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Farmers' preference for social media platforms for agricultural information

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Abstract

Social media has increasingly become an important source of agricultural information, offering farmers quick access to production technologies, weather updates, market information, and expert advisories. Understanding farmers' preference for different social media platforms is essential for developing effective digital extension strategies. The present study was undertaken in Akola district of Maharashtra State to identify the social media platforms preferred by the farmers for accessing agricultural information and to examine their pattern of use. An exploratory research design was used for the study. A total of 150 farmers were selected through simple random sampling from fifteen villages across three purposively selected blocks of Akola district. Data were collected through personal interviews using a structured and pre-tested interview schedule and analysed using appropriate statistical tools. The findings showed that half of the respondents (50.67%) belonged to the medium category of frequency of social media use, while 30.66 per cent and 18.67 per cent fell under the high and low categories, respectively. Among the social media platforms studied, WhatsApp was used regularly by the highest proportion of farmers (74.67%), followed by YouTube (62.00%). Based on mean scores, WhatsApp secured the first rank (2.65), followed by YouTube (2.55), Instagram (1.55), Facebook (1.45), and X (Twitter) (1.06). The study highlights that WhatsApp and YouTube are the most preferred digital platforms among farmers for accessing agricultural information. These findings suggest that extension agencies, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and agricultural universities may achieve greater outreach by prioritizing these platforms for disseminating timely and location-specific agricultural advisories.

Keywords: Agricultural information, preference, social media platforms, WhatsApp, YouTube

1. Introduction

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in India by supporting food security, rural livelihoods, and employment. Technological advancements, climate variability, and changing market conditions have increased farmers' need for timely, reliable, and location-specific information. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have strengthened agricultural extension by improving the speed, reach, and interactivity of information dissemination. However, the availability of multiple digital platforms does not mean that farmers use them equally, highlighting the need to understand their platform preferences.

Among ICT tools, social media has emerged as an important channel for agricultural communication. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and X facilitate the exchange of agricultural advisories, weather updates, pest and disease management information, market information, and farmers' experiences. Growing smartphone

and internet penetration has further expanded their use in rural India. According to Kemp (2025)^[3], India had over 800 million internet users and nearly 500 million social media users, indicating considerable potential for digital agricultural extension.

Previous studies have reported increasing acceptance of social media for agricultural information. Thakur and Chander (2018)^[11] noted farmers' preference for WhatsApp due to its simplicity and convenience, while Singh *et al.* (2021)^[10] and Meena *et al.* (2022)^[7] identified WhatsApp and YouTube among the preferred platforms for agricultural communication. Chowdary *et al.* (2024)^[1] and Madhushekar *et al.* (2024)^[5] also highlighted the importance of WhatsApp and YouTube in agricultural information dissemination. However, platform preference may vary with accessibility, ease of use, familiarity, and perceived usefulness.

Understanding these preferences can help Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), State Agricultural Universities (SAUs),

extension agencies, and policymakers develop more targeted digital communication strategies. However, evidence on farmers' preference for social media platforms for agricultural information in Akola district of Maharashtra remains limited. In view of this gap, the present study was undertaken to assess farmers' preference for social media platforms used for accessing agricultural information.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Akola district of Maharashtra State using an exploratory research design. Three blocks, namely Barshitakli, Patur, and Balapur, were purposively selected considering the growing use of social media by farmers for accessing agricultural information. From each selected block, five villages were selected through simple random sampling. Further, ten farmers from each selected village were chosen by adopting a simple random sampling technique. The total sample comprised 150 farmers. Data were collected through personal interviews using a structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Preference of social media platforms was measured on a three-point continuum comprising Most Preferred, Preferred, and Not Preferred with scores of 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Mean scores were computed to rank the social media platforms according

to the respondents' preference. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and ranking.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile Characteristics of the Respondents

The profile characteristics of the respondents were studied using selected characteristics and are presented in Table 1. More than half (54.67%) belonged to the middle age group (36-50 years), while 41.33 per cent had secondary education and 28.00 per cent had higher secondary education. Semi-medium landholding was predominant (36.00%), and 54.00 per cent belonged to the medium annual income category. Most respondents practiced Kharif-Rabi cropping (87.33%), had 11-20 years of farming experience (44.67%), and exhibited medium levels of extension contact (56.67%), social participation (65.33%), and frequency of social media use (50.67%); all respondents had internet access, indicating widespread digital connectivity in the study area. The predominance of middle-aged respondents and semi-medium landholdings was comparable with Mathkar *et al.* (2026) ^[6], while the medium level of social media use was consistent with Mishra *et al.* (2022) ^[8].

Table 1: Profile characteristics of the respondents (n = 150)

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (Years)	Young (Up to 35)	27	18.00
		Middle (36-50)	82	54.67
		Old (Above 50)	41	27.33
2.	Education	Illiterate	00	00.00
		Primary	05	03.34
		Middle School	26	17.33
		Secondary School	62	41.33
		Higher Secondary School	42	28.00
		College and above	15	10.00
3.	Land holding (ha)	Marginal (Up to 1.00)	12	08.00
		Small (1.01-2.00)	39	26.00
		Semi-medium (2.01-4.00)	54	36.00
		Medium (4.01-10.00)	34	22.67
		Large (Above 10.00)	11	07.33
4.	Annual income (₹)	Up to 3,05,000	43	28.67
		3,05,001-5,25,000	81	54.00
		Above 5,25,000	26	17.33
5.	Cropping pattern	Only Kharif	13	08.67
		Kharif + Rabi	131	87.33
		Kharif + Rabi + Summer	05	03.33
		Perennial	01	00.67
6.	Farming experience	Up to 10 years	24	16.00
		11-20 years	67	44.67
		Above 20 years	59	39.33
7.	Extension contact	Low (< 1.30)	47	31.33
		Medium (1.30 to 4.40)	85	56.67
		High (> 4.40)	18	12.00
8.	Social participation	Low (<0.35)	33	22.00
		Medium (0.35 to 3.07)	98	65.33
		High (>3.07)	19	12.67
9.	Scientific orientation	Low (<20)	15	10.00
		Medium (20 to 21)	47	31.33
		High (>21)	88	58.67
10.	Access to internet	Yes (1)	150	100.00
		No (0)	00	00.00
11.	Frequency of use of social media platforms	Low (<3.29)	28	18.67
		Medium (3.29 to 5.97)	76	50.67
		High (>5.97)	46	30.66

3.2. Frequency of use of social media platforms

The frequency of use of different social media platforms by the respondents is presented in Table 2. The results indicated that WhatsApp was the most frequently used platform for accessing agricultural information, with 74.67 per cent of the respondents reporting regular use, followed by YouTube (62.00%). In contrast, Facebook and Instagram were used regularly by only 4.00 per cent and 6.67 per cent of the respondents, respectively, while X (formerly Twitter) recorded the lowest level of regular use (1.33%). The greater use of WhatsApp and YouTube may be associated with their ease of operation, availability of agricultural groups and educational videos, and wider acceptance among farming communities. The widespread use of these platforms indicates that farmers increasingly rely on instant messaging and video-based content for obtaining practical and timely agricultural information. These findings are in conformity with the observations of Kumari (2020) ^[4], Meena *et al.* (2022) ^[7], Singh *et al.* (2021) ^[10], Harsini *et al.* (2023) ^[2], and Madhushekar *et al.* (2024) ^[5], who also reported WhatsApp as the most frequently used social media platform among the farmers.

Table 2: Frequency of use of social media platforms by farmers for accessing agricultural information (n = 150).

Sr. No.	Social media platforms	Regular		Sometimes		Never	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	WhatsApp	112	74.67	27	18.00	11	07.33
2.	YouTube	93	62.00	47	31.33	10	06.67
3.	Facebook	06	04.00	95	63.33	49	32.67
4.	Instagram	10	06.67	75	50.00	65	43.33
5.	X (Twitter)	02	01.33	05	03.33	143	95.34

3.3. Preference for social media platforms

The respondents' preference for different social media platforms is presented in Table 3.

WhatsApp emerged as the most preferred platform for accessing agricultural information, securing the first rank with a mean score of 2.65, followed by YouTube (2.55), Instagram (1.55), Facebook (1.45), and X (Twitter) (1.06). In terms of the highest preference category, 74.67 per cent of the respondents rated WhatsApp as most preferred, followed by YouTube (62.00%). On the other hand, Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) were less preferred for agricultural purposes. The higher preference for WhatsApp may be associated with its user-friendly interface, widespread adoption among rural smartphone users, instant messaging facility, multimedia sharing options, and the availability of agriculture-related groups managed by extension personnel and progressive farmers. Similarly, YouTube was preferred because it provides visual demonstrations of recommended agricultural practices, enabling farmers to understand complex farm operations more effectively. The comparatively lower preference for Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) may reflect their relatively limited use for agriculture-specific communication and lower availability of localized agricultural content among the respondents. This preference pattern indicates that farmers favour platforms that provide quick access to practical, easy-to-understand, and visually supported agricultural information.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Thakur and Chander (2018) ^[11], Sandeep GP *et al.* (2020) ^[9], Singh *et al.* (2021) ^[10], Meena *et al.* (2022) ^[7], Chowdary *et al.* (2024) ^[1], and Madhushekar *et al.* (2024) ^[5], who also reported WhatsApp and YouTube as the most preferred social media platforms for accessing agricultural information.

Table 3: Preference and ranking of social media platforms used by farmers for accessing agricultural information (n = 150)

Sr. No.	Social media platforms	Most preferred		Preferred		Not preferred		Mean Score	Rank
		f	%	f	%	f	%		
1.	WhatsApp	112	74.67	23	15.33	15	10.00	2.65	I
2.	YouTube	93	62.00	46	30.67	11	07.33	2.55	II
3.	Instagram	09	06.00	64	42.67	77	51.33	1.55	III
4.	Facebook	05	03.33	57	38.00	88	58.67	1.45	IV
5.	X (Twitter)	02	01.33	05	03.33	143	95.34	1.06	V

Conclusion

The study concludes that WhatsApp and YouTube were the two most frequently used and most preferred social media platforms among farmers for accessing agricultural information in the study area. Their widespread acceptance may be associated with their ease of use, multimedia capabilities, and the availability of agriculture-related content in an easily understandable format. In contrast, Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) were less preferred for agricultural purposes. Most respondents fell in the medium category of frequency of social media use, indicating moderate engagement with digital platforms for agricultural information seeking, though their level of engagement varies. These findings suggest that extension agencies, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, State Agricultural Universities, and other agricultural organizations should make greater use of WhatsApp and YouTube for disseminating timely, need-based, and location-specific agricultural advisories. Greater integration of these platforms into agricultural extension

programmes has the potential to improve the reach, relevance, and effectiveness of digital advisory services, thereby supporting informed decision-making among farmers.

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