



Article : Necessity of Orientation to the Farmers in the Age of Information Technology: Issues of Information Satisfaction

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Abstract:

On the threshold of the 21st century, the world faces major global challenges characterized by the threat of economic stagnation and decline. In this declining situation India can survive online because of an agricultural country. Only the agricultural production can rise up the national income. The 21st century India has made a remarkable development in the field of information and communication technology. The third generation, cell phone has reached to the door steps of the Indians. The farmers in Maharashtra are gratifying their information needs through Internet via cell phones or computers. Eventually, the study aims to derive the solutions over the problems of information satisfaction of farmers in Maharashtra state. The educational and the economical levels of the farmers in the country are drastically different. To study the information satisfaction level of the farmers in Maharashtra the researcher has taken into consideration 250 farmers on stratified basis from different areas of Maharashtra state. The interview methodology is used to acquire the information with having some set of specified questions. The percentage of farmers who uses mobile/cell phones in Maharashtra is 89.23% (Time of India Oct 12, 2009). Around 22.42% of cell phone holder farmers are using the cell phones for fulfilling the agricultural needs in Maharashtra. The crucial and hypothetical issue of research is that, the farmers are not satisfied with the information acquired from the Internet. After analyzing the facts, it is inferred that the farmers are not well verse in finding the information from the Internet of their needs. Some farmers have a phobia of technologies, some others are having no knowledge of new technological applications, some are having the language barriers which is found very crucial and mostly common.

On the basis of the facts, the researcher derives some solutions to overcome these impediments. It is very important to make acquainted the farmers with the open sources cloud based applications e.g. Google Translation, Type in Marathi using English keyboard, applying the languages in search engines. Translating the pages online is immensely and badly needed to be educated.

Introduction:

India is prominently known as an agricultural country in the World. In India near about 70 percent population is indulge in farming. In the recent decades there is expedite and tremendous progress is an agricultural fields, it is all happened due to invent of information communication technologies. The Indian economy is based on the agricultural sector. Indian economy has made a remarkable growth in the last decade including rapidly expanding of infrastructure in information and communication technology across the country. According to the world statistics and telecommunication report (www.internetworldstat.com) India continues to be one of the fastest growing major telecom markets in the world. Sweeping reforms introduced by successive Indian government over the last decade have dramatically changed the nature of telecommunication in the country.

Tele-center is being viewed as an important means of disseminating information and e- learning while also addressing the digital divide. The country today has an impressive telecommunication network in both private and government sector, over 5 lakh villages have public telephone in the country. The tele-network is being put to effective use for delivering information and knowledge to the farming community. A system of farmers information center or popularly known as Kissan call center (KKC) was conceived in the year 2004 by the government of India for delivering information and knowledge to the farming community as per their day to day information need. (1) A tele-center in narrower term can be defined as a place that offers the public connectivity with computers and networks. According to Roman and Colte 2002 (2).

Objectives of the study:

Generally it is found that that lot may studies are done and going on the learned or scholarly communities. It is also notice that the due to the enormous growth and widely reach of the telecommunication network in the country, the farmers community is also satisfying their need via telecommunication e.g. Internet. The question raised in the mind of the researcher that how farmers search the information through Internet? Whether they get the proper information of their needs? What may be the impediment they have for acquiring the information via Internet? Hence, the researcher has done the said study keeping in mind the following objectives.

- 1) To study the percentage of farmers who are using Internet for their agricultural needs (Professional needs).
- 2) To study whether the farmers are familiar with the information search strategies.
- 3) To study how the farmers retrieve the information
- 4) How much the farmers are satisfied by the information they got through the Internet.
- 5) To derive the solutions to improve the farmers information satisfaction level.

Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The researcher is residing in Amravati district of Maharashtra state; hence, he has selected the Maharashtra state as geographical area. The researcher has taken into account the farmers in Maharashtra. While selecting the scope of a present study the research has also considered the similarities of the information needs of the farmers. Therefore the said study is confined only up to Maharashtra state. In the present study only agricultural information needs of the farmers are taken into account and not other needs like educational, medical, social, political etc. In the study the gender discrimination has been made and only male farmers are taken for the study because the percentage of female farmers is few in Maharashtra.

Methods for collection of data:

In the present study the data is collected through schedule as a tool for data collection. A schedule is prepared firstly and then applied it pilotly. After examining the questions in an interview schedule of pilot survey the researcher has made some essential changes in it and finally use the same for data collection. Interviews are carried out of the farmers in Maharashtra with the help of the schedule. After collection of the data the facts are observed and analyzed in Microsoft Excel on scientific ground.

Channels/Sources of Information:

It is observed that the farmers apart from their educational literacy are using the Internet through cell phones and computers. The percentage of farmers who are using Internet is 22.42%. Farmers in Maharashtra state uses their cell phones to communicate with other farmers to get the information regarding the advanced techniques of farming. In the profession of farming it is a crucial part of market. It is found that most of the farmer's community uses Internet for market research e.g. latest prices of crops, fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. Some farmers are found who talk to the agricultural universities and expert. Some farmers are found interest in finding article about their interest on the Internet like e-Sakal Agrone, Krushimitra, Baliraja and etc.

Results and Discussions:

For collecting the facts farmers are selected in Maharashtra state, district wise farmers are taken into consideration depending upon the total population of the respective district in lakhs. The following table depicts the district wise population in lakhs along with the farmers of that district. All the district of Maharashtra state are covered.

Table: 1 District wise number of farmers

Sr. No.	District	Population	Farmers
1	Thane	11,060,148	13

2	Pune	9,429,408	14
3	Mumbai Suburban	9,356,962	12
4	Nashik	6,107,187	14
5	Nagpur	4,653,570	11
6	Ahmadnagar	4,543,159	10
7	Solapur	4,317,756	10
8	Jalgaon	4,229,917	10
9	Kolhapur	3,876,001	9
10	Aurangabad	3,701,282	8
11	Nanded	3,361,292	8
12	Mumbai City	3,085,411	7
13	Satara	3,003,741	7
14	Amravati	2,888,445	10
15	Sangli	2,822,143	6
16	Yavatmal	2,772,348	6
17	Raigarh	2,634,200	6
18	Buldana	2,586,258	6
19	Bid	2,585,049	6
20	Latur	2,454,196	6
21	Chandrapur	2,204,307	5
22	Dhule	2,050,862	5
23	Jalna	1,959,046	6
24	Parbhani	1,836,086	6
25	Akola	1,813,906	4
26	Osmanabad	1,657,576	4
27	Nandurbar	1,648,295	4
28	Ratnagiri	1,615,069	4
29	Gondiya	1,322,507	5
30	Wardha	1,300,774	7
31	Bhandara	1,200,334	7
32	Washim	1,197,160	7
33	Hingoli	1,177,345	3
34	Gadchiroli	1,072,942	2
35	Sindhudurg	849,651	2
			250

In connection to basic theme of the research the questions are asked to the farmers. On the basis of the said questions a clubbing is made to analyze the data. The table 2 is showing the clubbed sets of questions along with the responses.

Table: 2 Study of farmers

Sr. No	Queries	A	B	C	D	E
1	Background	BPL-10%	MIDDLE	RICH-6%	Accompanying	

	of the farmer	(25)	CLASS-60% (150)	(15)	with other business -24% (60)	
2	Educational qualification	Non Matriculate- 42% (105)	Matriculate- 28% (70)	HSC-19% (48)	Graduate-8% (20)	PG-3% (7)
3	Experience in farming	1-5Yrs-25% (63)	5-10Yrs-21% (52)	10-15Yrs- 14% (35)	15-20Yrs-40% (100)	
4	Information needs	Yield-36% (90)	Marketing- 28% (70)	Advanced techniques- 12% (30)	Cropping patterns-15% (38)	Agricultural Processing-9% (22)
5	Sources of information	Public-13% (33)	Radio-36% (90)	Television- 40% (100)	Internet via Cell phones-7% (17)	Internet via computers-4% (10)
6	Satisfaction level	Fully satisfied- 8% (20)	Partially satisfied-14% (35)	Not satisfied- 22% (55)	No efforts-34% (85)	No knowledge- 22% (55)
7	Barriers or obstacles	Economical- 38% (95)	Technical- 32% (80)	Lack of knowledge- 12% (30)	Unawareness- 10% (25)	Others-8% (20)
8	Opinions of the farmers	Need of orientation - 42% (105)	Books on the said issues-8% (20)	Language barrier-18% (45)	Advertisement on media-18% (45)	Role of Govt. servants-14% (35)

(Abbreviations: BPL- Below Poverty Line)

Table No. 2 is showing the responses in the form of percentage out of 250 clientele (Farmers community) along with their economical background, educational qualification, experience in the field of farming (Agricultural), information need, sources of information, level of satisfaction got through the information they have retrieved. It is also mention in the above table that the impediments or obstacles before the farmers in Maharashtra state amongst the selected sample. The table depicts the opinion of the farmers or expectations of the farmers in percentage.

Conclusion:

On the basis of the above analysis it is inferred that most of the farmers living in the middle economical class but their educational level is below matriculation which is distinctly more. It is found that most of the farmers are indulged in farming profession since twenty years. Hence, it can be derived that the farming is a traditional profession of such farmers. The information needs of the farmers are related their professions and are of mainly production and yield, marketing of products, use of advanced techniques in farming, suitable cropping patterns and agricultural products and their processing. It is observed that the sources of information for the farmers are public i.e. people in their regions, radio broadcasting, television programs for agriculture, Internet on cell phones and on computers. The farmers who are using which information are given in the form of percentage. After all, it is the heart of the said research that whether the farmers are satisfied with the information they have retrieved or not. The present study came to an inference that the very low percentage of farmers are satisfied with the information they got. The reasons behind the nonsatisfactions of the farmers can be derived as they are not that way qualified, unawareness of latest technologies or Internet and etc. In the current study the opinions of the clientele are taken into account. The clientele are expressed their opinions that they are badly need of orientation of new technologies search strategies on the Internet. They also expressed that the role of the government and government employees is crucial; however the government is not doing so far for their shake.

Suggestions:

In the nutshell, to acquire the information of their interest is very essential to educate the farmers and orient them. The role of the government needs to be active. Government should make some effective planning in this regard and execute it properly. As a result of it the national production of agriculture definitely may increase and ultimately the GDP also increase. Government should broadcast more programs on agriculture through radio and television and the timings of these programs should be suitable to the farmer's community. Public libraries are needs to be established in every village compulsorily with a literature on agriculture.

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