

SOCIAL MEDIA UNPACKED

Agriculture



Social Media Marketing

The Promising Start

Once, social media was the great new thing. On social media anyone could publish anything at no cost and audiences would grow through following and getting a follow-back in return.

A few years later the 'how it started' and 'how it's going' pictures are miles apart. It is still true that anyone can publish anything for free but missing is a large, delivered audience, specifically a large, delivered audience comprising a business's target market.

A delivered audience is the number of impressions a piece of content receives. Algorithmic sleight-of-hand is the villain of the piece. Crafted by social media HQs, hidden algorithms ensured that business users, diligently having grown audiences of one thousand, ten thousand or one hundred thousand followers, had been following a road to marketing disappointment, because their delivered audiences today are a small fraction of their number of followers.





...How Can This Be?

[1] Platform behaviours

For social media platforms active users are their oxygen. Success is related to the number of active users. Their strategic plan included creating an ecosystem with each user’s number of followers publicly visible to other users.

For users, business and personal, having more followers was the performance indicator above anything else. A large number of followers being better than a small number was soon a universally acknowledged truth.

Attracting users by being free yet requiring costly world-scale cloud infrastructure means the platforms have to generate income from advertising. The prospect of free marketing was a mirage to interest business.

Never intending marketing to be free, the social media platforms embedded sliding-scale slippage into the algorithms governing the relationship between an account’s number of followers, and the number of followers actually seeing the content being posted. Separately, the ability of most posts to go viral is cruelly hampered by hard shrinkage of the share and retweet reach.



But through using a platform its users have opted into seeing advertising. That is the social media deal – even for private accounts.

Detail on the inner workings of social media algorithms has been hazy. Googling the subject brings up plenty of remarkably similar blogs and opinion pieces, largely unruffled by data. Wanting to know the facts, we designed a research project to collect structured empirical data at scale, and from which we reverse-engineered the core formulae governing the main social media algorithms. This is what we discovered:

Account Followers	Total impressions delivered
2,000	840
5,000	1,200
10,000	1,900





Social media apps predicting the views that a campaign hashtag (e.g. #farm24) might have received from posts, retweets and shares don't factor into the reported numbers the minimised reality; showing instead epic exaggerations. In the same way, the relative influence possibly wielded by influencers doesn't equate to the weigh-in of followers. If payment is involved, perhaps this should be for target audience views achieved.

As the number of followers increases the sliding-scale algorithms stomp more heavily on the free reach brake pedal. As examples, a video recently posted by a well-known farming title with close to 90,000 Twitter followers achieved under 700 (i.e. 0.8% follower reach) video views.



On Facebook a video from another well-known farming title, with over 220k followers, received 1k views (representing 0.5% follower reach). To summarise, follower acquisition is a hollow marketing KPI.

[2] Target audience behaviours

So far, all followers have been regarded as equal. Another picture appears if we consider that for every account the followers are comprised of a mixture of target audience

and not target audience. For businesses in agriculture the target audience is nearly always those involved in farming and their influencers.

Across the accounts of hundreds of agriculture businesses the central norm is a ratio of 20% target audience:80% not target audience.

This important and often unknown imbalance has multiple drivers: few people follow businesses – TV and sport faces are more popular, and of course farming folk favour following fellow farmers (but independence of thinking is highly valued; a farmer's popularity and ability to influence lessens if perceived as posting to aid a business or brand, and the much-used 'ambassador' cliché is ringing hollow now). Or the target audience member may never see the account to be able to choose to follow it – low 'findability' is a high hurdle when more than twenty thousand other social media business accounts also want to reach UK farmers. Yet the most promising ground for new and renewed business is the out-of-reach non-followers.

"They're checking VAR"

Quick insight into how all content is, or is not, reaching a business account's followers is shown by the video views displayed when a video is posted. Almost invariably the number of video views is a small fraction of the number of followers. It is notable that shares or retweets, even from accounts with many followers, have hardly any effect on the video views achieved. The use of GIFs, YouTube/Vimeo or player cards to hide the poor reach is weak marketing.



Social: Farmers

The next table shows the monster target-audience crunching effect when the platforms and farmer target audience behaviours are combined.

Account Followers	Total impressions delivered	Total farming target audience impressions delivered
2,000	840	168
5,000	1,200	240
10,000	1,900	380

(The total number of impressions includes share/retweet impressions)

So, posting content on an agricultural account with ten thousand followers may reach, on average, somewhere around 380 of the desired target farmer audience. Houston, we have a problem. Most social media marketing has been imaginary marketing.





Is Free Social Media Worth Using?

Imagining a dartboard gives an idea of the working of the social media platforms' algorithms. (Facebook/Instagram and Twitter work in identical ways.) If the board is the followers of an account, the bullseye is the followers most frequently being shown content.



Artificial intelligence decides who is in the bullseye, with the liking of previous posts or tweets carrying the greatest weight.

Unlike dartboards, the account bullseye is not a set proportion of the whole board. As the number of followers increases the relative size of the bullseye shrinks.

To complete the analogy we must also regard the pub wall around the dartboard. An area extending out from the board holds the greatest portion of the big picture: non-following members of the target audience.

The bullseye followers are the account's closest social media friends and allies; these followers are shown most of everything published. Outside the bullseye the audience sees content less frequently, much less frequently, or never.

So for keeping friends and allies in the know and receiving their regular likes, yes, free social media is worth using – bearing in mind that views of their onward shares and retweets (and likewise your own shares and retweets) are being stymied, almost completely, by the algorithms' cloak of invisibility. For individual businesses a better answer will come from a re-framing of the question: Is producing content that will be seen by only a small number of desired observers doing any marketing for the business?

If there is one vital social media marketing skill, one providing the best starting-point for big picture marketing decision-making, it is the ability to accurately quantify the real numbers of target audience seeing content. Reach is king; content is the pawns.

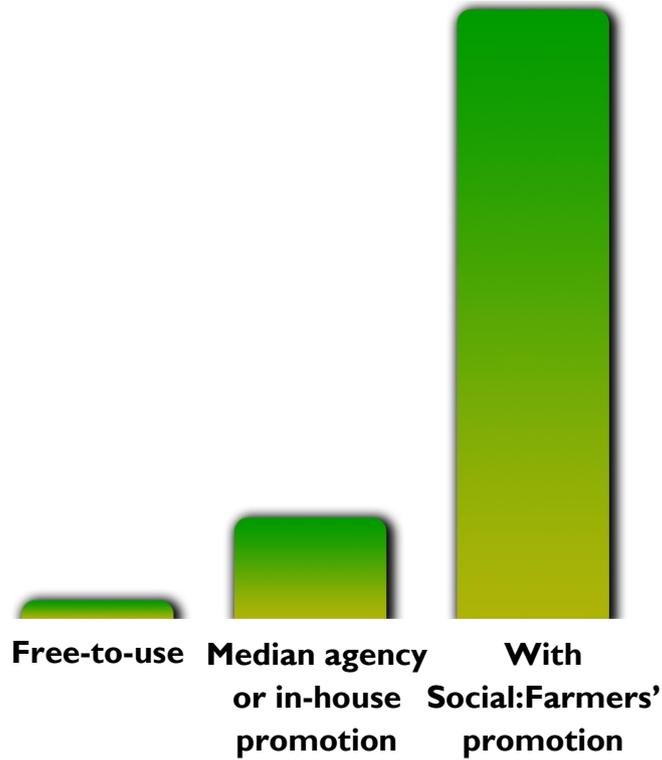




Social:Farmers' Audience Targeting

As the largest combined platform Facebook/Instagram promotion is an essential part of any social media marketing strategy. Facebook and Instagram use a common promotion interface which looks the business ... but delivers a costly super-abundance of false positives when used for targeting farmers.

Farming audience reach – Facebook/Instagram



Including overlap (most Twitter users are also Facebook/Instagram users but not so much vice versa). Facebook/Instagram rates per impression per post vary, typically ranging between £4 - £10 per 1000 impressions.



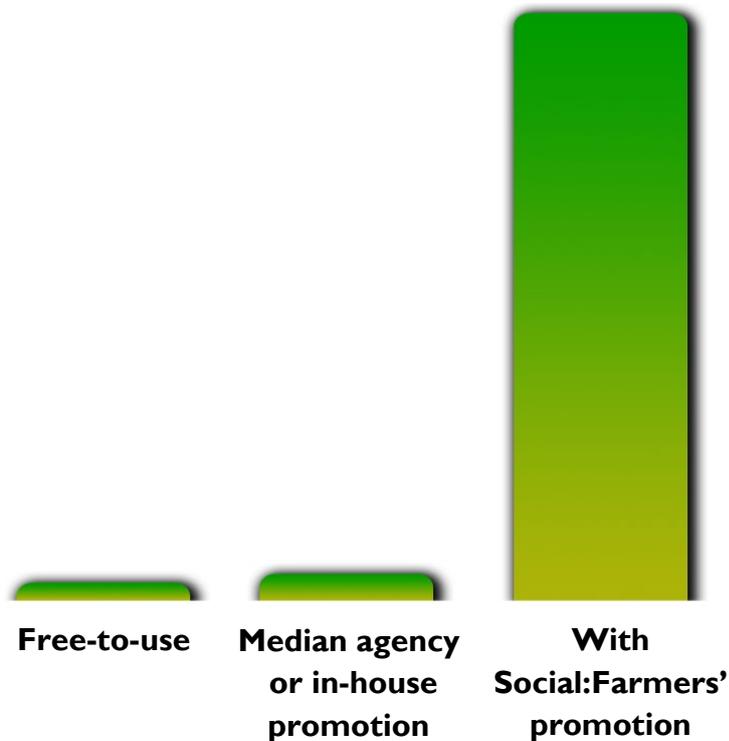


Social:Farmers

Not for nothing is open and accessible Twitter the social media platform of choice for news announcements from the world’s governments, leaders and royalty. The term social media understates the transformation we’re seeing – direct media is the better adjective. ‘A’ now communicates with ‘B’ on a direct route that avoids negotiating stop lights and delays on the venerable PRs-journalists-editors-publishers turnpike. For UK agriculture, 80%+ of whom are using social media, Twitter’s popularity is clear with continuing linear growth amongst UK farming users.

But Twitter lacks any means of promoting to farmers with useable accuracy, and quantitative research had shown us that making free-to-use Twitter fulfil any role as a marketing channel could never happen and will never happen. The outcome was the development of Social:Farmers’ unique Twitter farming audiences.

Farming audience reach - Twitter



Audiences can be applied to any account to immediately transform marketing whatever the number of followers with almost equal reach.

Social:Farmers’ Twitter farming audiences

UK Arable farming, on-farm and influencers	11,000
UK Dairy farming, on-farm and influencers	9,000
UK Beef & Sheep farming, on-farm and influencers	23,000

Also other countries including Ireland, farm vets, and pig and poultry sector audiences



With audiences applied new and historical tweets from any source are able to benefit immediately from accurately targeted audience promotion.

Twitter's rate for audience impressions is around £3 per 1000 impressions. Like Facebook/Instagram, campaigns can be switched on/off or use a capped spend.



Social media promotion has the advantage of being push marketing (proactive), eclipsing SEO and PPC pull marketing (reactive) by two to four orders of magnitude – with our SEO associates being top-ranked in the world. On the current upward trajectory, by 2024 spending on social media promotion will be greater than the whole of the rest of digital marketing combined. This is because with social media promotion, content is presented

automatically to chosen audience(s) whenever they simply check their preferred social media platforms, there is zero need to wait for particular searches to be conducted, if ever, or for enticements to make a website visit.

With audiences your social media marketing options increase. Social media marketing becomes a more valuable, fully controllable and a fully integrated part of marketing campaigns and ongoing brand awareness building. Videos and active graphics are seen by audiences of thousands, leverage is added if at an event; social media can lead or complement specific campaigns; and overall it's the optimal way to stay front-of-mind.

Most importantly you will be reaching the currently untapped audience of non-followers where new or renewed business can be won.

Q & A

We are interested in farming audiences, which platforms should we be promoting on for social media marketing?

Facebook is the most important: it's the largest platform with the greatest share of decision-making farming users. Twitter farmers tend to have the higher farm yields and are the more likely to be early adopters of technology. TikTok and Instagram are home for the upcoming farming generation but not many decision-makers. Only a few use LinkedIn.

We're using social media promotion, what is the best way of measuring the accuracy of our audience targeting?

Facebook/Instagram promotion targeting is controlled by an algorithm which delivers a large collateral audience of false positives – people not linked to farming – greatly diluting visibility to the farming audience. (The platforms' profits come from quantity not quality, of course.)



For an insurmountable structural reason, extensive testing of the six Twitter targeting features, used solo or in combination, proved that there is no means of reaching a large farming audience.

To measure targeting accuracy on any platform: study the 'likes' and group them, using bio and other clues, into target audience and public. This target:public ratio is the best performance indicator for showing the accuracy of promotion

targeting. Negative comments/emojis from the public are another KPI for bad farmer targeting. Instagram is notable for the random 'liking' of almost anything. Random likes or few likes? We are the leading specialists in accurate reach for businesses in agriculture.

Is there a way of measuring the influencing effect of social media marketing?

Commonly, distributors and dealerships fulfil the last mile of the distribution role – which makes the numeric measurement of direct influence from central brand marketing somewhat difficult to track. Clients selling direct, using our creatives with accurate targeting, are continually selling to farmers directly from social media. If you are selling, welcome social media to your sales team.



How does social media marketing compare with using other marketing methods?

Farmer impressions per £ spent is an interesting way of comparing bottom-line marketing effectiveness. Circumstances alter cases but our ballpark estimates (from bespoke telephone research of farmers) per £100 spend are: Social:Farmers' accurate targeting social media promotion (16k farming audience impressions); standard social media promotion (3k); print advertising+PR (2.5k); shows and events (0.15k).

Email is similar to free-to-use social media; reaching established friends and allies but not so effective for reaching the important, wider audience – lists of uncertain or mixed quality combine with low open rates to limit email's marketing potential for winning business.



Because social media is seen sequentially (i.e. we read a message, then another, then the next, and so on) it guarantees some 100% focus time on your promoted marketing content. And like print advertorial, it is both a simple strategy and best social media practice to blend promoted content into its environment.

'Programmatic' digital ads are either intrusive, irksome, inline interruptions when trying to read a piece on a phone screen, or on bigger screens, are one of the 'look-at-me' competing peripheral items. Digital advertising suffers further from the self-inflicted practice of audience-boring repetition – even though audiences develop 'seen that before' ad-aversion at lightning speed (amazing as it may seem, the brain's switching-off of interest threshold is two exposures). No-one ever read a page, online or in print, to check out some ads. A high frequency succession of new posts keeps promoted social media marketing fresh.

Social media promotion is continually being seen by the wider audience so keeping brands and campaigns both front-of-mind and ahead of competitors. If it is good marketing practice to always be where the audience is spending some of their time then accurate social media promotion is perfect.



Clients We Have Helped

Since 2014 we have specialised only in social media marketing in agriculture. As the leading specialists we have been delighted to be able to work with a wide range of businesses.

- Videos, Images and Graphics
- Joint Account Management
- Unique Accurate Twitter Reach
- Facebook and/or Instagram Reach
- Social Media Strategies
- Tracking and Reporting
- Social Media Masterclasses
- In-house Social Media Training





How We Can Help

Social media promotion now represents 30% of all digital marketing spend and with growth rocketing skywards at 20% per year social media promotion spending in 2024 will be exceeding that of the rest of digital marketing combined.

We are the leading social media agency specialising in agriculture. Assuming you're managing your social media accounts it is likely that our accurate reach services will lend a very complementary hand through the installation of a much larger farmer audience.

	Social:Farmers	Others
Unique seven year knowledge-base of eighty agricultural social media research studies	✓	X
Globally most accurate Twitter and Facebook/Instagram farming audiences	✓	X
Asset library of 38,000 farming videos and images shot for social media appeal	✓	X
Use standalone reach, or share-managed reach with content including free use of asset library	✓	X
100% focus on social media marketing for agriculture	✓	X
Wide experience arable & livestock farming (there is no substitute for hands-on farm work)	✓	X
Unrivalled experienced track record of 1100 social media promotion campaigns	✓	X

We believe that effective social media is an essential. If you think now is the time for social media to be doing more, then naturally we would be pleased to hear from you.

 peter.gill@social-farmers.com

 01743 352041

 www.social-farmers.com

 @Social_Farmers

Social:Farmers
Branstone House
151 Ellesmere Road
Shrewsbury SY1 2RA

