

# Internet Tools in Marketing Communications of Agribusinesses in Ukraine

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**Abstract** Modern technologies have expanded into all spheres of the human activity, including a marketing one. As for the marketing sphere, it especially concerns promotion policies and marketing communications. The Internet allowed a lot of companies and business to get closer to their clients regardless of their location and their language. Because of the Internet advertising and its type, the companies got an opportunity to send messages to the strictly defined target audience and the consumers can sift them out and select only those of a special interest at a particular moment. Many technologies capable of boosting the effectiveness of the marketing communications requests have recently emerged, which determines the relevance of the study. Thus, the use of Google Ads, SEO promotion, and social media permits to analyse accurately the communications campaign results and establish strong feedback with a potential client. The aim of the study - the analysis of the spread of the Internet and social networks in Ukraine agribusiness, which testifies - considerable prospects of the Internet advertising and the Internet communications usage by agro-industries and companies. Despite the noteworthy advantages of these tools, the volumes and the level of their use by Ukrainian agribusiness are not sufficient neither in the B2C marketing nor in the B2B one. On the one hand, it is attributed to the focus of many agribusinesses on the external market. On the other hand, it is caused by the deficient understanding of marketing and its tools by companies. The coronavirus crisis with its restrictions proved the necessity to apply different Internet tools in all businesses in Ukraine, particularly in the agro-industries. The war made it difficult to use internet tools and forced us to adapt quickly to new realities. As a result of this article,

an algorithm for positive marketing communication campaigns during the war was developed, it was concluded that they should employ modern means of communications with the target audience, resort to experience in other spheres, introduce marketing tools into their activities and cultivate an efficient marketing communication policy.

**Keywords** Marketing Communications, Agribusiness, Internet Advertising, Content Marketing, Promotion on Social Media

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays any business faces the need to organise effective cooperation with its marketing microenvironment, especially with the consumers and the target audience. Ukrainian agro-industries are not an exception in this process. What's more, their desire to move from being raw material industries to consumer- and technology-oriented ones, and find new external markets require considerable efforts taking into account the achievements and tendencies of other business and activities in networking and cooperation with other participants of the market.

Different marketing communication tools, which are changing and developing actively, are intended to assist the companies. The construction of effective communication campaigns within the promotion policy can persuade a modern demanding consumer of the collaboration benefits, explain the main advantages of particular goods or services, take a clear position on the market and in the consumers' consciousness, and establish long lasting cooperation with

the target audience [1].

In Ukraine, agribusiness (along with all the others) has to deal with constant changes of the consumers' behaviour and tastes. Today it is not enough to produce functional goods of a high quality in order to become successful on the market. It is also necessary to make every effort in the marketing promotion policy in order to ensure brand awareness, a reputation, an image, a positive perception of the goods (services), the company, and its trademark. Moreover, modern consumers are under constant information pressure and are not ready to grasp any information sent to them. These perception limits demand the agribusinesses to create engaging, unique, creative and exact messages that should hit the target, that is, reach the consciousness of a potential client, a supplier, and the target audience [2].

Under these conditions the requirements to the marketing communication tools are increasing continuously. Even when producing foodstuffs, it is necessary to consider the means of cooperation and the tools that will help keep the target audience's attention on the value proposition. It is also advisable for Ukrainian agricultural companies to take into account the Internet communication tools that are developing rapidly and allow to get closer to the external marketing microenvironment, collaborate faster, establish mutual real-time communication, and perceive the customer's and the supplier's mood. Furthermore, the Internet development and the use of its possibilities in the agribusiness marketing communication campaigns will facilitate the entrepreneurship development, its modification, and the increase in its social responsibility (as society want now). A key to success is the spread of the Internet and its active users whose number is growing constantly in Ukraine.

In spite of the agrarian focus of the national economy in Ukraine, the level of the marketing communications tools usage by many businesses in this branch (especially, in crop cultivation, animal husbandry, meat processing, and gardening) remains insufficient (except for large holdings). Therefore, there is a growing need for an integrated approach to establishing communications policies by the agricultural companies. It should involve a rational combination of different means of the marketing communications into a single line, which is aimed to create a clear stand of the company accommodated to business-specific development strategies [3].

In the promotion policy, Ukrainian agribusiness should resort to the experience of leading service enterprises and technology companies. They use innovative instruments of the marketing communications, which can be to a great extent implemented in the agro-industry economic activities. Notwithstanding the volumes and the kinds of the activity, the agribusiness owners and executives should be acquainted with the key tendencies of consumers' behaviour and apply recent means to contact potential clients. Consequently, it is so important to introduce the Internet tools into marketing activities, especially into

communications campaigns. Moreover, the consumers, the suppliers and the contact audience are already prepared to it since they deal with such methods of cooperation on a daily basis.

Over the past ten years, research on the development of Internet communications and social media has been quite popular in the field of marketing. Among foreign publications, the works of such scientists as: H. Kartajaya, Ph. Kotler and I. Setiawan [4], A. McStay [5], S.J. Barnes [6], Ch.R. Taylor [7], Gordon, B.R., Jerath, K., Katona, Z., Narayanan, S. and Shin, J. [8] and others have highlighted the above-mentioned issue. At the same time, Ukrainian agribusiness sector also has a variety of digital marketing challenges that require additional analysis.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The aim of the research is to study the possibilities to apply the Internet technologies during the marketing communications campaigns by agricultural companies in Ukraine, taking into consideration the changes of consumers' behaviour and modern trends. It is necessary to single out the following research objectives:

- to analyse the role of the Internet advertising in the goods and services promotion in Ukraine;
- to highlight the tendencies for consumers' involvement in Ukrainian online space and the possibilities to attract their attention;
- to compare the expenditure on different forms of advertising with a view to implementing them Ukraine;
- to assess the use of the Internet technologies when promoting Ukrainian agribusiness;
- to distinguish the key problems of the Internet communications in the marketing of domestic agricultural companies.

During the analysis of modern marketing communications tools, which can be used by Ukrainian agribusinesses, the following three crucial aspects are dwelt upon:

- the assessment of the communication activity prospects in Ukraine;
- the study of the innovative approaches to the effective marketing communication policy formation by the agribusinesses;
- the identification of the marketing potential of the digital communication tools usage.

When determining the communication activity prospects, the main attention is paid to the development of the Internet advertising in Ukraine and the key services that can make it a high-efficient tool of the marketing and economic business activities. Thus, Google Adwords, being the most widespread product in Ukraine, was analysed. Because of its simplicity and a set of exact parameters, this tool helps

achieve the aims set such as to attract potential clients, to boost the sales volumes, and to estimate the results. During the research, the change of the Internet users' audience for the past ten years was analysed. This is a positive trend for the marketers and asserts a continuous increase in the Internet advertising potential and its influence on the target audience. The observation of the Internet audience's structure reveals ample opportunities for the agribusiness. Thus, the audience differs on distinct networks. Therefore, the content can be selected according to the consumers' tastes. The statistical analysis of different forms of the advertising activity in recent years proves that all companies and institutions are moving towards the content creation and promotion primarily on the Internet. It is also a sign of Ukrainians' readiness to consume such information.

The market elasticity assessment points to its high level because the market is changing actively, adjusting to relevant marketing environment and entrepreneurs' strategic expectations. The economic analysis of the innovative approaches to the effective marketing communication policy creation by the agribusiness in Ukraine demonstrates the movement towards promotion and marketing digitalization [9].

However, during the assessment of the marketing potential of the digital communication tools usage and the relevant modelling it is necessary to take into account the specific features of Ukrainian economy development, especially frequent currency fluctuations. Consequently, in order to forecast the further development of the Internet advertising and other digital communications with the help of extrapolation, it is necessary to adopt a balanced approach and adjust for currency fluctuations. However, the Internet communications used by the agribusiness has proved promising.

The analysis and synthesis of the main search requests connected to the agricultural goods production and sales demonstrate a low level of the use of the Internet advertising and other digital promotion tools by Ukrainian agribusinesses. This fact raises a range of problems that should be solved by scholars, marketers, and managers.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Nowadays, in most sectors of human activities, it is difficult to imagine the marketing communication campaigns without the Internet technologies. Moreover, during the last years they are gradually replacing other advertising communication channels. The innovative tools simplify notably the creation, the spread and the control over such messages and allow the companies to calculate the results accurately.

Therefore, the Internet advertising is spinning up in Ukrainian goods and services promotion. The biggest service of contextual advertising in Ukraine is Google, whose services occupy the largest market share [10]. Its

product Adwords is characterized by the following features:

- a comfortable set of tools to create advertising campaigns on search engines and media sites;
- an opportunity to choose the target audience, the geography of messages, and the exact time;
- a capacity to add and edit the advertisements, control and change the campaign budget if necessary;
- the speed of the assessment and the analysis of the communication campaign results.

At the same time, in comparison with other forms of the advertising activity, the contextual advertising on Adwords has a considerable advantage because a customer pays not for the advertisement posting or broadcasting but for the number of requests for the advertisement (clicks) [11]. Higher relevance of the advertisements and the web-site for the audience will decrease the expenditure on each site visit, which is measured by the CTR indicator (Click-through rate), that is, the relation of a number of clicks to a number of displays. The growth of this indicator is indicative of the high-quality contextual advertising and its correct orientation [10].

Under such conditions, imposition disappears, which modern consumers complain of, trying to "fight off" the "excess" advertisements [12].

Therefore, the key advantages of the contextual advertising use, specifically of Adwords, by Ukrainian agro-industrial companies can be distinguished, as follows:

- (1) accessibility – easy access to the creation and the spread of advertisements linked to their low costs (in comparison with other forms of advertising);
- (2) measurability – the application of innovative services to create and spread the contextual advertising allows to analyse accurately the advertising campaign components and effectiveness (for example, with the help of Google Analytics);
- (3) flexibility – a possibility to easily change messages, advertising campaign time frames, and a communication budget;
- (4) accuracy – a rigorous spatial and geographical determination and the possibility to hit the previously defined target audience by displaying advertisements to those who make similar search requests;
- (5) rapidity – due to the Internet specific features, a client has an opportunity to get more information about the advertised product immediately, study reviews, the usage possibilities, and compare it with other proposals;
- (6) easiness – overcoming aggression and negative reactions through the decline of obtrusiveness (the messages come to a potential client at the moment of his interest in a certain product) facilitates easier perception and comprehension.

Obviously, the Internet advertising has a range of disadvantages that can limit its use by Ukrainian

agribusiness. The main one is an access to the worldwide network. Although the number of the Internet users in Ukraine has tripled for the last 10 years (Figure 1), the use of the Internet by the older and rural populations is remarkably lower. They can constitute a noteworthy part of the target audience and become potential clients of the agribusinesses. This should be taken into account when developing a marketing communication campaign and using the Internet advertising by agricultural companies.

The worldwide network became popular in Ukraine at the beginning of 2008 [13]. The dynamics of the Internet expansion in 2008-2019 is illustrated by Figure 1 [14]. At the beginning of 2021, there are approximately 30 million Internet users in Ukraine [15]. According to the research conducted by the Ukrainian Internet Association (UIA), “regular users” are those who resort to the Internet once in a month or more frequently. It is obvious that the Coronavirus pandemic has influenced strikingly the revitalization of the Internet consumers (in Ukraine and in the world). Moreover, the social media audience is increasing quickly.

#### 4. The Internet Audience in Ukraine

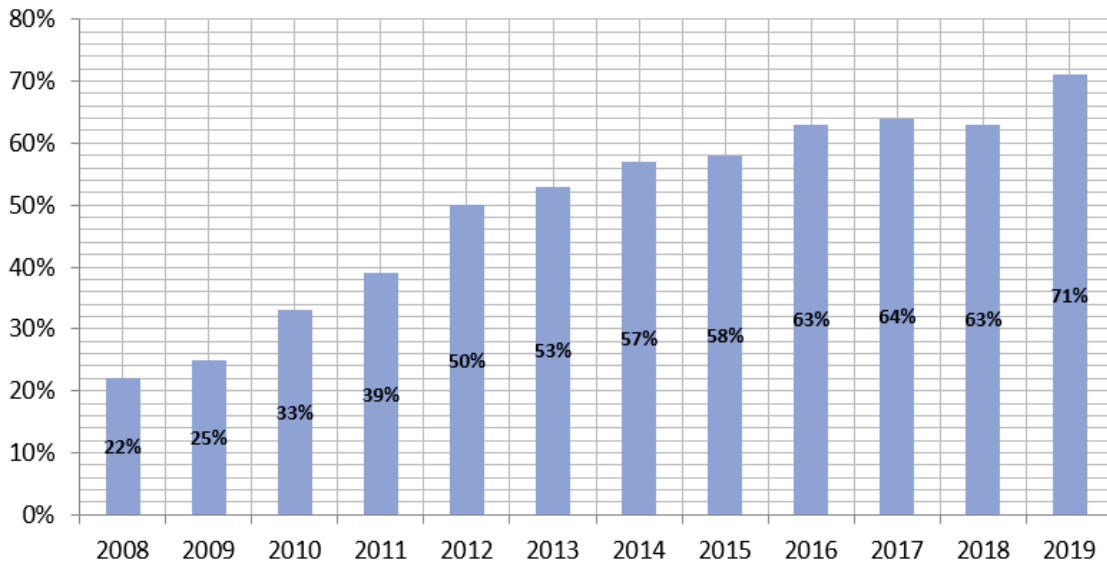
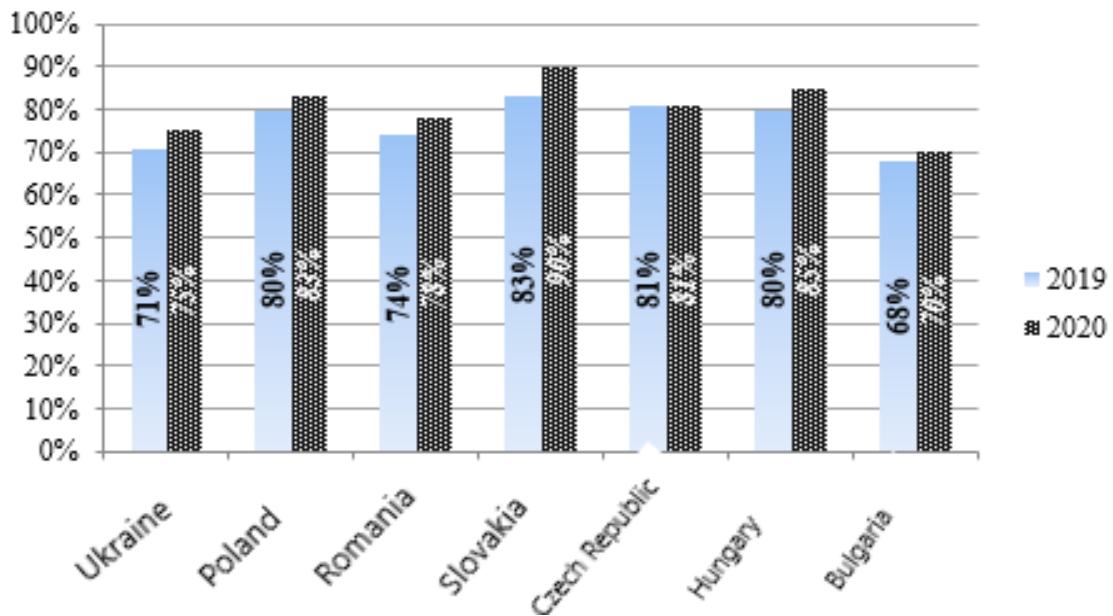
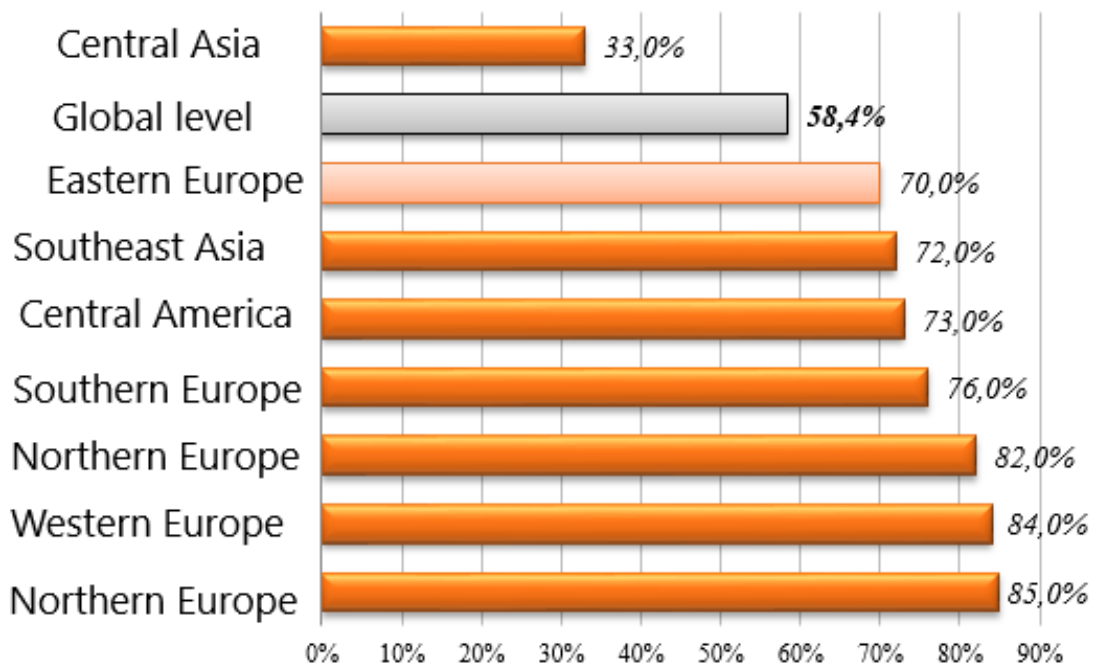


Figure 1. The dynamics of the Internet expansion in Ukraine in 2008-2019



Calculated according to World Bank data (Individuals using the Internet, 2022) [16]

Figure 2. The share of individual Internet users as a % of the total population of some Central and Eastern European countries



Source: Global social network penetration rate, 2022 [17]

**Figure 3.** Penetration of social networks by some regions (as of January 2022)

It should be mentioned that all the nations in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) indicate the trend of an increase in active Internet users. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Telecommunication also claims that this process has expanded globally, has been ongoing for more than decade and is still going strong today. According to data from the World Bank, there were about 80% of these users in 2020 (for comparison, the global Internet user population was 60% in 2022), and that number is steadily rising. The vast majority of consumers in the CEE countries have access to the Internet and actively use it in their daily lives (Figure 2). At the same time, over the past 5 years, the highest growth rates among the CEE countries have been demonstrated by Ukraine and Romania.

It is apparent that the coronavirus pandemic had a considerable impact on Internet users' activation, both in Ukraine and around the world. At the same time, the user base of social networks is expanding even more quickly. Therefore, as of July 2022, there were 5.03 billion active Internet users globally, of which 4.7 billion used social networks, according to Statista company official data [17]. As a result, social networks have over 60% of the world's population as users (Figure 3).

At the same time, it is the consumers of the European continent who use various social networks the most in their everyday life and professional activities. This is evidence of significant opportunities for marketing activities, especially promotion policy, for any business, and Ukrainian agrarian business in particular. Social network platforms Facebook (in 2022 – more than 2.9 billion users), YouTube (in 2022 – 2.6 billion users), WhatsApp (in 2022)

remain the constant leaders in terms of the number and growth of active users in recent years (2 billion users) and Instagram (almost 1.5 billion users in 2022) (Table 1).

Social networks in Ukraine are developing even more dynamically. Thus, throughout 2020 in Ukraine, the ukrainian social media audience has grown by seven million people, from 19 million users to 26 million. At the beginning of 2021, 60% of the population was registered in some social networks [15]. According to the GlobalLogic data, the number of Facebook users is 16 million people and the Instagram users amounts to 14 million people. 96% of the regular Internet users resort to YouTube in Ukraine [15]. It is interesting to note that the audience on different social media varies. Consequently, it is possible to define exactly what messages and to whom they should be sent during the communication campaign with the help of the Internet tools.

Since Poland is one of the largest agro-industrial nations in Central and Eastern Europe, which is crucial for our research. Let's analyse its social network usage and distribution for comparison. So, according to statistics from Statcounter (a website used to analyse Internet traffic), at the end of 2020, the most popular social networks in Poland in terms of traffic are: Facebook (75.5%), Pinterest (12.9%), Twitter (6.3%), YouTube (3.4%) [20]. As a fact, according to NapoleonCat.com, in November 2021, there were more over 22 million Facebook users in Poland, accounting for nearly 59% of the nation's total population [21]. In general, the number of users of social networks in Poland was about 69% [22]. At the same time, surveys conducted in 2021 indicate a rapid increase in the

popularity of the YouTube network among the 16-64-year-old audience: 92.8% of respondents confirmed their active use [22].

All CEE nations share a similar position with regard to Internet availability and the growth of social networks. For example, in Romania, the most popular social platforms in terms of traffic in 2020 are: Facebook (94.4%), Pinterest (3.3%), YouTube (1.1%) [23]. In Bulgaria - Facebook (97%), Pinterest (1.7%), Twitter (0.4%) [24]. Obviously, Facebook is the channel with the most diversity in terms of age, social status or interests of users in CEE countries; therefore, through its platform, businesses promote their activities and should focus significant attention on agro-industrial enterprises.

In Ukraine, the use of social networks by consumers is more diverse. In addition to Facebook, it's a good idea to pay special attention to Instagram and YouTube, both of which play a significant role in the promotion of certain services and products for particular consumer groups. The interaction between these networks will probably change both during and after the war. As a result, agriculture company marketers in Ukraine should research these trends and alter their marketing communications and promotion strategies. Along with the growth of the number of the Internet and social media users, the role and the effectiveness of the Internet advertising is increasing. Insightful companies, which adopt a strategic approach to their future and look constantly for an additional contact with the target audience, are obliged to take this fact into consideration when constructing their marketing, in particular, their promotion policies. Therefore, Ukrainian agro-industrial businesses cannot be an exception because they will find it difficult to cooperate with the microenvironment and compete at a high level without a rational policy of marketing communications.

**Table 1.** Change in the number of users of the most common social networks during 2020-2022

Social network	2020	2022	Growth rate
Facebook	2,797	2,910	4,0%
YouTube	2,291	2,562	11,8%
WhatsApp	2,000	2,267	13,4%
Instagram	1,221	1,478	21,0%

Source: (The 15 Biggest Social Media Sites and Apps, 2021) [18] and (Most popular social networks worldwide, 2022 [19].

As a reaction to the improvement of cooperation technologies, the fickleness of the consumers' perception, and the modification of the market demands, the Internet advertising is changing and broadening. The following type of the Internet advertising are usually singled out:

- (1) search advertising – textual advertisements that appears while looking for some goods and services in search engines;
- (2) media advertising (banner) – banners or textual advertisements on thematic web-sites;
- (3) video advertising – video clips appearing at the beginning or in the middle of videos on the Internet, for example on YouTube;
- (4) mail advertising – messages and advertisements that arrive to consumers' emails;
- (5) marketing campaigns in the search process – images of the goods that emerge when looking them for in a search engine [10].

Accordingly, the Internet advertising can be of different forms, as follows:

- search – displaying goods in a search engine according to the consumer's requests;
- thematic – connected with the offer of goods to the consumer on electronic web-sites;
- behavioural – the consumer's "persecution" on the basis of his previous search behaviour or keywords (names of goods) when working on the Internet [25].

## 5. The Forms of Advertising Activities

It is necessary to analyse in detail the current situation with the content marketing and the Internet advertising in Ukraine. According to the data of the Internet Advertising Committee of the Ukrainian Internet Association [26] (2021), in 2020 the total volume of the Internet advertising within the country is 13,56 billion UAH (Table 2). Moreover, for the past 10 years it has been showing a constant tendency for growth [27]. It is advisable to assess and compare the share of this type of marketing communications with some popular tools of the promotion policy.

**Table 2.** The analysis of the expenditure on different forms of the advertising activity in Ukraine in 2018-2020

Indicators	Units	Years			Growth rate	
		2018	2019	2020	2019/2018	2020/2019
Advertising volumes in:						
Internet	millions UAH	9 398	12 673	13 560	34,8%	7,0%
Television	millions UAH	9 269	11 526	12 175	24,3%	5,6%
External	millions UAH	3 493	4 240	3 159	21,4%	-25,5%
Press	millions UAH	1 612	1 850	1 466	14,8%	-20,8%
Radio	millions UAH	578	717	717	24,0%	0,0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>millions UAH</b>	<b>24 350</b>	<b>31 006</b>	<b>31 077</b>	<b>27,3%</b>	<b>0,2%</b>
Official hryvnya / United States dollar exchange rate (average in the given period)	UAH / US \$	27,20	25,85	26,96	-5,0%	4,3%
<b>Expenditure on advertising:</b>						
Internet	millions US \$	346	490	503	41,9%	2,6%
Television	millions US \$	341	446	452	30,9%	1,3%
External	millions US \$	128	164	117	27,7%	-28,6%
Press	millions US \$	59	72	54	20,8%	-24,0%
Radio	millions US \$	21	28	27	30,6%	-4,1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>millions US \$</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>1 200</b>	<b>1 153</b>	<b>34,0%</b>	<b>-3,9%</b>

Source: calculated by the author according to the results of the research on search results and media advertising by the Internet Advertising Committee (2021) and the data of the National Bank of Ukraine (2021).

It is possible to assert that the Internet advertising has conquered a leading position on the market, and since 2018 its expenditure has surpassed the expenditure on the television advertising. Nowadays, the companies and institutions spend more funds on the Internet advertising than on the whole scope of the UN (external), press, radio, and audio-visual advertising. Consequently, it occupies one of the forefront positions among all forms of the advertising activity in Ukraine and constitutes more than 50% of the market (for instance, the total volume of the advertising media market was 24,517 billion UAH in 2020) [28].

A similar situation is observed in almost all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, in Poland, the rate of increase in spending on Internet advertising in 2020 compared to 2019 was 4.9% (increase from PLN 4.954 billion to PLN 5.198 billion) [29]. At the same time, SEM (Search Engine Marketing) showed the greatest growth - more than 21%. In Romania, the growth rate is much higher - about 11.3% (from USD 416.06 million to USD 463.07 million). At the same time, video advertising via the Internet showed the greatest growth in Romania (40.9%) [30]. About 12% growth was shown by online advertising during the analyzed period also in Bulgaria. After the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, in most countries of the world, there is a tendency to increase the volume of Internet advertising against the background of the growth of Internet users. Even higher rates of growth are

demonstrated by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which determines the potential opportunities for the promotion of agricultural products of these countries.

However, the analysis of the marketing communications in Ukraine prompts some conclusions that should be paid attention to with a view to comprehend better the companies' behaviour in certain sectors of the national economy and the consumers' perception.

- (1) The marketing communications is highly elastic and undergoing continuous changes and corrections under the influence of a current marketing environment and entrepreneurs' strategic expectations. On the one hand, such elasticity characterises marketers and advertisers positively, who work actively with their target audience. On the other hand, it points to the disproportionality of markets and entrepreneurship development, difficulties in forecasting the activities in the agrarian sector in Ukraine.
- (2) The external marketing environment has a crucial impact on the companies' expenditure on the marketing communications, particularly, on the advertising. It is worth mentioning that the coronavirus pandemic has shrunk the spending on the marketing communications and decreased the growth rate tempo of all means of advertising activities. As the General Manager of the All-Ukrainian Advertising Coalition M. Lazebnyk [28] puts forward, "2020 was characterized by deep recession on a

global scale that undoubtedly was reflected in the sphere of marketing services”. The changes of the agribusinesses’ and consumers’ behaviour is a sign of the further creation of new approaches and tools of the promotion policy and the marketing communications.

- (3) The Internet advertising volumes are boosting although their analysis needs a more profound approach. For example, it is worth carrying out the adjustment for currency fluctuations because during this adjustment the indicators can vary significantly. Thus, the volumes analysis of the Internet, television, external, radio, and press advertising converted into the US dollars reflects more rigorous dynamics of the changes (Table 1) and illustrates the development directions of the advertising market, that is, a movement towards the digitalization of marketing communications, a promotion policy, and marketing in general.

Therefore, the advertisers distribute their advertising budgets in favour of the Internet advertising as the most dynamic and forefront media channel. So, it is important to analyse the media Internet advertising, whose tempo has been raising for the last ten years within the digital marketing communications. At the moment, a media

component of the Internet advertising comprises approximately 49%. The Ukrainian Internet Association [14] studies the volumes of the media advertising based on cross-checking data from the surveys of the biggest advertising agencies and holdings, web-sites and sales houses in Ukraine. The growth rate of the media Internet advertising in Ukraine are high (Figure 4). It is the only means of marketing communications that has demonstrated a tendency for an increase regardless of the coronavirus pandemic (even having been adjusted for a currency exchange rate).

The construction of the trend line and the extrapolation for two years shows future high growth rates of this type of marketing communications. However, it is worth taking into consideration the data adjusted for a currency exchange rate, the price for these services is often bound to foreign currencies. If the forecast of the extrapolation after adjustment of the media Internet advertising volumes for the official hryvnya / United States dollar exchange rate is realised, the data will be more moderate regarding its further increase. At the same time, this increase provides grounds for a conclusion that the marketing communications is a living system that changes, improves and takes the marketing environment fluctuations into account.

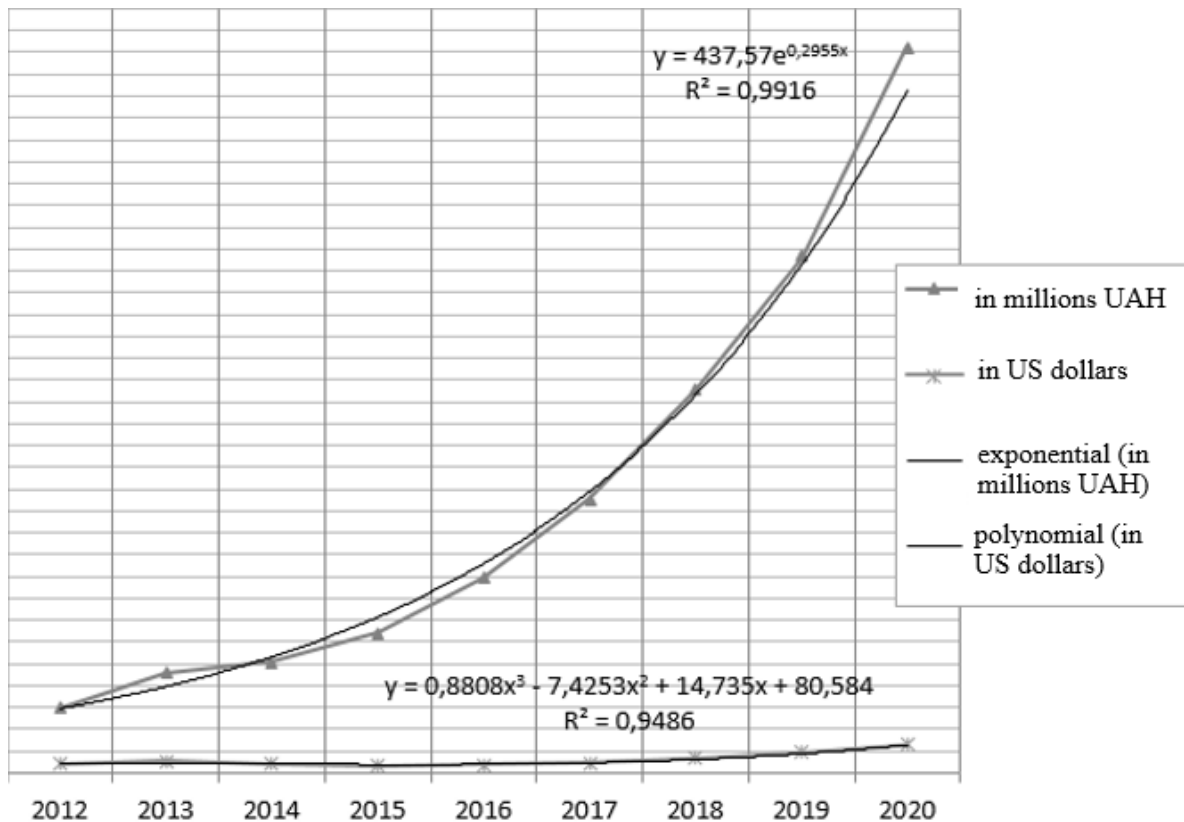


Figure 4. The dynamics of the media Internet advertising volumes in Ukraine in 2012-2020



## 6. The Promotion of Agricultural Goods by the Internet in Ukraine

These data are rather optimistic and testify the increased role of innovative Internet tool in communication campaigns used by Ukrainian companies. However, the place of the Internet advertising in Ukrainian agribusiness is not so straightforward. Accordingly, it is necessary to assess the use of Google Ads by Ukrainian agro-industrial companies.

According to the most common request in the most widespread search engine Google.com.ua (as of 12/12/2021) “to buy honey, barbecue, homemade sausages, flour, bread, vegetables, oil, fruits, apples, potatoes, milk”, which is potential for the B2C market, paid search results or contextual advertisements are virtually absent. The following companies use the online advertising service Google Ads:

- Internet shop “Pishchevik” [31] – an online sports nutrition shop.
- Internet shop “Prime Food” [32] – an online seafood and grocery shop.
- Internet market “FreshMart” [33] – an online seafood, greengrocer, sweet and drinks shop.
- Barbecue shop “Lviv” [34] – an online butcher shop.

They all are elements of the marketing channels of goods and services distribution. In addition, they are not agro manufacturers and do not have a direct connexion with the agribusiness.

From the analysis of the requests in the search engine Google.com.ua (as of 12/09/2021) based on such keywords as “to buy grains, barley, wheat, premix, oil crops, an elevator service, sunflower seeds”, which are potential for the B2B market, there are even fewer paid search results and contextual advertisements. It can be illustrated by the following companies:

- The main site for agronomists sells good and different applications for the modern crop cultivation.
- Group of companies “Dolyna” [35] is a group of enterprises that is specialised in the development, research and implementation of plant growth stimulators and micronutrient fertilizers. into the agricultural industry.
- Company “Agrosem” [36] is a firm that implements the best experience in agrarian technologies, crops seeds, mineral fertilizers and machinery.
- TOV “Agro-Control” [37] provides bulk and retail deliveries of seeds, macro- and micronutrient fertilizers, and plant protection products.

Furthermore, it is worth noticing that only those companies that deal with the crop cultivation use actively the contextual advertising on the agro-industrial market. The Google Ads advertising is widely applied only by the group of companies “Dolyna”, which promotes intensively its products for agribusinesses, farmers, and gardeners.

Thus, in spite of noteworthy advantages of the contextual advertising and its effective application in many businesses and spheres in Ukraine, the agro-industrial sector hardly makes use of positive aspects of this type of communications. Even the available broad statistics in Google AdWords accounts (the number of clicks, CTR, average CPC or CPM, costs, conversion rate, cost-per-conversion, screenings percentage at the top of the page (IS), search absolute top impression share) does not attract Ukrainian agribusiness [13].

It is also worth mentioning that agro-industrial companies and their distributors use SEO promotion, because in accordance with the search requests in the top positions of search results, some web-sites repeat. SEO experts work on these sites’ rankings in the search and traffic. There can be distinguished the following crucial directions of the SEO promotion:

- Textual significance: the uniqueness of the content and its quality, optimised by keywords and the fullness of advertising information.
- Internal quality: the avoidance of technical errors that facilitates fast web-page loading and the obligatory adaptation to mobile applications.
- External stimuli: paying attention to feedbacks from external sources, the consumers’ reviews, and the target audience’s reaction.
- Behavioural factors: taking into account users satisfaction by the analysis of the time spent, the number of pages visited, backtracking, etc. [38].

It is necessary to highlight that, in so far as the number of web-sites and competitiveness on the Internet is growing, the companies should make a considerable effort to rise rankings and website traffic. The highest positions can be occupied only by qualified, useful and optimised user-oriented sites.

In addition, the use of SEO in marketing communication campaigns provides several opportunities for Ukrainian agro-industrial business, as follows:

- to get an additional channel of customer acquisition;
- to increase the brand awareness;
- to cut down on expenditure on promotion and other marketing tools;
- to introduce a new target audience to the sales;
- to take advantage of its availability for small businesses;
- to boost the sales volumes and their efficiency.

Why do Ukrainian agribusinesses scarcely use the Internet communication tools? Why do small agricultural enterprises and farms not promote their activities with the help of innovative means of communication with their customers? There is all the more reason for this as city dwellers are prone to such methods of cooperation (as the above analysis demonstrated).

An answer to these questions is complicated and needs analysing conditions and special features of sales by

modern agro-industries. Firstly, middle-sized and large agricultural companies try to find access to foreign markets by all available means. Thus, they do not only look for additional opportunities to sale their products but also intend to get access to highly solvent purchasers and to gain absolute and relative advantages [39; 40]. At the same time, this is a chance to eschew national currency unit fluctuations. Consequently, prices on the domestic market (especially, on the grains market) is a reflection of the external market tendencies in terms of a currency exchange rate.

Secondly, the level of the marketing communication tools application by agribusiness is not sufficiently high. It specially concerns small and middle-sized enterprises. In the Ukrainian agro-industrial complex, the understanding of marketing often comes down to trade, which is constrained and does not permit to see additional advantages of using modern tools [41].

## 7. Internet Communications in Ukraine

Why do Ukrainian agribusinesses use Internet communications insufficiently? Why do not small farms and agricultural businesses use contemporary methods of consumer access to market themselves and their operations? Additionally, modern customers, particularly city dwellers, are increasingly drawn to these types of communication (as evidenced by the analysis above).

The answer is complex and requires an analysis of the conditions and features of sales by modern agricultural enterprises. First, medium-sized and larger agricultural companies are trying to find exits to foreign markets in every possible way [42]. As a result, they seek out more possibilities to sell their products as well as access to customers with greater purchasing power in order to achieve both absolute and comparative advantages, according to A. Smith [39] and D. Ricardo [40]. On the other hand, it is also an opportunity to avoid currency fluctuations of the national currency. Therefore, the prices in the domestic market (especially in the grain market) are a reflection of external trends with conversion to the exchange rate.

Second, agriculture does not use marketing techniques and communications in particular to their full potential, especially small and medium-sized businesses. The notion of marketing is frequently reduced in Ukraine's agricultural sector to trade, which is constrained and prevents the adoption of contemporary methods from yielding extra benefits [43].

However, this approach is short-sighted and needs to be changed. The domestic market is extremely important for any business, especially since its development potential is significant. The corona crisis and Russia's war against Ukraine proved that external fluctuations can be fast and significant enough for any national economy and any type of business. From this perspective, it is advised for

agricultural enterprises to be proactive and search for cutting-edge methods of communicating with target markets and audiences, draw on the expertise of other fields and industries, implement marketing tools into their operations, and maintain a successful marketing communications policy.

## 8. The Role of Digital Tools in Ukraine During the War

Over the past couple of years, the marketing strategies of numerous agricultural businesses in Ukraine have changed and improved quickly. At the same time, the majority of small and medium-sized businesses utilized marketing techniques insufficiently. After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (February 24), all companies, including the agricultural sector, "froze" and completely stopped any communication with the markets. Work during the war is the biggest crisis without exception for most Ukrainian enterprises.

However, Ukrainian farmers were among the first to adapt to new commercial circumstances (after all, this is a field of activity with a production cycle that cannot be stopped). The ability of businesses to adapt to changing circumstances is another sign of their dependability, which is mostly assessed by their customers. Even in these trying times, agricultural businesses should take steps to contact their audience rather than alienate it. This is crucial not only for company survival, but also for national support.

The communication strategies and approaches of agricultural companies underwent radical changes during the war. The vast majority of businesses have stopped using traditional means of marketing communications. Thus, all forms of advertising activity were stopped due to: lack of public interest in such messages; excessive outrageousness and, at times, flamboyance of appeals for such a period. The national entrepreneurship development project *Diya.Biznes*, the Office of Entrepreneurship and Export Development and many practical courses and advice (in particular, the *Bazilik* practical school of communications) came to the rescue. The educational course "Business Speaks. Where and how to communicate during the war" was launched [44], where Ukrainian entrepreneurs are helped to adapt to new realities.

In our opinion, it is possible to define a certain algorithm of a rational marketing communication campaign during the war and after the victory of Ukraine:

- (1) Public position. Agribusiness must clearly state its position through all available communication channels. Publications and content should be carefully prepared, ambiguous wording, humor, and outright disdain for war should be avoided. The greatest way to deliver information is as a fact.
- (2) Plans for the future. The very first step in communication under changing circumstances is to inform everyone who is a part of the company's

microenvironment about working conditions, the restoration of activities, or the partial suspension of them. A work strategy and a readiness for changing circumstances are critical in communications now more than ever.

- (3) Honesty and openness in communication. Most agribusinesses suffered significant losses. In an uncertain circumstance, it is important to report changes in work honestly and openly, to solicit assistance and support from clients and suppliers, and, if necessary, to reach out to audiences. It is crucial for all participants in the agriculture market today – both in Ukraine and abroad – to demonstrate their readiness for altered circumstances. Additionally, as spam is now even more annoying to readers, additional care should be taken to ensure that information about the agricultural industry does not become that.
- (4) Adaptation of the content and the appeals themselves. Storytelling is an important component of Ukrainian agribusiness [45]. Today, it is better to employ restrained rhetoric while using the positive; it is worth exercising caution. The big factor of positive perception of the business and its operations is public support for Ukraine Armed Forces, volunteers, and customers. It is important to share useful information: where you can get help or hide in case of danger, charge your devices in case of a power outage, etc.
- (5) Perspectives for further work. The challenging war period is quite unfavorable for the media. The credibility of both domestic and international markets can be raised by paying attention to the viewpoint of an agricultural company's actions, such as exports. In the end, it will help the company's employees, its customers, intermediaries, suppliers to take a break and think about the future. It is expedient for agro-industrial enterprises to be one step ahead and look for modern ways of communicating with target markets and audiences, to attract experience from other spheres and industries, to implement marketing tools and to implement an effective marketing communications policy.

## 9. Recommendations and Prospects for the Development of Marketing Communications in Ukraine

Agricultural enterprises focused on the domestic market in Ukraine should pay more attention to social networks. The rapid pace of their spread and significant role during the war (in the process of rapid transmission of vital information) will only increase their importance in marketing activities. They should become not only a way to promote goods and services of Ukrainian agribusiness, but also a means of communication, active interaction and, ultimately, sales. Small and medium-sized agricultural

businesses, which have a particularly difficult time attracting customers through conventional marketing communications strategies because of their high cost, complexity in production and use, and longer period of return, should pay even more attention to this. This might be the key to their growth and more effective competition because many Ukrainian agro-industrial firms are based on farms and have low volume production.

It should also be noted the significant impact of the war in Ukraine on users of various messengers (Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.). Thus, these means became an extremely important way of sharing and obtaining information during the periods of Russian terrorism against the civilian population of Ukraine. In addition to learning about current military operations and news in the nation, the public also studies, seeks for recent offers of goods and services, and communicates thanks to messengers. In our opinion, even after the end of hostilities, the relevance of such means of communication will be high in Ukraine. Online sales and promotion of various goods and services, particularly agricultural products, will become even more active through messengers. This will become a unique component exclusively of the Ukrainian national market and already requires the attention of marketing specialists of Ukrainian agricultural companies and relevant intermediaries.

Such recommendations can be considered to apply to other markets, particularly those in the region's neighbours, in addition to Ukrainian agriculture's internal market. Because of this, new markets are impacted by technology and advances in the fields of marketing and communications very quickly, and customers throughout the world are eager to try new things, even with products that are merely secondary or tertiary necessities.

## 10. Conclusions

The Internet technologies are catching on in the marketing in any business. Furthermore, these achievements are taken into consideration by the promotion policy, which is aimed at attracting consumers' attention overloaded with information and difficult to surprise. This is a reason for the growth of the role of the Internet advertising in promoting goods and services by Ukrainian business. In Ukraine, a notable position in the contextual advertising is occupied by Google services that have a range of important advantages for small and middle-sized companies, particularly in the agrarian sector. An important element of such communications is the possibility to measure accurately the advertising campaign effectiveness and the obtrusiveness level decrease, which can be irksome to contemporary consumers, by a set of indicators.

The key to the Internet technologies application in marketing communications is the target audience's access to the worldwide network. Despite a constant increase in

the number of regular Internet users in Ukraine, the older and small towns population resorts to the Internet data notably less. The agro-industries should take this into consideration when developing a marketing communication campaign. Apart from that, the coronavirus pandemic influenced a tendency for a boost of the number of regular Internet and social media users. At the same time, the audience of different social media vary. This fact can add effectiveness to the agribusiness marketing communications by defining precisely what messages and to whom should be sent.

The analysis of the expenditure on different forms of advertising in Ukraine shows that the role of the Internet advertising has recently enhanced. It is a sign of a rapid adjustment of marketing to the fickle marketing environment. To comprehend changes of the marketing communications environment in Ukraine, it is advisable to consider currency exchange rate fluctuations, because the majority of agencies and advertisers bind their services costs to foreign currency.

The Internet advertising in the agribusiness marketing in Ukraine has not occupied the leading position yet, especially in small and middle-sized companies. The analysis of the Google Ads usage on the B2C and B2B markets demonstrates that this advertising tool is applied insufficiently (except for crop cultivation companies), despite its important advantages. The Ukrainian agrarian companies' marketers pay more attention to SEO promotion. Therefore, considering the development dynamics and the application of the Internet technologies in promotion, Ukrainian agribusiness has significant possibilities to advance its marketing activity, take on an additional share of the market, find new market channels, and establish close cooperation with its target audience.

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