

Challenges and Prospects of Farmers in Using Social Media for Agri-Marketing in District Budgam, J & K

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SUMMARY

Technology has taken the world by storm. Business, news, entertainment and education are facilitated by internet and e-applications. Information flow is facilitated in a flick of a second and at bare minimal cost. While it has wide usage, the actual picture at grassroots presents a rather dismal picture. Our primary producer – the humble farmer, stays blissfully ignorant about its utility and benefits. The current article brings the case of farmers in District Budgam.

INTRODUCTION

The internet has largely shaped the world economics in the last three decades. More recently, its importance got underlined in times of Covid-19 Pandemic, when physical distancing was an imperative and all endeavors sought execution on-line for all practical purposes. Children were able to achieve their academic targets only because of electronic applications like Google Classrooms and other of the ilk. Our own clientele, the primary producer – farmer, was accessed through electronic applications like Zoom and Telegraph for most awareness programmes, lectures and several demonstrations on processing of fruits and vegetables.

Challenges and Prospects of Farmers

In a random sampled data of farmers registered during these on-line and off-line trainings, it surfaced that nearly 65% of farmers use smart phones. This usage was primarily for communicating with friends, family and relatives or for seeking news and entertainment through social network sites. Social network sites may be defined as electronic based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. These sites however differ in nature and nomenclature. In nut-shell social media enable people to create, publish, share, collaborate, discuss and network through a wide range of new, mainly digital, formats and platforms. Different types of Social media are Blogs, Microblogs (Twitter), Conversational threads (WhatsApp), Social Photos, Social Networking (Facebook, LinkedIn), Video Sharing (YouTube).

None of the farmers accessed were found to be using social media applications like FaceBook or Instagram for purposes to highlight/showcase their farm endeavors or sell their produce through these media. While 85% of these are illiterate, a mere ease of buttons, multi-language use, user-friendly interface is an edge that favors use of these apps by even a semi-literate person. A digital profile of a local farmer, growing organic, farm fresh produce, eliminating the risk of middleman stands a larger chance of fetching economic remuneration than a local grocer if dealt in an organized manner.

CONCLUSION

There is a strong need to raise awareness about social networking sites among farmers. These are an important tool to enable them identify their niche areas and products for wider market and therefore economic returns. Farmers need to identify their farms market and set their farm apart in terms of farm sanitation and idyllic appeal. They need more exposure visits to other aspiring agriprenuers in order to emulate their experience. These will subsequently broaden their vision and ultimately culminate into an experience that will enable them to develop their farm and enterprise in a commercially viable enterprise. A strong hand-holding from stakeholders like Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Department of Agriculture and other Non-Profit Organisations can build their capacities in these domains and enable progressive farmers to create farm logo, have a tag-line, launch a website, join Farmers Producer Organizations, attend farm related events and finally begin advertising their produce. A main benefit of social media in agricultural marketing is ability to gain wealth of knowledge and ideas, opportunity to establish key partnership, opportunity to reach wider consumers, experts in agricultural field.

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