

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF MARKET INFORMATION BY THE FARMERS

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ABSTRACT

The study titled “Use of Social Media as a Source of Market Information by Farmers” was conducted in the Marathwada region of Jalna district of Maharashtra state, specifically in Badnapur, Bhokardan, and Mantha. From each taluka, three villages were selected, and from each village, 15 respondents were chosen, making a total of 135 respondents for the study. The research design used for the study was exploratory, and the data was collected through personal interviews with the help of a structured interview schedule. The data was tabulated, analysed, and interpreted. The findings revealed that majority (91.85%) of respondents possess WhatsApp, (65.18%) of respondents possess YouTube, (57.77%) use Facebook, (48.14%) have Kisan Suvidha App and (14.81%) have Telegram. The respondents were distributed according to the constraints faced by them and the suggestions they had for market information. More farmers must be encouraged to use social media in order to fully realize the potential of this tool for agricultural extension. Relevant agencies must also support this effort by offering social media policy the promotion and staff training.

Keywords- social media, market information, ICT tools, maharashtra

INTRODUCTION

India is the world's second-largest agricultural producer. According to the Indian Economic Survey, 20.2% of India's GDP came from the agricultural sector in 2016. Agriculture and allied sectors accounted for 17.5% of the GDP in the year 2020. The majority of Indian farmers are still poor and they depend on middlemen to sell agricultural products. Nowadays, agricultural digital marketing is significant since consumers are becoming more conscious of the quality of farm products and the gap between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors is closing due to digital marketing tools (Dsouza, D.J., and Joshi, H.G. 2014). Providing farmers with access to reliable, accurate and efficient markets is a key factor in raising their revenues. Farmers produce more profit and consumers spend less when the market is efficient (Government of India, 2013). Social media are web-based tools of electronic communication that allow users to personally interact with others individually or in groups for purpose of exchange the information sharing thoughts and opinions, influencing and facilitating decision making by creating, storing, retrieving and exchanging information in any form (text, pictures, videos, etc.) by any one in the virtual world. Social media has become popular among farmers to share information and create awareness. Social

media platforms offer farmers real-time updates on market trends, news, and events (Pratik and Vinaya, 2021). By using social media, farmers can stay informed about market trends, prices, and consumer preferences. They can join agricultural groups, follow relevant hashtags, and participate in online forums to gather valuable insights that can help them make informed decisions about their crops, pricing strategies, and marketing efforts (Pratik and Vinaya, 2022). It also facilitates networking and collaboration among farmers, agricultural organizations, and experts. Farmers can connect with peers to exchange ideas, share best practices, and seek advice on various aspects of farming, such as crop management, pest control, and sustainable practices (Panasara et al., 2023; Dhanwal, 2023). The majority of study participants, according to Suchiradipta and Saravanan (2016), used social media to locate and disseminate agricultural information as well as to connect with customers through their businesses. They also discovered that, among the social media platforms used by individuals and organizations, Facebook was the most often used one. These users also used other social media apps, such as Google+, Twitter, and blogs. Additionally, it was discovered that social media sites like WhatsApp (Thakur & Chander, 2017) and Instagram (Stock, 2020) were helpful as extension tools. Studying broadens one's knowledge and

aids in the development of one's research and agriculture marketing skills. This study contributes to the beginning of the benefits of using social media for agriculture marketing. In consideration of this requirement, research in this area has been conducted and a study has been started. The purpose of the study aimed to fill the gap with the object of exploring and learn about and comprehend how farmers view social media marketing. In addition, sources of market information were also explored to examine whether social media tools played important role in providing the data. It might highlight how important social media is to the marketing of agricultural products and the difficulties farmers have with social media marketing.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To know various Social Media sources available and the extent of their use as a source of market information by the farmers.
- (2) To find out the relationship between the profile of farmers and the extent use of social media as a source of

market information by the farmers.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was undertaken in one randomly selected Jalna district of Marathwada region of Maharashtra State. There are Eight (8) talukas in the Jalna district out of which three (3) talukas namely, Badnapur, Bhokardan, and Mantha selected for the present study. From each of the selected taluka, three (3) villages were selected randomly. Thus fifteen (15) villages were selected for the present study. For the present study, we selected 9 villages and randomly chose 15 respondents from each village. The criteria for selection were that the respondents should have mobile phones with internet facilities and be engaged in agricultural operations. Hence, a total of 135 respondents ($15 \times 9 = 135$) were considered for the study. The study's preferred data collection method was through an interview schedule. The interview schedule was tailored to the study's objectives to ensure the precision of the data collected. The tools used to measure the variables and the techniques followed are discussed in detail in Table 1.

Table 1 : Variables and their measurement

| Sr. No. | Variables | Empirical Measurements |
|-----------------|---|---|
| (I) | Independent Variables | |
| X ₁ | Age | Actual Chronological age in Years |
| X ₂ | Education | Formal education of the farmer. |
| X ₃ | Occupation | Scale of G.Trivedi and Pareek (1964) |
| X ₄ | Land Holding | Classification as per state Government of Maharashtra |
| X ₅ | Annual Income | Income in rupees of the farmer's family derived from all the sources in a year. |
| X ₆ | Economic Motivation | The scale developed by Supe (2007) will be used. |
| X ₇ | Market Information | Schedule was developed. |
| X ₈ | Use of ICT Tools | Schedule was developed. |
| X ₉ | Social Participation | Schedule was developed. |
| X ₁₀ | Mass media exposure | Schedule was developed. |
| X ₁₁ | Media Credibility | Schedule was developed. |
| (II) | Dependent Variable | |
| X ₁₂ | Extent use of social media for market information | Schedule was developed. |

Statistical tools and techniques used for data collection

- (1) Percentage
- (2) Arithmetic mean
- (3) Frequency
- (4) Coefficient of correlation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media sources available to the respondent farmers.

The data presented in Table 1.1 shows that the

majority (91.85%) of the respondents possess WhatsApp, 65.18 percent of the respondents possess YouTube, 57.77 per cent uses Facebook, 48.14 per cent have Kisan Suvidha App and 14.81 per cent have Telegram.

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents according to social media sources available

(n=135)

| Sr. No. | Social Media sources available | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|------|
| 1 | Telegram | 20 | 14.81 | V |
| 2 | YouTube | 88 | 65.18 | II |
| 3 | Facebook | 78 | 57.77 | III |
| 4 | WhatsApp | 124 | 91.85 | I |
| 5 | Kisan Suvidha app | 65 | 48.14 | IV |

Thus, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents have WhatsApp as the main source of social media available with them.

2. Extent use of social media as a source of market information by the farmers.

Table 3 : Distribution of the respondents according to extent use of social media by the farmers for seeking market information

(n=135)

| Sr. No. | Social Media | Extent of use of media for Market Information | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|---|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | Daily once | | Weekly once | | Fortnightly once | | Monthly once | | Whenever needed | | Never | |
| | | f | (%) | f | (%) | f | (%) | f | (%) | f | (%) | f | (%) |
| 1 | Kisan Suvidha App | 5 | 3.70 | 19 | 14.07 | 13 | 9.62 | 14 | 10.37 | 32 | 23.73 | 52 | 38.51 |
| 2 | YouTube | 56 | 41.49 | 43 | 31.86 | 16 | 11.85 | 4 | 2.96 | 6 | 4.44 | 10 | 7.40 |
| 3 | Facebook | 25 | 18.51 | 15 | 11.11 | 2 | 1.48 | 52 | 38.52 | 14 | 10.38 | 27 | 20 |
| 4 | WhatsApp | 78 | 57.78 | 29 | 21.49 | 9 | 6.66 | 3 | 2.22 | 12 | 8.89 | 4 | 2.96 |
| 5 | Telegram | 12 | 8.89 | 8 | 5.92 | 7 | 5.19 | 19 | 14.08 | 57 | 42.22 | 32 | 23.70 |

From the above table, 3.70 per cent respondent were using Kisan Suvidha App daily once, 14.07 per cent were using weekly once, 9.62 per cent using Fortnightly, 10.37 per cent monthly once, 23.73 per cent whenever needed and 38.51 per cent never used it for market information.

Majority of the respondents (41.49%) were using YouTube daily once for Market Information out of which 31.86 per cent were using it weekly once, 11.85 per cent were using it fortnightly once, 2.96 per cent were using it monthly once and 4.44 were using whenever needed, 7.40 per cent had never used it for market information.

About 18.51 per cent of the respondents were using Facebook daily once for Market Information out of which 11.11 per cent were using it weekly once, 1.48 per cent were using it fortnightly once, 38.52 per cent were using it monthly once and 10.38 were using whenever needed, 20.00 per cent had never used Facebook for market information.

Majority of the respondents 57.78 per cent were using WhatsApp daily once for Market Information out of which 21.49 per cent were using it weekly once, 6.66 per cent were using it fortnightly once, 2.22 per cent were using it monthly once and 8.89 were using whenever needed, 2.96

per cent had never used it for market information.

About 8.89 per cent of the respondents were using Telegram daily once for Market Information out of which 5.92 per cent were using it weekly once, 5.19 per cent were using it fortnightly once, 14.08 per cent were using it monthly once and 42.22 were using whenever needed, 23.70 per cent had never used Telegram for market information.

Relationship between the profile of farmers and the extent of use of social media as a source of market information by the farmers.

The value of coefficient of correlation shows that the extent of use of social media for market information was positively significantly associated at 0.05 percent level of significance with their education, occupation, social participation, media credibility and highly significantly associated with 0.01 level of significance with their Economic motivation, Market Information, Use of ICT Tools, mass media exposure and media credibility. Further, coefficient of correlation indicated that the variable age, land holding, and annual income had positive and non-significant relationship with extent of use of social media by farmers for market

information. It means that these variables have no significant role on the extent of use of social media.

Table 4 : Correlation between profile characteristics of farmers and their extent use of social media for market information.

| Sr. No. | Variables | Correlation coefficient |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| X ₁ | Age | 0.0577NS |
| X ₂ | Education | 0.2528* |
| X ₃ | Occupation | 0.2130* |
| X ₄ | Land Holding | 0.0563NS |
| X ₅ | Annual Income | 0.1068NS |
| X ₆ | Economic Motivation | 0.3577** |
| X ₇ | Market Information | 0.3417** |
| X ₈ | Use of ICT Tools | 0.3836** |
| X ₉ | Social Participation | 0.2134* |
| X ₁₀ | Mass media exposure | 0.4513** |
| X ₁₁ | Media Credibility | 0.2345* |

* Significant at 0.05 level of significance

NS- Non-Significant

**Significant at 0.01 level of significance

CONCLUSION

The discipline of agricultural extension has recently been interested in social media, and both researchers and practitioners are paying attention to social media-based agricultural extension. Notwithstanding their widespread use, this study found that the majority of farmers in the research region did not accept or use social media, nor did they consider it to be a significant source of agricultural knowledge. These results demonstrate how social media is actually seen in Marathwada's rural areas, and other developing nations are probably experiencing a similar predicament. The study conclusively proved that regarding social media sources available to farmers the majority of farmers use WhatsApp applications as the main source of social media available to them and for extent use of social media for market information, the majority of farmers use YouTube for the extent use of social media as a source of market information by the farmers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Social media enables farmers to network, share best practices, exchange information on market trends, and strengthen their bargaining power through cooperatives and alliances.
- (2) Using social media for market information carries the

risk of misinformation. Farmers may suffer financial losses due to false or misleading information about market prices, demand, or weather conditions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Farmers recognize the value of social media in providing market information. It helps make informed decisions on crop selection, pricing strategy, and farm management. However, we must evaluate and verify the info obtained. Responsible use is paramount, including respecting intellectual property rights, maintaining professional conduct, and safeguarding personal information. We pledge to use social media effectively to support our agricultural efforts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest among researchers.

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