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Perception of farmers on social media in fertilizer marketing: A case study in Nalgonda district

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Abstract

The study entitled "Perception of Farmers on Social Media in Fertilizer Marketing – A case study in Nalgonda district" has been conducted in Miryalaguda region, Nalgonda district of Telangana state. It is one of the major producers of rice in the Telangana state and there is a large market for fertilizer business. The study was attempted to know the demographics, perception towards uses of social media marketing by farmers. One hundred twenty farmers participated in the study. The study revealed that the average score for social media was found to be highest for WhatsApp, YouTube and lowest for LinkedIn in the promotion of agricultural products. Larger part of the farmers was depending on traditional marketing due to lack of knowledge in social media marketing was the main constraint found in the study area.

Keywords: Farmers' perception, fertilizer marketing, Nalgonda district

Introduction

Traditionally, information related to the agriculture disseminates through newspapers, television, pamphlets, billboards, radio, and magazines. Now a days the agriculture sector is also making some innovations in marketing as an extension service to farmers. Most of the companies are now adopting social media as a medium to disseminate information about their products and to sell them through e-commerce platforms. It creates opportunities to the firms to communicate with the customers directly and quickly. (Mishra *et al.*, 2021) [6]. The usage of social media, the new frontier in fertilizer marketing, has increased as a result of 21st century advancements in technology, and the four main pillars of social media marketing in the agriculture industry are networking, industry knowledge, extension and marketing, consumer engagement, and crisis communication (Lathiya *et al.*, 2015) [4]. It includes platforms like websites, social media marketing (SMM), pay per click (PPC), content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and many more technologies that are utilized to sell products and services.

Social media marketing

Social media marketing (SMM), also referred as online marketing or digital marketing, involves using electronic tools to promote goods and services. It is a modern marketing approach that heavily relies on technology and has become a powerful tool for connecting marketers and customers (Meng, 2009) [5].

SMM is a new and growing technique in marketing. It is accomplished through several means, including audio, video. It is widely embraced by multinational corporations and international businesses globally (Hooda and Aggarwal, 2012) [3].

Benefits of Social Media Marketing

It focuses on incorporating consumers in strategic planning and programming. Companies gain from ongoing interaction on websites, which allows consumers to openly voice their thoughts about products and services. This feedback enables businesses to better assess product acceptance and develop great consumer connections.

Consumers are continually interacting with advertising through websites, receiving multiple adverts, updates, and offers every day, even if they do not actively participate. This exposure keeps consumers informed about new specials and promotions, which influences their shopping decisions and strengthens brand recognition.

Marketing businesses use social media methods to establish trust and increase consumer satisfaction. Consumers are affected by trustworthy sources' advertising and are more likely to believe remarks on a marketing organization's page, which are supported by other consumer comments and reactions.

This trust is difficult to transmit to communications from other organizations, which strengthens the consumer's relationship with the original organization.

Materials and Methods

Purposive sampling with a pretested schedule was used in the study and farmers who were using social media were only considered. Additionally, farmers using at least one social media platform were also considered. It involves 120 farmers from Miryalaguda division, Nalgonda district. Four mandals based on the highest cropped area in the Miryalaguda region were selected. From each mandal, two villages based on highest cropped area were selected. From each village, 15 farmers were selected. The information collected on demographics of the farmers (age and education), perceptions of farmers on the social media platforms and awareness of social media marketing. Descriptive analysis (frequency, percentage, mean), Rating scale and Garrett ranking were used.

Results and Discussion

Demographic status of the farmer respondents

To understand farmers' age and education.

Age of the farmers

The data related to the age group is divided into four categories i.e. 26 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 55 and above 56.

Table 1: Age distribution of the farmers

S. No.	Category (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
1	26 to 35	30	25%
2	36 to 45	39	33%
3	46 to 55	35	29%
4	Above 56	16	13%
	Total	120	100%

Table 1 presents the age distribution of farmers. The largest age group is 36-45 years old, comprising 33% (39 farmers). The 46–55-year-old group follows closely at 29% (35 farmers), while 26–35-year-old account for 25% (30 farmers). The oldest age group, 56 and above, is the smallest at 13% (16 farmers). Overall, most farmers are concentrated in the 36-45 age range, indicating a focus on middle-aged individuals.

Education level of the farmers

The information regarding educational levels of the farmer's is categorized into five categories as Illiterate, Primary level, Secondary level, Intermediate and Graduation. The data was analysed to get comprehensive view of the farmer's educational background.

Table 2: Education level of the farmers

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	5	4%
2	Primary level	19	16%
3	Secondary level	48	40%
4	Intermediate	37	31%
5	Graduation	11	9%
	Total	120	100%

Table 2 outlines the educational levels of farmers across these five categories. Secondary education is the most prevalent with 40% (48) of farmers, followed by 31% (37) with an intermediate level. Primary education accounts for 16% (19), while 9% (11) are graduates and 4% (5) are illiterate. Overall, the majority of farmers have at least a secondary education, with fewer having primary or no formal education.

Social media platforms

The primary social media platforms used in the study area were WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The usage of these platforms among 120 farmers was assessed, and they were ranked based on their preferences.

Table 3: Social media platforms

S. No.	Platform	Garett's mean score	Rank
1	WhatsApp	71.22	I
2	You Tube	64.83	II
3	Facebook	56.05	III
4	Instagram	44.34	IV
5	Twitter	35.85	V
6	LinkedIn	30.72	VI

Table 3 ranks social media platforms by Garett's mean score, reflecting farmer's preferences. WhatsApp emerged as the most preferred platform with the highest score (71.22), followed by YouTube (64.83) and Facebook (56.05). Instagram (44.34), Twitter (35.85), and LinkedIn (30.72) rank lower, indicating they are less favoured. The rankings suggest that messaging and video-sharing platforms are more valued than networking or microblogging platforms.

Frequency of usage of social media platforms by farmers

The frequency of social media platform usage among farmers in the study area was categorized into four levels i.e. daily, weekly, monthly, and rarely.

Based on the farmer's response Figure 1 shows that, 68% (82) of farmers use social media daily, making it the most common usage pattern. 13% (15) use it weekly, 5% (6) monthly, and 14% (17) rarely. These findings indicate that the majority are daily users, indicating heavy reliance on social media, while less frequent engagement is less common.

Farmer's awareness on social media marketing

Figure 2 reveals that a majority of farmers, 62% (75), are familiar with social media marketing. However, 38% (45) remain unaware due to factors such as limited knowledge of social media, insufficient quality information, slow internet speeds, and language barriers.

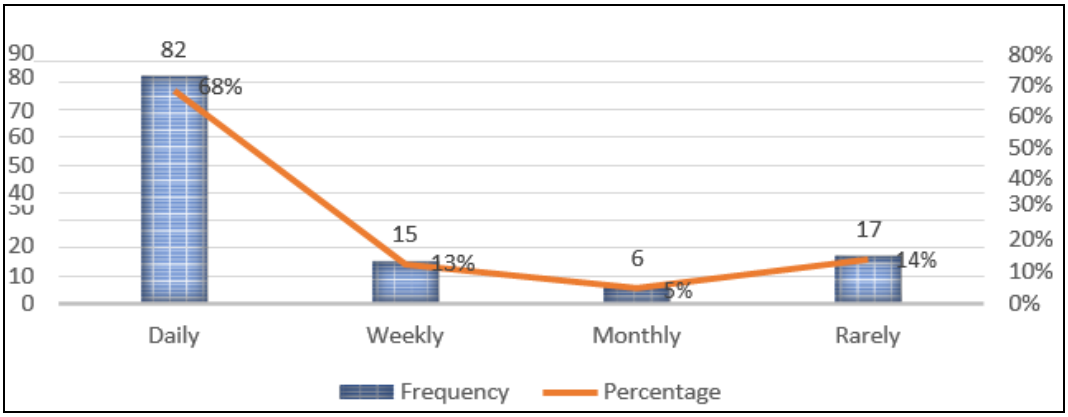

Fig 1: Frequency of usage of social media platforms

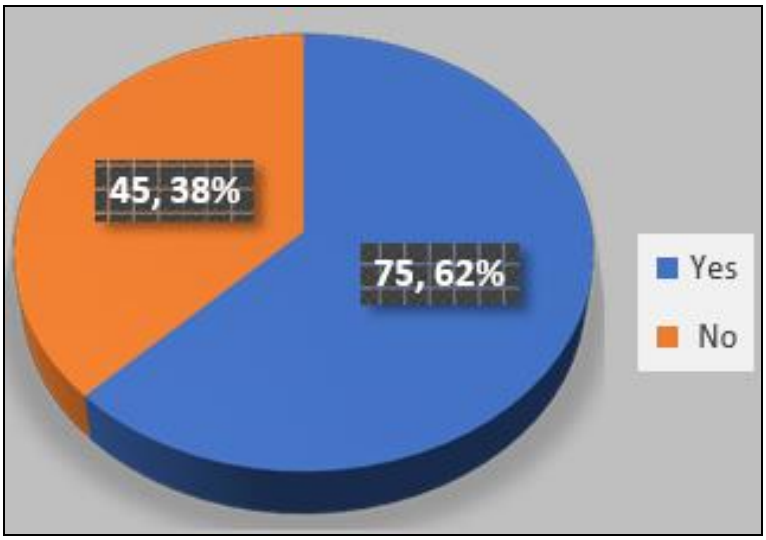

Fig 2: Farmers awareness on social media marketing

Table 4: Perception of farmers on the usage of digital marketing

S. No.	Statement	Ranks given by the farmers					Total scores	Mean	Rank
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th			
1	Provides timely information	2325	2220	1800	440	125	6910	57.58	III
2	Increases product visibility	1950	2700	1900	360	50	6960	58	II
3	Enhances consumer accessibility	1950	1800	2400	400	150	6700	55.83	IV
4	Strengthens relationships with stakeholders	600	1380	2250	1040	450	5720	47.67	VIII
5	Fosters trust and transparency	975	660	2450	1320	350	5755	47.96	VII
6	Facilitates feedback	600	1800	1950	1400	200	5950	49.58	VI
7	Increases product access	1425	2160	1650	680	375	6290	52.42	V
8	Assists in usage of products	2526	2300	1874	550	0	7220	60.12	I

Table 5: Perception of farmers on the challenges by using social media marketing

		Scores given by the farmers							
No.	Statements	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Total	Mean	Rank
1	It cannot be handled by low literacy	2250	2700	650	840	275	6715	55.96	V
2	There will be a huge variation of pricing	1950	2400	1350	760	200	6660	55.5	VI
3	Fear of purchasing	2025	2700	1750	360	100	6935	57.79	III
4	Delivery issues in rural areas are often poor	3000	3120	1200	120	25	7465	62.21	II
5	Delivery takes long time to reach customers	21725	2160	2500	320	75	6780	56.5	IV
6	Requires effective management	1800	1380	2250	640	300	6370	53.08	VII
7	Not suitable for those with no work	150	0	250	2040	1550	3990	33.25	IX
8	Time-intensive	0	120	300	2000	1550	3970	33.08	X
9	Not exclusive to progressive stakeholders	750	1020	2800	880	375	5825	48.54	VIII
10	Traditional marketing is more effective	3600	2400	1450	80	25	7555	62.96	I

The table 4 highlights farmer's attitudes on major social media platforms and their use in agriculture. WhatsApp had a mean score of 65.58, showing that it is the principal communication medium among farmers, most likely due to its simplicity of use and broad acceptance. YouTube is placed second with a mean score of 59.58, indicating that it provides valuable and instructive information related to farming techniques. Facebook ranks third (mean score of 50.08), owing to its importance in disseminating news and current events. Instagram ranks fourth (mean score: 44.75), with adverts that are somewhat related to farmers' interests. Finally, LinkedIn is placed fifth (mean score of 39.38), utilized mostly for keeping up with industry news and developments, but it is less liked among farmers.

The data from Table 5 highlights several challenges that farmers face with social media marketing, primarily favouring traditional methods (62.96) due to familiarity and trust. Key concerns include poor delivery infrastructure in rural areas (62.21), fear of purchasing (57.79) due to a lack of trust in online transactions and long delivery days (56.5). Additionally, low digital literacy (55.96) limits their capacity to efficiently use digital technologies and the inconsistent pricing (55.5) on social media causes confusion and mistrust. Interestingly, farmers believed that social media is not exclusively for progressive stakeholders, as evidenced by the relatively high mean score (48.54). Other challenges include the need for effective management (53.08) and the perception that social media marketing is not suitable for those without regular work (33.25) or is too time intensive (33.08).

Conclusion

According to the data, the majority of farmers have at least a secondary education, with the majority falling into the middle age category (36 to 45). WhatsApp is the favoured social media network, owing to its simplicity of use and widespread acceptability, particularly for everyday communications. While social media has an impact on purchase decisions, conventional marketing still dominates owing to familiarity and confidence in local approaches. Poor rural infrastructure limited digital literacy, and distrust of online transactions all hinder the efficacy of social media marketing among farmers, emphasizing the importance of tailored initiatives to increase digital engagement and trust.

Limitation

The sample size was small, consisting of only 120 farmers. This limited scope may affect the generalizability of the results. Additionally, time and financial constraints impacted the survey's comprehensiveness. The analysis relied solely on respondents' replies, making the findings approximate rather than exact. Furthermore, many participants were hesitant to share information, adding to the study's challenges.

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