

CONSTRAINTS FACED AND SUGGESTION OFFERED BY FARMERS IN ACCESSING THE REQUIRED INFORMATION THROUGH SMS AND VOICE MESSAGES

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ABSTRACT

Mobile phones significantly have reduced communication and information costs for the rural people. This technology has provided new opportunities for rural farmers to obtain knowledge and information about agricultural issues, problems and its usage for the development of agriculture. The study was conducted in Junagadh and Gir Somnath districts of Saurashtra region. Total 15 households representing different farm-size classes were interviewed from randomly selected 24 villages, which were from eight talukas and forming a sample size of one hundred twenty (120) farmers, for the study. The result of the study revealed that the major important constraints faced by farmers were; farmers growing single crop do not get all information regarding specific crop (75.83 per cent), farmers get only technical name of insecticide and pesticide rather than trade name (71.67 per cent) and information on plant protection is not current or too old (69.17 per cent) got first, second and third rank respectively. Whereas, major suggestions offered by farmers were; agricultural information should be provided at the right time according to the field condition (77.50 per cent), information should be provided according to the crop condition and problems of insect pests (72.50 per cent) and the fertilizer dose should be given in kg/vigha instead of percentage (65.00 per cent) got first, second and third ranked, respectively.

Keywords : voice messages, sms, information, constraints

INTRODUCTION

Enhanced farm productivity and farmers' livelihoods largely depend on how the relevant technology information and farm inputs are accessed by farmers. Singh (2011) reviewed various delivery mechanisms of agricultural extension services available to farmers in India.

Mobile application plays a key role in fulfilling the agricultural information needs of the farmers as it has many advantages such as easy and convenient access, reach to areas where there is no other ICT infrastructure like internet, fixed lines etc., and is easily afforded by farmers (Ravinder and Vister, 2010). According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, the number of wireless mobile phone subscribers has reached 867.80 million as on March 2013 and India is the second largest wireless market in the world (TRAI, June, 2013). Further, rural subscribers are continuously increasing every month, as compared to urban subscribers. The increasing trend in mobile phone use, particularly in remote rural areas, provides an opportunity to bridge the rural and urban digital divide.

In the same way, Reliance Company provides the

mobile texts/ mobile voice messages to farmers of Saurashtra. Keeping this in view, study was conducted on the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To find out the constraints faced by farmers to received mobile texts/ mobile voice messages
- (2) To seek the suggestions offered by the respondents

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Junagadh and Gir Somnath districts of Saurashtra region. This districts were selected purposively for study having Reliance Foundation Information Services, because all the registered farmers in these districts receive and participate in the mobile based mobile texts, mobile voice messages, dial out mobile conference, WhatsApp group and toll free help line number : 1800 419 8800 initiative. Four talukas from each selected district were selected randomly. Thus, total 8 talukas were selected, 15 households representing different farm-size classes were interviewed from randomly selected 24 villages of selected taluka. This is followed by a convenient sampling

of 60 farmers from each of the districts, forming a sample size of one hundred twenty (120) farmers, for the study.

The primary data for the study were collected from the farmers through telephonic interview or personal contact at their home/farm using a well-structured questionnaire. The farmers considered were those who had already registered their mobile number run by the Reliance Foundation Information Services, Gujarat. The registered mobile numbers of the farmers were collected from the technology partner (Reliance Foundation Information Services, Gujarat). The farmers were requested to inform about current sources

from where they get agricultural information. The questions were asked to compare the sources of information with the delivery of agricultural information via mobile phone through mobile text/ voice messages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The farmers were requested to express their constraints about information received through mobile text and voice messages. Frequency and percentage for each constraint were calculated and rank given based on per cent.

Table 1 : Constraints faced by farmers in accessing the required information through SMS and voice messages

n = 120

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency	Percent	Rank
1	Farmers does not read message regularly sent by agency	58	48.33	XI
2	Lack of timely available solutions of the problems.	72	60.00	VIII
3	Unawareness about agri. related news and events, which may useful to farmers.	81	67.50	V
4	There is not direct contact with agriculture experts and progressive farmers	39	32.50	XIII
5	Sometime low battery of mobile or switch off mobile.	62	51.67	X
6	Poor network problems in rural area.	52	43.33	XII
7	General information about all crops given to farmers.	82	68.33	IV
8	Some information is not easy to listen in voice messages.	33	27.50	XIV
9	Farmer growing single crop do not get all information regarding specific crop.	91	75.83	I
10	Information on plant protection is not current/too old.	83	69.17	III
11	Farmers get only technical name of plant protection insecticide and pesticide rather than trade name.	86	71.67	II
12	Farmers get only fertilizers in active ingredient in percent rather than kilogram.	79	65.83	VI
13	Difficult to get accurate weather information	71	59.17	IX
14	Lack of quality, timely, relevant, and reliable information	77	64.17	VII
15	Limited skills in operating mobile phone	11	9.17	XVI
16	It is difficult to apply the recommended practices in the field condition by the farmers	27	22.50	XV

The data in table 22 indicated that the major important constraints faced by farmers were; farmers growing single crop do not get all information regarding specific crop (75.83 per cent), farmers get only technical name of insecticide and pesticide rather than trade name (71.67 per cent), information on plant protection is not current or too old (69.17 per cent), general information about all crops given to farmers (68.33

per cent) and unwareness about agri. related news and events which may useful to farmers (67.50 per cent) got first, second, third, fourth and fifth rank respectively.

The major suggestions as given by the farmers about agricultural information through mobile text and voice messages were listed and ranked.

Table 2 : Suggestions offered by farmers in accessing the required information through SMS and voice messages

n = 120

Sr. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Percent	Rank
1	Agricultural information should be provided at the right time according to the field condition.	93	77.50	I
2	Information should be provided according to the crop condition and problems of insect pests.	87	72.50	II
3	The fertilizer dose should be given in kg/vigha instead of percentage.	78	65.00	III
4	Information should be provided according to the farmers' need.	77	59.16	IV
5	The information about various government schemes related to agriculture and animal husbandry should be provided.	64	53.33	V
6	It should be sharing the information with others farmers	48	40.00	VI

The major suggestions were; agricultural information should be provided at the right time according to the field condition (77.50 per cent), information should be provided according to the crop condition and problems of insect pests (72.50 per cent), the fertilizer dose should be given in kg/vigha instead of percentage (65.00 per cent), information should be provided according to the farmers' need (59.16 per cent), the information about various government schemes related to agriculture and animal husbandry should be provided (53.33 per cent) and it should be sharing the information with others farmers (40.00 per cent) got first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth ranked, respectively.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the major important constraints faced by farmers were; farmers growing single crop do not get all information regarding specific crop, farmers get only technical name of insecticide and pesticide rather than trade name and information on plant protection is not current or too old got first, second and third rank respectively. Whereas, major suggestions offered by farmers were; agricultural information should be provided at the right time according to the field condition, information should be provided according to the crop condition and problems of insect pests and the fertilizer dose should be given in kg/vigha instead of percentage got first, second and third ranked, respectively.

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