



Use of Information and Communication Technologies by the Farmers of Hilly Areas of Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication from different sources and channels are the essence of extension which provides agricultural information and knowledge to the farmers. Keeping in mind the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the transfer of agricultural technologies, a study on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by the Farmers of Hilly Areas was conducted in Reasi District of Jammu and Kashmir. Out of 12 Blocks, 4 blocks namely Reasi, Arnas, Pouni and Painthal were selected randomly. Twenty villages were selected randomly from these blocks and a total of 120 farmers were selected randomly from these 20 selected villages. An index was developed for studying the use of ICTs by the respondents. It was found that the majority of farmers were having television and mobile phones and most of them were using the television for the entertainment purpose. Extension personnel's were considered as the most credible source of information followed by radio, television, newspaper and computer.

Key Words: Communication, Innovative Technologies, Hilly Areas, Credibility, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

The communication is the core activity of human association in general and progress as well as development in particular. People's need for communication is as strong and as basic as is need to eat, sleep and affection. For modern people, it is impossible to function without mass media of communication, as they have become the part of fabric of modern civilization. Effective communication from different sources and channels are the essence of extension which provides knowledge and information for rural women to modify the behaviour in the ways that provide sustainable benefits to them. Useful information creates interest, promote understanding, assist in mental evaluation and ultimately motivate them for adoption. Hence, there is urgent need to disseminate useful information among the farmers from hilly areas through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Sharma *et al* (2012) reported that most farmers accessed the information through cell phones and called fellow progressive farmers, relatives,

input dealers, traders and government agricultural extension personnel and scientists working at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra. The other important sources of information were newspaper, radio and television. The internet and helpline telephone number was found to be least preferred sources among the farmer. However, the perceived quality and relevance of the information provided by these sources was highly variable (Sharma *et al*, 2012). Hence, in order to study the successful communication among the farmers of the hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir, it was necessary to know their communication profile. Keeping in mind the importance of ICT, a study on the use of information and communication technologies by the farmers of hilly areas was undertaken.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the hilly district Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir which was selected purposively. Out of 12 Blocks, 4 blocks namely Reasi, Arnas, Pouni and Painthal were selected randomly. Twenty villages were selected

randomly from these blocks and a total of 120 farmers were selected randomly from these 20 selected villages. The data were collected through a semi-structured schedule and analyzed with the help of various statistical tools i.e. frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ownership of ICT tools by the farmers

The television set has become a common place in homes, businesses and institutions, particularly as a vehicle for advertising, a source of entertainment, and news. Similarly, keeping of a mobile phone by an individual can be considered as a status symbol or a necessity as well. The data (Table 1) showed that 89.16 per cent of respondents owned mobile/telephone followed by television (85.00 %), radio (25.00 %), newspaper (13.33%) and computer (6.66%). Similarly, It has been reported by Sharma *et al* (2012) that in the sample villages in Kapurthala district of Punjab, 98.3 per cent of the farmers possessed mobile phones and out of which, 78.0 per cent were using this device for getting information from dealers, relatives, scientists, extension workers, banks etc. However, only 66.7 per cent of marginal farmers were using it for agricultural purpose. It was also revealed that 57.5 per cent of farmers were possessing radio sets but only 37.7 per cent amongst them were using this medium for getting information related to agriculture.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to the ownership of ICTs. N=120

Sr. No.	Owner of ICT source	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Radio	30	25.00
2.	Mobile/Telephone	107	89.16
3.	Newspaper	16	13.33
4.	Television	102	85.00
5.	Computer	8	6.66

Purpose of using ICT tools

The data (Table2) revealed that majority (77.50 %) of the respondents were using television for the entertainment with very few (7.50%) were using it for the information purpose. Majority (89.16%) of the farmers were using mobile/telephone to talk with their friends and relatives for their personal work whereas 10.83 per cent of the respondents were reading newspaper for the information purpose with only 2.50 per cent for the education purpose. Similar type of findings were reported by Sharma *et al* (2012).

The data (Table3) revealed that the majority (89.16%) of the respondents were regularly using the mobile/telephone to talk to their friends/relatives etc. to discuss their personal problems. Majority (85.00%) of the respondents were viewing television regularly. 5.83 per cent of the respondents were reading newspapers occasionally while 4.16 per cent were reading regularly and 3.33 per cent of

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to the purpose of use of ICTs.

N=120

Sr. No.	ICT source	Information	Entertainment	Education	Others
1.	Radio	11(9.16)	9(7.50)	10(8.33)	0.0
2.	Mobile/Telephone	-	-	-	107(89.16)
3.	Newspaper	13(10.83)	-	3(2.50)	-
4.	Television	9(7.50)	93(77.50)	-	-
5.	Computer	8(6.66)	-	-	-

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Use of ICT

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to the use of ICTs.

N-120

Sr. No.	ICT source	Frequency of use					
		Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely	
		N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
1	Radio	5	4.16	12	10.00	13	10.83
2	Mobile/Telephone	107	89.16				
3	Newspaper	5	4.16	7	5.83	4	3.33
4	Television	102	85.00				
5	Computer	3	2.5	3	2.5	2	1.66

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to the ICTs credibility.

N=120

Sr. No.	ICT source	Credible	Less Credible
1	Radio	91.66	8.33
2	Newspaper	81.66	25.00
3	Television	83.33	16.66
4	Computer	79.16	20.83
5	Extension Personnel's	95.83	4.16

the respondents were rarely reading the newspapers. Only 4.16 per cent of the respondents were listening radio regularly while 10.00 per cent respondents were listening radio occasionally and 10.83 per cent of the respondents were rarely listening. The results were in accordance with the results of Singh and Singh (1997).

The values given in Table 4 reveal that majority (95.83 %) of the respondents were having credibility on the Extension Personnel followed by radio (91.66%), television (83.33%), Newspaper (81.66%) and computer (79.16%). The results were in accordance with the results of Sharma and Kumar (2010).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the majority of the farmers were having television and mobile phones at their homes. Majority of the farmers were using the television for the entertainment purpose. Extension personnel's were considered as the most

credible source of information followed by radio, television, newspaper and computer. Hence, the use of information and communication technologies is necessary for the development of the society.

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