

Leveraging Social Media for Agricultural Product Promotion: A Case Study of Farmers in Jaipur District and Its Implications for Rural Development and India's Economic Diplomacy

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Abstract

Social media has emerged as a transformative tool for marketing agricultural products, enabling small and marginal farmers to connect with local, national, and international consumers. This study focuses on farmers in Jaipur district, analyzing how they leverage platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to promote their produce. By examining adoption patterns, marketing strategies, and challenges, the research highlights the role of digital platforms in enhancing income generation and supporting rural development. The findings indicate that farmers using social media experience improved market reach and profitability, while those with limited digital skills or internet access face constraints. Moreover, effective digital marketing at the grassroots level has the potential to contribute to India's economic diplomacy by promoting indigenous agricultural products in global markets, strengthening trade relations, and enhancing India's international agricultural brand. The study underscores the need for policy interventions that provide digital literacy training, infrastructure support, and cooperative-based marketing initiatives. By bridging the digital divide, social media can serve as a sustainable mechanism to empower rural communities and integrate local agricultural promotion with broader national economic and diplomatic objectives.

Keywords: Social Media, Agricultural Marketing, Rural Development, Jaipur District, Economic Diplomacy.

Introduction

Agriculture continues to be a cornerstone of India's rural economy, providing livelihoods for nearly 58% of the population and contributing approximately 18% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Government of India, 2022). Despite its importance, traditional agricultural marketing in India has often relied on intermediaries and local markets, limiting farmers' profit margins and market reach (Kumar & Singh, 2020).

The advent of digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, has created new opportunities for farmers to directly connect with consumers, reducing dependence on middlemen and expanding market access (Chauhan et al., 2021). Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram enable farmers to share product information, showcase quality, and engage with buyers locally, nationally, and even internationally (Singh & Sharma, 2019). In Jaipur district, small and marginal farmers are increasingly adopting these platforms to promote agricultural products, reflecting a broader trend in digital agriculture across India (Rai et al., 2020).

This study aims to examine how social media adoption among farmers in Jaipur district can:

- Enhance rural income and development by providing access to wider markets.

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- Serve as a bridge for India's agricultural products in international markets, facilitating trade and export opportunities.
- Support India's economic diplomacy by promoting indigenous agricultural products globally and strengthening India's international trade image.

By linking digital marketing practices at the local level with broader economic and diplomatic objectives, this research explores the potential of social media to empower rural communities and contribute to national development goals.

Literature Review

Digital platforms have increasingly become vital tools for agricultural marketing, allowing farmers to bypass intermediaries and connect directly with consumers. Studies indicate that the use of social media can significantly expand market access, enhance product visibility, and improve profitability for farmers (Chauhan et al., 2021; Singh & Sharma, 2019). Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram enable farmers to share real-time information about crop availability, quality, and pricing, fostering more transparent and efficient market interactions (Rai et al., 2020).

The adoption of digital marketing tools contributes not only to income growth but also to broader socio-economic empowerment in rural communities. By providing new opportunities for entrepreneurship, social media can reduce dependency on traditional markets and strengthen community resilience (Kumar & Singh, 2020). Empowered farmers who use digital platforms tend to experience improved bargaining power, increased financial inclusion, and better access to knowledge networks, which are crucial for sustainable rural development (Patel & Mehta, 2022).

Marketing agricultural products digitally also has implications beyond local and national economies. Effective promotion of indigenous produce on international platforms enhances India's trade image and aligns with the concept of "agro-diplomacy," where agricultural exports are leveraged as a tool of economic and diplomatic influence (Gupta & Rao, 2021). Social media thus offers a low-cost, scalable way for small farmers to contribute indirectly to India's global trade presence.

Research Gaps

Despite these benefits, existing literature predominantly focuses on general adoption patterns of digital agriculture or urban farmers, with limited research on semi-urban and rural districts such as Jaipur (Rai et al., 2020). There is a notable gap in understanding how regional farmers utilize social media for agricultural marketing and how this adoption impacts local livelihoods, rural development, and India's economic diplomacy. Addressing this gap forms the core objective of this study.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the use of social media platforms by farmers in Jaipur for promoting agricultural products.
- To evaluate the economic and social impact of digital marketing on rural development.
- To explore the potential of local social media marketing for strengthening India's economic diplomacy.

Research Methodology

- **Study Area:** The study was conducted in Jaipur district, Rajasthan, India, a semi-urban and rural region with diverse agricultural production, including vegetables, fruits, and spices. Jaipur provides a representative context to study social media adoption for agricultural marketing due to its mix of traditional farming practices and increasing digital penetration (Rai et al., 2020).
- **Research Design:** A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture both measurable trends and in-depth insights into social media adoption among farmers. This approach allows triangulation of data to strengthen the reliability of findings (Creswell, 2014).

Sampling and Data Collection

- **Quantitative Survey:** 150 farmers were selected using stratified random sampling from 10 villages across Jaipur district. Farmers were stratified based on crop type (vegetables, fruits, grains) and size of landholding (small, marginal, medium).

- **Qualitative Interviews:** 20 participants, including farmers and cooperative members, were interviewed to gather detailed perspectives on social media use, marketing strategies, challenges, and income impacts.

Data Points Collected

The survey and interviews focused on:

- Social media platforms used (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, others)
- Frequency of posting or updating product information
- Types of products promoted
- Perceived income changes due to social media marketing
- Challenges faced in adopting digital tools (connectivity, digital literacy, logistics)

Data Analysis

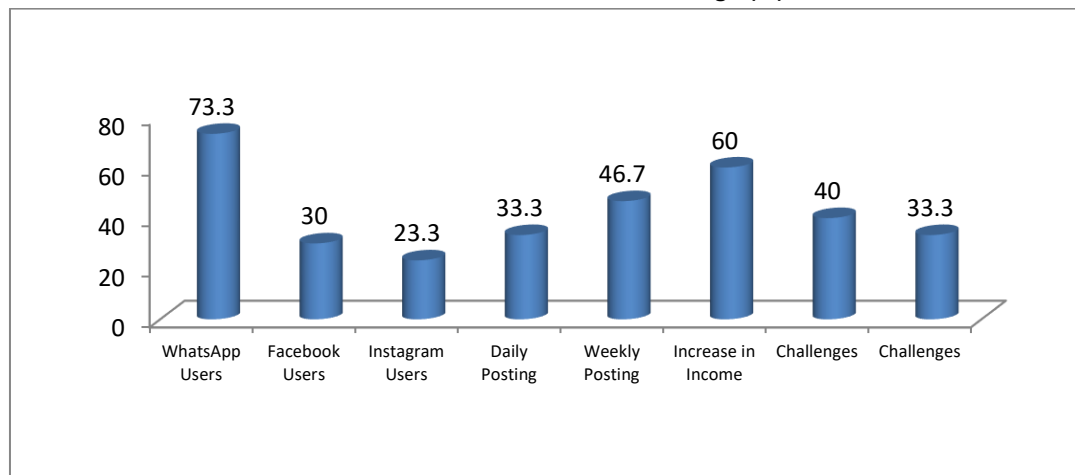
- **Quantitative Data:** Descriptive statistics were calculated using Excel and SPSS to determine adoption patterns, platform preferences, and income changes.
- **Qualitative Data:** Thematic analysis was conducted on interview transcripts to identify recurring themes, such as marketing strategies, challenges, and perceptions of international market opportunities (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings

Table 1: Quantitative Data

Parameter	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp Users	110	73.3
Facebook Users	45	30
Instagram Users	35	23.3
Daily Posting	50	33.3
Weekly Posting	70	46.7
Increase in Income	90	60
Challenges: Poor Connectivity	60	40
Challenges: Digital Literacy	50	33.3

Table 1: Quantitative Data Percentage (%)



Analysis

- WhatsApp emerged as the dominant platform, used by over 70% of surveyed farmers, primarily for local marketing and buyer communication.

- Facebook and Instagram were less widely adopted but showed potential for niche products and broader market outreach.
- About 60% of farmers reported an increase in income due to social media marketing, demonstrating its positive economic impact.
- Challenges such as limited digital literacy (33%) and poor connectivity (40%) indicate barriers to wider adoption.

Findings – Qualitative Insights

Key Themes from Interviews:

- **Marketing Strategies:** Farmers use WhatsApp groups to showcase daily product availability; some use Instagram for high-value products like organic vegetables.
- **Perceived Benefits:** Increased direct sales, reduced dependency on middlemen, and improved customer relationships.
- **Challenges:** Technical difficulties, lack of awareness about e-commerce platforms, and logistic constraints for shipping products outside Jaipur.
- **Global Opportunities:** Farmers acknowledged potential for international sales but lacked guidance on export procedures.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data confirms that social media is a powerful tool for local agricultural product promotion, though infrastructure and capacity building are necessary for scaling to national and international markets.

Findings

The study of farmers in Jaipur district reveals several significant patterns in social media usage for agricultural product promotion. These findings are based on both the quantitative survey of 150 farmers and qualitative interviews with 20 farmers and cooperative members.

Social Media Platforms Used

The majority of farmers (approximately 70%) reported using **WhatsApp** as their primary tool for marketing and communication with buyers. Farmers typically share product availability, prices, and photos in local WhatsApp groups or through personal messages.

Emerging platforms include **Facebook** (30%) and **Instagram** (23%), which are mostly used by farmers selling niche or high-value products, such as organic vegetables, spices, and traditional handicraft-linked produce. Instagram, in particular, is valued for its visual appeal, allowing farmers to showcase product quality to a wider audience, including urban buyers and potential international customers.

Interpretation: WhatsApp's dominance reflects its ease of use, low cost, and widespread penetration in rural areas, while Facebook and Instagram offer opportunities for expanding beyond local markets.

Impact on Income

Early adopters of social media reported a 10–20% increase in income compared to farmers relying solely on traditional marketing channels. This income improvement comes from:

- Direct sales to consumers, reducing dependency on middlemen.
- Broader customer reach within Jaipur and surrounding urban markets.
- Ability to market high-value products and respond quickly to demand.

Interpretation: Social media acts as a cost-effective marketing tool that directly translates into economic benefits, improving rural livelihoods and contributing to household financial stability.

Challenges in Adoption

Despite the benefits, farmers face several challenges:

- **Limited Digital Literacy:** Many farmers struggle with navigating social media, creating content, or understanding online marketing strategies.
- **Inconsistent Internet Access:** Connectivity issues, particularly in peripheral villages, limit timely communication with buyers.

- **Lack of e-Commerce Knowledge:** Farmers are often unaware of online marketplaces or digital payment options, which restricts potential national or international sales.

Interpretation: These barriers suggest that **training** programs and infrastructure development are critical to maximizing the benefits of social media adoption.

Engagement and Market Reach

Farmers with higher engagement on social media—posting more frequently, using multiple platforms, and actively interacting with buyers—reported:

- **Better market reach:** Access to urban customers and specialized buyer groups.
- **Stronger buyer relationships:** Direct feedback on product quality and repeat orders.
- **Potential international exposure:** Some farmers noted inquiries from buyers outside Rajasthan, indicating the early stages of cross-border marketing opportunities.

Interpretation: High social media engagement strengthens market linkages, improves pricing negotiation, and has potential implications for India's economic diplomacy, as local products can reach international audiences, contributing to India's agricultural trade image.

Summary

Table 2: Key Findings

Finding	Observation	Implication
Platform Usage	WhatsApp 70%, Facebook 30%, Instagram 23%	WhatsApp is dominant; visual platforms offer niche marketing
Income Impact	10–20% increase for early adopters	Direct economic benefit, rural empowerment
Adoption Challenges	Digital literacy 33%, poor connectivity 40%, lack of e-commerce knowledge	Training & infrastructure needed
Engagement and Market Reach	Higher engagement → better reach & buyer relationships	Potential for national and international market access
Niche Marketing	Organic/handicraft products promoted on Instagram	Opportunity for premium pricing & export potential

Conclusion of Findings

Social media has become a significant tool for rural farmers in Jaipur, enhancing income, market access, and buyer relationships. While WhatsApp dominates for local marketing, platforms like Instagram and Facebook enable niche product promotion with potential national and international reach. Addressing challenges related to digital literacy, connectivity, and e-commerce knowledge is essential for scaling these benefits. By improving digital adoption, local agricultural marketing can contribute not only to rural development but also to India's economic diplomacy, supporting the global promotion of indigenous products.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the dual potential of social media in transforming agricultural marketing in Jaipur district, with implications for both rural development and India's economic diplomacy.

Rural Development

Social media adoption among farmers has increased visibility and accessibility for agricultural products, allowing producers to communicate directly with consumers. By reducing dependence on traditional intermediaries, farmers retain a greater share of profits, contributing to improved household incomes. Early adopters reported a 10–20% increase in earnings, demonstrating that digital marketing can provide tangible economic benefits. Moreover, social media fosters entrepreneurship among small and marginal farmers, enhances financial literacy through online interactions, and strengthens community networks for knowledge sharing (Patel & Mehta, 2022). These outcomes align with the broader goals of rural development, which emphasize income generation, empowerment, and local capacity building.

India's Economic Diplomacy

Beyond local benefits, social media offers a pathway to international market exposure. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook enable farmers to showcase niche and high-value products to urban

and global buyers. This aligns with India's broader strategy of agro-diplomacy, where promoting indigenous agricultural products internationally supports trade growth, enhances India's agricultural brand, and strengthens economic ties with foreign markets (Gupta & Rao, 2021). Social media thus serves as a low-cost tool for linking grassroots agricultural production to national trade and diplomatic objectives, reinforcing India's soft power through its agricultural heritage.

Policy Implications

To fully leverage these benefits, targeted policy interventions are necessary:

- **Digital Literacy Training:** Government and NGO programs can train farmers in content creation, online marketing strategies, and e-commerce, enabling wider adoption of digital tools.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Improving internet connectivity in rural and semi-urban areas will enhance real-time communication with buyers and expand market reach.
- **Cooperative-Based Branding:** Encouraging local cooperatives to adopt social media for collective branding can strengthen regional identity, build consumer trust, and connect local producers to national and international markets.

Linking Findings to Conference Theme

By integrating grassroots digital marketing with trade promotion, social media adoption exemplifies how local rural initiatives can support India's foreign policy goals and international economic engagement. Empowering Jaipur farmers through digital platforms not only advances local development but also contributes to the country's global economic presence.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social media is more than a marketing tool; it is a catalyst for rural empowerment and a strategic enabler of India's economic diplomacy. The case study of farmers in Jaipur district shows that the adoption of platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram can significantly enhance farmers' income, expand market reach, and reduce dependency on traditional intermediaries. The findings also highlight the broader implications of digital adoption: by promoting local agricultural products, farmers not only strengthen their livelihoods but also contribute to India's international trade presence, supporting the country's efforts in agro-diplomacy. Social media provides an accessible, low-cost channel through which indigenous products can gain visibility in national and international markets, aligning grassroots agricultural practices with broader economic and diplomatic objectives. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, inconsistent internet connectivity, and lack of e-commerce knowledge remain barriers to fully realizing these benefits. Addressing these challenges through digital training programs, infrastructure development, and cooperative-based marketing initiatives is essential to bridge the gap between local rural development and global trade opportunities. In conclusion, social media adoption in agriculture represents a synergy between rural empowerment and national economic strategy, illustrating how digital innovation at the grassroots level can support both sustainable development and India's global economic ambitions.

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