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SOCIAL MEDIA: BOON TO AGRICULTURE

Ajay Kumar Prusty[1], Bibhuti Prasad Mohapatra[2], Sandeep Rout[3], Rupashree Senapati[1] and Chitrasena Padhy[1]

Abstract

In the current scenario, social media plays an important part in the transfer of information and communication in the agricultural community of India. Emerging through the Covid-19 pandemic, social media was very important for the transfer of information because of the shutdowns. It is very effective as everyone can connect with each other anytime and anywhere through social media. The present study shows how social media improves farmers through effective information grasp. What are social media and some kinds of it were discussed here.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, youtube, WhatsApp.

#General Article

[1]M.S.Swaminathan School of Agriculture, Centurion University of Technology and Management, Paralakhemundi, Gajapati, Odisha-761211, India.
[2]Department of Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751003, India.
[3]Faculty of Agriculture, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, Odisha-754006, India
Email - sandeeprout1988@gmail.com

Introduction

Social media is that the most up-to-date sort of data communication and on a world scale, we will find it irresistible, we can hate it but it can't be ignored anymore. The millennials have made social media an inseparable part of their lives which connects them with the remainder of the globe. Accessing news through social media by using mobile devices is additionally gaining popularity (Italie, 2015). The facility of social media has expanded beyond evolutionizing personal communication to a socio-political level bringing social revolutions and toppling governments. Arab spring in 2009 – 2010 in the Middle East and few African countries which made headlines for Twitter uprisings and Facebook revolutions have made political history with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google Docs helping people, as Daniel Nadler puts it, 'share revolution'. Barack Obama joined Twitter with the White House handle @POTUS and created a record of 1,000,000 followers within 4.5 hours (Thorne, 2015).

The general elections of 2014 in India have created another history with massive social media campaigns increasing awareness and forming popular opinion (Wolf, 2015). Not just on the political level, social media activism has yielded leads to social causes like the He for She campaign of UN Women which generated a lot of tweets and raised awareness on gender equality, the Ice Bucket Challenge raised awareness on Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and funds worth millions for further research on the disease, Facebook 'Safety Check' app during Nepal earthquake of 2015 helped people locate their friends and family within the disaster zones. Corporate recruiters are hiring their prospective employees referring to their social media profiles and digital footprints instead of their resume (Schawbel, 2012), and these are just a few samples of the way social media affects the lifetime of millions around the globe for a positive change. Be it the 2008 Mumbai attacks, 2009 revolution in Iran, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Egyptian revolution of 2011, 2015 Nepal earthquake, Novel Corona Virus 2019, or any cyclone striking Eastern India, social media has alerted the globe, helped people unite during a crisis, and most significantly, motivated people to act. a significant reason for concern and scepticism for social media use is that the limited span of attention to events and recognition of sensational ones only but in those cases too, they need to be served the aim well for the amount they were intended to. This sea-change in communication can affect the way people create change. "Group action gives human society its particular character, and anything that changes the way groups get things done will affect society as a whole" (Shirkey, 2009) and this is true for the development sector likewise. Social media gives opportunities to farmers for co creating content and promotes co-learning among farmers (Jackson *et al.* 2009).

Further, content creation is quicker through social media than traditional mass media channels of extension communication (Fuess, 2011). Realtime interaction through farmer clientele is possible through social media. Therefore, these tools help to speak instantaneously and cheaply with stakeholders (Newbury et al., 2014 and Mains *et al*. 2013), the advantages of social media goes beyond cost effective ways of communication to empowering social connections and long run engagement in extension programs (O'Neill *et al.* 2011). For the farming community, social media are often a decent way of networking and gaining through social capital in a variety of trust, engagement and community involvement (Stanley, 2013). The potential of Social Media channels like

Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube among others aren't yet fully exploited by agricultural extension and development departments to succeed in intent on farmers in India. However, there is a bright prospect of social media use in agricultural extension and advisory services given the recent initiatives taken by the Indian government to reinforce social media use (Thakur and Chander, 2018).

Meaning

Social media are web based tools of transmission that allow users to personally interact with others individually or in groups for the needs of exchanging information, sharing thoughts and opinions, influencing and facilitating decision-making by creating, storing, retrieving and exchanging information in any form (text, pictures, video, etc.,) by anyone within the virtual world (Suchiradipta and Saravanan, 2016). Merriam-Webster (2015) defines social media as sorts of transmission through which users can create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. Social media refers to the internet-based digital tools for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers to the user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia that's are shared and discussed over digital networks (Andres and Woodard, 2013). Aspects of social media that produces them a crucial and accessible tool in development communication are their quick access through mobile phones, mass-personal communication and mass-self communication, a bigger set of weak ties to confirm receipt of novel ideas, a high degree of connectedness, and linkability and content sharing across multiple platforms (Hemsley and Mason, 2013). A short classification of various sorts of social media platforms is given in Table 1. as described by Suchiradipta and Saravanan (2016).

Table 1. Different Types of Social Media Platforms

Type of Platform	Examples	Description
Social networking sites	Facebook, Myspace, Google+	These platforms are mostly used for creating personal profiles and networks with friends, colleagues, and peers. they're the foremost popular kind of social media platform and have the very best reach, mainly due to the non-public reach.
Blogs and vlogs	Blogger, Wordpress	These are the earliest style of social media. They're mostly personal sites but are increasingly being employed by corporate houses to succeed in their clients. Media richness is high in blogs but not most in vlogs.
Micro-blogs	Twitter, Instagram	They are the same as blogs with restriction of characters (140 for Twitter) and permit users to make and share content. Media richness is additionally high as in blogs.
Collaborative projects	Wikis	Joint and simultaneous content creation by users. Media richness is mostly low but they will become the most source of knowledge for users because of mere diversity and broad base coverage.

Type of Platform	Examples	Description
Social bookmarking	Delicious, Blinklist	Group based collection, rating, and sharing of internet links and media content. Low media richness.
Social gaming	World of Warcraft, Farmbook	The users can interact with one another though the scope of self presentation and self-disclosure is somewhat limited. they will even be leveraged by corporate houses for communication campaigns and reach several users.
Content communities	Video (YouTube, Vimeo, Vine)	They are mostly formed to share specific style of content easily amongst many users. Media richness is high for specific content. They're easy means to succeed in a world user base in a remarkable way.
	Photo (Instagram, Flickr, Tumbler)	
	Audio (Soundcloud, Podcasts)	
	MS Office docs, PDF, PPT (Slideshare)	
Forums, discussion boards and groups	Google hangout, Blackboard, Discussion groups (Dgroups)	Content creation and sharing among users with specific interests or activities is less complicated. Media richness is medium as all platforms don't support various formats of content.
Socially integrated messaging platforms	WhatsApp, Facebook, messenger, Snapchat	These platforms have recently gained high popularity because of group messaging options and high media richness. Users can create and share any variety of content in groups or to individuals.
Professional networking	ResearchGate, Academia.edu, LinkedIn	These platforms increase the scope for scientific discussions among peers and experts in specific fields. Increased networking among professionals increases the scope of researches to be disseminated amongst a wider audience.
Social news	Reddit, Propeller, Digg	These are point sharing platforms where users can treat the posts. The news items and comments are ranked supported popularity. Media richness is high and might be very useful for maintaining recent happenings and web trends.

(Suchiradipta and Saravanan, 2016)

Some commonly used social media applications used by the farmers include Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp. The usage of these applications has increased because the world going through COVID-19 pandemic and all the communications are based through internet connections. They have become more friendly and frequently used applications as they are available to use in mobile handsets also. These applications are much efficient for

sharing video, images, audio and even having conversations through text which supports efficient contact of the farmers with agricultural extension functionaries, research centres, input organisations etc (Table.1).

Youtube

One of Google's subsidiaries allows users to view, like, comment, share, subscribe, upload, report on the videos in the website. YouTube has become quite a popular platform scientific information in agriculture. The contents in youtube are developed and uploaded by individuals, media, music, institutions etc. News channels, agricultural research institutes and non-government organizations are organizational sources for uploading videos. The information is available in Hindi as well as in other regional Indian languages.

Facebook

An online social networking media service. Anyone can post updates about activity on their farm, share pictures, and see what friends, celebrities, organizations, and groups are up to. The Facebook community often consists of people known in real life. Facebook enables us to post anything in the timeline which can be viewed by friends and people related to them. It has features to add friends who are related to your field of work. Facebook pages of several agricultural organizations are like SAUs, research centres, NGOs etc are functional which post updates on their pages regularly for the upliftment of the farmers. Images, Videos and other information can be shared by these organizations through their profile to farmers.

Whatsapp

One of the most commonly used social media platforms now a days as almost everyone who are having smartphones are using whatsApp. This messenger is a very effective medium bridging the gap between farmers and researchers as information can be shared both ways directly to the notification of smartphones. Several groups were created by scientists, research organizations, extension functionaries including the farmers of the regions for easy transfer of technology and information among them. The information in WhatsApp can be accessed by everyone anywhere and anytime.

Conclusion

Social media is an important and effective way of transferring information to the farming community rather than the conventional method of technology transfer. The social media are unique as they supply strong communication linkage between the farming communities. Social media can contribute towards increasing efficiency by supporting the production, marketing and information needs of the farmers. The increase in the usage of smartphones also assists in increased usage of social media by farming communities bringing all the players in the sector closer to each other. A multi-dimensional initiative can be taken by organisations in agriculture for all round development of the farmers including agricultural extension services.

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