Meat stores strategies in social media: a study in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Estratégias de lojas de carne nas redes sociais: um estudo em Porto Alegre, Brasil

Estrategias de carnicerías en redes sociales: un estudio en Porto Alegre, Brasil

Received: 07/11/2022 | Reviewed: 07/26/2022 | Accept: 07/28/2022 | Published: 08/06/2022

Tamara Esteves de Oliveira
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9353-4180
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
E-mail: esteves.teo@gmail.com
David Santos de Freitas
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6101-5554
Instituição Educacional São Judas Tadeu, Brazil
E-mail: dsf.doct@gmail.com
Tainá Machado Bartmann
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1408-8248
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
E-mail: tainambt@gmail.com
Roderval Fernandes Cipriano
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1846-6856
UNESC University, Brazil
E-mail: rodervalfc@hotmail.com
Miguelangelo Gianezini
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0785-6034
Program in Productive Systems PPGSP, Brazil
E-mail: mgianezini@outlook.com
Júlio Otávio Jardim Barcellos
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9858-1728
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
E-mail: julio.barcellos@ufrgs.br

Abstract
This study identified the marketing strategies in social media used by retail meat stores in the municipality of Porto Alegre, Southern Brazil. Data was collected through posts available on social media and on websites of 18 stores in November 2018, each social media was analyzed on the same day to avoid bias of new followers or posts. In this analysis, 38 descriptor variables were identified, coded, and grouped by Cluster Analysis. The variables were compared in a one-way PERMANOVA with Bonferroni correction. To our knowledge, none other research analyzes the virtual strategies of this traditional sector and offers pointers for beef stores to survive on social media. To understand this adaptation is even more relevant considering the reality of Covid-19 pandemic, and we highly suggest future studies to analyze this scenario to understand the changes in marketing and in consumer's responses. The analysis of clusters identified three types of meat stores: traditional; dynamic and UpToDate; and a group with diffuse strategies, with different marketing strategies on social media. The most advertised variables were associated with product characteristics, such as quality, sensorial aspects, and beef cut. On the other hand, intangible aspects such as environmental concerns, certifications, where barely mentioned.
Keywords: Digital marketing; Beef supply chain; Premium meat; Food niche market.

Resumo
Este estudo identificou as estratégias de marketing nas mídias sociais utilizadas por estabelecimentos varejistas de carnes no município de Porto Alegre, sul do Brasil. Os dados foram coletados através de postagens disponibilizadas nas redes sociais e em sites de 18 lojas no período de novembro de 2018, cada rede social foi analisada no mesmo dia para evitar viés de novos seguidores ou postagens. Nesta análise, 38 variáveis descritoras foram identificadas, codificadas e agrupadas pela análise de cluster. As variáveis foram comparadas em uma one-way PERMANOVA com correção de Bonferroni. Até onde sabemos, nenhuma outra pesquisa analisa as estratégias virtuais desse tradicional setor e oferece indicações para que as lojas de carne bovina sobrevivam nas redes sociais. Entender essa adaptação é ainda mais relevante considerando a realidade da pandemia de COVID-19, e sugerimos estudos futuros para analisar esse cenário para entender as mudanças no marketing e nas respostas do consumidor. A análise dos clusters identificou três tipos de lojas de carne: tradicionais; dinâmico e UpToDate; e um grupo com estratégias difusas, com diferentes estratégias de marketing nas redes sociais. As variáveis mais divulgadas foram associadas às características

do produto, como qualidade, aspectos sensoriais e corte da carne bovina. Por outro lado, aspectos intangíveis como preocupações ambientais, certificações, foram pouco mencionados.
Palavras-chave: Marketing digital; Cadeia de fornecimento de carne bovina; Carne premium; Nicho de mercado alimentar.

Resumen
Este estudio identificó las estrategias de marketing en las redes sociales utilizadas por los establecimientos minoristas de carne en la ciudad de Porto Alegre, sur de Brasil. Los datos se recopilaron a través de publicaciones disponibles en redes sociales y en sitios web de 18 tiendas en el período de noviembre de 2018, cada red social fue analizada el mismo día para evitar sesgos de nuevos seguidores o publicaciones. En este análisis se identificaron, codificaron y agruparon 38 variables descriptoras por análisis de conglomerados. Las variables se compararon en un one-way PERMANOVA con corrección de Bonferroni. Hasta donde sabemos, ninguna otra investigación analiza las estrategias virtuales de este sector tradicional y ofrece indicaciones para que las tiendas de carne sobrevivan en las redes sociales. Comprender esta adaptación es aún más relevante considerando la realidad de la pandemia de COVID-19, y sugerimos estudios futuros para analizar este escenario para comprender los cambios en el marketing y las respuestas de los consumidores. El análisis de conglomerados identificó tres tipos de tiendas de carne: tradicionales; dinámico y UpToDate; y un grupo con estrategias difusas, con diferentes estrategias de marketing en redes sociales. Las variables más difundidas estuvieron asociadas a características del producto, como calidad, aspectos sensoriales y corte de carne. Por otro lado, rara vez se mencionaron aspectos intangibles como las preocupaciones ambientales y las certificaciones.
Palabras-clave: Marketing digital; Cadena de suministro de carne de res; Carne premium; Nicho de mercado de alimentos.

1. Introduction

Despite the prominence in the international market, a large part of the Brazilian beef is destinated for domestic consumption. Furthermore, this beef supply chain has dispersed and poorly integrated agents (Cottle & Kahn, 2014), which means that fresh Brazilian beef is generally offered as a product without differentiation, considered a commodity. This scenario is aggravated by the pour communication with the consumers, which makes the selection of products complex to meet their expectations (Horta et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, some retail stores in large consumer centers around the country have segmented this market; that is, they focus on a product for specific demands of a smaller group, allowing these customers to be served individually and with products more suited to their expectations. This type of strategy is impacting from the rancher – who has different demands and remuneration through partnerships – to the retailer that offers products with higher added value to the consumer that has a new experience in gastronomic events. This market offers differentiated, unique, fractional, and customized cuts (Oliveira et al., 2015), in addition to international cuts, usually not found in Brazil and that are promoted and marketed on the internet and social media by these firms.

For the standard Brazilian beef, finding markets that compete at low prices has not been a problem (Carvalho & Zen, 2017), but when selling differentiated products, the beef supply chain still faces sanitary and coordination challenges, as well as pour perception of its quality attributes, and other information regarding the product and its production processes. This information, when it is available, is mismatched, confusing, and complicated for the understanding of national and international consumers (Koen & Wentzel-Viljoen, 2016). Besides, we have all started to make more use of social media (NEWCOM, 2020), and the future presents a significant challenge for retailing stores in a supply chain by tradition and innovation challenges, compromising the development of precise and efficient marketing strategies in these digital platforms.

However, there is some news in this scenario as the growth of the beef boutiques in key Brazilian cities like São Paulo and Porto Alegre, the latter is the capital of Rio Grande do Sul state. Located in southern Brazil, near Argentina and Uruguay, Porto Alegre and its gaúchos inhabitants have a remarkable historical and traditional background of beef consumption. Considering Porto Alegre´s profile and the development of social media as essential communication and distribution channels.

Besides, it is relevant to understand the marketing strategies that can benefit the beef supply chain of Rio Grande do Sul, since most of the production occurs in the pampa Biome, in semi-natural ecosystems indicated for cattle production in line with the conservation of the natural landscape, since this activity has been overtaken by other rural activities with higher profitability (Oliveira et al., 2017). Therefore, the aim of this research is to clarify this scenario by identifying the marketing strategies used by local meat stores in social media, focused on beef purchase, indicating strategies and bottlenecks for social network and social media management of this retail stores.

The premium beef markets

Despite the challenges of Brazilian beef production, several companies began to move away from the general market and developed strategies to add value to their products and services based on the differentiation of it (Micheels & Gow, 2010). This demand for differentiated products reflects the dynamism of the Brazilian meat market, which allows the consolidation of noble or premium products (Wilkinson, 2010). The differentiation of beef is a strategy that can be applied to the choice of raw material, to the selection of distribution points and even to the provision of additional services after the purchase of the product (Henchion *et al.*, 2014), such as portioning cuts and selling via WhatsApp® in the current scenario.

In beef production, there is inherent variability in the product, due to the diversity of production systems and the biological cycle of beef cattle. This cycle is long (on average 1.5 years), dependent on climatic conditions, and not controlled in most of the properties on which the food of most of the Brazilian herd depends. On the other hand, their consumers increasingly demand safe, healthy, quality-assured, and consistent food, as well as guarantees and certifications for these attributes, which requires clear and efficient strategies from suppliers in communicating this information (Trienekens *et al.*, 2012).

Regarding the consumer's differentiated meats profile, it is found the following characteristics: a) medium to high income; b) experienced and appreciate beef brands with information and assistance at the point of purchase; c) buy beef from boutiques or specialized meat shops; d) is more interested in the quality of the cut than in its size; e) have a small family; and f) is concerned about their health and the intrinsic quality of the product (Morales *et al.*, 2013; Giacomazzi *et al.*, 2017).

Moreover, for the offer of differentiated products, distribution channels are essential, as they are part of the consumers' shopping experience. In this context, these channels can be understood as sets of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making products/services available for use/consumption (Stern & El-Ansary, 1992). These organizations are mainly responsible for consumer satisfaction, offering products and services in the right place and the expected quantity, quality, and price, which stimulate demand. For the offer of differentiated meat, places with more individualized service, such as butcher shops and meat boutiques, prevail (Table 1).

Table 1. Types of differentiated beef stores in Brazil.

Beef Stores	Characteristics
Butchers or meat shops	Purchase meat on average three times a week, increasing or decreasing the frequency according to sales. Products are purchased from slaughterhouses or distributors. Until the 80s, butchers had priority in acquiring the best meat from slaughterhouses. However, with the decapitalization of these agents, this priority was achieved by supermarket chains. These stores represent independent sale points or small local chains, distributed throughout the city, with salespeople (butcher and/or assistant) who cut, pack, and guide the customer in the purchase. Usually, they have a refrigerated counter where parts of the products are displayed for the customers to choose from.
Premium meat stores or Boutiques	Points of sale for special cuts, usually previously packaged, arranged in freezers and refrigerated counters, which can be self-service or traditional retail. They sell not only beef, sheep, pork, and chicken, but also exotic meats and seafood, matured meats, as well as international cuts. At these stores, there are imported and national products, with strong brands, either of the meat store or third parties. In general, they provide more information about products, production systems, preparation instructions, and meat consumption experiences.

Source: Adapted and updated from IEL/CNA/SEBRAE (2000). Different types of beef stores and its main selling product, considering quality, quantity, different cuts and packages.

For beef, the distribution channels decode the requirements of consumers regarding the type of product they want and what are the most suitable locations for points of sale, in addition to passing on this information to other agents in the supply chain so that it adapts and offers demand-oriented products (Lazzarini *et al.,* 1996). Furthermore, these agents still transmit to consumers the product specifications, their differentials, and the best forms of consumption to ensure positive experiences with the beef.

Marketing in the beef supply chain

Establishing differentiation strategies is essential for companies to attract customers, and these actions are more efficient if accompanied by segmentation, which facilitates the understanding of the target market (Ortega *et al.*, 2016). However, to reach these market niches for differentiated or premium beef, strategies are needed for specific and well-coordinated points of contact with the consumer.

In this scenario, digital marketing has been used to strengthen and enhance communication with consumers, bringing these agents closer together (Bragg *et al.,* 2017). With this new trend, companies create educational or reference content about their products on social media, which contributes to knowledge and confidence in the brand (Cheowsuwan *et al.,* 2017). In several countries, this type of approach is a valuable tool to advertise, inform, characterize, and sell beef with differentials (Gillespie *et al.,* 2016).

2. Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative analyzes were conducted in three stages: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. First, a bibliographical and documentary review was carried out to describe the concepts (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003, p. 225), as well as the general and specific characteristics of premium and differentiated meat stores, followed by a survey of primary and secondary data (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003, p. 225) through the analysis of social media of this establishments.

Exploratory research was carried out initially with 115 meat stores operating in the municipality of Porto Alegre, Capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Southern Brazil (Gerhardt & Silveira, 2009), of which 54 were considered meat stores with differentials, being butchers our meat shops and premium meat stores or meat boutiques (Table 1). From the selected 54, only 18 had an active profile in at least one of the main social media, and these were the stores analyzed. Data was collected from the information available on social media and on the websites of each company in November 2018. All collections of information from each social media were carried out on the same day to avoid bias from new followers or posts. In this analysis, 38 beef descriptor variables were determined, divided into three dimensions: company characteristics, participation in social media, and differentials presented on media (Table 2).

Table 2. Variables collected within their respective dimensions.

Dimensions	Variable
Company characteristics	Type, Website, E-mail, and Awards.
Social Media	Facebook®, Instagram®, Twitter®, YouTube®, Pinterest®, and WhatsApp®.
Differentials presented on social media	Team training; trust; differentiated cuts; variety of products; product presentation; invites to events; marketing experience; price; associated products (special salt, knifes and spices; beef quality; other services such as customized cuts or consumers' orientation; differentiated distribution channels; beef sensoriality; animal feed; certifications of the beef, production system or the store; animal management and welfare; slaughterhouse information and practices; information about the beef cut as how to prepare it and pairing with local wines and beers; recipes; nutritional information; environmental actions; partnerships; bovine breeds; social benefit actions; culinary courses.

In this analysis, 38 beef descriptor variables were determined, divided into three dimensions: company characteristics, participation in social media, and differentials presented on media. Source: The authors.

After data collection, the variables were coded and inserted into the SPSS 20.0 (IBM et al., 2011), to perform the Cluster Analysis, which allowed grouping the meat stores according to the variables (Hair, 2009). This analysis was performed based on the Ward method, and on a dissimilarity matrix calculated from the Euclidean distances squared method. The clusters were tested by the one-way PERMANOVA in the PAST 3.21 software (Harper et al., 2001), with Bonferroni correction. All tests considered a 95% significance level. Once the clusters were identified, the variables of each group were described according to their percentage of occurrences.

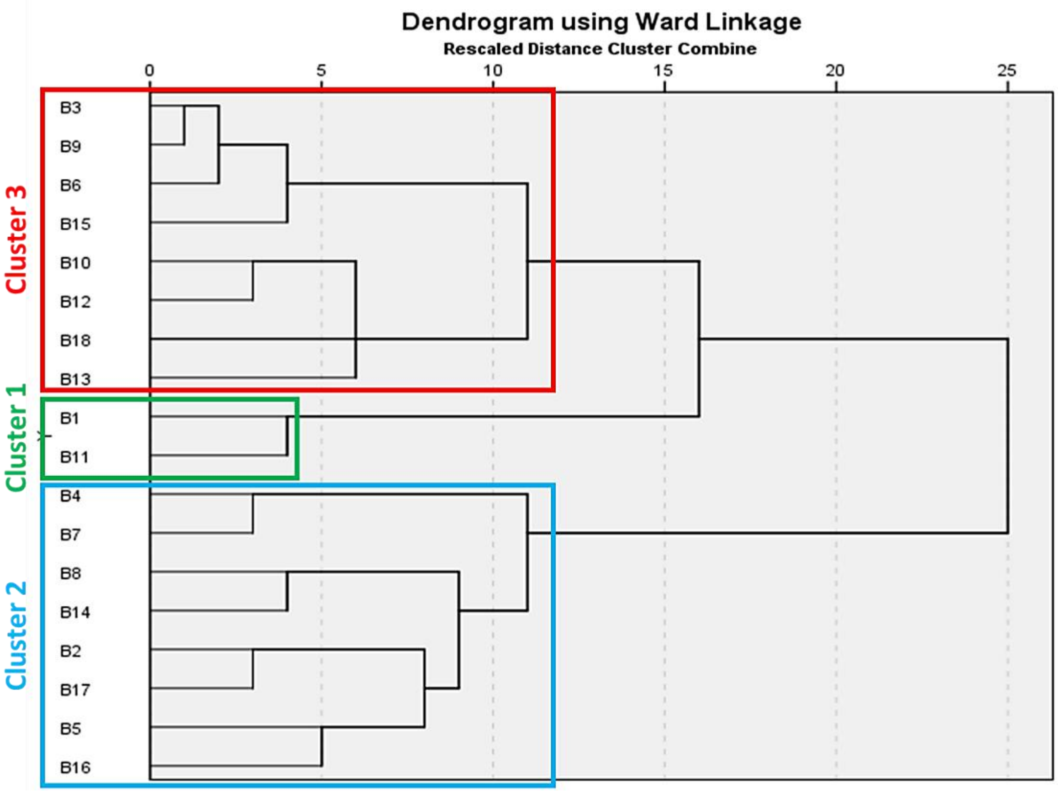
In addition, the consumer´s opinion on leading platforms (posts and ratings) were also collected, including Google™, Yelp®, Kekanto®, Facebook®, GuiaMais®, Apontador® and Reclame Aqui®, to assess the perception of these establishments by the netizens, the internet citizens (Kothler, et al., 2016).

3. Results and Discussion

After the first evaluation and characterization of the meat stores, a prevalence of butchers or meat shops (13) was observed, compared to the stores considered as premium meat stores or boutiques (5). All the boutiques are less than three years old, and came to meet the demands of niche markets, a small but increasing marketing strategy for beef in Brazil. This tactic, offers differentiated products, reduction in production and transaction costs, an opportunity of restructuring and coordinate the supply chain, investments in research and development and new negotiation models between the agents of the Brazilian beef chain, especially considering alliances and partnerships (Oliveira *et al.*, 2015).

The clusters analysis indicated three different groups of meat stores, cluster 1 composed of traditional meat stores; cluster 2, a group of innovative firms; and a third cluster 3 which comprises stores with diffuse strategies (F = 3,227, p <0,001) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Clusters dendogram grouping the strategies of premium meat stores in Porto Alegre, according to Ward's connection analysis. Result of PERMANOVA with Bonferroni correction: cluster 1 x cluster 2 (p = 0.0228), cluster 1 x cluster 3 (p = 0.025), cluster 2 x cluster 3 (p = 0.0001).



Source: The authors.

Cluster 1 is composed only of meat stores that mainly use E-mail, Facebook®, and Twitter® as contact points for communication and sales. In their posts, they invest in the promotion of quality, product mix, information regarding the cuts, recipes, and associated products, such as salt, spices and knifes. These establishments are considered more traditional and adopt more conservative and systematic strategies. Even so, they updated their social medias continuously, also offering delivery and information via WhatsApp®.

In turn, Cluster 2 covers young companies that entered the market with a dynamic perspective. For instance, all stores have an Instagram® account and frequently use this media. However, they have not yet abandoned Facebook® or even their websites, the latter in which some have a space for commercialization of different meats, product prices and promotions, and specific information that is advertised on social media. As for their differentials, these stores invest not only in the disclosure of quality attributes, but also publicize associated products such as drinks, spices, or culinary utensils, both traditional and extremely innovative according to their profile. They bet on a different niche, with special cuts and selected breeds, mostly European and its crosses, partnering with other companies, culinary courses, as well as environmental and social projects eventually.

Finally, Cluster 3 groups the stores that have diffuse marketing strategies, not adjusted to a pattern that can be easily observed. We emphasize the posts aiming at beef quality and the fact that these are the only companies that invest in promoting low prices and their distribution channels (mainly peer-to-peer channels such as WhatsApp®, telephone, or virtual store) in their social media activities.

In general, much of the information about beef and its qualitative attributes is made available to consumers through advertisements, information campaigns through breed or farmers associations, meat industries brands, seals and labels, or retail brand associations. This information is used in conjunction with other factors to create product expectations, which in turn influence the purchase decision and the willingness of consumers to pay an amount above that established for differentiated beef (Cottle & Kahn, 2014). Currently, this information can and should be transmitted through social media in a clear and informative form, to engage consumers and stablish trust and a long-time relationship with consumers. However, each media has a specific audience and an information format that must be respected to capture consumers' attention (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of information and strategies of meat stores in Porto Alegre at social media.

Dimension	Variables	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	General	F	P
Companies	Retail Type	0%	50%	13%	28%	1,327	0,193
	Awards	50%	13%	0%	11%	0,944	1,000
	Associated products	100%[ab]	75%[bc]	12,5%[a]	50%	2,012	0,025*
	Site	50%	63%	38%	50%	0,798	0,798
	E-mail	100%	38%	13%	33%	1,179	0,326
Social Media Presence	Facebook®	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-
	Instagram®	0%[a]	100%[bc]	50%[ab]	67%	7,500	0,0097*
	Twitter®	100%	25%	13%	28%	1,167	0,238
	Youtube®	0%	25%	0%	11%	1,088	0,372
	Whatsapp®	50%	50%	25%	39%	0,802	0,802
Differentials and highlights present in social media	Team training	0%	25%	0%	11%	1,088	0,371
	Confidence	50%	0%	13%	11%	0,944	1,000
	Differentiated cuts	0%	75%	50%	56%	1,731	0,134
	Variety	100%[a]	0%[bc]	12,5%[ab]	17%	1,429	0,0204*
	Product presentation	50%	0%	0%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Events	0%	13%	0%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Experience Marketing	0%	13%	0%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Price	0%	25%	13%	17%	0,975	0,840
	Associated products	0%	0%	13%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Quality	100%	100%	75%	89%	0,962	0,588
	Services	0%	25%	25%	22%	0,948	0,711
	Distribution channels	0%	0%	25%	11%	1,088	0,368
	Sensoriality	50%	63%	25%	44%	1,003	0,573
	Animal feed	0%	25%	13%	17%	0,975	0,844
	Certifications	0%	13%	0%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Information about the meat cut	100%[ab]	87,5%[bc]	25%[a]	61%	2,108	0,05*

	Revenue	100%	38%	13%	33%	1,179	0,331
	Nutritional information	50%	0%	13%	11%	0,944	1,000
	Preparation orientation	100%	50%	0%	33%	1,700	0,073
	Environmental concern	0%	13%	0%	6%	1,000	1,000
	Partnerships	50%[ab]	100%[bc]	25%[a]	61%	3,038	0,0071*
	Breed	0%[ab]	87,5%[bc]	12,5%[a]	44%	3,184	0,0045*
	Social actions	0%[ab]	62,5%[bc]	0%[a]	28%	2,033	0,0119*
	Courses offered	0%[ab]	75%[bc]	0%[a]	33%	2,722	0,0034*

Source: The authors.

Of the meat stores and boutiques analyzed, two received awards and promoted this information on social media, mainly on Instagram® and Facebook®. Most stores (traditional) offer associated products, usually complementary such as unrefined salt and special barbecue coal. However, in the innovative stores, there is an association with artisanal beers, local wines, spiced unrefined salt, and unique smoking wood, in addition to accessories such as knives, forks, boards, aprons, and caps that externalize the *gauchos'* passion for barbecue.

In the meat boutiques, an incentive to prepare beef like a *Parrilla* has also evolved, offering culinary courses, specific cuts, and all kinds of utensils and products for this experience. The *Parrilla* is prepared on grills, traditionally consumed by Uruguayans and Argentinians, using only the glowing embers to roast the beef. This strategy is interesting, as it is based on the culture and tradition of the *gaúcho* way of life, similar among the countries that are part of the Pampa biome (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay). The population of Rio Grande do Sul is known to be proud of their state, they know the state anthem by heart and celebrate the day they tried to emancipate themselves from the rest of the country, usually with a traditional barbecue (Oliveira & Freitas, 2017).

This feeling is also observed in several of these retail stores that still invest in websites to advertise their brands, offers, and products. On one side, traditional butcher stores represent a remnant of a period when websites were a great novelty to marketing strategies but could get closer to Millennials that will repeatedly visit website that has competitive prices (Smith, 2011). On the other side, innovative firms have already built their websites, providing information on beef cuts, on how to prepare it, and a platform for online shopping. The latter, was even used by one of the most traditional stores analyzed, which started a side project to offer special meats exclusively via virtual stores, combining the trust and tradition of one of the oldest establishments rooted in the culture of Porto Alegre, with the differentiated proposal of a meat boutiques.

The use of e-mail addresses as a communication with consumers followed similar principles to the use of websites, used mainly by traditional butchers and meat stores with diffuse marketing strategies. However, it is a strategy even less used by meat boutiques that have appropriated all the service, communication, and marketing via social media and social network. In this sense, although emails are usually economical and effective for building brands, improving relationships with customers, for consumers, it is often irritating and irrelevant if they are not empowered by sending them emails only when permitted and by making them active participants in the communication (Hartemo, 2016).

As for social media, all stores analyzed have a profile on Facebook®, but most of them rarely use the commercialization tools or has a business page. Food enterprises have been able to stablish a healthy relationship with young consumers on this media (Confos & Davis, 2016), but this segment seems to be less present each day. In 2020, Facebook has slightly grown in users, except among young people (NEWCOM, 2020), which maybe a problem considering the potential for young consumers usually interest in premium and innovating products, and the future of this virtual touchpoint with consumers. Twitter use is undermost and for few stores, but this could be an interesting information tool to keep consumers close and related to the beef industry and products, and has been even used to minimize waste by backtracking the beef supply chain (Mishra & Akshit, 2018).

On the other hand, firms that have profiles on Instagram® (the social media most used in all its resources) invest in these two strategies: a) use it almost as a personal profile of the butcher and his team; or b) present active participation and high engagement with consumers, with professional photographs and specific marketing campaigns. Instagram it is often used to fill empty moments and is perceived by users as a social media that ensured they are quickly informed and up to date (Voorveld *et al.,* 2018). Instagram growth is leveling off, especially among the 15-19 year old target group (NEWCOM, 2020), so Instagram is, along with TikTok and other forthcoming social media a space in which premium meat stores should invest and create a proper persona to engage and communicate with consumers.

None of the companies analyzed uses Pinterest®, and this is opportunity should be considered since consumers feel enthusiastic, original and unique in Pinterest and considered that the platform offered something new and gave users practice tips, ideas, and advice, motivating them to visit a shop or to search for more information (Voorveld *et al.,* 2018). The same authors found that YouTube is considered an important entertainment for users that associated it to being happy and relaxed, hence. However, in our findings the few stores that use YouTube® (3) do so rarely, with a maximum of five videos posted and not related to the store at all. With some investment, these last two platforms could be engaging channels to transmit beef differentials such as cattle breeds, culinary guidelines, important health factors and technical attributes of both product and production systems.

Generally, the information highlighted as beef positive attributes includes product origin, the production method and the quality class (in countries where it is already established), and these signals act as cognitive shortcuts in beef quality evaluation (Żakowska-Biemans *et al.,* 2017). These signs influence consumers at the purchase, mainly because of their confidence in the information conveyed in the media about food (Yadavalli & Jones, 2014). However, almost all beef stores face difficulties in clearly expressing these topics to consumers. Thus, increasing information quality associated with beef must be considered a strategy to innovate and improve its performance and competitiveness (Ding *et al.,* 2014).

Of the differential for beef presented in the social medias, the main ones were quality, information on beef cuts, disclosure of products associated with beef and brand partners (suppliers and associated products), culinary tips, preparation guidelines and beef sensoriality, such as succulence, tenderness, and flavor. Intrinsic and social attributes were advertised by a much smaller number of stores, and include information about human resource training, product presentation and packaging, participation in events, distribution channels, and certifications. Only one of the stores invests massively in experiential marketing, so the entire strategy of the boutique is associated with this concept and in keeping consumers close and informed.

On the environmental issue, only one company made a brief comment, and none of them advertised on animal handling and welfare, or about humane slaughter practices. Posts with social information, such as payment bonuses for producers and company social actions, were explored superficially. Nevertheless, all of these issues are relevant for new consumers, especially those who question whether or not they should consume beef, aware of its environmental and social impacts, as well as the best practices on how to raise, feed, and slaughter animals. It is believed that a portion of this population (including the *millennials*) may be potential consumers for this more sustainable beef (Freitas, Oliveira and Gianezini, 2017). These differentials already exist in several products, but consumers either do not know them or do not understand them in depth.

Table 4. Consumer assessment of premium meat stores in the municipality of Porto Alegre, in the leading opinion platforms.

Meat Stores and Boutiques	**Google™** Grade (n. of respondents)	**Facebook®** Grade (n. of respondents)	**Facebook®** Suggestions/Recommendation
B1	5,0 (1)	5,0 (28)	4
B2	4,3 (16)	4,7 (17)	11
B3	4,3 (6)	5,0 (3)	2
B4	4,2 (15)	-	1
B5	4,6 (29)	5,0 (30)	3
B6	4,4 (12)	4,8 (27)	9
B7	4,5 (8)	4,9 (77)	2
B8	-	4,9 (124)	12
B9	4,2 (92)	-	2
B10	4,9 (10)	4,9 (5)	1
B11	4,5 (762)	-	0
B12	4,9 (16)	5,0 (1)	0
B13	5,0 (3)	4,50	17
B14	4,9 (9)	-	0
B15	4,2 (29)	4,8 (41)	3
B16	4,3 (16)	4,8 (28)	24
B17	4,7 (44)	5,0 (43)	6
B18	-	5,0 (2)	1
Avg.	**4,56**	**4,87**	**97**

Obs.: Max. grade = 5 in all platforms. Source: The authors.

Most of the companies have been rated highly by consumers on Google™ and Facebook® platforms, where they also have a proper engagement with consumers. Meanwhile, in Yelp®, Kekanto®, GuiaMais®, and Apontador®, less than five posts/ratings were found per firm, so these platforms were disregarded for this research. None of the stores presented complaints in ReclameAqui® so far (Table 2). Thus, Meat stores and Boutiques should devote more attention to respond to questions and criticisms from consumers on Google™ and Facebook®. However, it would be interesting to periodically monitor other platforms that may arise to respond quickly to complaints/doubts or even to maintain a communication valuing positive comments and indications, which are precious. To increase participation and better understand consumers, discount and rewards can encourage consumers to write online reviews (Smith, 2011).

This information, especially when combined with the one released by the mass media, can change consumer behavior, positively affecting the selection of differentiated meats (Yadavalli & Jones, 2014). For instance, university students considered social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, as relatively trustworthy and perceived the beef industry as a supplier of safe products through the information received in these platforms (Howard *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, there is room for the development of more specific marketing strategies for retail meat stores in Porto Alegre as communication with clear messages as well as current and relevant information about premium beef.

4. Conclusion

The analysis allowed to identify three different groups of marketing strategies that selected Porto Alegre´s beef retail stores have used to publicize their differentials on social media. It was possible to identify clusters of stores that adopt more conservative or more dynamic positions and analyze how this can generate competitive advantages or better serve the niche markets targeted by these companies.

The most advertised strategies were associated with beef characteristics, such as quality, sensory aspects, and information on beef cuts. On the other hand, the less posted ones deal with issues that are not widely disseminated, such as environmental actions, certifications, and distribution channels. It is intended to return the information from this research to the stores with guidelines and tips for marketing strategies on social networks, peer-to-peer communication, and social media.

Lastly, regarding the current impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in many sectors, including all the beef supply chain, it would be interesting for future studies to analyze the strategies of butcheries and beef boutiques in social media to understand the changes on marketing and the consumer's responses to it. Moreover, broader research considering other capitals, can contribute to a clearer understanding of the Brazilian beef niche in the domestic market.

References

Bragg, M. A., Eby, M., Arshonsky, J., Bragg, A., & Ogedegbe, G. (2017). Comparison of online marketing techniques on food and beverage companies' websites in six countries. *Globalization and health*, 13(1), 79. 10.1186/s12992-017-0303-z

Cheowsuwan, T., Arthan, S., & Tongphet, S. (2017). System Design of Supply Chain Management and Thai Food Export to Global Market via Electronic Marketing. *International Journal of Modern Education & Computer Science*, *9*(8). 10.5815/ijmecs.2017.08.01

Confos, N., & Davis, T. (2016). *Young consumer-brand relationship building potential using digital marketing. European Journal of Marketing, 50(11), 1993–2017.*10.1108/ejm-07-2015-0430

Cottle, D., & Kahn, L. (2014). *Beef cattle production and trade*. CSIRO.

Ding, M. J., Jie, F., Parton, K. A., & Matanda, M. J. (2014). Relationships between quality of information sharing and supply chain food quality in the Australian beef processing industry. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*. 10.1108/IJLM-07-2012-0057

Oliveira, T. E., de Freitas, D. S., Gianezini, M., Ruviaro, C. F., Zago, D., Mércio, T. Z., Dias, E. A., Lampert, V. N., & Barcellos, J. O. J. (2017). Agricultural land use change in the Brazilian Pampa Biome: The reduction of natural grasslands. *Land use policy*, *63*, 394-400. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2017.02.010

Oliveira, T.E., Gianezini, M., Peripolli, V., & Barcellos, J. O. J. (2015) Alianças mercadológicas estratégicas e elementos de diferenciação na cadeia da carne bovina no brasil. *Iberoamerican Journal of Strategic Management (IJSM),* 14(2), 40-50.

Oliveira, T. E., & Freitas, D. S. (2017) Local beef production: what Rio Grande do Sul is waiting for? *Revista em Agronegócio e Meio Ambiente,* 10 (2), 312-341.

Freitas, D., Oliveira, T. E., & Gianezini, M. (2017) Consumer's perception on beef sustainability in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil. *Business Management Dynamics,* 7 (2), 07-19.

Gerhardt, T. E., & Silveira, D. T. (2009). *Métodos de pesquisa*. Plageder.

Giacomazzi, C. M., Talamini, E., & Kindlein, L. (2017) Relevance of brands and beef quality differentials for the consumer at the time of purchase. *Revista Brasileira de Zootecnia*, 46 (4), 354-365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1806-92902017000400012

Gillespie, J., Sitienei, I., Bhandari, B., & Scaglia, G. (2016). Grass-fed beef: How is it marketed by US producers? *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, *19*(2), 171-188. 10.22004/ag.econ.234961

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2009). Análise multivariada de dados. *Editora Bookman*.

Hartemo, M. (2016). Email marketing in the era of the empowered consumer. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*. 10(3), 212-230 https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-06-2015-0040

Henchion, M., McCarthy, M., Resconi, V. C., & Troy, D. (2014). Meat consumption: Trends and quality matters. *Meat science*, *98*(3), 561-568. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.meatsci.2014.06.007

Horta, F. D. C., Eckhardt, O. H. O., Gameiro, A. H., & Moretti, A. D. S. A. (2010). Estratégias de sinalização da qualidade da carne suína ao consumidor final. *Revista Brasileira de Agrociência*, *16*(1-4), 15-21.

IEL - Instituto Euvaldo Lodi; CNA - Confederação Nacional da Agricultura; SEBRAE Nacional - Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas.

Estudo sobre a eficiência econômica e competitividade da cadeia agroindustrial da pecuária de corte no Brasil. IEL/CNA/SEBRAE, 2000.

Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2016) *Marketing 4.0: Moving from traditional to digital.* John Wiley & Sons.

Krishna, A. (2012). An integrative review of sensory marketing: Engaging the senses to affect perception, judgment and behavior. *Journal of consumer psychology*, *22*(3), 332-351.

Kumar, N., & Kapoor, S. (2017). Do labels influence purchase decisions of food products? Study of young consumers of an emerging market. *British Food Journal*, 119 (2), 218-229. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-06-2016-0249

Lazzarini Neto, S., Lazzarini, S. G., & Pismel, F. S. (1996). Pecuária de corte: a nova realidade e perspectivas no agribusiness. *São Paulo: SDF Editores*.

Marconi, M. D. A., & Lakatos, E. M. (2003). Fundamentos de metodologia científica. *Atlas*.

Micheels, E. T., & Gow, H. R. (2015). The effect of market orientation on learning, innovativeness, and performance in primary agriculture. *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics/Revue canadienne d'agroeconomie*, *63*(2), 209-233.

Mishra, N., & Singh, A. (2018). Use of twitter data for waste minimisation in beef supply chain. *Annals of Operations Research*, *270*(1-2), 337-359.

Morales, L. E., Griffith, G., Wright, V., Fleming, E., Umberger, W., & Hoang, N. (2013). Variables affecting the propensity to buy branded beef among groups of Australian beef buyers. *Meat science*, *94*(2), 239-246.

NEWCOM. *Social media research 2020.* Newcom's National Social Media survey, 2020. < https://www.newcom.nl/socialmedia2020 >.

Ortega, D. L., Hong, S. J., Wang, H. H., & Wu, L. (2016). Emerging markets for imported beef in China: Results from a consumer choice experiment in Beijing. *Meat Science*, *121*, 317-323.10.1016/j.meatsci.2016.06.032

Smith, K. T. (2011). Digital marketing strategies that Millennials find appealing, motivating, or just annoying. *Journal of Strategic marketing*, *19*(6), 489-499. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2011.581383

Stern, L. W., & El-Ansary, A. I. (1992). *Consumer behavior:* An information processing perspective.

Trienekens, J. H., Wognum, P. M., Beulens, A. J., & van der Vorst, J. G. (2012). Transparency in complex dynamic food supply chains. *Advanced Engineering Informatics*, *26*(1), 55-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aei.2011.07.007

Voorveld, H. A., van Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with social media and social media advertising: The differentiating role of platform type. *Journal of advertising*, *47*(1), 38-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754

Wilkinson, J. (2010). Transformações e perspectivas dos agronegócios brasileiros. *Revista Brasileira de Zootecnia*, *39(Suppl.)*, 26-34. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1516-35982010001300004

Yadavalli, A., & Jones, K. (2014). Does media influence consumer demand? The case of lean finely textured beef in the United States. *Food Policy*, *49*, 219-227. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2014.08.002

Żakowska-Biemans, S., Pieniak, Z., Gutkowska, K., Wierzbicki, J., Cieszyńska, K., Sajdakowska, M., & Kosicka-Gębska, M. (2017). Beef consumer segment profiles based on information source usage in Poland. *Meat Science*, *124*, 105-113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.meatsci.2016.11.001