

Analysis Of The Social Media Usage By The Indian Council Of Agricultural Research(Icar) For Agri Communication

Midhila M S¹, Dr. S Dinesh Babu²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar Department of Visual
Media and Communication, School of
Arts, Humanities and Commerce, Amrita Vishwa
Vidyapeetham, Kochi Campus.

²Assistant Professor (Sr.Gr)
Department of Visual Media and Communication, School
of Arts, Humanities and Commerce, Amrita Vishwa
Vidyapeetham, Kochi Campus.

Abstract

The rapid expansion and integration of new digital technologies and social media have been significant factors in harnessing the positive impact of communication in almost all sectors. The digital revolution can be utilised to transform the face of agricultural communication. The study's main aim is to determine the social media integration by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for agricultural communication and outreach by analysing the level of engagement (likes, shares and comments) that ICAR's social media posts generate. The research methodology encompassed for the study includes quantitative analysis of the Facebook page of ICAR.

Introduction

Agriculture is vital to India's economic development as more than 50% of the population still depends on agriculture and allied activities. The prevalence of the internet and social media is evolving into a significant communication phenomenon that has altered communication barriers and incorporated collaborative communication.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have millions of users who use these platforms as a medium to share opinions, which in turn helps shape ideas and gather information. Social media has restructured the segment of adequate information access (Saha & Guha, 2019).

Agriculture is a significant factor in every nation's development, whether it is a developing country or a developed one. The rising technological advancement in ICTs

helps farmers and the agricultural population access the Internet and social media, making communication more accessible and efficient. ICTs can facilitate practical communication activities for the rural population by ensuring distance learning and remote public services (Bhalekar et al., 2015).

Social media can be elucidated as a website or online service allowing users to connect instantly and produce content (Kapoor et al., 2017). Many organisations have incorporated social media within their organisational structure to promote sales (Oyewobi et al., 2022). It has the tremendous potential to provide a collaborative environment where users can create and disseminate information and connect online. How governments use social media has become a matter of study, and its effectiveness can be incorporated into the government communication system to improve its information dissemination capability. Social media has its pivotal ability to communicate with a broader audience which is utilised as an effective communication tool to improve communication between governments and citizens. Developed and developing nations are incorporating social media for official information dissemination and integrating with official government websites. Various academicians and researchers have pointed out the growing possibilities of social media and new media platforms in ensuring transparency and openness to government functioning and its information dissemination. (Appel et al., 2019).

Social media improvised the idea of connectedness by transcending borders through collaborative communication. The advancement in the communication strategies of government departments can be achieved by incorporating social media and new media as communication aids.

Building an effective communication strategy with social media integration needs more structured elements that minimise the issues of the digital divide, digital illiteracy and infrastructural hurdles. The significant features of transparency and connectivity can be re-emphasised by developing a well-ordered communication strategy.

Social media has been implemented into e-governance by governments of different countries. However, to make this integration secure and practical, they have created frameworks, laws, and guidelines regulating the spread of misinformation and disinformation. There are many unique challenges regarding the social media adaptation for e-

governance, including the digital divide, the spread of misinformation, privacy violations and security threats.

Review of Literature

The internet impacts every element of human endeavour, including how businesses are run and how people shop and spend their free time (David, Andrew 2012).

The study mentions the need to necessitate a context-specific innovation in the communication strategy, which is crucial as India is a large and diverse country (Verma et al., 2017). Integrating social media with government sectors positively impacts communication methods and provides a forum for collaboration and public participation. Citizens' perceptions of the government are influenced by their participation in the governance process. (Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

Social media technologies, including blogs, wikis, and social networking sites, are expanding quickly, and social media usage has significant implications for organisational communication processes. Social media has played a significant role in improving sustainable agriculture practices by connecting farmers with consumers, policymakers, and other stakeholders (Coulibaly et al., 2021).

Post and pre-pandemic eras witnessed the need for an efficient unified online platform, which ensures farmers can sell their products online (Süher et al., 2021). Social media is utilised by 30% of Asian Governments for information dissemination (Kuzma, 2010). Still, the remaining governments must recognise the better opportunities social media provides for citizen involvement and communication.

Researchers discovered that it is easier for individuals to adopt Twitter when using information services, and transaction-based e-government services better match Facebook adoption (Gao & Lee, 2017). In India, different agriculture sub-sectors use popular social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, and YouTube to disseminate and share information. Most of these are carried out by individuals, and no coordinated efforts are being made to leverage social media through public extension systems (Devesh, 2018). As per the research conducted by (Severson, 2011), internet connectivity is the biggest obstacle to using social media, particularly in rural America. Only 60% of rural families have broadband access, while 28% of Americans never use the Internet.

Furthermore, in developed and developing countries, there is an evident technological difference regarding internet

availability between urban, suburban and rural areas. Regarding information access from social media, the crucial problem lies in the reliability and timeliness of the information shared across various social media platforms (Suresh, 2012). A study by (Tariq Banday & M. Mattoo, 2013) depicts the potential primacy of social media platforms in encouraging the significant elements of collaboration and participation, which can be utilised for bringing together government, citizens and associated agencies to promote e-services and sales, which in turn can help in building trust among citizens about government—personal and collective dimensions of information by incorporating collaborative social extents (Razmerita et al., 2014).

The study (Dominic & Gisip, 2021) elucidates the consequence of the association between characteristics of social media and the continued use of government social media page for information dissemination and the pivotal role of social media as an effective tool for communication.

Methodology

The study uses the method of quantitative content analysis to assess the social media utilisation of government agriculture agencies. The study is purely based on primary data.

Objectives

- To find out the social media integration by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for agricultural communication and outreach.
- To analyse the level of engagement (likes, shares, comments) that ICAR's social media posts generate.

Research Questions

- What is the frequency of ICAR postings on Facebook?
- How does the Indian Council of Agricultural Research use Facebook as an effective communication tool?
- What is the average number of posts received by the Facebook page of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)?
- Which are the crucial information disseminated through the official Facebook page of ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)?

Hypothesis

- **Social media usage by the Central Council of**

Agricultural Research promotesThe period of the study

In India, December 3rd is celebrated as “Agricultural Education Day” by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research every year. The period of the study the researcher has chosen is 31 days. Primary data is collected through the Facebook page of Indian Council of Agricultural Research from November 18th to December 18th 2022, to analyse how ICAR communicate before and after the Agricultural Education Day.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The theory of Uses and Gratifications explains how individuals use media for their needs and how they get satisfied when they are fulfilled. The theory of uses and gratifications can be applied to understand the social media usage of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and to analyse its user engagement. By analysing the different content of the Facebook page of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the researcher could identify whether Facebook is used to inform and educate farmers about different schemes and programs. The Uses and Gratifications theory can examine how different communication and engagement strategies are best suited to meet the demands and requirements of the different social media users to gather agricultural information.

Content analysis of the Facebook page of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research was carried out by analysing the following parameters:

1)	Date of the post
2)	Total Followers
3)	Total Post
4)	User Engagement ● Comment ● Like ● Share ● Views

5)	Type of Content ● Documents ● Quiz ● Plain text ● Polls ● Poster ● Links ● Photo ● Live ● Video
6)	Language ● Regional ● Hindi ● English
7)	Parameters ● Crop Information ● Soil Condition ● Climate ● Price ● Awareness ● App information ● Digital Innovation/Transformation ● Success Stories ● Schemes and Policies
8)	Cross-Posting ● Twitter ● Youtube ● Instagram ● LinkedIn
9)	Re-post ● Facebook ● Instagram

Table-1 The table shows the different parameters used to analyse the content and user engagement of the identified social media page(Facebook)

Data Interpretation

- **ICAR**

The data is obtained from 31 days of quantitative content analysis from the official Facebook page of ICAR. For the study,

the researcher used the above code sheet (**Table:1**) to analyse and obtain data regarding the frequency of posts, user engagement, type of content, the language of the information shared and significant parameters. The total number of posts shared between 18th November and 18th December was 26, in which the total number of comments was 45, and the total likes acquired for 26 posts was 2810 likes. Sixteen of the 26 posts were images, and the remaining were posters. The 26 posts were images, and the remaining posts consisted of posters and videos. Most of the post shared was educational content focusing mainly on crop information and awareness. A few posts were also cross-posted. Most of the content shared was in English, and the presence of regional languages in posts and content was less.

Findings

- Most of the posts on the Facebook page of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research are educational, and the primary focus is on crop information.
- Comparatively, higher engagement is seen in posts focussed on educational content.
- No posts were shared about soil, climate and price information.

Conclusion and Discussion

The official Facebook page of The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has thousands of followers and high likes and shares. Still, discussion and audience engagement were far lower. The language used in the posts can be the primary reason behind the reduced audience engagement. The maximum number of posts were in English, Hindi or other regional languages like Gujarati and Urdu. So, the information shared via Facebook is not accessible to the illiterate communities and the marginalised sections of people who fall under the broader category of the digital divide.

By ensuring information dissemination in local languages, government agencies can ensure information access to the section of farmers who are inept in understanding English. Incorporating regional languages helps bridge the language barriers and provides the information reaches a broader audience. Data presented in a language that farmers are comfortable with is more likely to be perceived as relevant and essential to them.

Government agencies should manage their official Facebook page to well-structured platforms, which can facilitate active

interaction and discussions with ordinary people and farmer communities. Achieving this goal needs an effective social media communications strategy that can alter the significant issues of the digital divide along with illiteracy and technological hurdles. Social media used in government activities improves communication between the government and stakeholders, which will act as a platform to express their opinions and feedback from citizens.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, the researcher selected a small sample size for the study. The analysis of the Facebook page has been done only for 31 days. To attain a profound understanding of the content shared on the Facebook page of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, it needs large sample sizes.

Social media users are only sometimes representative of the general population, and significant differences arise between the demographics and interests of those who engage with the government agriculture page and those who do not, which can be pointed out as a significant issue in concluding the effectiveness of the Facebook page in engaging with the general public.

Reference

- Treem, J. W., & Leonardi, P. M. (2013). Social media use in organisations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and Association. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 36(1), 143–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2013.11679130>
- Verma, R. K., Kumar, S., & Ilavarasan, P. V. (2017). Government portals, social media platforms and citizen engagement in India: Some insights. *Procedia Computer Science*, 122, 842–849. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.445>
- Gao, X., & Lee, J. (2017, December). E-government services and social media adoption: Experience of small local governments in Nebraska state. *Government Information Quarterly*, 34(4), 627–634. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2017.09.005>
- Barberá, P., Bonneau, R., Langer, M., Metzger, M., Nagler, J., Sterling, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2018). How Social Media Facilitates Political Protest: Information, Motivation, and Social Networks. *Political Psychology*, 39, 85–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12478>
- López-Goñi, I., & Sánchez-Angulo, M. (2017). Social networks as a tool for science communication and public engagement: focus on Twitter. *FEMS Microbiology Letters*, 365(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/femsle/fnx246>

- Suresh Chandra Babu, Claire J. Glendenning, Kwadwo Asenso Okyere, & Senthil Kumar Govindarajan. (2012). Farmers' information needs and search behaviors: A case study in Tamil Nadu, India. *Research Papers in Economics*.
<https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.126226>
Twitter vs. Facebook and the personality predictors of social media usage. (n.d.).
- Tariq Bandy, M., & M. Mattoo, M. (2013). Social Media in e-Governance: A Study with Special Reference to India. *Social Networking*, 02(02), 47–56.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/sn.2013.22006>
- Razmerita, L., Kirchner, K., & Nabeth, T. (2014). Social Media in Organizations: Leveraging Personal and Collective Knowledge Processes. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 24(1), 74–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10919392.2014.866504>
- Future of agriculture in India is great and people are hopeful: Radha Mohan Singh. (2016, May 31). *Www.Indianfoline.Com*.
https://www.indiaonline.com/article/news-top-story/future-of-agriculture-in-india-is-great-and-people-are-hopeful-radha-mohan-singh-116053100392_1.html
- ET Government. (2022, February 12). Govt extensively using electronic media, social platforms for educating farmers: Minister. *ETGovernment.Com*.
<https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/digital-india/govt-extensively-using-electronic-media-social-platforms-for-educating-farmers-minister/89523117>
- Dominic, D., & Gisip, I. A. (2021). Effect of Social Media Usage in Government Agencies' Communication Effort. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v11-i3/9277>
- Mergel, I. (2012). The social media innovation challenge in the public sector. *Information Polity*, 17(3,4), 281–292.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/ip-2012-000281>
- Agriculture and Social Media. (n.d.). Mississippi State University Extension Service.
<http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/information-sheets/agriculture-and-social-media>
- FAO. 2017b. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Agriculture: A Report to the G20 Agricultural Deputies. Rome: FAO.
- Adesina, A. (1993). Technology characteristics, farmers' perceptions and adoption decisions: A Tobit model application in Sierra Leone. *Agricultural Economics*, 9(4), 297–311.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0169-5150\(93\)90019-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0169-5150(93)90019-9)
- Barham, B. L., Chavas, J. P., Fitz, D., Salas, V. R., & Schechter, L. (2014). The roles of risk and ambiguity in technology adoption. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 97, 204–218.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2013.06.014>

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S.
(2011). Social media? Getserious! Understanding the
functional building blocks of social media. *Business
Horizons*, 54(3), 241–251.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005>