

# Online Sales Promotion of Geographical Indication Products: The Case of Evia PDO Dried Figs <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** Through a literature review and secondary research on the internet, the aim of this paper is to investigate the dynamics of the internet presence of the producers, packers, traders, and online sellers of PDO dried figs in the Kymi and Taxiarchi regions of the Evia Regional Unit, Greece. With the use of big data, an attempt is made to identify internet users' preferences concerning the dried figs. Suggestions for improved internet presence that will match demand with supply can be subsidised from EU regional development funds and contribute to the increase in internet sales of PDO Evia dried figs.

**Keywords:** geographical indication products; online sales; PDO; dried figs; Evia

## 1. Introduction

Since 1992, the initiative providing the legislative framework for the certification of geographical indication products in the European Union has been launched and is continually improving. By the beginning of 2021, 3306 products with a geographical indication had been registered in the European Union, with most of them relating to countries in the European south. GI-certified products have more than doubled the added value compared to the same products without GI certification, which contributes to the improvement in the development of rural areas of the European Union [1].

The internet plays an important role in sales promotion. The online marketing of products and services is an essential tool for rural development. Various methods have been developed to evaluate the online presence of businesses, considering various criteria [2]. The integration of information technologies and online marketing practices by Greek agribusinesses shows continuous growth [3].

The recognition of the importance of the production, promotion, and protection of products with a geographical indication is among the priorities of the European Union for the period of 2021–2027, as mentioned in the proposal (EC, 2022/0089 COD) of the European Commission [4]. Protecting GI products at the online sales level has low success rates and requires additional efforts and initiatives (Figure 1).

An attempt is made through this research to evaluate and optimize the integration of the e-commerce of producers, packers, traders, and online sellers of the PDO dried figs produced in the regional unity of Evia, at the areas of Kymi and Taxiarchis. To match supply with demand and promote online sales, trends were explored in consumer searches on the internet and digital social networks for GI products.



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|                  | Completely agree | Somewhat agree | Neutral | Somewhat disagree | Completely disagree |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Production stage | 60%              | 36%            | 4%      | 0%                | 0%                  |
| Processor stage  | 52%              | 48%            | 0%      | 0%                | 0%                  |
| Wholesale stage  | 22%              | 48%            | 26%     | 4%                | 0%                  |
| Retailer stage   | 33%              | 50%            | 13%     | 4%                | 0%                  |
| Online sales     | 23%              | 32%            | 23%     | 18%               | 5%                  |

Figure 1. Effectiveness of controls on GIs/TSGs. Source: Evaluation support study on GI/TSG [5].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The online sales promotion of PDO Evia figs was investigated through a secondary research approach to evaluate the online presence of the 10 companies approved by ELGO DIMITRA (as of September 2022) as beneficiaries of the PDO indication for Evia dried figs production, packaging, and marketing. Using keywords for PDO Evia dried figs in English and Greek, 18 additional online sellers were spotted on the first page of each search at Google Search engine and were added to the evaluation [6].

The detailed assessment of the online presence of businesses was carried out by checking the existence (grade 1) or not (grade 0) of 30 specific characteristics (X1 to X30) [7,8]. The 30 characteristics are: X1 = More than two languages; X2 = Information about the products and services; X3 = Contact information; X4 = Information about the area; X5 = Digital Map; X6 = Audiovisual material; X7 = Live Web Camera; X8 = Search Engine; X9 = Site Map; X10 = News feedback; X11 = Online Survey; X12 = Online Contact Form; X13 = Weather Forecast; X14 = Traffic meter app; X15 = Frequently asked questions; X16 = Useful Links; X17 = General Information; X18 = Available files for download; X19 = Date/Time app; X20 = Events calendar; X21 = Calendar of Holidays and nominal holidays; X22 = Share buttons; X23 = Social Media Profile; X24 = Forum; X25 = Relative to products information; X26 = Third party ads; X27 = Newsletter; X28 = RSS feed; X29 = Member registration; X30 = Customization and security.

In the second stage of the research, the Google Trends tool was used to explore user search statistics on Google Search Engine and YouTube for the keywords “Figs”, “Dried Figs”, and “PDO”. Google Trends is used in scientific surveys for big data research [9]. The generated results do not include searches performed within websites.

## 3. Results

The producers, packers, traders, and online sellers of Evia PDO dried figs that were spotted in Google Search and were concluded at the assessment were as follows: Agricultural Cooperative of Taxiarchis; Deli Carpous; Oxilipro; Cuma; Sykakymis; Kumilio; Wikifarmer producer; Farmasarli; Askada; Food we love; Elliniko.ch; Xmesazontes producer; Go healthy farmacy; Think bio store; Nomeefoods; Gr-ocery; Fromthenatureshop; Brinkys organic groceries; Amalikerasmata; Foodtrails; Terrapura; Elenianna; Thefoodmarket; Ubuy.ci; Mediterranean gourmet; Grecian purveyor; Lazada.

A summary of the evaluation for each one of the 30 characteristics examined is shown below (Figure 2). The numbers vary between 0 (absent in all sites) to 28 (present in all sites).

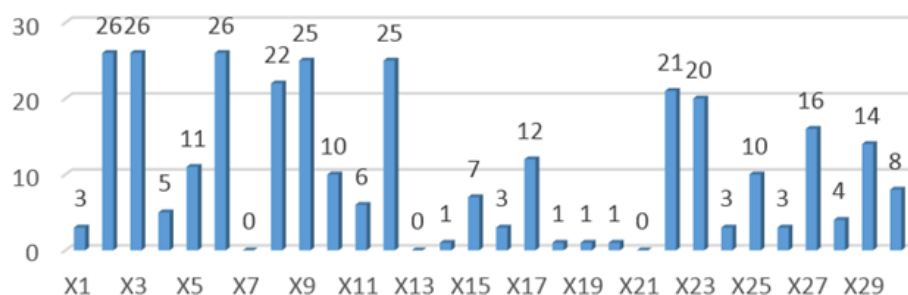


Figure 2. The total of 30 assessment features identified across the 28 sites [1].

Provision of information about the products offered (X2), the availability of photographic and audio-visual material (X6), the ease of navigation (X9), the provision of contact information (X3), and the availability of online contact forms (X12) were the dominant features identified in 89–93% of the websites (Figure 2).

Google Trend results for the keyword “figs” revealed a peak in the searches of the users between August and September, shortly after the harvesting period of the figs (Figure 3).

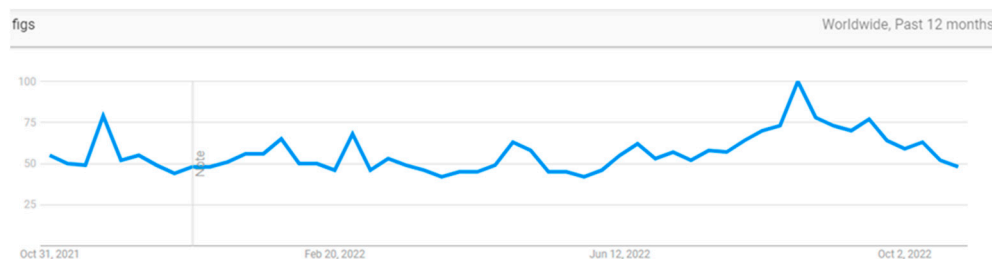


Figure 3. Search for the term “figs” worldwide, November 2021–October 2022 [1].

Top searches in Google Search and YouTube are related to dried figs’ health benefits and dried figs recipes (Figure 4).

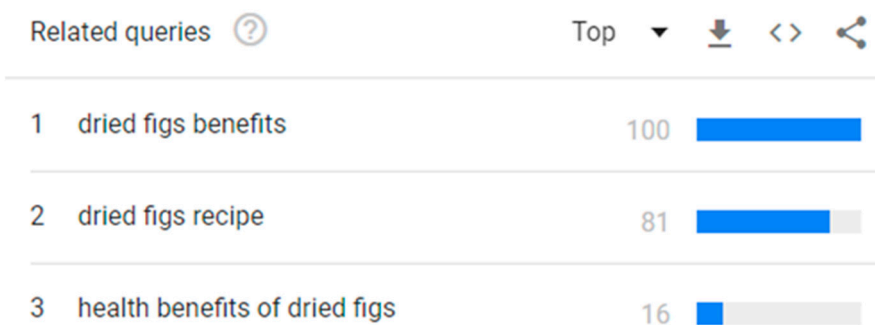


Figure 4. Searches related to dried figs between November 2021–October 2022 [1].

#### 4. Discussion

Only 3 out of 28 sites use more than two languages (X1), a feature that can increase site traffic and boost online sales worldwide. Useful links (X16) can increase site traffic and improve search engine optimization. Available files for download (X18), such as recipes, nutrition value information, and dietary benefits of figs, can boost sales by matching demand with supply. Company profiles on social media and “share” buttons on websites (X22 and 23) have become essential features, taking into consideration the continuous increase in social media usage. Relative to product information (X25) is a feature than can be utilised to add nutrition value information and recipes for Evia dried figs.

GI products, such as the PDO dried figs of the regional unity of Evia, are associated with specific geographical areas of the European Union. An increase in the demand for Evia PDO dried figs on the internet can increase not only sales and, therefore, production but can also create more opportunities for rural development. The use of live web cameras (X7) at the figs’ cultivation sites (none found in research), the provision of information about the area (X4), and the online presence of an up-to-date events calendar (X20) can contribute to increasing tourism demand for the area. Increased tourist numbers at the area can also boost PDO dried figs sales.

The European Union, recognising the importance of digital transformation for local and regional development, has located distinct packages of funds for its less-developed regions, such as the regional unity of Evia. The digital literacy of the dried figs producers and the improvement in their internet presence can be subsidised by EU funds.

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