

A study on the scope and role of social media in Marketing of Rapeseed and Mustard

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ABSTRACT

Social media, as a mainstream form of communication, continues to gain acceptance with smartphones becoming popular and ease of use on the go. Despite the benefits offered to the farmers, the adoption of social media in agricultural marketing remains low. Despite much technological information that leads to increased productivity and effective marketing, many farmers do not clearly see the role and scope of social media marketing especially in the context of rapeseed and mustard. The descriptive analysis revealed that social media might be adopted as a useful marketing tool for rapeseed and mustard as it saves farmers' time and cost in obtaining information. Male farmers dominated using social media in agricultural marketing. Young farmers are more confident in using social media in agricultural marketing. WhatsApp/Telegram groups are the most preferred social media platform for the purpose of seeking information and solutions to the problems. The major challenges faced by the farmers in using social media for marketing of rapeseed and mustard is the low reliability of social media channels and the lack of formal education and training on adopting social media in agricultural marketing. Thus, there exists scope and urgency of increasing interactions with agri-workers and farmers and enhancing their technical capabilities to contribute more knowledge about rapeseed and mustard marketing techniques.

Keywords: Social media, Agricultural marketing, Rapeseed-Mustard, Farmer, Oilseeds.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is a world of information and communication technology, and as a dominant trend in world-wide communication, social media continues to gain acceptance with the popularity of smartphones and ease of use on the go. Since its inception in 1996, social media has successfully penetrated 56.8% of the global population (PeW Research Report, 2021). With 4.48 billion active users worldwide, social networking platforms have been used by secondary and tertiary sectors for business and consumer engagement, but in agriculture, their acceptance remains low. As of recent, social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, etc. are becoming better ways to share updates and information regarding the marketing of agricultural produce (Hall & Rhoades, 2009), still limited research suggests that as smartphones become more popular, the use of social media by farmers and agribusinesses is increasing.

Social media offers farmers a quick and easy way to individually connect with people in agribusiness, and better understand consumer needs and perspectives (Chui et al., 2012). In addition to building relationships, social media platforms can be used to share the latest information on harvesting, post-harvesting, market conditions, marketing of produce, and trading of agricultural commodities. Further, for agricultural sector, the significance of social media is associated with the value of social capital. It brings together the farmers, agribusiness, and consumers, thereby increasing authenticity, reliability, engagement, and transparency in supply chains and agricultural marketing (Lathiya et al., 2015). Financial returns are often indirect results of improvements in social capital, although these are difficult to measure.

The global agricultural sector is embracing social media and using it to advance knowledge within the industry and connect with other agribusiness professionals. The communities and relationships on which agriculture is primarily based have been further expanded through social media platforms, which agri-workers have begun to assess to combat isolation due to the nature of their work (Kipkurkat et al., 2016). Despite this, social media adoption in the Indian agricultural sector remains low (Balkrishna & Deshmukh, 2017). Previous research has produced much technological information that have increased productivity and ensured effective marketing, but many farmers still do not clearly see the role and scope of social media marketing (Lathiya et al., 2015), especially in the context of rapeseed and mustard. They face many challenges when using social media to market rapeseed and mustard that need to be identified and overcome.

Considering that the use of social media presents enormous opportunities for the buying, selling, and marketing of agricultural products, this study attempts to examine the role and scope of social media in agricultural marketing along with the challenges faced by Indian farmers in using social media for agricultural activities of Rapeseed and Mustard, and making certain recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role and scope of social media in agricultural marketing, especially in the context of rapeseed and mustard.
2. To study the challenges faced by farmers while using social media for the marketing of rapeseed and mustard.
3. To suggest some measures to overcome the identified challenges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a descriptive study conducted over a 3-month period (November 2021-January 2022) in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan to purposefully examine the role of social media in marketing of rapeseed and mustard. Jaipur district was deliberately chosen for the study as it is one of the top five districts in Rajasthan in terms of area and production of rapeseed and mustard. Bearing in mind the research objectives, the primary data for 80 responses were purposefully selected from three blocks (Shahpura, Bassi, and Govindgarh) in the Jaipur district using a multistage stratified random sampling technique.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participating farmers, i.e., age, gender, and education.

Table – 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

Demographic Information		Frequency	Percent
Age	30 years and younger	18	22.5%
	31-40 years	26	32.5%
	41-50 years	22	27.5%
	More than 50 years	14	17.5%

Gender	Male	68	85.0%
	Female	12	15.0%
Education	Illiterate	6	7.5%
	Secondary Education or Below	14	17.5%
	Higher Secondary Education	36	45.0%
	Graduate or Higher	24	30.0%

The demographic profile summarized in the above table 1 show that the majority (32.5%) of the participants are from the age group 31-40 years, followed by 27.5% of the participants from the age group 41-50 years, 22.5% farmers of age 30 years or younger, and 17.5% farmers over 50 years of age. Of the total 80 participants, majority (85%) are male and remaining 15% are female. Further, when interviewing farmers, it was found that male farmers use social media more often than female farmers. Likewise, demographic profile highlights that the majority (45%) participants have completed their higher secondary education, followed by 30% participants who are graduates or post-graduates, 17.5% participants who have secondary education as their highest level of education, and 7.5% are illiterate. Further, when interviewing farmers, it was found that they can operate mobile phones and have knowledge of using social media on it.

Table 2 summarizes the responses received from the participants regarding having at least one account on any of the social media platforms.

Table – 2: Social Media Account

Do you have at least one account on social media?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	71	88.75%
No	9	11.25%

The responses summarized in the above table 2 shows that the majority (88.75%) of the farmers have at least one account on the social media platforms.

Table 3 summarizes the responses received from the participating farmers regarding the various social media platforms used by them.

Table – 3: Social Media Platform

Which social media platform do you use?	Frequency	Rank
WhatsApp / Telegram	73	1
FaceBook	48	3
YouTube	65	2
Twitter	9	5
LinkedIn	2	6
Blogs	23	4

The responses summarized in the above table 3 shows that the majority of the participants use WhatsApp/Telegram, followed by YouTube and FaceBook. Blogs, Twitter, and LinkedIn are not used widely. WhatsApp/Telegram is used for related groups, while FaceBook is used for pages and profiles, and YouTube is used for videos.

Table 4 summarizes the responses received from the participating farmers regarding the frequency of visiting the social media sites.

Table – 4: Frequency of visiting Social Media Platforms

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percent
Daily	36	45.0%
Weekly	28	35.0%
Fortnightly	12	15.0%
Rarely	4	5.0%

The responses summarized in the above table 4 shows that the majority (45%) of the participants use the social media platforms daily, 35% use weekly, 15% use fortnightly, while 5% use social media platforms very rarely.

Table 5 summarizes the responses received from the participating farmers regarding the purpose for which they visit the social media sites.

Table – 5: Purpose of visiting Social Media Sites

Purposes	Frequency	Rank
Seeking information	54	1
Seeking solution to a problem	46	2
Sharing success or failure stories	17	5
Buying / Selling agricultural commodity	22	4
Branding of agricultural commodity	10	6
Enquiry for market prices	38	3

The responses summarized in the above table 5 shows that the major purpose for which the farmers use social media is seeking information, followed by seeking solution to their problems and making enquiry of market prices. The farmers rarely use social media platforms for trading or branding agricultural commodities or for sharing information.

The participants were asked about the challenges that they face while using social media for the marketing of rapeseed and mustard and the responses received are summarized in the table 6 below.

Table – 6: Challenges faced by farmers in using Social Media for Marketing

Purposes	Frequency	Rank
They have no formal education and training on using social media platforms for agricultural marketing	53	2
They have limited access to social media due to data or network issues	21	4

Traditional marketing is still more popular than the adoption of social media as an agricultural marketing tool	47	3
Higher risk and likelihood of fraud associated with e-purchasing/e-selling of agricultural products on social media	65	1

As evidenced from the above table 6, the major challenge faced by the farmers in using social media for marketing of rapeseed and mustard is the low reliability of social media channels. Further, lack of formal education and training on using social media platforms for agricultural marketing is another major problem faced by the farmers.

CONCLUSION

This article attempts to examine the role and scope of social media in agricultural marketing along with the challenges faced by Indian farmers in using social media for agricultural activities of Rapeseed and Mustard. The research findings suggest that the male farmers dominate the use of social media platforms for agricultural marketing. Young farmers are more confident in using social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook for marketing of agricultural produce.

Further, the majority of farmers have at least one account on social media platforms and WhatsApp/ Telegram groups are the most preferred social media platform used by them for the purpose of seeking information and solutions to their problems. Many organizations have their own official pages, blogs, and social groups to provide a quick response to farmers' problems. This saves time and costs to the farmers, as they get regular and updated information (Huq et al., 2017). WhatsApp/Telegram is used for related groups, while FaceBook is used for pages and profiles, and YouTube is used for videos.

The major challenges faced by the farmers in using social media for marketing of rapeseed and mustard is the low reliability of social media channels and the lack of formal education and training on using social media for marketing of agricultural commodities. Educating farmers with the knowledge of using social media can generate innovative ideas and creativity for agricultural productivity and marketing efficiency. Thus, there exists scope and urgency of increasing interactions with agri-workers and farmers and enhancing their technical capabilities to contribute more knowledge about rapeseed and mustard marketing techniques. Sincere cooperation between governments, NGOs, the public, and others can address current constraints and create opportunities for social media agricultural marketing.

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