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# Regional Identity: The role of Facebook in promoting PDO and PGI agricultural products across Europe

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## Abstract

This study aims to assess how PDO and PGI agricultural products are promoted on Facebook Page across five European countries: Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, and Greece; together these countries hold for 75% of all the agricultural products that belong to some GI scheme in Europe. The products that will be part of the investigation are registered as PDO or PGI under the EU basis of protection, belong to the Product Type Food - Category - Class 1.6 (Fruits, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed). The study was carried out for those products for which the producer group was available in GI View Portal (n=314) and had a digital presence through a Facebook Page (n=217); some groups of producers handle more than one product, and they will be evaluated as a unique Facebook Page. The final sample of the study considered only unique Facebook Pages with any type of publication from January 2023 and May 2024 (n=170). Utilizing data from Facebook posts a quantitative analysis was conducted aiming to evaluate the completeness of basic information on Facebook pages, media type usage (photo, video, links) and post frequency. Moreover, a qualitative analysis was conducted using Voyant Tools to analyse the content of each publication using word frequency and relative frequency, to understand the most common words used employed by producer groups on the Facebook posts. The results revealed significant variability in the accuracy and completeness of basic information on Facebook pages across the countries, showing an average of only 50% of usage of the About Us Section. Engagement rates and posting frequencies also varied, with France achieving the highest engagement rate at 2.4%, while Greece and Portugal had the lowest at 1.1%. Photos were the most commonly used media type across all countries, making up 63.3% of the total media types used. The analysis of the corpus generated on the Voyant tools, revealed that Spain and France frequently highlight PDO and PGI certifications on Facebook publications, emphasizing quality and regional identity through geographic branding. Italy emphasizes regional products, with a strong presence of Calabria as a term of the corpus. Portugal focuses on local markets and community involvement, promoting the cooperatives rather than products, while Greece promotes the wine industry and agritourism. This comparative analysis provides insights into how different promotional strategies are employed across these countries. The findings suggest that while common themes exist, such as the emphasis on quality, strong connection with localization and regional identity, each country exhibits unique approaches reflecting their market conditions. Additionally, none of the countries use Facebook to reinforce the

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sustainable approach of the GI products. The relative frequency indicates higher values for the term Quality all over the corpus of the Voyant when compared to Sustainability. Spain presents the highest relative frequency for Sustainability (1.660), however, still very low when compared to Quality (3.221). Future research could expand the scope to include more countries and social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of different promotional strategies.

**Keywords:** agrifood marketing, digital marketing, Facebook, Sustainability, Food Marketing, Social media