

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON ROLE OF MEDIA AS WELL AS SOCIAL MEDIA IN AGRICULTURE MARKETING AND PROMOTING AGRIBUSINESS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The growth of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) as well as the development of Internet during the last two decades has changed the business environment to a large extent. Governments, companies and organizations develop through the ICTs new potentials and opportunities that are presented. A major outcome of the growth and exploitation of the ICTs and the Internet was the creation of a new type of "website" that helped people to create, chat, share, and amend user generated content, "the social media". Nowadays there are hundreds of social media platforms worldwide. There are different kinds of platforms that the user can join and use such as social networks, discussion groups and blogs. Traditionally, agricultural information exchange has been dominated by industrial media for instance newspapers, magazines and television. But the power of the 21st century is literally in our hands now. We have never before had such a powerful tool to connect with millions of people from the comfort of our own home and all around the world it is changing the way business is done. Social media has given power to the voice of the everyday man and whilst that may come with its challenges, the opportunities are there for the taking. Now Social media is a mainstream form of communication around the world, and continues to grow in popularity with the increase in the number of smart phones. The purpose of this paper is to assess the role of social media could have for the agricultural marketing.

KEYWORDS: *Agricultural Marketing, ICT, Media, Social Media, GDP, Economy.*

Introduction

Agriculture is essential to India's economy. Agriculture sector which is also known as primary sector is crucial for economic growth in any economy including India. Since independence it has emerged as the essential-growing sector in the global economy in India. This sector contributed 15.87% of GDP (Gross Domestic product) and employs just a little less than 54.6% of the country's workforce. In the world's total economic production agriculture contributes to 6.4%. India is the second largest producer of agricultural products accounts for 7.39% of total global agricultural output.

The need for relevant and current information by professionals in this sector for sustainable agricultural production is a key issue to the nation. Information communication technology services are greatly influencing how information is sourced and disseminated these days. Traditionally, exchange of agricultural information has been dominated by industrial media for instance newspapers, television and magazines. In recent years, however, technology awareness, computer literacy and usage of smart phones and internet are increasing across all demographics in India. It is staggering to believe that in little as two short decades, the evolution of the Internet and social media has taken place right before our eyes. It was only in 1991 that the World Wide Web became public, only around 17 years since Google was created and only a decade since Facebook was invented. We now live in a world where wondering about the unknown is often followed by the phrase "Google it" and people feel as though they have lost their right arm if they don't have their cell phone at the other end of it. Social media are very trendy especially among younger users. They are very easy to access since there is more than one way to log in social media platforms like mobile

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and computer-based technology. Social networking platforms are the most popular platforms of social media. These platforms allow users to interact through personal profiles they create and they can invite friends to access those profiles and send e-mails, share photos, videos and audio files with each other. The profile the user creates includes photos, video and audio files and various personal information. Examples of such platforms are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc. The popularity of the social media leads to a new communication framework where individuals have the power to collaborate, interact and share information. Through that process individuals create a new trend that influences on a large extent the way companies act together with the customer. In that way the social media democratized the online communication and the power to the users shifted since earlier the companies, through their marketing strategy, could control the flow of information provided to the customer, create new trends and influence people on a large level. Social networks can also develop collaborative governance processes by facilitating:

- The generation, diffusion and acquisition of different kinds of knowledge and information about the systems under management
- Allocation and mobilization of key resources for effective governance
- Commitment to common rules among actors fostering willingness to engage in sanctioning programs monitoring.

Today more agricultural businesses are oriented to Internet, and use it as a tool for information, advertising and communication with their clients and colleagues. The online existence of agribusinesses is expected for those interested in establishing and growing their trade. This existence has become more interactive and turns to new communication frameworks. Facebook, Twitter and other social media have built their reputation by helping people keep in touch with family and friends, but this seems to change. A growing group of professionals, among them agronomists and farmers are connecting social media as a tool for communicating with fellow colleagues, consumers and future clients about the business of agriculture.

Agricultural Marketing

Production and marketing of products are interdependent in the sense that products in the field have no value unless they are transformed into a consumable form and reach the ultimate consumer at his convenience. Since the larger part of farm output in many countries is not consumed by the people, who produce this, it must, like industrial products, be sold to satisfy the consumers' demand. There is an increasing awareness that it is not enough to produce a crop; it must also be marketed. Agricultural marketing involves in its simplest form the buying and selling of agricultural product. In ancient days, this meaning of agricultural marketing may be accepted when the economy of village was more or less self-sufficient, when the marketing of agricultural produce presented no complexity, as the farmer sold his produce directly to the consumer on a cash or barter basis. But, in modern times, marketing of agricultural products is different from that of olden days. In modern marketing, agricultural products has to go through a series of transfers or exchanges from one hand to another before it finally reaches the consumer. Agricultural marketing includes the farmers' transaction both buying and selling, but it is generally confined to the selling side of his business and used to cover all activities involved from the time when products leave the farm, till it reaches the consumer.

Definition of Agricultural Marketing

The term 'agricultural marketing' has varied connotations as understood by different scholars.

According to Cohen (1965), "Agriculture marketing is marketing process to the mechanism for fixing prices, just as a market is a place where buyers and sellers together arrive, by bargaining, at the current price".

Khois (1967) has defined marketing as "the performance of all business activities involved in the flow of goods and services from the point of initial agricultural production until they are in the hands of ultimate consumer".

According to Rajagopal (1989), "marketing of agricultural produces is a process, which starts with a decision to produce saleable farm commodities. It involves an integrated market system, both functional and institutional based on techno-economic considerations".

Saxena (2003) stated, "Marketing is concerned with the channels of distribution through which goods move from producers to consumers. The entire process is performed at places known as market centers which, like organism, rather active with functions, behavioural pattern and growth process, contributing to a geometric pattern".

According to the National Commission on Agriculture (1976), "Agriculture Marketing includes all aspects of market structure and system, both functional and institutional, pre and post-harvest operations, assembling, storage, grading, transport and distribution".

It is apparent from the above definitions that the system of agriculture marketing is very complex. It is a process whereby prices of agriculture commodities are determined, either by the forces of demand and supply or by some other mechanism over space and time. To the large extent the determination of these prices depends upon the availability of marketing infrastructure between the point of production and point of consumption. The process mostly involves assembling, grading, storage, transportation and distribution activities apart from the pre and post-harvest operations. Such operations add value to the produce in terms of time, place and farm utilities. It is also characterized as spatio-temporal integration of numerous activities from production to consumption in a single institutional network.

Concept of Social Media

Social media is a one stop shop for information whereby the users can read and also contribute to the content. It is convenient to those who need information immediately or do not have easy access to information. Social media is a set of online technologies that allow users to share insights, experiences and opinions with one another. The sharing can be in the form of text, video, audio, or multimedia. Tang, Gu & Whinston (2012) say that the benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond social sharing to building reputations and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income. According to Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) social media platforms focuses on some or all seven building blocks that is; identity, sharing, conversations, relationships, presence, groups and reputation. Different social media actions are defined by the extent to which they focus on some or all of these blocks. Social media provides opportunities for companies to interact with their publics in real time. This is important because feedback enables companies to make quick decisions. Social media is also cheaper in the long run. According to Kietzman et al. (2011) by reason of mobile and web based technologies social media creates highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss, co-create and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between communities, organizations, and individuals.

Social media has revolutionized/modernized communication whereby it has managed to outstrip traditional gatekeepers in traditional media that is editors and other decision makers who set the agenda. Nevertheless social media has not overthrown traditional media and is complementing traditional media in agenda setting. Traditional media has been the main medium for companies to reach their audiences and there has been a great deal of control which is avoided on social media. Social media is dominated by user generated content. Social media is an evolutionary incentive because users not organizations or the traditional news media now control the distribution and creation of information. Users bypass the traditional information gatekeepers. The traditional mass media have attempted to reach as many readers and viewers as possible joined with more targeted new media players who sought a particular segment of the population, including those with quite specialized interests anywhere in the world.

Definition of Social Media

Social media refers to the internet-based digital tools for discussing and sharing information among people. It states to the user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia that is discussed and shared over digital networks. Aspects of social media that makes them an important and accessible tool in development communication are their easy access through mobile phones, mass-personal communication and mass-self communication, a larger set of weak ties to make sure for receipt of novel ideas, high degree of connectedness, and link ability and content sharing across multiple platforms. Social media states to the means of connections among people in which they create, share, consume and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

Importance of Social Media

Is social media important to agriculture? While many outsiders would never think to associate farmers, dairy farmers, animal keeper with Facebook and Twitter, they actually represent on a large group of active users on both of the social networking sites. According to some farmers and tech savvy scientists, social media is an indispensable communication tool for farmers to connect with each other and educate others about their industry. A main benefit of social media in agricultural marketing is capacity to gain wealth of knowledge and ideas, opportunity to establish key partnership, opportunity to reach wider consumers, experts in agricultural field.

Popular Social Media Tools

- **Facebook:** Facebook is the world's most popular social networking website as it makes it easy to attach with family and friends and share pictures, websites and videos. It allows users to make a profile, add friends, send messages and join common interest groups.
- **Twitter:** Twitter is quick and easy allowing users to share almost 140 character messages. These messages are called "Tweets" that are available to anyone who is concerned in reading them.
- **YouTube:** YouTube is a video-sharing website where users can upload and view videos.
- **WhatsApp:** WhatsApp messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging application for smartphones. In addition to text messaging, users can also to send each other images, video and audio media messages.
- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is geared toward the professional community. It allows everyone to network with work colleagues and is a powerful for brands and job seekers. You can post your resume, connect with other professionals, and keep up to date with industry news. You can follow groups focused on topics relevant to your industry.
- **Agropedia:** Agropedia is an open-ended knowledge sharing platform. It is an online agricultural knowledge repository that makes agriculture information available to scientists, researchers, extension personnel and the agricultural community and allows them to search and make contributions to the vast knowledge base. It is a collaborative project of seven coalition partners' viz., ICRISAT Hyderabad, NAARM- Hyderabad, IIT Kanpur, IIT Bombay, GBPUAT- Pantnagar, UAS- Raichur and IITM-Kerala. Project is backed by Government of India and sponsored by the World Bank through the National Agricultural Innovation Project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The project was launched on Jan 12, 2009. Many social enterprises are currently addressing the agriculture space, attempting to bring new technologies to rural areas to improve the efficiency and profitability of farmers. Agropedia works as a one-stop hub for information on the agriculture ecosystem. The Wiki-style platform provides, among other things, a space for stakeholder interaction, best practice sharing, news updates, and an online library.

Social Media and Agriculture

Social media overcomes geographical area and creates communities who share common interests. The users also seek out information from traditional media social media platforms. Rhoades and Hall (2007) have shown that there was a large presence of blogs covering agriculture. Many of the blogs were formally written but the majority were not related to the media. Agricultural media is taking the time to understand this phenomenon and to use Web 2.0 technology for their audiences. Therefore, it is important to look at each of these Web 2.0 applications. It is also important to understand how the audience needs to present their information in this fast-paced society. He argues that research should be conducted with audiences to see if they want agricultural information using Web 2.0 technologies. According to findings by Cline (2011) the respondents have devoted a considerable portion of their time on social media sites for agricultural purposes and had participated in the 'advocacy' process through social media. Respondents prefer Twitter to collect and disseminate agricultural information 'Advocates' views the rotating signs as a place not only to share agricultural news, but also to share advice and opinions. According to findings by Ruth and Lundy (2004) newspapers would be the best form of communication for information about agriculture after television, government agencies, and radio. According to Hall and Rhoades (2009) a study of audience in rural America states that farmers still prefer to communicate when communicating online. However according to Fannin (2006) as quoted by Rhoades and Aue (2010), with the decline of farm radio and media, rural markets have been left without agriculture news podcasting is a new method of audio news distribution, it bypasses traditional radio media outlets to reach agricultural producers and general news consumers.

Review of Literature

Prof. Bite Bhalchandra Balkrishna and Dr Anand A. Deshmukh (2017), wrote a article "A Study on Role of Social Media in Agriculture and its scope", in this paper he clarifies that the larger populations of the farmers in the age group of 30-40, uses social media for getting information related to farming as well as using apps for marketing their products.

Amit Lathiya, Arvind Rathod and Kuldeep Choudhary (2015), in the Paper “The role of social media in agriculture”, the study found that nowadays Social media is considered as the mainstream form of communication around the world, and increase in smartphones and high-speed data increases and promotes its growth and popularity with the rise in the number of users.

Prof. Shrikant Waghulkar, Dr Kumardatt Ganjre, Prof.Nitesh Behar and Prof. Niranjana Diwan (2017) in the paper “A Viability Study for Online Marketing of Agricultural Greenhouse Products W.R.T. Pune District”, discovered that Farmers specifically who do greenhouse farming are technically capable for online marketing of their products. The study clarify that greenhouse farmers have sufficient commercial availability for online marketing of greenhouse products, and they prefer online marketing of greenhouse products as they consider it will be more affordable for farmers and customers.

Objectives

- To study the role of social media in agricultural marketing.
- To study the challenges of social media in agricultural marketing.
- To suggest various social media and their use.
- To study the role of social media in promoting agribusiness.

Challenges of Media as Well as Social Media

- Adoption of social media as a tool of agricultural marketing.
- Lack of effective and quality programme production in terms of content and production quality.
- A high turnover of staff that causes a lack of journalistic and technical skills and thus a consistent demand for training.
- There is a limited access to social media because of data, network etc.
- There is a need of training and education about use of social media in agri-marketing.
- People are less trusted on e-buying, e-selling of agricultural commodity on social media.
- All the activities are restricted by time, technology, networks etc.
- Cost of technology use in agricultural marketing is more.
- Satisfying heterogeneous users.
- Institutionalizing social media.
- Continuous engagement

Role of Media in Agriculture

Rural societies are using social media for connecting with friends and family, reading current news, to get information from peers. Thus, connecting that to agriculture and leveraging it to bridge the farmer-extension gap can corroborate to be a benefit to the agriculture sector and the farm families. Social media plays an important role in diffusion of agricultural technologies. The program on success of agricultural development largely depends on the nature and scope of use of social media in mobilization of people for development. Moreover, it can be decisive in helping farmers access the information that they need and communicating their concerns. Radio, Television has been much-admired to be the most effective media for diffusing the scientific knowledge to the people. In a low literacy level country, the choice of communication media is of vital importance. In this regard the radio and television are important, as they transfer modern agricultural technology to literate and illiterate farmers alike even in interior areas, within minimum time. In 1966 farm and home broadcast with agricultural thrust were introduced in India, to instruct farmers on the use of various technologies to boost agricultural development. At present, there are about 50 such radio stations all over the country. Thus, media have a role to play in funding and investment for agriculture as well. By creating greater awareness, they can encourage political decision-makers to become more actively involved in agricultural and rural innovation processes.

Opportunities

Some of the opportunities in media for agriculture development are as follows:

- Few social media applications are available without internet.
- Forming global/national interest groups is possible.
- Greater engagement and dialogue.
- Allows for integration of a wide range of stakeholders.
- Can act as accelerator for resource mobilization (technological, organizational, and financial)

Conclusion

The Internet has changed and became more interactive than it was earlier. Consumers' behaviour is what defines the business strategy and if consumers use the internet more than ever to learn about new products, to shop online, views with other consumers, to criticize and exchange, e-commerce is the channel through which is carried an advertising dialogue between companies and consumers. Nowadays existence of company in electronic markets is inevitable. New trends in ICT have changed social interactions and become a new form of interaction with the online community. Farmers' interest in social networks is motivated by the fact that social media networks provide people with valuable information and, in addition, can use targeted marketing and advertising tools. The spring up of social media can support efforts of open innovation and enable agricultural companies to develop channels of communication with customers, experts and academics, which before could not be reached. Farmers on the other hand, are advised to first establish goals for how to use the tools, become familiar with what opportunities of these tools have to offer and then develop a strategy for using these tools. Social media is now a mainstream form of communication around the world, and continues to grow in popularity with the increase in the number of smartphones, and the ease of use whilst on the go. Other industries have embraced these platforms in business and consumer engagement; however it has not been widely accepted in India. Agricultural is not in new concept; however changing platforms for communication can seem foreign to some people. Perception of social media as a valuable tool rather than time wasting application is important to change to extend to the value to more people.

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