



Effect of Socio-Personal Traits of Farmers on their Perception towards Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Any progress in terms of utilization of a new ICT technology or innovation is greatly affected by how well it is perceived by the farmers. The perception of farmers is the product of their personal, social, psychological and economic background. Social media is one such new innovation which is spreading rapidly in rural areas and has transformed the communication process. The present study was conducted in Hisar and Sonapat districts of Haryana, with an objective to analyze the relationship between socio-personal traits of farmers with their perception towards social media. The data were collected personally from 200 respondents comprising 25 farmers from eight selected villages through a structured interview schedule. Findings revealed that 59 per cent of the farmers had neutral perception towards social media followed by 25.50 per cent farmers who had favourable perception. Further, analyses of the relationship between perception and profile of farmers revealed that, education, landholding, family income, cosmopolitaness-localitiness, mass media exposure, social participation, extension contact and extension participation were positively correlated with perception towards social media. It is recommended that there is a need to train farmers on better utilization of social media, use of social media marketing and sensitizing them about the positive aspects of social media.

INTRODUCTION

Merriam-Webster defines social media as a form of electronic communication through which users can create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents. Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social media provides opportunity to users to share information, ideas, personal messages and other forms of content by creation of communities online. This further help in opinion formation, discussions and relationship building (Joshi and Dhaliwal, 2019). Traditionally, agricultural information was mainly provided by industrial mass media such as newspapers, radio, television and magazines but in recent years, technology awareness, computer literacy spread of smart phones and internet have changed the way

farmers communicate and get agriculture related information. Now farmers are able to get all sorts of information through social media in no time while sitting in the comfort of their homes. Social media gives opportunities to farmers for co-creating content and also promotes co-learning among farmers (Jijina and Raju, 2016).

Perception refers to the way sensory information is organized, interpreted, and consciously experienced. This involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing means that perceptions are built from sensory input whereas, the way we interpret those sensations is influenced by our existing knowledge, our experiences, and our thoughts. This is called as top-down processing (Lumen learning). Perception of a person determine one's knowledge about any ideas, its acceptance, adoption, and rejection. It also has a bearing with other requirements associated with the idea. (Sujeetha and Palaniswamy, 2014). The psychological object can be a symbol, phrase, slogan, person, institution, idea or

an innovation towards which the people may differ in respect of positive or negative effect (Sivaraj et al., 2016).

Any progress in the terms of utilization of a new ICT technology or innovation is greatly affected by how well it is perceived by the farmers. Their background has huge influence on how favorably or unfavorably they view the new advancements and technologies. Chauhan (2010) found that education, land holding, mass media exposure and experience of internet use were positively related with the farmers perception towards ICTs application in agriculture while type of family had negative relationship with farmers perception. Variables like occupation, age, modern agricultural equipment, extension contact and organization participation were not showing any significant relationship with perception of farmers towards use of ICTs in agriculture. Keeping in view the above facts and their importance, the present study was conducted with the objective to assess the relationship between socio-personal traits of the farmers with their perception towards social media.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Hisar and Sonipat districts which were selected from west and east zones of Haryana, respectively. Two blocks Hansi-1 and Hisar-2 were selected randomly from Hisar district while Rai and Kharkhoda blocks were selected from Sonipat district. Further, two villages were selected from each of the four blocks randomly. In Hisar, Umra and Garhi were selected from Hansi-1 block whereas Balsamand and Arya Nagar were selected from Hisar- 2 block. In Sonipat, Manauli and Halalpur were selected from Rai block while Kanwali and Rohat were selected from Kharkhoda block. Also, Twenty-five farmers having smart phone facility were selected from each of the villages, thus a total of 200 farmers were selected for the study. The data were collected through personal interview technique with the help of structured interview schedule and analyzed using MS Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, for computing frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation and regression analysis. For measuring the profile of farmers, eleven variables were selected viz, age, gender, education, family type, land holding, family income, cosmopolitaness-localiteness, mass media exposure, social participation, extension contact and extension participation. Scores were given for all these independent variables to assess their relationship with perception (dependent variable). Also, in order to measure the farmers' perception towards social media, they were given fifteen items and the responses were obtained on a five-point continuum (Likert-type) scale representing strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Further, all positive statements were given scores in the order of 5, 4, 3, 2 & 1 with 5 being strongly agree while 1 being strongly disagree, while all negative statements were given scores in the reverse order. The scores for all of the items were added and the respondent was categorized as favourable, neutral and unfavourable based on his total score using mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perception towards social media

The results given in Table 1 revealed that most of the farmers (59.00%) were having neutral perception of social media followed

Table 1. Distribution of respondents on the basis of their perception towards social media

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Unfavourable (<47)	31	15.50
2	Neutral (47-62)	117	58.50
3	Favourable (>62)	52	26.00

by 25.50 per cent farmers with favourable perception of social media. Only 15.50 per cent farmers had unfavourable perception towards social media.

Further, the item wise analysis of perception of farmers towards social media revealed that while farmers generally perceive social media aids in faster delivery of information, provides timely updates related to agriculture and increase their knowledge about agricultural practices, they were also skeptical about the credibility of information content and unbiasedness of social media and were concerned about its misuse by delivering of wrong information to them. This might explain why majority of farmers had neutral perception towards social media. Also, as use of social media among farmers will increase with time and they will be aware with more benefits of social media their perception towards it may also change and become more favourable. The findings were similar to the Pal (2018) who found that majority of farmers (70.75%) had neutral perception towards social media as a source of agricultural information. Similarly, Kumar and Sankarkumar (2012), revealed that around two-thirds (64.00%) farmers had positive perception about ICT usage in agriculture Also, the results were supported by the study of Mishra et al., (2020) who found that majority of farmers has neutral attitude towards use of ICT service in agriculture.

Relationship between profile of the farmers with their perception towards social media

The independent variables viz, education, land holding, family income, cosmopolitaness-localiteness, mass media exposure, social participation, extension contact and extension participation were significant and positively correlated (at 0.01 level of significance) with farmers' perception of social media while age, gender and family type had no significant relationship with social media use. This could be due to the fact that as education, social participation & extension contact increases farmers become more aware of the benefits of social media use and build a favourable perception towards social media. Also, the regression analysis gave value of R^2 as 0.467 which revealed that 46.70 per cent variation in the perception towards social media could be explained by the eleven variables (independent) selected in the study. The findings are partially supported by Pal (2018) where education and information seeking behaviour had significant and positive correlation with perception of farmers while age had no significant relationship with perception. Chauhan (2010) in his study too revealed that education, land holding and mass media exposure had significant and positive correlation with perception of farmers towards ICT application in agriculture while type of family had negative relationship farmers' perception. Similarly, Aldosari et al., (2019) observed that education showed positive and significant relationship with perception of farmers' regarding use of ICT in agriculture.

Table 2. Item wise perception of the respondents

S.No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	Age is not a barrier to social media	19.50	27.00	07.00	40.50	06.00
2	Social media aids in faster delivery of information	30.50	60.00	04.50	05.00	00.00
3	Social media provides up to date info related to agriculture	30.50	46.50	14.00	08.50	00.50
4	Social media saves time and energy of farmers	35.50	44.50	14.00	05.50	00.50
5	Social media cannot be used in agriculture	00.00	09.00	12.50	53.00	25.50
6	Social media can be misused by delivering wrong information to farmers	06.50	49.00	33.50	10.00	01.00
7	Social media can be used to get direct information from agricultural institutions and government	15.50	37.50	39.00	08.00	00.00
8	Social media promotes fast and better agricultural related solutions	24.50	36.50	28.50	09.00	01.50
9	Social media is an unbiased tool for information dissemination	17.00	27.00	33.00	21.00	02.00
10	Social media increase level of knowledge about agriculture	25.00	46.50	20.00	07.50	01.00
11	Social media brings farming communities of different places to one platform and helps in creating new knowledge base	36.50	55.00	07.00	01.50	00.00
12	Social media provides detailed agricultural information	11.50	35.00	28.50	23.50	01.50
13	Social media helps farmer in getting good market price of their crops and saves exploitation by middleman	01.50	13.50	10.00	60.50	14.50
14	Social media is not advantageous to agricultural community	1.00	07.50	18.50	54.50	18.50
15	Social media is quick mode of communication	46.00	50.50	03.00	00.50	00.00

*All values are in terms of percentage

**SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, UD= Undecided, D= Disagree & SD= Strongly disagree

Table 3. Relationship between profile of respondents with their perception towards social media

S. No.	Personal Variables	Correlation coefficient ('r' value)	Regression coefficient (B value)
1	Age	-0.047 ^{NS}	-1.425
2	Gender	0.030 ^{NS}	0.278
3	Education	0.214**	0.562
4	Family type	-0.026	-0.765
5	Family income	0.418**	0.867
6	Land Holding	0.320**	0.589
7	Cosmopolitaness-Localitess		
I	Personal Localite	0.325**	0.477
II	Personal Cosmopolite	0.452**	1.224
8	Mass Media Exposure	0.316**	0.533
9	Social Participation	0.429**	1.329
10	Extension Contact	0.505**	0.659
11	Extension Participation	0.309**	0.863

R² = 0.467

Constant=31.627

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance

NS = Non-Significant

CONCLUSION

The results revealed that 59.00 per cent farmers had neutral perception towards social media towards social media. Farmers generally perceived social media aids in faster delivery of information, provided timely updates related to agriculture and increased their knowledge about agricultural practices, they were skeptical about the credibility of information content and unbiasedness of social media and were concerned about its misuse by delivering wrong information to them. Education, land holding family income, cosmopolitaness-localitess, social participation, extension contact and extension participation showed positive relationship with farmers' perception towards social media whereas, age, gender and family type had non-significant relationship with perception. The eleven variables selected for the study could explain 46.70 per cent variation in the perception of social media. The

study recommends training of farmers on better utilization of social media tools, use of social media marketing for the sale of agricultural-produce, sensitizing farmers about the positive aspects of social media, importance of building social networks and using social media to fulfill their information needs. This will help farmers realize the true potential of social media. As the farmers were skeptical on the reliability of the content and information that is being delivered using social media, the need of the hour is to curb the spread of fake news and put restrictions on online channels that are disseminating wrong information to the farmers through social media, in order to stop its misuse and build a favourable perception towards social media.

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