

Short Communication

Use of Whatsapp for Development of Farmers

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WhatsApp was launched in 2009. It is a free application that can be used on both smartphones and computers. Users of the Whatsapp can send text, real-time locations, images, voice recordings, documents, and videos^[2]. In 2019, WhatsApp was used by 1.5 billion users in 180 countries. Researches revealed that farmers, dairy workers, mushroom growers and other people are using Whatsapp to take the information on various aspects. WhatsApp are used for different purposes e.g. personal use, health services, journalism. WhatsApp is a free application and can be used across different smartphone operating systems (Apple, Android) as well as on computers. It is simple, instinctive, and easy to use. The widespread use of mobile smartphones globally, along with better affordability of mobile data, has made it possible for many people to use WhatsApp throughout the world^[3]. Since its launch in 2009, WhatsApp has become a social network that enables individuals to connect individually and collectively. In 2019, it had 1.5 billion users in 180 countries.

Information is consider as a valuable resource like land, labor, and capital and described as the main stimulating factor in the sustainable growth of any sector. According to **Sharma (2013)**, the right information given at right time empowers the farmers

and information is necessary for agricultural development. The most important function of information is to upgrade the level of knowledge to reduce uncertainties.

The knowledge stage is the first stage of the innovation-decision process. Any information is termed as effective if it is disseminated with accuracy at a right time. Importance of access to information and improved communication will be a major step towards development in any field, and dairy is not an exception to this. Many new high-yielding production technologies were revolutionized in recent decades by the hard work of researchers and scientists. Yet, there is a huge difference in the development of technologies and rapid transfer of the technologies. One of the reasons for this gap is the lack of access to information, which could be due to the scarcity of extension personnel and technical human resources. In India extension workers to farmer ratio is 1:5000, due to which extension personnel cannot reach every household and not be able to tackle the problem of individual farmers. Thus, to decrease the information gap e- extension came up which means electronic technology are being used to enhance the face to face and paper based transaction^[6].

Routinely, agricultural information dissemination was facilitated by newspaper,

television, magazine, and radio. Now there is a paradigm shift in the past several years from radio, television, and newspaper to digital media. This media is easily accessible and its use in the agriculture and allied sector increased across the world. There has been an increased use of web-based services like mobile applications and web portals in the last decade. Earlier, information services offered through mobile phones had their own limitation of sending short text messages due to which communication remained one way as farmers needed to wait for professional's advice and most of the time their problems remain unheard^[4]. Mobile-based communication services were lacking feedback on animal recovery, but with the help of social media instant feedback can be taken from farmers which will be able to reduce one way communication. Digital India is one of the best initiatives taken by the government to ensure that all the facilities are available to all citizens electronically including delivering new techniques and information in the field of agriculture and dairy.

WhatsApp allows users to send not only text but also real-time locations, images, voice recordings, documents, and videos. It works using the Internet, enabling the users to be connected anytime and anywhere as long as they have access to the Internet. WhatsApp also facilitates communication within groups, which can have up to 250 members. Group members can send messages to all the others in the group instantaneously^[1]. In 2016 the application introduced end-to-end encryption to protect user privacy.

WhatsApp is transforming everyday communication in various realms, such as the professional, the educational and the interpersonal. **Dodds (2019)** states that WhatsApp has become

an important tool for journalists. It enables them to create new, more informal relationships with their sources and also promote new levels of mutuality and camaraderie among journalists. WhatsApp groups enable learners to improve their interactions, foster dialogue, increase sharing, create an enjoyable atmosphere, and promote profound collaboration with peers. Researchers commonly agree that WhatsApp is making our communication informal; even in the domains of communication such as journalism which were previously formalised. For example, Communication of journalists with their sources, formal texts, emails, and phone calls seem out of place and have been replaced by light responses accompanied by emojis on WhatsApp^[2]. WhatsApp offers more immediacy and spontaneity than other tools, such as Facebook and Skype which do not require an account to be tied to users' mobile phone numbers. Communication over WhatsApp is faster than email as it permits immediate response. In WhatsApp, users can also see if their contacts are online and if the message has been delivered and read. These actions are not possible in other communication tools such as SMS. Despite a growing number of studies on WhatsApp, the app is still under-researched.

It is one of the most popular social media platforms founded by Jan Koum and Brian Acton in 2009, through which text, pictures, audio, and video could be sent with end-to-end type encryption. India is the biggest market for WhatsApp as it has 340 million users that are the largest among other countries. The majority of the Indian population including the farmer's community uses WhatsApp because of its availability on every Smartphone and its zero-cost communication facilities.

WhatsApp does not require any extra cost except the cost of internet connectivity. It is the easiest way to be connected with a group of people and share information. It can establish the link between farmers due to group messaging options and high media richness. The global prevalence of WhatsApp showed that it handled more than ten billion messages per day at one period of time^[5]. Many a times unpredictable problem leave the farmers clueless and in the confused state that delay timely intervention needed

to the ailing animal as a result farmer faces many animal loss.

The use of social media specifically WhatsApp is increasing day by day to get an instant and genuine information as due to many problems farmers were not be able to do face-to-face communications with peers, farmers' community, veterinary institutions, extensions personnel, and others for getting information about the recent researches and technologies.

Table1 Number of Whatsapp Users in India

S.No.	Country	Number of Whatsapp Users
1	India	390.1 million
2	Brazil	108.4 million
3	United States	75.1 million
4	Indonesia	68.8 million
5	Russia	64.7 million
6	Mexico	62.3 million
7	Germany	48.3 million
8	Italy	35.5 million
9	Spain	33.0 million
10	UK	30.1 million

So here are some popular WhatsApp group formed in India: [1] *Hoy AmhiShetkari (HAS-Yes, we are farmers) Maharashtra*:This group was formed by AnkushChormule and AmolPatil in 2012, and today they manage to run 70 WhatsApp groups which are handled by 15 administrators. There are 60,000 farmers associated with HAS WhatsApp group in the present scenario. They share the latest technique with the farmers in the group, update with the upcoming schemes and, tell farmers about insects and pests. The group first explained invasion of fall armyworm, which was harmful to the maize crop. Later they open the Facebook page in 2015 followed by their You-tube channel later for the farmers. [2] *Young innovative farmers WhatsApp group,*

Punjab:This group was started by the ADO (Agriculture Development Officer), Dr.Amrik Singh on 15th August 2014 to educate farmers about the issues regarding crop health and other problems. The people who joined the group were the young farmers, agricultural experts. The experts were to help the farmers by providing them advice immediately or as and when required. Besides this, they also update them with information related to new techniques of cultivation treatment, seed treatment of paddy and wheat, and much more information. The boost in the spirit of young farmers by getting instant information without any cost also created the interest in doing faring with new and good agricultural practices. [3] *"Baliraja" WhatsApp group of Farmers Pune*:Anil

Bandawane created the group on August 2015. They connected hundreds of farmers from various villages. Farmers can seek information and advice regarding their problem by connecting to an expert from WhatsApp group. They started learning

Conclusion

On the basis of above discussion, this can be concluded that Whatsapp is a powerful medium to empower the farming

References

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new practices and technology with the help of experts. Farmers through WhatsApp group interaction learn practices like use of fertilizers and pesticides, weather updates and how to grow exotic veggies like broccoli.

community. Majority of people are using Whatsapp in India. Thus, this is a good medium to empower the rural community.