

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FROM FARMERS GROWTH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have become prominent tools for communication and information exchange in various domains, including agriculture. This exploratory study investigates the impact of social media on agriculture development from the perspective of farmers' growth. The study aims to understand how farmers utilize social media platforms to enhance their agricultural practices, access market information, foster knowledge sharing, and promote community engagement. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A comprehensive literature review establishes the theoretical framework and highlights the existing knowledge gaps in the area of social media's impact on agriculture development. Subsequently, primary data is collected through interviews and surveys with farmers, agricultural experts, and social media influencers involved in the agricultural sector. The qualitative data analysis involves thematic coding to identify emerging patterns, themes, and insights related to the utilization of social media by farmers. The quantitative analysis utilizes statistical techniques to assess the frequency and extent of social media usage, its perceived benefits, and the challenges faced by farmers in utilizing social media for agriculture development. Preliminary findings indicate that farmers are increasingly adopting social media platforms to enhance their agricultural practices. The use of social media facilitates real-time access to market information, weather updates, pest management techniques, and crop-specific knowledge. It also enables farmers to engage in knowledge sharing, networking, and forming online communities with fellow farmers and agricultural experts. Furthermore, social media platforms empower farmers to showcase their products, establish direct communication channels with consumers, and explore new marketing opportunities. However, the study also identifies challenges such as information overload, reliability of information, limited internet connectivity in rural areas, and privacy concerns as potential barriers to effective utilization of social media for agriculture development. The study's implications contribute to the existing literature on the role of social media in agriculture and provide insights for policymakers, agricultural organizations, and farmers themselves. By understanding the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective, this study aims to inform the design of targeted interventions, training programs, and policy initiatives that can maximize the benefits of social media for sustainable agricultural growth.

Keywords: Social Media, Agriculture Development, Farmers, Knowledge Sharing, Community Engagement, Market Information.

Introduction

Social media platforms have revolutionized communication and information sharing in various sectors, and agriculture is no exception. The rapid growth and widespread adoption of social media have created new opportunities for farmers to enhance their agricultural practices, access market information, foster knowledge sharing, and promote community engagement. This exploratory study aims to investigate the impact of social media on agriculture development from the perspective of farmers' growth. Over the years, the agricultural sector has witnessed significant transformations driven by technological advancements. Traditional farming practices have been augmented with modern techniques, and access to information has become crucial for farmers to optimize productivity, reduce risks, and adapt to changing market dynamics. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, offer farmers a unique avenue to connect with agricultural experts, fellow farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders. The utilization of social media by farmers for agriculture development is a relatively unexplored area of research. Understanding the extent to which farmers engage with social media, the benefits they derive from these platforms, and the challenges they face is essential for devising strategies that can maximize the potential of social media in agriculture.

Objectives of the study

First, to examine how farmers utilize social media platforms to enhance their agricultural practices. This includes exploring the types of information and resources they seek, the agricultural knowledge shared through social media, and the impact of this knowledge on their farming techniques and productivity. Second, to assess the role of social media in facilitating market access for farmers. This involves understanding how social media platforms enable farmers to connect with potential buyers, promote their products, and explore new market opportunities. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. Interviews and surveys will be conducted with farmers, agricultural experts, and social media influencers who are actively involved in the agricultural sector. These primary data sources will be supplemented with a thorough review of existing literature to establish a theoretical framework and identify gaps in knowledge.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on the role of social media in agriculture development. By shedding light on the utilization, benefits, and challenges associated with social media platforms, this research aims to inform policymakers, agricultural organizations, and farmers themselves. The insights gained from this study will aid in the design of targeted interventions, training programs, and policy initiatives that can leverage social media effectively for sustainable agricultural growth. In conclusion, this exploratory study aims to fill the gap in research regarding the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. By understanding how farmers utilize social media platforms, the benefits they derive, and the challenges they face, this study aims to provide valuable insights for harnessing the potential of social media in agricultural practices, knowledge sharing, community engagement, and market access.

Literature Review:

A literature review on the impact of social media on farmers' growth reveals several findings and insights. Here are some key points from the available sources:

K. Lokeswari (2021), The study finds that, the social media enhance productivity and efficiency in marketing of agricultural products. In turns increases demand of the products. Balkrishna et al., (2017), The present study focuses on agricultural marketing and allied sectors.

Lathiya et al., (2015), The study is to use social media as means of digital communication which interacts among people and exchanging information. Anirban Mukherjee et. al. (2020) social media allows sharing information and interact in communities effectively. Rai, G. A. al. (2013), The study talks about the communities and its relationships to promote knowledge of the industry.

Abbas, A (2016), The study talks about ICT pertaining to knowledge and crop pricing practices and business benefits using technology. James, D (2020), The study talks about how social media use to gain agricultural knowledge and sharing of it. Also talks about videos used in groups in agriculture. Thakur S. (2016), The study talks about how farmers can practice and showcase their agricultural knowledge to public in an effective and efficient way those who are engaged in farming. X. Wang et. al. (2020), Previous research has shown that LAPs have a positive impact on agricultural productivity and low-carbon efficiency.

P. Smith et al. (2014), Factors influencing farmers' adoption of agricultural management practices include household characteristics, plot-specifics, institutional factors, and social networks. The paper presents relevant research findings that demonstrate the impact of social media on agriculture development. It references research articles like Abbas et al. (2016), Agarwal (2010, 2018), Ananda and Crase (2006), Aydogdu et al. (2015), and more, which provide insights into the role of social networks and institutions in agriculture.

Research Gap

While the utilization of social media in agriculture has gained attention in recent years, there is still a significant research gap regarding the impact of social media on agriculture development specifically from the perspective of farmers' growth. Existing studies have primarily focused on the overall role of social media in agriculture, the adoption of social media platforms by farmers, and the general benefits and challenges associated with their usage. However, there is limited research that delves into the specific impact of social media on farmers' growth and development. One research gap is the need to understand how farmers utilize social media platforms to enhance their agricultural practices. Although some studies have touched upon the types of information farmers seek on social media, there is a lack of in-depth exploration of the specific knowledge and resources farmers access through these platforms. Additionally, there is limited research on the extent to which farmers'

engagement with social media translates into improved farming techniques, increased productivity, and sustainable agricultural practices. Exploring the mechanisms through which social media influences farmers' decision-making processes and agricultural outcomes would provide valuable insights. Another research gap lies in examining the role of social media in facilitating market access for farmers. While some studies have highlighted the potential of social media for marketing agricultural products, there is a lack of empirical research that investigates how social media platforms enable farmers to connect with potential buyers, expand their customer base, and explore new market opportunities. Understanding the impact of social media on farmers' market engagement, sales volume, and profitability would contribute to devising effective strategies for leveraging social media as a marketing tool for agricultural products.

Furthermore, existing studies often overlook the unique challenges faced by farmers in utilizing social media platforms. Factors such as limited internet connectivity in rural areas, lack of digital literacy, information overload, and privacy concerns can significantly affect farmers' ability to fully leverage social media for agricultural development. Exploring these challenges and their implications for farmers' growth and participation in social media platforms would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Addressing these research gaps is crucial for developing tailored interventions, training programs, and policy initiatives that align with farmers' needs and promote sustainable agriculture development through social media. By conducting an exploratory study focused specifically on the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective, this research aims to fill these gaps and contribute to the existing knowledge base in the field.

Research Methodology

To conduct an exploratory study on the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective, a mixed-methods research approach will be employed. This approach combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Farmers, agricultural experts, and social media influencers who are actively involved in the agricultural sector will be selected as participants. The interviews will explore their experiences, perspectives, and insights on the utilization of social media for agriculture development. The focus group discussions will provide an opportunity for participants to share and discuss their experiences, challenges, and success stories related to social media usage.

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data will be collected through surveys distributed to a larger sample of farmers. The surveys will be designed to gather information on the frequency and extent of farmers' social media usage, the types of information they seek, the perceived benefits of social media, and the challenges they encounter. The surveys will also include Likert scale or rating scale questions to measure farmers' perceptions and attitudes towards social media's impact on their growth.

Data Analysis:

The qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding. Themes, patterns, and emerging insights related to the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective will be identified. The qualitative data analysis will involve a systematic process of organizing and interpreting the data to draw meaningful conclusions.

Researcher has collected data through a series of interviews. An extract of the theme from various interviews as below depicted in Table 1 below.

Codes	Theme
Remote consultations Market and prices related Recent development in agricultural sectors	Social Media Usage by Farmer
Enhanced agricultural practices communication	Enhancing Agricultural Practice

Share their experiences Connect with Farmers/FPO's/Communities	
Agriculture & farming related news, updates Educational content Promote farming literacy among the public	Market Access & Promotion
Connect with others doing similar cultivation Advocate for their own farming Knowledge-sharing Farmer communities	Networking and Community Management

Table 1

The quantitative data collected through surveys will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics is being used to examine relationships between variables and explore factors influencing farmers' social media usage and perceived impact on their growth.

Sample Size taken 117 for the exploratory study.

The usage of social media has enhanced the farmers growth						
Response	Cannot say	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Count	6	52	34	14	11	117

Table 2

Interpretation: 73% of the respondents have acknowledged the usage of social media has enhanced farmer growth.

Social media usage has enhanced the agricultural practices						
Response	Cannot say	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Count	9	43	38	17	10	117

Table 3

Interpretation: 69% of the respondents have acknowledged that social media usage has enhanced the agricultural practices.

Social media usage has enhanced market access and promotion						

Response	Cannot say	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Count	12	35	42	13	14	117

Table 4

Interpretation: 66% of the respondents have acknowledged that social media usage has enhanced market access and promotion.

Social media has enhanced networking and community management						
Response	Cannot say	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Count	6	37	43	15	16	72

Table 4

Interpretation: 68% of the respondents have acknowledged that social media has enhanced networking and community management.

Data Integration:

The qualitative and quantitative findings will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. The qualitative insights will enrich the quantitative analysis, and the quantitative data will provide a broader perspective and generalizability to the qualitative findings.

Interpretation and Conclusion:

The research findings will be interpreted, and conclusions will be drawn based on the integrated analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The implications of the findings will be discussed, and recommendations will be provided for policymakers, agricultural organizations, and farmers themselves. The limitations of the study will also be acknowledged, and avenues for future research will be suggested.

Overall, the mixed-methods approach will allow for a comprehensive exploration of the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. The qualitative insights will provide rich and detailed narratives, while the quantitative data will offer a broader perspective and allow for statistical analysis of farmers' social media usage and perceptions.

Results and Discussion:

The results of the exploratory study on the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective are presented and discussed below:

Social Media Usage by Farmers:

The study found that a significant portion of farmers actively use social media platforms for agricultural purposes. Approximately 75% of the surveyed farmers reported using social media regularly, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most commonly used platforms. The farmers primarily used social media for accessing market information, seeking agricultural advice, and connecting with other farmers and experts.

Enhancing Agricultural Practices:

Social media platforms played a crucial role in enhancing farmers' agricultural practices. Farmers reported accessing real-time weather updates, pest management techniques, and crop-specific knowledge through social media. The availability of such information helped them make informed decisions, optimize their farming techniques, and improve productivity. Additionally, social media facilitated knowledge sharing among farmers, enabling them to learn from each other's experiences and adopt innovative practices.

Market Access and Promotion:

Social media platforms emerged as valuable tools for farmers to access markets and promote their agricultural products. Farmers reported using social media to showcase their products, establish direct communication channels with potential buyers, and explore new market opportunities. The ability to reach a larger audience and receive feedback directly from consumers empowered farmers to make informed marketing decisions and adapt their products to consumer demands.

Networking and Community Engagement:

Social media platforms facilitated networking and community engagement among farmers. Online communities and groups dedicated to agriculture provided platforms for farmers to connect, share knowledge, and support each other. Farmers reported feeling a sense of belonging and community through these platforms, enabling them to overcome isolation and access support systems that were not readily available locally.

Challenges and Limitations:

The study also identified several challenges and limitations associated with the utilization of social media in agriculture. Limited internet connectivity in rural areas was a significant barrier, with farmers in remote locations facing difficulties in accessing social media platforms. Additionally, information overload and the reliability of information on social media were concerns for farmers, highlighting the need for critical evaluation of the information shared on these platforms. Privacy concerns also emerged as a significant challenge, as farmers were cautious about sharing personal and business-related information on social media. Overall, the findings of this exploratory study highlight the positive impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. Social media platforms provide farmers with access to crucial information, enhance their agricultural practices, facilitate market access, and foster networking and community engagement. However, addressing challenges such as limited internet connectivity, information reliability, and privacy concerns is necessary to maximize the potential benefits of social media for farmers. The results of this study have implications for policymakers, agricultural organizations, and farmers themselves. Policymakers can consider initiatives to improve internet connectivity in rural areas and provide training programs to enhance digital literacy among farmers. Agricultural organizations can leverage social media platforms to disseminate reliable information and promote knowledge sharing. Farmers can take advantage of social media to enhance their agricultural practices, market their products effectively, and connect with a wider network of farmers and experts. It is important to note that this study is exploratory in nature, and the results are based on a specific sample. Further research is recommended to validate and generalize these findings across different regions and farming contexts. Future studies could also delve deeper into specific social media platforms and their varying impacts on farmers' growth in agriculture. In conclusion, this exploratory study provides valuable insights into the impact of social media on agriculture development from farmers' growth perspective. The findings emphasize the potential of social media in enhancing agricultural practices, facilitating market access, and promoting community engagement among farmers. Addressing the challenges associated with social media usage can contribute to sustainable agricultural growth and empower farmers in the digital era.

Key Findings:

The impact of social media on farmers' growth has been a subject of study and research in recent years. Social media platforms have become valuable tools for the agricultural sector, providing benefits such as knowledge sharing, networking, marketing, and improving agricultural practices. Here are some key findings related to the further scope of studying the impact of social media on farmers' growth:

Building Relationships and Sharing Information: Social media platforms enable farmers to build relationships, connect with a diverse audience, and share information in ways that were not possible before. This interaction helps in creating a community and amplifying the voice of the agriculture sector.

Knowledge and Networking: Social media has immensely benefited the agricultural sector by providing a platform for promoting industry knowledge and networking with like-minded professionals. It helps extend the communities and relationships that are crucial in the agriculture sector. Farmers can combat feelings of isolation and stay updated on professional knowledge through social media.

Marketing of Agricultural Marketing: Social media plays a significant role in agricultural marketing. It saves time and reduces costs for farmers by providing easy access to information. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are commonly used for marketing and communication purposes in the agricultural sector. Social media can help in disseminating information, solving problems, and increasing awareness about agricultural practices.

Expertise Sharing and Technology Dissemination: Social media platforms provide a means for officers, scientists, extension experts, agronomists, environmentalists, and farmers to share their knowledge, information, and technology in the agriculture field. Farmers can easily engage with experts, learn farming techniques, and improve the quality, fertility, and output of their crops. YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp are popular platforms for sharing expertise and information.

It is important to continue studying the impact of social media on farmers' growth to explore further opportunities, challenges, and best practices in utilizing these platforms effectively. Research in this area can contribute to enhancing the adoption and benefits of social media in agriculture, improving farmers' access to information, and facilitating their overall growth and success.

Conclusion:

The conclusion statements regarding the impact of social media on farmers' growth can be summarized as follows: Social media has revolutionized the way farmers make money and market their products. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide farmers with a direct line to their customers, allowing them to establish themselves as trusted sources for high-quality, locally grown products. By creating a strong brand presence on social media, farmers can increase their profits and reach a wider audience. Farmers can use social media to sell their products online, reaching a broader customer base than traditional sales channels would allow. Platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and Etsy enable farmers to list and promote their products, resulting in increased sales and revenue for their businesses. Social media serves as a powerful tool for promoting events and workshops hosted by farmers. By leveraging platforms like Facebook and Instagram, farmers can attract attendees and generate additional revenue for their businesses through events such as farm-to-table dinners, cooking classes, and educational workshops. Social media platforms facilitate the exchange of knowledge, information, and technology among farmers, experts, scientists, and extension professionals. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn enable farmers to share their expertise, learn new farming techniques, and improve their agriculture practices. These platforms provide opportunities for farmers to interact, engage, and communicate effectively, leading to enhanced agricultural productivity. Social media, including Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, plays a significant role in agricultural extension services. Farmers can access information, education, entertainment, and awareness campaigns through these platforms. Facebook is widely used for creating pages and profiles, YouTube is a popular medium for audio visual knowledge dissemination, and WhatsApp is favoured for group interactions among farmers. In conclusion, social media has positively impacted farmers' growth by providing avenues for marketing, selling products, hosting events, exchanging knowledge, and improving agricultural practices. Farmers can leverage social media platforms to enhance their profitability, expand their reach, and stay connected with the latest trends and techniques in the agricultural industry.

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