

Extent of Utilization of Social Media by Extension Functionaries in Southern India

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ABSTRACT

We are living in the era of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), which contributed significantly in diversifying the means and modes of communication. Since inception of social media, communication is becoming more and more rapid and dynamic. Social media platforms like you tube, face book opened new avenues for information collecting, storing and sharing. As a result we are witnessing the tremendous potential of social media for people interaction, sharing of information and influencing the behavior complex of the people i.e Knowledge, Skill and Attitude. At the same time there is an immense need to strengthen and revitalize the extension system to meet the challenges in agricultural development. By keeping this in view the present study was taken up to study the extent of utilization of social media by the extension functionaries in southern India. The present study indicated that majority of the extension functionaries utilizing social media platforms like Gmail (97%) followed whatsapp (59%), face book (55%) and you tube (47%) for sharing of information. Nearly 58 percent of the extension functionaries were using the social media platforms for sharing the information. It is also observed from the study that innovativeness (0.5103), information seeking behavior (0.6136) found to be positively significant at 0.01 level of probability.

Key words: Information communication technologies; Social media; Behavioral complex; Agricultural extension systems;

Information is the ultimate power in any field, including agricultural sector. With advent of social media and other ICT tools paved new ways of human interaction. It substantially affected the nature of communication process. The term social media refers to the wide range of Internet – based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user – created content, or join online communities. The type of internet services commonly associated with social media includes the following:

Apps: a self-contained program or piece of software designed to fulfill a particular purpose; an application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device.
Multimedia product sharing sites: These sites allow users to share videos or photographs. eg: Digital green, You tube, Pinterest, Instagram.

Blog: A regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group that is written in

an informal or conversational style. e.g.- e-blogger
Wikis: A wiki is a collective website where any participant is allowed to modify any or create a new page using his /her web browser. e.g.- wikipedia
Social networking sites: A social networking website is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. e.g.: face book, twitter.

Social media is increasingly being used as a medium of sharing information and creating awareness. Platforms such as Face book, Twitter, YouTube and blogs have been used to engage with various audiences. Social media strengths are complementing traditional media in facilitating the shaping of content. In the recent years agricultural extension functionaries realized that social media is one of the potential media for revitalizing agricultural extension globally. Social media has changed the way we communicate, read, search, think, talk, watch,

listen, and sometimes start a revolution – be it political and or social. By keeping the potential of social media as medium for strengthening of agricultural extension system, the present study was carried out to assess the extent of social media for strengthening of agricultural extension system. Social computing is an exciting new direction in new direction in computing a field for both researchers in information and social sciences. Over the past two decade, social software, from e-mail to blog has fundamentally changed the ways of living, working and interacting with each others. (Aditya et al. , 2015).

The communities and relationships that agriculture is largely based on are further extended through social media channels and rural workers have begun to use social media to combat the feeling of isolation which arises due to the nature of their work. Social media overcomes geographical boundaries and creates communities who share common interests. The users also seek out information from traditional media social media platforms. Rhoades et al. (2007) noted that there was a large presence of blogs covering topics on agriculture.

Kiertzman et al. (2011) stated that mobile and web based technologies social media creates highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals.

According to Saravanan, et al. (2014) the major challenges in using social media for agricultural extension in the developing countries are-

Passive users: A review of the activities in most of the groups/communities/pages indicated that most of the users are very passive and only very few are pro-active. While many visit the group pages, only few posts, share and discuss ideas and issues.

Irrelevant information: Along with useful things, frequently there is irrelevant information also posted in the social media which increases the need of monitoring.

Infrastructure issues: Limited ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity is still a major issue in rural areas of most developing countries.

Mindset of users: Many users still believe that social media is “not for serious business”. It is for just to share personal photos and general information.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in six southern states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa and three union territories namely Andaman and Nicobar, Puducherry, Lakshadweep in India. A total number of 150 respondents comprise of extension officials working in agriculture and allied sectors were selected randomly for the study. A structured questionnaire was developed for the study. Test –Retest method and content validity tests were being used to test the reliability and validity of the instrument. The data was collected by using structured questionnaire and analyzed by applying suitable statistical tests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Social media utilization by Agricultural extension officers in India (N=150)

Social Media	No.	%	Rank
Gmail	142	97.0	1st
Whats app	88	59.0	II
Face book	82	55.0	III
You tube	73	47.0	IV
Wikis	52	35.0	V
Google+	27	18.0	VI
LinkedIn	22	15.0	VII
Blog	21	14.0	VIII
Twitter	16	11.0	IX
Flickr	11	7.0	X
Online professional Group	10	7.0	XI
RSS feeds	9	6.0	XII
Academia	3	3.0	XIII

It is evident from the Table 1 that, majority of the respondents claimed that they had accounts in social media platforms and they have been using them for updating professional knowledge. This results shows that Nearly cent percent (97%) of the respondents were having Gmail accounts and sharing information through electronic mails, The results from the above table also shows that more than fifty (59.0 %) of the people were using Whatsapp for sharing information including agricultural information. As many as 55 per cent of respondents were using facebook for interacting with other extension professionals and farmers. Nearly half (47.0 %) of the respondents using you tube for viewing video based agricultural information. A total of 35.0 per cent of the participants were depending on wikis like

Table 2. Purpose of utilization of social media by agricultural extension officers (N=150)

Purpose of utilization of social media	No.	%	Rank
To sharing information with others	58	36.8	I
To establishing professional relationships with others	42	28.0	II
To share audio visuals i.e., videos, audios, photos and pictures	36	24.0	III
To create awareness on innovative agricultural approaches	22	14.6	IV
To share knowledge with others	20	13.3	V
To build networking with agricultural extension officers	15	10.0	VI

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between independent variables and extent of utilization of social media by extension functionaries

Independent variables	'r' values
Age	0.1935NS
Gender	0.1875NS
Education	0.0171NS
Experience	-0.1921NS
Trainings undergone	0.3041*
Innovativeness	0.5103**
Information seeking behaviour	0.6136**
Material possession	0.3077*

NS= Non significant, *Significant at 0.05 level of probability
 ** Significant at 0.05 level of probability

Wikipedia, vikas pedia for gathering information. The results were showing that utilization of social media platforms like twitter, Flickr, Online professional group, RSS feeds and Academia was 11.0 per cent, 7.0 per cent, 6.0 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively. From the above results it also found that the usages of social media networks are significantly through increase in the usage of mobile phones. The results are in conformity

with study the *Kiertzman et al. (2011)*.

It is observed from the above table that the majority of the extension functionaries were utilizing social media for sharing information with others (36.8%), to establishing professional relationships with others (28.0%), to share audio visuals i.e., videos, audios, photos and pictures (24.0%), to create awareness on innovative agricultural approaches (14.6%), to share knowledge with others (13.3%) and to build networking with agricultural extension officers (10.0). Hence it could be concluded from the results that if the social media tools can be used for sharing of technical information for agricultural development.

Table.3 revealed that Information seeking behavior (0.6136) and Innovativeness (0.5103) were found to be significant at 0.01 level of probability. While material possession (0.3077) and trainings undergone (0.3041) were found to be significant at 0.05 level of probability. Thus Information seeking behavior, Innovativeness, material possession and trainings undergone were the major determinants of extent of utilization of social media by extension functionaries.

CONCLUSION

Social media serves as a potential medium for sharing information by the extension professionals and helps them to be aware of the recent developments in the agriculture to allied sectors. It also helps in build relationships, share information, and connect with varied audience. It is evident from the study that majority of the extension functionaries utilizing social media platforms like gmail , followed whatsapp , face book and you tube. Social media provides tools to extension professionals for sharing agricultural information if utilized appropriately.

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