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Attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension

[1]Jyoti M Deshmukh, [2]DD Suradkar and [3]MM Bhogaonkar

[1]Professor (CAS), Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Latur, Maharashtra, India

[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Latur, Maharashtra, India

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Dharashiv, Maharashtra, India

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Corresponding Author: Jyoti M Deshmukh

Abstract

Social media are potential low cost tools that have the ability to increase the scope and coverage of agricultural extension. Social media tools can be regarded as social communication technologies in which opportunities of farmers' feedback, interaction, and networking are much higher than other forms of extension information delivery. The present study was conducted with objective to study attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension. This study was conducted in Latur district of Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. From this district three tahsils were selected randomly for the study. Two villages from each tahsils were selected randomly. Fifteen farmers from each village who were using social media were purposively selected. Thus, total 90 famers were the sample of present study. A major finding was, most of the farmers found in favourable category of social media use in agricultural extension. The major constraints expressed by farmers were inadequate service (network, coverage and speed) and increased internet data requirement (with reference to cost).

Keywords: Attitude, Social media use

1. Introduction

Social media are potential low cost tools that have the ability to increase the scope and coverage of agricultural extension. Social media is yet another ICT based tool, which once used purely for entertainment, has great potential to be used for knowledge sharing and collaboration even in agriculture. (Goyal, 2011) [2] These ICT tools are relatively easier to use and are gaining popularity in agricultural sector (Saravanan and Bhattacharjee, 2016) [11]. Through these tools farming community can learn and share information in multiple ways in form of texts, photos, pictures, audio, audio-visuals and web links. Social media gives opportunities to farmers for correlating content and promotes co-learning among farmers (Jackson *et al*., 2009) [3]. Further, content creation is faster through social media than traditional mass media channels of extension communication (Lucas, 2011) [4]. Real time interaction through farmer clientele is easily possible through social media. Therefore, these tools help to communicate instantaneously and cheaply with stakeholders (Newbury *et al*., 2014) [7]. The benefits of social media goes beyond cost effective ways of communication to empowering social connections and long term engagement in extension programs (Neill *et al*., 2011) [6]. For farming community, social media can be a good way of networking and gaining through social capital in form of trust, engagement and community involvement. Social media has been aptly called as one of the most participative extension tools of recent times. Social media tools range from Facebook, Whatsapp, We chat, QQ, Tumblr, Twitter, Pinterest, Blogs, YouTube, Instagram, Wikis, Facebook messenger, Snap chat etc. Out of these, under Indian context, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube can be considered as three most popular social media tools in farming community. Though there are slight differences in approach of these three forms of social media. Specifically, Facebook is a social networking site that allows people to build personal webpages and then connect with friends to share content and information.

Facebook remains most popular social media platform by agricultural research and extension professional in India. WhatsApp specifically is an instant messaging platform that has made users much more connected. The nature of Facebook is more of a public platform and has higher viral content than WhatsApp which is a relatively closed medium. YouTube remains a content community in which videos are seen and shared. Peer use has been found to be influential to use social media in agricultural extension activities (Newbury *et al*., 2014) [7]. Further, quite a number of studies have focused on use of social media among agricultural researchers and extension educators. Not much have been documented about usage of social media for sharing farming based information by the farmer clientele. There is definite need to document the ways in which it is being used for the direct benefit of farming community. This would not only improve the awareness towards use of social media tools for delivering farm extension information but would also assess the present status of social media usage. The poject presents examples of use of most popular social media tools like Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube in agriculture and allied fields under Indian context. It

investigates attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension and development agencies to deliver and share farming based information.

Significance of the study

Social media are potential low cost tools that have the ability to increase the scope and coverage of agricultural extension. Social media tools can be regarded as social communication technologies in which opportunities of farmers' feedback, interaction, and networking are much higher than other forms of extension information delivery. The number of social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) using farmer clientele is likely to increase substantially in near future. In order to utilise this tool for the benefit of farmers, it is necessary to know the attitude of the social media using farmers towards sharing of agricultural extension information through this tool. Attitude has been defined as the degree of positive or negative effects associated with the some psychological object (Edwards, 1957) [1]. In this study; it referred to the degree of positive or negative attitude of the respondents towards use of social media tools such as WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook in agriculture. For this purpose, the study was designed to measure attitude of farmers towards use of social media tools in agricultural extension. The scale developed by Thakur *et.al* 2017 [8] has been used to find out the attitude of farmers.

Thus the study explores the new way to reach out among the farming community through dissemination of useful information and strengthening the farmer community with latest technology.

Objectives

- To study the profile of farmers.
- To know the attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension.
- To study the constraints faced by farmers in using social media.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Latur district of Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. From this district three tahsils were selected randomly for the study. Two villages from each tahsils were selected randomly. Fifteen farmers from each village who were using social media were purposively selected. Thus, total 90 famers were the sample of present study. An interview schedule was prepared, so as to collect the information in line with the objectives of the study. The data was collected personally with the help of interview schedule. Attitude was measured by the scale developed by Thakur et.al. (2018) [9] with slight modification. Three continuum response i.e. Agree, Undecided and Disagree was collected to know the attitude. The data was analyzed with the help of statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation.

Results

1. Profile of farmers

From Table 1, it is indicated that majority (67.78%) of the social media users were middle aged, followed by old (18.89%) and young (13.33%). More than half (54.44%) of respondents having secondary education followed by higher secondary education (25.00%), graduate and above (20.00%), primary education (7.78%) and a very few (1.11%) percentage of farmers were illiterate. 62.22 per cent of the respondents were from medium sized family (5 to 6 members) followed by 20.00 per cent small size family (upto 4 members), big family (17.78%) i.e. above 6 members in their family. Less than half (46.67) of the respondents were having semi medium land holding (2.01 to 4.00 ha.), small land holder were 27.78 per cent. 20.00 per cent were having medium land holding (4.01 to 10.00 ha.) and 5.55 per cent were from big (above 10.00 ha) land holding. More than three fourth (47.78%) of the social media users were having medium annual income (Rs.1, 84,920.01 to Rs. 5, 96,342.00) followed by low (37.78%) and only 14.44 per cent of the farmers were having high annual income.

Regarding social participation presented in table indicated that more than half (54.45%) of the farmers were from medium category of social participation followed by low (33.33%), high (12.22%) social participation. Table 1, portrays mass media exposure of farmers. It was found that 47.78 per cent social media users having medium mass media exposure followed by high (30.00%) and low (22.22%). It is illustrated from table that more than half (61.11%) of the respondents having medium innovativeness. However, 24.45 per cent of the respondents having high innovativeness and 14.44 per cent having low innovativeness. Table 1 indicated that near to half (52.22%) of the respondents were having medium knowledge level followed by high (26.67%) and low (21.11%) knowledge level.

2. Attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension

2.1 Statement wise distribution of respondents

Table 2 revealed that there were 16 components of attitude among these 8 statements were negative and 8 were positive. The first statement which is negative, found that more than half (55.55%) of the respondents were disagree. Second statement I regularly follow farm based advice through Facebook /WhatsApp was equally responded in three continuum of scale. More than half (61.11%) of the respondents were undecided to absence of face to face contact, makes use of WhatsApp/ Facebook for farm extension activities a difficult tool to use. 66.66 per cent of farmers were agree to the statement, neighbours and relatives are better sources than WhatsApp/ Facebook for agriculture based information. Half of the farmers were agree with information through social media creates more confusion in mind and the statement, by receiving farm based information through WhatsApp/ social media, I am able to save my time. 61.11 per cent were agreeing that WhatsApp helps me to discuss farm based information with others. Agriculture based information received through social media can help me to reduce my farm losses, information received through WhatsApp/ Facebook id better than Kisan call centre and I will prefer going to agricultural extension officer than seeking help of Facebook/WhatsApp for agricultural problems was equally (50.00%) agreed by the farmers. Half of the respondents were undecided

regarding social media interactions are more productive than direct face to face communication due to absence of inhibition. Equal per cent (40.00%) of the respondents were agree and disagree to the statement that it is possible to discuss in detail on farm related topics through social media. Majority (72.22%) were agreed that among internet based sources, social media remains one of the best tools to receive information.

2.2 Overall attitude of farmers

Table 3 indicated that majority (83.33) were found in favourable to most favourable category of attitude towards social media use in agricultural extension. 16.67 per cent of the farmers were having unfavourable attitude towards social media use. It may be due to constraints of network and cost of services.

3. Constraints faced by farmers in using social media

The data mentioned in the Table 4, showed that, 80.00 per cent of the farmers express inadequate service (network coverage and speed). The other major constraint was increased internet data requirements (with reference to cost) (75.55%) and difficulty to find relevant information (due to large number of sources) (68.88%). Inadequate technical knowledge or skill of handling social media (66.66%), irrelevant posts (64.44%), lack of sufficient time to use information (60.00%) and problems of phone storage (memory of phone) (48.88%) were the other constraints reported by the farmers.

Tables

1. Profile of the farmers

Table 1: Profile of the farmer

Sr. No	Category		Frequency	Percentage
1.	**Age (years)**			
	1.	Young (upto 29 years)	12	13.33
	2.	Middle (30 t0 49 years)	61	67.78
	3.	Old (Above 49)	17	18.89
2.	**Education (Std.)**			
	1.	Illiterate	01	1.11
	2.	Primary Education (Std 1st to 4th)	07	7.78
	3.	Secondary Education (Std 5th to 10th)	49	54.44
	4.	Higher Secondary Education (Std 11th to 12th)	15	16.67
	6.	Graduate and above	18	20.00
3.	**Size of Family**			
	1.	Small (Upto 4members)	18	20.00
	2.	Medium (5 to 6 members)	56	62.22
	3.	Big (Above 6 members)	16	17.78
4.	**Land holdings (ha.)**			
	1.	Small (up to 2.00)	25	27.78
	2.	Semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00)	42	46.67
	3.	Medium (4.01 to 10.00)	18	20.00
	4.	Big (10.01 and above)	05	5.55
5.	**Annual Income (Rs.)**			
	1.	Low (upto1,84,920.00)	34	37.78
	2.	Medium (1,84,920.01 to 5,96,342.00)	43	47.78
	3.	High (Above 5,96,342.00)	13	14.44
6.	**Social participation**			
	1.	Low (Up to 5)	30	33.33
	2.	Medium (6 to 9)	49	54.45
	3.	High (9 and above)	11	12.22
7.	**Mass Media Exposure**			
	1	Low (Up to 19)	20	22.22
	2	Medium (20 to 25)	43	47.78
	3	High (25 and above)	27	30.00
8.	**Innovativeness**			
	1	Low (Up to 12)	17	21.25
	2	Medium (13 to 17)	46	57.50
	3	High (18 and above)	17	21.25
9.	**Knowledge level**			
	1	Low (Upto 21)	19	21.11
	2	Medium (22 to 29)	47	52.22
	3	High (29 and above)	23	26.67

2. Attitude of farmers

2.1 Statement wise attitude of farmers

Table 2: Statement wise attitude of farmers towards social media use

Sl. No.	Statements	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	I feel WhatsApp/Facebook has limited role in provision of farm based information to farmers*	15	16.66	25	27.77	50	55.55
2	I regularly follow farm based advice through Facebook/WhatsApp	30	33.33	25	27.77	35	38.88
3	Absence of Face to Face contact, makes use of WhatsApp/Facebook for farm extension activities a difficult tool to use*	15	16.66	55	61.11	20	22.22
4	Neighbours and relatives are better sources than WhatsApp/Facebook for agriculture based information	60	66.66	25	27.77	5	5.55
5	Information through social media creates more confusion in minds*	45	50.00	15	16.66	10	11.11
6	By receiving farm based information through WhatsApp/Social Media,I am able to save my time	45	50.00	10	11.11	30	33.33
7	WhatsApp helps me to discuss farm based information with others	55	61.11	10	11.11	25	27.77
8	Agriculture based information received through social media can help me to reduce my farm losses.	45	50.00	25	27.77	20	22.22
9	Information received through Facebook/WhatsApp is better than Kisan Call centre	45	50.00	35	38.88	10	11.11
10	I will prefer going to agricultural extension officer than seeking help of Facebook/WhatsApp for agricultural problems	50	55.55	35	38.88	5	5.55
11	Social media interactions are more productive than direct face to face communication due to absence of inhibition*	5	5.55	45	50.00	40	44.44
12	Social Media helps to create specific interest groups in agriculture*	55	61.11	20	22.22	15	16.66
13	It is possible to discuss in detail on farm related topics through social media*	40	44.44	10	11.11	40	44.44
14	Discussions in social media can easily lose its focus and divert from main topic under discussion*	20	22.22	52	57.77	18	20.00
15	Agricultural Information through social media is good for awareness but applying it is difficult*	45	50.00	25	27.77	20	22.22
16	Among internet based sources, social media remains one of the best tools to receive information	65	72.22	10	11.11	15	16.66

2.2 Overall attitude of farmers

Table 3: Attitude of farmers towards social media use in agricultural extension

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Unfavourable (upto 30)	15	16.67
Favourable (31 to 36)	55	61.11
Most favourable (above 36)	20	22.22

3. Constraints faced by farmers

Table 4: Constraints faced by farmers in using social media

Sr. No	Constraints	Response		Rank
		Frequency	Percentage	
1.	Irrelevant posts	58	64.44	V
2.	Inadequate technical knowledge or skill of handling social media	60	66.66	IV
3.	Inadequate service (network coverage and speed)	72	80	I
4.	Increased internet data requirements (with reference to cost)	68	75.55	II
5.	Difficulty to find relevant information (due to large number of sources)	62	68.88	III
6.	Lack of sufficient time to use information	54	60	VI
7.	Problems of phone storage (Memory of phone)	44	48.88	VII

Conclusion

1. In respect of profile characteristics of social media users, it is observed that more than half of the respondents were having middle age group, educated upto secondary education level, medium family size. Less than half possess semi medium land holdings. However they were having medium income, medium social participation, medium mass media exposure, medium innovativeness and also medium knowledge level.
2. Most of the farmers found in favourable category of social media use in agricultural extension.
3. The major constraints expressed by farmers were inadequate service (network, coverage and speed) and increased internet data requirement (with reference to cost), difficulty to find relevant information (due to large number of sources),inadequate technical knowledge, irrelevant posts and problems of phone storage(memory of phone).

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