

Popular Article

Development Of the Livestock Industry Using Modern ICT Techniques Such as WhatsApp Groups

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Introduction

Livestock sector plays a multifaceted role in the welfare of India's rural population as it employs a major section of the countries labor force and also provides a large share of draft power being used to cultivate crop land. India's livestock sector is one of the largest in the world with a holding of 11.6% of world livestock population (Islam, 2016). The livestock sector has emerged as an important segment of an expanding and diversifying agricultural sector in Indian economy (Mondal and Mishra, 2022). The growth is driven by the rapidly increasing demand for livestock products, this demand being driven by population growth, urbanization and increasing income in developing countries (Delgado, 2005).

Knowledge and information gap seems to be one of the major factors for poor productivity (Thakur *et al.*, 2017). This gap seems to be the result of inadequacies of the current livestock information delivery system. On the other hand, farmers are in dire need of these information services at different stages of livestock production cycle.

Low-cost information and communication technology (ICT) tools promise the ability to deliver timely, relevant, and actionable information to farmers throughout the world, at dramatically lower costs than traditional extension services (Cole and Fernando, 2012) Smart phone users spend considerably more time on social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Thus, there exists an ample opportunity to utilize WhatsApp for veterinary extension activities. The WhatsApp group offers a futuristic scope for access to varied forms of dynamic information required in livestock production. Information is crucial in increasing production and improving marketing and it is one of the distribution strategies (Oladele, 2006). WhatsApp is a form of a social media tool that enables one to many and more & more types of conversation and sharing information and facilitating discussion (Devanand and Kamala, 2019).

Advantages of Using WhatsApp

1. Extends Radius for Veterinary Extension

WhatsApp also is in web form for computer users in different language. Thus, WhatsApp has the potential to enhance the radius of extension (Thakur *et al.*, 2017).

2. It usually requires lesser cost

WhatsApp requires less internet than its cost also less as compare to other application, which is highly beneficial for farmers (Devanand and Kamala, 2019). So, as it happened, it can happen in Department of Veterinary Extension.

3. Easiest way of communicating with the farmers

Various extension education methods demand high infrastructure requirements, content preparation, refinement and delivery to produce the desired effect. In comparison, WhatsApp seems to be a relatively easier and simpler ICT tool for farmers.

4. Good for two-way communication

WhatsApp has the potential to take user feedback is easier to receive for establish of two-way communication.

5. Encourages Peer Learning

Peer learning is the process of farmers learning with and from each other. WhatsApp groups fulfill requirements of this kind of learning as it can promote farmer networking and interaction.

6. Correct Delivery of information

WhatsApp has information storage facilities. Information may be incompletely understood, retained, forgotten during face to face and mass media (Television, Radio) extension methods.

7. WhatsApp is More Advantageous than Call Centers services

The various state veterinary universities provide call centers services for livestock farming solution but these centers are sometimes very general in nature. This WhatsApp arrangement can improve diagnosis and advice to the farmers (Mittal *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, there are greater chances of peer discussions and learning, which are impossible through mobile advisory services (Thakur *et al.*, 2017).

8. WhatsApp as alarm for disease outbreaks

In livestock several diseases are seasonable and their outbreaks are very quick in nature. So WhatsApp works as a fastest way of transferring the outbreaks information.

Application of WhatsApp

1. Livestock based Diagnostic Support.

. WhatsApp can give timely information in advice and can significantly reduce major complications likely to emerge in case the animal remains unattended by the basic clinical aids. After receiving the queries from different experts, the mediator can share the pooled advice in an easily understandable form to the farmer clientele (Thakur, 2016).

2. Information sharing about different actives

Some well-known WhatsApp group have been shared below in Table 1:

Table 1: Examples of popular WhatsApp group of livestock farming solution in India

Name of the group	Information about members	Administrator of group	Type of Content Shared
Pashu Palan group	Farmers of states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan Uttar Pradesh Haryana and Gujarat	Veterinarian	Information about livestock breeds, feeding and health management.
Goat Owners group	Farmers of Pune and Mumbai	Managed by Farmer Entrepreneur	1.Photos of Live animals 2.Negotiations of selling and buying

(Thakur *et al.*, 2017)

Challenges of Using WhatsApp in livestock industry

1. Requires regular attention

Attention is required for nobody post to irrelevant messages in the group. Regular habit for checking the activity in the group is beneficial. .

2. Commitment of Administrators

Information received through WhatsApp have also been denounced by farmers as generic, old and of routine nature surprising as locally contextual content has productivity (Mittal *et al.*, 2010). One has to keep on posting something new, which must be pertinent to the farmers (Yadav *et al.* 2015).

3. Diversity of members among the groups

There are several members in the WhatsApp with their own thinking and perspectives. Due to their different backgrounds, information delivery suited to their needs remains a challenge.

4. Sometimes source of fake information

Delivery of incorrect messages, fake information and misguidedness are such are challenges for transferring the information through WhatsApp group.

Conclusion

WhatsApp group platforms are continuously evolving. Online communities tend to be fickle and more fragile as visual cues and body languages are generally lacking (Andres & Woodard, 2013). This can also be a challenge while using WhatsApp group platforms to communicate with farmer clientele. As youngsters are the heart of our country attracting youth with latest technologies like 'WhatsApp' groups will promote their involvement in livestock sector. WhatsApp is an easy and cost-effective way to create and maintain linkages with smartphone farmer clientele. As an extension worker, it helps build trust and credibility among the farmers. Overall, it is an amazing tool to promote and support marketing, networking, encouragement and enthusiasm among the farmers. Extension system should evoke and support this innovative outreach tool.

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