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Perception of farmers towards social media for agricultural information dissemination in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has transformed agricultural extension services by enabling farmers to access timely and reliable information through social media platforms. The present study was undertaken to assess the perception of farmers towards social media as a source of agricultural information and technology dissemination in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. Three blocks, namely Musiri, Mannachanallur and Thuraiyur, were purposively selected based on their agricultural importance. Six villages were identified from these blocks, and a total of 120 farmers actively using smartphones and social media for agricultural purposes were selected through the snowball sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule. The perception of respondents was measured using eighteen statements on a five-point Likert continuum. The findings revealed that a majority (50.83 per cent) of the respondents possessed a medium level of perception towards social media, followed by 33.33 per cent with low perception and 15.83 per cent with high perception. Statement-wise analysis indicated that respondents strongly perceived social media as a user-friendly platform for obtaining agricultural information (Mean = 4.02), with messages being easy to read and understand (Mean = 3.81). Respondents also acknowledged the role of social media in increasing social interaction, motivating farmers to learn modern agricultural technologies and creating awareness about improved farming practices. However, comparatively lower mean scores were observed for the completeness, practical utility and technology dissemination capacity of social media messages. The study concludes that social media has emerged as an effective agricultural extension tool, although improvements in the reliability, completeness and location-specific relevance of information are necessary to enhance its usefulness among farmers.

Keywords: Social media, farmers' perception, technology and information dissemination

1. Introduction

Agriculture is one of the major sectors contributing to the Indian economy and serves as the primary source of livelihood for a large proportion of the rural population. Agricultural productivity and sustainability largely depend on farmers' timely access to accurate and reliable information related to improved crop production technologies, pest and disease management, weather forecasts, market intelligence and government development programmes. Traditionally, agricultural extension agencies have played a crucial role in transferring technologies to farmers through demonstrations, training programmes, field visits and advisory services. However, increasing farmer populations and limited extension personnel have created challenges in providing timely advisory services.

The rapid growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has opened new avenues for agricultural information dissemination. Among various ICT tools, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and Telegram have emerged as important channels for sharing agricultural knowledge due to their interactive nature,

multimedia capabilities and wide accessibility. These platforms enable farmers to communicate with agricultural experts, exchange farming experiences and receive real-time information on improved technologies.

The effectiveness of social media as an agricultural extension tool depends largely on farmers' perception regarding its usefulness, accessibility, credibility and practical applicability. Farmers with positive perceptions are more likely to utilize social media for agricultural decision-making and adopt improved farming technologies. Therefore, understanding farmers' perception is essential for developing effective digital extension strategies and enhancing technology dissemination.

Although several studies have examined the adoption of ICTs in agriculture, limited research has focused on farmers' perception of social media as an agricultural extension tool in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. Hence, the present study was undertaken to assess the overall and statement-wise perception of farmers towards social media for agricultural information dissemination and technology transfer.

2. Research Methodology

The present study was conducted in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu, which comprises fourteen rural development blocks exhibiting considerable variation in agricultural activities, cropping patterns, resource availability and socio-economic characteristics. Among these, Musiri, Mannachanallur and Thuraiyur blocks were purposively selected based on their agricultural importance and active farming population. A comprehensive list of Village Panchayats under the selected blocks was obtained from the Office of the Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruchirappalli. Musiri block consists of 33 Village Panchayats, Mannachanallur comprises 35 Village Panchayats and Thuraiyur comprises 34 Village Panchayats, accounting for a total of 102 Village Panchayats. After consultation with Agricultural Officers, extension personnel and local leaders, villages having a considerable farming population and active agricultural engagement were identified. Accordingly, Thiruthalaiyur and Kottathur villages were selected from Musiri block, Ayyampalayam and Valaiyur villages from Mannachanallur block and Nagapuram and Pagalavadi villages from Thuraiyur block. Thus, six villages were selected for conducting the investigation.

The respondents for the study were selected using the snowball sampling technique, as it was difficult to identify farmers possessing smartphones and actively using social media for agricultural purposes through conventional sampling methods. Initially, a few eligible respondents were identified with the assistance of Agricultural Officers, extension personnel, farmer groups and village leaders. These respondents subsequently helped identify other farmers with similar characteristics within their social and professional networks. The process was continued until the required sample size was achieved. Thus, a total of 120 farmers drawn from the six selected villages constituted the sample for the present investigation.

Perception was operationally defined as the degree to which farmers perceived the usefulness, correctness, accessibility and timeliness of agricultural information disseminated through social media platforms. To measure farmers' perception, a scale consisting of eighteen statements was developed with the assistance of agricultural extension scientists, ICT experts and other subject matter specialists. The statements covered various aspects of social media, including user-friendliness, readability, usefulness, practical utility, awareness creation, communication effectiveness and technology dissemination. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert continuum comprising Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. Mean scores were calculated for each statement, and the statements were ranked in descending order based on their mean values. The overall perception scores of the respondents were categorized into low, medium and high levels following the procedure adopted by Balaji (2024) [2]. The collected data were coded, classified and analysed using appropriate descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean score and ranking.

3. Results and Discussion

Perception is the process of attaining awareness or

understanding the information, where one receives, collects, makes an action for possession and apprehension with the mind. Perception quantifies the relationship between the intensity of physical stimuli and their perceptual effects.

3.1 Overall perception level

The overall perception level of the respondents about social media was studied and results are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their overall perception level about social media (n=120)

S. No.	Category	Number of respondents	Percent
1	Low	40	33.33
2	Medium	61	50.83
3	High	19	15.83
Total		120	100

From the result shown in Table 1 the majority of the respondents (50.83 per cent) had a medium level of perception about social media, followed by 33.33 per cent with low and 15.83 per cent with high perception levels. The majority of respondents (50.83 per cent) having a medium level of perception about social media suggests that while they are somewhat aware of its potential, they may face barriers such as limited digital literacy and poor internet access. This moderate perception reflects a transitional phase, where farmers are gradually adopting social media but have not yet fully realized its value for agricultural purposes. This is in accordance with the findings of Harsini *et al.*, (2023) [3].

3.2. Statement wise the level of Perception of the respondents about the social media

A detailed analysis on statement wise the level of perception of the respondents about social media are discussed in the Table 2.

The data presented in Table 2 among the eighteen statements, "Social media is a user-friendly platform for obtaining agricultural information" recorded the highest mean score (4.02) and secured Rank I, indicating that respondents strongly perceived social media as an accessible and convenient source of agricultural information. This was followed by "Social media messages are easy to read and understand" (Mean = 3.81, Rank II), suggesting that the content available on social media was considered simple and easy to comprehend. The statement "Social media increases social contact" (Mean = 3.57, Rank III) further highlighted the role of social media in improving communication among farmers, extension personnel and agricultural experts.

The statements "Social media motivates farmers to learn new agricultural technologies" (Mean = 3.56, Rank IV), "Social media video files are practical tools for demonstrating agricultural techniques" (Mean = 3.53, Rank V), and "Messages shared on social media are relevant and useful to farming" (Mean = 3.50, Rank VI) indicate that respondents appreciated the educational value of social media and recognized its effectiveness in delivering timely agricultural information. Likewise, "Social media promotes fast and better agricultural solutions" (Mean = 3.48, Rank VII) and "Social media creates awareness of modern farming technologies" (Mean = 3.42, Rank VIII) demonstrate the importance of social media in creating awareness and supporting agricultural extension activities.

Table 2: Statement wise perception level towards social media by the respondents

S. No.	Statements	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Messages shared on social media are relevant and useful to the farming	3.50	VI
2.	Social media messages are easy to read and understand	3.81	II
3.	Social media as a user- friendly platform for obtaining agricultural information	4.02	I
4.	Messages shared on social media are complete in nature	3.12	XV
5.	Social media messages have a higher practical utility	2.97	XVIII
6.	Social media saves time, money and energy of farmers	3.25	XII
7.	Social media audio files in spoken information, allowing for easy communication with low literacy rates	3.41	IX
8.	Social media video files as a practical tool for demonstrating agricultural techniques and sharing real-time farming practices	3.53	V
9.	The visual nature of social media photos as an effective means for farmers to exchange knowledge	3.10	XVII
10.	Social media increases social contact	3.57	III
11.	Social media provided the need based information	3.30	XI
12.	Social media creates awareness of modern farming technologies	3.42	VIII
13.	Social media motivates to learn the new agricultural technologies	3.56	IV
14.	Social media helps convince farmers to accept modern technologies	3.35	X
15.	Social media motivates the farmers to adopt new technologies	3.20	XIV
16.	Social media promotes fast and better agriculture solutions	3.48	VII
17.	Social media as an unbiased tool for information dissemination	3.22	XIII
18.	Social media is a suitable platform for easy technology dissemination in agriculture	3.11	XVI

*Multiple response

Moderate agreement was observed for "Social media audio files allow easy communication for farmers with low literacy levels" (Mean = 3.41, Rank IX), "Social media helps convince farmers to accept modern technologies" (Mean = 3.35, Rank X), "Social media provides need-based information" (Mean = 3.30, Rank XI), "Social media saves time, money and energy of farmers" (Mean = 3.25, Rank XII), and "Social media as an unbiased tool for information dissemination"(Mean = 3.22, Rank XIII) and Social media motivates the farmers to adopt new technologies (Mean = 3.20, Rank XIV).

These findings suggest that respondents acknowledged the usefulness of social media but expected more reliable, personalized and unbiased agricultural information. The lowest mean scores were recorded for "Messages shared on social media are complete in nature" (Mean = 3.12, Rank XV), "Social media is a suitable platform for easy technology dissemination in agriculture" (Mean = 3.11, Rank XVI), "The visual nature of social media photos is an effective means for farmers to exchange knowledge" (Mean = 3.10, Rank XVII), and "Social media messages have higher practical utility" (Mean = 2.97, Rank XVIII). These results indicate that respondents were less satisfied with the completeness and practical usefulness of the information available on social media.

Overall, the statement-wise analysis indicates that respondents perceived social media as a user-friendly and effective platform for obtaining agricultural information and learning modern farming technologies. However, improving the reliability, completeness and location-specific relevance of the information shared through social media would further enhance its effectiveness as a tool for agricultural extension and technology dissemination. This is in accordance with the findings of Balaji (2023) ^[1].

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that a majority of the respondents possessed a medium level of perception towards

the use of social media for agricultural information dissemination. Farmers generally perceived social media as a user-friendly, easily understandable and accessible platform for obtaining agricultural information. The respondents also recognized its role in enhancing communication, creating awareness of modern farming technologies and motivating farmers to learn improved agricultural practices. However, respondents expressed comparatively lower satisfaction regarding the completeness, practical utility and reliability of information shared through social media platforms. These findings indicate that although social media has emerged as an effective complementary agricultural extension tool, there is considerable scope for improving the quality, authenticity and location-specific relevance of agricultural information disseminated through these platforms. Strengthening collaboration among agricultural universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), extension agencies and line departments in developing scientifically validated digital content will further enhance farmers' confidence and increase the effectiveness of social media in agricultural technology dissemination. Therefore, social media can serve as a sustainable and efficient extension platform for improving farmers' knowledge, accelerating technology adoption and promoting agricultural development.

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