of the figure of the influencer, since 82 % reported knowing what an influencer is and only 18 % reported that they did not. Of the total sample, it can therefore be confirmed that 66 % follow these profiles.

Figure 4. Reasons why the audience follows influencers

REASONS WHY THE PUBLIC FOLLOWS INFLUENCERS.



The figure shows that the most relevant reason why the audience follows these accounts is entertainment, at 26 %, followed by information and trends at 16 % and 14 %, respectively; promotions are less important at 7 %, while the number of followers accounts for only 3 %. It was also found that the 3 most popular profiles in the sector for this sample are @lajoya.agro at 20 %, @agroelmartiyo at 19 %, and @gerardoconiglio at 11 %.

Figure 5. Percentage influence of agricultural influencers' opinions on purchasing decisions

This figure shows that, for 39.6 % of respondents, influencers' opinions would not affect their purchasing decisions; for 37.5 %, they might do so; and for a smaller proportion, 22.9 %, they would have an influence. The previous figure also showed that the main reason people follow these accounts is entertainment, and this trend is corroborated here because 70.06 % of respondents stated that they do not seek product information on influencer profiles before making a purchase, whereas 29.04 % stated that they do. Respondents were also asked whether they consider influencer content regarding these companies credible, and 57.04 % answered yes while 42.06 % answered no.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this manuscript is to analyze the perceived value and motivating factors underlying the use of social media marketing and influencer marketing by companies devoted to selling agricultural equipment to an audience aged 18 to 60 years who follow this type of company; to verify whether social media and influencer strategies are being considered by these companies; to evaluate whether the campaigns and posts viewed both on the companies' social networks and on influencer profiles affect the target market's purchasing decisions; to identify which social networks are used by companies selling agricultural equipment and by agricultural influencers; and, finally, to determine the reasons why people follow this type of influencer profile.(13)

The first variable addressed in this section is the use of social media and influencer strategies by the type of company analyzed, as established in specific objective number 1. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the emergence of ICTs made it possible to facilitate access to and handling of large volumes of information for millions of individuals. These information and communication technologies made a strong impact on various social and business settings, transforming many sectors, including companies that sell agricultural equipment. The data obtained from the in-depth interviews confirm that 100 % consider the presence of their brands on social networks important. This coincides with the responses obtained from the target audience in the surveys, since 98.1 % consider it important for these companies to use social networks. It can therefore be concluded that these companies are aligned with what their audience and current dynamics require regarding social media presence. This is consistent with the statement by Magazine (1) that the expansion of the Internet and the widespread corporate communication offered by today's digital media have generated changes in the communication strategies of all companies, which have had to incorporate tools such as web banners, social media, emailing, and influencers, among others, that are now essential to any communication strategy.(14)

Regarding the use of influencer strategies, a division can be observed according to company type: multinational companies use influencer marketing, whereas national companies have not yet incorporated it into their strategies. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the use of influencers is a growing trend, and influencers constitute a type of independent external endorser that national companies in the sector still find difficult to adopt. Because it is a new channel, they do not yet have 100 % certainty regarding its results and hesitate to redistribute their limited budgets to cover these new media.

The second variable analyzed concerns which social networks are used by these companies and agricultural influencers, as described in specific objective 3. The information collected in the interviews shows that the social networks most frequently used by this type of company are Instagram and Facebook. This coincides with the surveys, which show that the networks most frequently used by the audience are Instagram at 63 % and Facebook at 29.5 %. Regarding the networks most frequently used by agricultural influencers, the analysis of the main profiles showed that they are Instagram and TikTok. Survey data indicate that 34 % of people do not follow influencers and therefore do not use any social network for this purpose. The remainder of the audience is divided among Instagram at 43 %, TikTok at 15 %, and Facebook at 8 %. This partially coincides with study (5), which reports that influencer following is strongest on Instagram and that Facebook ranks third. However, in the sector analyzed, the second most important platform is not YouTube but TikTok. It can also be observed that, in this particular case, the percentage of people who follow an influencer is higher, at 66 %, whereas the study indicates that 50 % of users follow an influencer.(15)

The third variable analyzed, corresponding to specific objective 4, concerns the reasons why people follow agricultural influencers. These are entertainment at 26 %, followed by information and trends at 16 % and 14 %, respectively; promotions at 7 %; and number of followers at only 3 %. These findings show that people seek product and trend information on these profiles, which is related to the profile of agricultural influencers who, according to the classification, are experts specializing in a particular sector. This also coincides with the advantage of using influencer marketing described in study (3), which states that this tool adds value to products or services. However, it should be noted that, in this particular case, entertainment is the main reason for this audience.

As the fourth variable, corresponding to specific objective 2, we examined whether the campaigns and posts viewed both on company social networks and on influencer profiles affect the target market's purchasing decisions. The interviews revealed that these companies do not believe social network use generates direct sales, although they do consider that it helps keep the companies in the audience's top of mind for future purchases. Survey results, on the other hand, show that 85 % of respondents confirm that the content published by these companies would influence their purchasing decisions; 54.1 % state that they would use social networks to resolve questions and obtain advice when purchasing agricultural equipment; 30.6 % state that they might do so; and 15.3 % state that they would not. This information is consistent with the Spain study (5), which indicates that 50 % research products on social networks before making a purchase.

Regarding influencers, it was found that the influencers in the sector can be classified as Macro influencers according to the size of their audience. According to the description of this category, they are sector reference figures with a loyal community and may increase visibility and sales, rapidly attract customers, and raise awareness of products and services in a short period of time; however, their fees are not affordable for all companies.

The analysis showed that 39.6 % of respondents stated that influencer opinions would not affect their purchasing decisions, 37.5 % stated that they might, and a smaller proportion, 22.9 %, stated that they would. These findings confirm data from study (5), which reveals that 33 % of people consider influencers credible. It was also observed that 70.06 % of respondents stated that they do not seek product information on influencer profiles before making a purchase, whereas 29.04 % stated that they do. This does not coincide with the Spain study (5), in which 58 % of consumers purchased a new product in the previous 6 months because of an influencer's recommendation. Based on all of the above, the characteristics attributed to Mega influencers do not have the same impact in this sector, since they do not guarantee customer acquisition and sales, although they can provide visibility. Regarding the high costs that make them inaccessible to most companies, this does coincide with the sector, since national companies have not yet adopted them because doing so would require redistributing their limited marketing and advertising budgets.

Regarding the perceived value and motivating factors underlying the use of social media marketing and influencer marketing by these companies for an audience aged 18 to 60 years, in relation to our general objective, it can be confirmed that this audience is composed predominantly of males, who represent 68.2 %, which is consistent with the dynamics of the agricultural sector, where men are the majority, while females represent 31.08 %. The most common age ranges are 41 to 48 years at 29.5 % and 34 to 40 years at 27.3 %. The 26 to 34 age range represents 22.7 %, while the 18 to 25 and 49 to 60 age ranges represent 11.4 % and 9.01 %, respectively.

Regarding social media marketing, the factors that most motivate these companies to use it are positioning and keeping their brands in consumers' top of mind. However, they are overlooking the importance of interaction with an audience that increasingly demands real-time responses from companies, as is characteristic of this new era of communication. Regarding influencer marketing, in addition to not being adopted across the entire market, since it is currently used only by

multinational companies, it can be observed that these companies do not select influencers based solely on their number of followers. Instead, they research profiles in order to select the person best able to convey their values. Only 20 % consider the number of followers important, while 80 % believe selection should depend on a mix of followers, views, likes, and comments. These data do not coincide with the statement in the book “Vivir de las redes,” which indicates that the 2 variables usually considered when selecting an influencer are the number of followers and the engagement rate. However, they do coincide with the book’s statement that agencies use minimum qualitative and quantitative criteria when searching for influencers.

Companies selling agricultural equipment view influencer profiles as a tool for strengthening their brands and market positioning. They also agree that influencers generate brand awareness among young people who may purchase their products or recommend them in the future. These findings are consistent with the statement that success requires an appropriate strategy in which the objectives and values to be conveyed are defined, as well as the ability to select the influencer best suited to the company.

CONCLUSIONS

For companies selling agricultural equipment and for the people who follow their accounts, social media presence is very important. Both actors primarily use Instagram and Facebook. These companies focus their efforts on achieving positioning and top-of-mind awareness for future purchases. They do not believe that social media strategies directly generate sales and do not fully recognize the importance their content has in purchasing decisions. They also make limited efforts to maintain active interaction with the audience on social networks, even though 52.8 % of respondents stated that they would use social networks to resolve questions and obtain advice when making a purchase, and 84.5 % stated that the content they find on social networks would influence their purchasing decisions.

The use of influencer marketing strategies is divided because such strategies have already been adopted by multinational companies, but not by national companies, which still lack clear visibility regarding the risks and/or benefits of redirecting their limited conventional marketing and advertising budgets toward influencer marketing. Regarding this issue, 34 % of the target audience do not follow influencers. Although they know what influencers are, they are not interested in following these accounts. With respect to the influence of influencer comments on purchasing decisions, it is not possible to conclude with certainty whether they influence the audience analyzed, since 41.2 % stated that they might. On the other hand, 71.2 % stated that they do not seek product information on influencer profiles, while 56 % consider the content influencers publish about companies credible. It can therefore be concluded that there is still some uncertainty among the audience regarding how this new influencer trend is perceived.

Multinational companies that invest in influencer marketing select influencer profiles according to the values they wish to communicate through their brands. Although the main reason people follow agricultural influencers is entertainment, another substantial percentage does so for information and trends. Therefore, the strategy used by these companies is appropriate, since the evidence shows that the audience does not follow these accounts because of follower counts or engagement rates.

Finally, it is concluded that the social networks used by agricultural influencers and by the target audience to follow them also coincide, since they are Instagram and TikTok.

Based on the conclusions reached, and with the aim of helping companies devoted to selling agricultural equipment make sound strategic decisions related to social media marketing and influencer marketing, the following recommendations are established in this study:

- Companies in the sector should pay special attention to the content they publish on their social networks. Although they are strongly focused on achieving positioning and top-of-mind awareness, it can be observed that the audience considers such content important when making purchases.
- Companies devoted to selling agricultural equipment should keep their accounts up to date with regard to responding to user inquiries, since more than 50 % of respondents indicated that they would use social networks to resolve questions and obtain advice when making a purchase.
- National companies with smaller advertising budgets than multinational companies should cautiously incorporate influencer marketing into their strategies on a trial basis. Although this is a growing trend, most users in the sector still do not follow these figures. More than

70 % confirmed that they would not seek product information on influencer profiles, and there is still uncertainty among the audience as to whether influencer opinions would be considered when making purchasing decisions.

- The most appropriate profile when selecting an agricultural influencer is that of an expert, since these individuals specialize in a particular sector and, in addition to entertainment, the audience considers product information and trends important when following these accounts.
- The content addressed by companies through influencer marketing should focus on technology and trends and should be presented in an informal, relaxed manner, since the audience follows these influencers primarily for entertainment.

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