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Constraints faced by farmers in use of social media and strategies for their effective utilization: A study in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing use of social media among farmers, several practical barriers continue to limit its purposeful utilization for agricultural purposes. The present study was undertaken to identify the constraints faced by farmers in the use of social media and to document the suggestions given by them for its more effective utilization, in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh. A total of 150 farmers were selected from seven villages of the district using proportionate and systematic random sampling, and data were collected through a pre-tested interview schedule. The results revealed that lack of awareness about technology (74.00% often) was the most frequently reported constraint, followed by lack of digital literacy (72.67%), expensive recharge/data cost (71.33%), limited use of social media for agricultural purposes (56.67%) and credibility of information source (54.67%). Constraints related to network infrastructure, such as poor network connectivity (5.33% often) and high-speed internet problems (10.00% often), and limited use of smartphones (6.00% often) were comparatively less severe. The farmers suggested improving rural internet connectivity, providing agricultural information in Hindi and other local languages, timely response from experts and Krishi Vigyan Kendra personnel through WhatsApp, wider use of short videos and photographs over lengthy text messages, regular digital-literacy training, and the establishment of verified village- or block-level WhatsApp groups with direct expert interaction. These findings indicate that awareness- and skill-related barriers, rather than basic infrastructure or cost, are the primary constraints limiting the purposeful use of social media by farmers of Morena district, an insight with direct implications for the design of future digital-literacy and agro-advisory interventions.

Keywords: Constraints, Farmers, Morena, Social media, Strategies, Suggestions

1. Introduction

Although social media offers considerable promise as a channel for agricultural information and advisory services, farmers' ability to use it purposefully is often constrained by a range of practical, technical and skill-related barriers. Identifying these constraints, along with the solutions farmers themselves consider useful, is essential for designing digital-extension interventions that farmers can realistically use.

Several recent studies have documented such constraints. Sandeep *et al.* (2022) [1] reported low digital literacy (45.0%), poor social media networking skills (50.0%) and low information-processing ability (65.0%) as major constraints limiting the effective utilization of social media among the farmers surveyed, and recommended mass awareness programmes on useful agricultural websites and applications, periodic digital-literacy training, improved rural network infrastructure and credible, localised content as possible solutions. Malik *et al.* (2024) [2] identified lack of awareness about useful mobile apps (WMS 1.88, rank I) as the foremost constraint faced by farmers in using social media, followed by poor competency in using mobile apps (WMS 1.64), lack of awareness about useful websites (WMS 1.51), poor network services (WMS 1.31) and poor competency in internet use (WMS 1.29), with the cost of internet recharge (WMS 1.00) reported as the least severe constraint; severity analysis in the same study showed that awareness- and skill-related gaps, rather than cost, were rated as more severe by the farmers. Barau *et al.* (2025) [3] reported that farmers of Sokoto state faced constraints of inadequate search skills (28.57%), poor network connectivity (22.0%), lack of content quality control (16.48%), inadequate power supply (12.1%) and high cost of data (11.54%), with 9.34 per cent of respondents also reporting experiences of account hacking while accessing agricultural information. Mithun *et al.* (2026) [4], studying livestock farmers of Andhra Pradesh, found information overload (77.59%) to be the most severe constraint, followed by network issues and slow internet speed (68.88%), presence of fake or misleading information (61.48%), low digital skills (51.66%), high cost of data (48.33%), lack of area-specific information (44.63%), language barrier (35.92%) and lack of trust in available information (27.22%).

With respect to possible solutions, Himshikha *et al.* (2026) [5], using Garrett's ranking technique with a panel of twelve subject-matter experts, found that deployment of peer mentors or lead farmers as digital facilitators

was ranked as the most effective strategy to overcome such constraints, followed by short, local-language video explainers of two minutes or less, verified district-level WhatsApp or Telegram channels moderated by Krishi Vigyan Kendras, voice-note and IVR-based advisories for low-literacy farmers, and monthly village-level digital-literacy workshops; infrastructure-oriented measures such as community Wi-Fi hotspots and subsidised data packs were accorded comparatively lower priority, suggesting that socially embedded, peer-led and trust-based interventions are perceived as more effective than purely infrastructural measures.

These studies indicate that awareness, skill and trust-related barriers are consistently reported as more limiting than cost or basic connectivity across different farming contexts, and that farmer-suggested and peer-based solutions are generally preferred over purely technical fixes. A locality-specific documentation of these constraints and suggestions is therefore useful for designing digital-extension strategies suited to Morena district. This paper is drawn from a larger study on the use of social media by farmers of Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, and reports findings specific to the constraints faced by farmers in the use of social media and the suggestions given by them for its purposeful utilization.

1.1 Objective of the study

To study the constraints faced by farmers in the use of social media and to document their suggestions for its purposeful utilization, in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh.

2. Methodology

2.1 Locale of the study

The study was conducted in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, which falls under the Chambal division of the state and borders Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Agriculture, together with allied livestock rearing, forms the principal occupation of the majority of the district's rural population.

2.2 Research design

A descriptive research design was adopted for the study, as the objective was to describe the constraints faced by farmers in using social media and to document their suggestions for its improvement.

2.3 Selection of respondents

All seven blocks of Morena district, namely Ambah, Jaura, Kailaras, Morena, Pahadgarh, Porsa and Sabalgarh, were included, and one village was randomly selected from each block, yielding seven villages in all. A total of 150 respondents were selected from these villages using proportionate sampling based on the number of households in each village, followed by systematic random sampling within each village from lists obtained from the respective panchayat offices.

2.4 Data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the sampled farmers. The schedule was prepared in Hindi for the convenience of the respondents and pre-tested on a small group of non-sample farmers before finalisation. Each respondent was personally interviewed by the researcher at his residence or farm.

2.5 Measurement of constraints and suggestions

Farmers' constraints in the use of social media were assessed across eleven specific items covering technical, infrastructural, economic and knowledge-related barriers, namely high-speed internet problems, expensive recharge/data cost, poor network connectivity, electricity problems, limited use of smartphones, lack of digital literacy, lack of awareness about technology, credibility of information source, information overload, technical language issues and limited use of social media for agricultural purposes. Each item was rated by the respondents on a three-point continuum of often, sometimes and never faced, and constraints were ranked according to the proportion of respondents reporting each as an often-faced problem. This frequency-based ranking should be distinguished from Garrett's ranking technique used in some other studies, which requires respondents to rank-order the constraints themselves; the present study did not collect such rank-order data. In addition, an open-ended question was used to record farmers' suggestions for the more purposeful utilization of social media, which were subsequently compiled and summarised.

2.6 Statistical analysis

The data collected were coded, tabulated and analysed using frequency and percentage. Suggestions given by the respondents were compiled and summarised qualitatively.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Constraints faced by farmers in use of social media

The constraints faced by the respondents in the use of social media are presented in Table 1 and illustrated in Fig. 1. Lack of awareness about technology was the most frequently reported constraint, faced often by 74.00 per cent of the farmers, followed by lack of digital literacy (72.67%), expensive recharge/data cost (71.33%), limited use of social media for agricultural purposes (56.67%), credibility of information source (54.67%) and information overload (52.67%). Technical language issues were often experienced by 30.00 per cent of the respondents and occasionally by a further 60.67 per cent. Electricity problems (24.00% often, 65.33% sometimes), high-speed internet problems (10.00% often) and poor network connectivity (5.33% often) were comparatively less severe constraints, while limited use of smartphones was the least reported constraint, with 74.67 per cent of the farmers never facing this problem.

Table 1. Constraints Experienced by the Respondents in Use of Social Media ($n = 150$)

Constraint	Often	Sometimes	Never	Rank
Lack of awareness about technology	111 (74.00)	18 (12.00)	21 (14.00)	I
Lack of digital literacy	109 (72.67)	25 (16.67)	16 (10.67)	II
Expensive recharge / data cost	107 (71.33)	43 (28.67)	0 (0.00)	III
Limited use of social media (agricultural)	85 (56.67)	51 (34.00)	14 (9.33)	IV
Credibility of information source	82 (54.67)	54 (36.00)	14 (9.33)	V
Information overload	79 (52.67)	46 (30.67)	25 (16.67)	VI
Technical language issue	45 (30.00)	91 (60.67)	14 (9.33)	VII
Electricity problem	36 (24.00)	98 (65.33)	16 (10.67)	VIII
High-speed internet problem	15 (10.00)	77 (51.33)	58 (38.67)	IX
Limited use of smartphone	9 (6.00)	29 (19.33)	112 (74.67)	X
Poor network connectivity	8 (5.33)	76 (50.67)	66 (44.00)	XI

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages. Rank is based on the percentage of respondents reporting the constraint as an often-faced problem.

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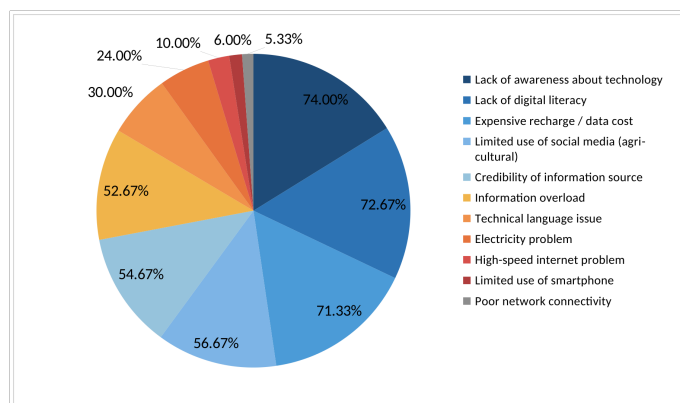


Figure 1. Constraints Faced by Farmers in Use of Social Media - Morena District (n = 150)

These findings indicate that awareness, digital-literacy and cost-related barriers, rather than basic network infrastructure or smartphone access, were the major constraints faced by the farmers of Morena district in using social media, a pattern broadly consistent with several other studies. Sandeep *et al.* (2022) [1] similarly identified low digital literacy and poor networking skills, rather than infrastructure, as major limiting factors. Malik *et al.* (2024) [2] likewise found lack of awareness about useful mobile apps and websites, along with poor competency in their use, to be more severe constraints than the cost of internet recharge, which was rated as the least severe constraint in their study, mirroring the comparatively low severity of cost-related and connectivity-related constraints found here. This convergence across different regions suggests that farmers' capacity to use social media meaningfully is limited less by access to the technology itself and more by their ability to find, understand and trust the information available on it.

However, this pattern is not universal: Barau *et al.* (2025) [3] found network connectivity (22.0%) and inadequate power supply (12.1%) to be somewhat more prominent constraints among farmers of Sokoto state, while Mithun *et al.* (2026) [4] reported information overload (77.59%) and network issues (68.88%) as the two most severe constraints among livestock farmers of Andhra Pradesh, a slightly different ordering that nonetheless still places information-related barriers, similar to the credibility and overload concerns observed here, ahead of purely infrastructural ones. Taken together, these comparisons suggest that while the specific ranking of constraints can vary by region, awareness, skill and information-quality barriers consistently rank among the most significant limitations to purposeful social media use by farmers.

3.2 Suggestions given by respondents for purposeful utilization of social media

Based on their own experience, the respondents offered several practical suggestions to make social-media-based agricultural extension more effective.

These are summarised below:

1. Improve internet connectivity in rural areas.
2. Provide agricultural information in Hindi and other locally understandable languages.
3. Ensure timely and reliable information on weather, improved varieties, pest and disease management, government schemes, input availability and market prices.
4. Encourage agricultural scientists, Krishi Vigyan Kendra experts and extension personnel to respond promptly to farmers' queries through WhatsApp and other social media platforms.
5. Use short videos, photographs and practical demonstrations in place of lengthy technical text messages.

6. Organise regular digital-literacy training to help farmers use social media platforms effectively and distinguish authentic agricultural information from misinformation.
7. Establish verified WhatsApp groups at the village or block level with direct interaction with agricultural experts.

These suggestions closely mirror the strategies found effective in other studies. Himshikha *et al.* (2026) [5] similarly found that peer-led and trust-based measures, such as lead-farmer digital facilitators, short local-language video explainers and verified WhatsApp or Telegram channels moderated by Krishi Vigyan Kendras, were rated by subject-matter experts as considerably more effective than purely infrastructural measures such as community Wi-Fi hotspots or subsidised data packs. The strong emphasis placed by the respondents of Morena district on verified expert-moderated groups, local-language and short-format content, and regular digital-literacy training is consistent with this finding, indicating that farmers themselves recognise trust, comprehensibility and skill-building as more central to effective social-media-based extension than connectivity or cost concerns alone.

4. Conclusion

The present study examined the constraints faced by farmers of Morena district of Madhya Pradesh in using social media, and the suggestions given by them for its more purposeful utilization. Lack of awareness about technology, lack of digital literacy and the cost of data emerged as the most frequently reported constraints, while network connectivity and smartphone access were comparatively less severe problems. Farmers suggested a range of measures to address these constraints, including improved internet connectivity, local-language content, prompt expert response through WhatsApp, greater use of short videos and demonstrations, regular digital-literacy training and verified village- or block-level WhatsApp groups moderated by agricultural experts.

These findings suggest that future digital-extension efforts in Morena district would benefit more from investment in awareness-building, digital-literacy training and credible, expert-moderated content than from infrastructure- or cost-focused interventions alone, since the latter were reported as comparatively minor barriers by the respondents themselves. Given that farmers' own suggestions closely align with strategies found effective through expert consultation in other studies, extension planners could draw on both sources of evidence to design a phased digital-literacy and trust-building programme, beginning with peer-led, local-language content and verified expert-moderated groups, before expanding into more resource-intensive infrastructural measures. As the present findings are based on a sample of 150 male farmers from one district, further research across a wider sample would help confirm the generality of these constraints and the relative effectiveness of the suggested strategies.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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