



Preparedness of Agricultural Extension agents for the awareness of Social Media in extension service delivery in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

In Nigeria today, the use of social media for communication is becoming more dynamic of which agricultural activities is not left behind. The study examined the preparedness of agricultural extension agents for dissemination of agro-information using social media in Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study ascertained the socio-economic characteristics of the extension agents; determined the levels of awareness of social media tools by extension agents and the level of knowledge in the use of social media; One hundred respondents were selected for the study using random sampling and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study showed a mean age of 42 years and majority (77.1%) of the respondents were males. The modal educational level was HND. The level of awareness of social media among the extension agents was quite high especially for Facebook (94.8%) and WhatsApp (94.8%) Findings revealed that 87.5% of respondents had low level of knowledge of social media usage. The study revealed a significant relationship between age ($r = - 0.29, p < 0.05$) and educational level ($r = 0.37, p < 0.05$) and knowledge of social media usage. The study concluded that extension agents are thus prepared for the utilization of social media tools especially WhatsApp, yahoo and Facebook and thus recommends the use of social media as a major tools for agro-information delivery in this technological age.

Keywords: Social media, agriculture, extension, professionals, communication, Face book.

Introduction

Social media is the most latest shape of virtual verbal exchange on an international scale, the millennium have made social media an inseparable part of human lifestyle which connects them with the relaxation of the world. Accessing information through social media with the aid of using cell gadget is likewise gaining reputation¹. Social media can absolutely be described as websites and online programs that permit customers to create and proportion content materials or take part in social networking².

Also, it is outlined as net-primarily based totally virtual equipment for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers back to the user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia this is shared and mentioned over virtual networks. social media is defined as sorts of digital conversation through which users can create online groups to percentage facts, thought, private messages and different content materials³. social media is described as the interplay of human beings and additionally to creating, replacing and commenting on contents in digital groups and networks⁴. According to past records, social media isn't always appropriately what everyone folks does or says, however appropriately what we do or say together, worldwide, to talk in all guidelines at any time through any feasible virtual means⁵.

Social media are essentially digital technology facilitating communication of user generated content material through regular interplay^{6,7}. Looking on the numerous definitions, social media may be defined as internet primarily based totally equipment of digital conversation communication that permit users to interact, create, share, retrieve, and alternate facts and thoughts in any shape (text, pictures, video,) that may be mentioned upon, archived, and utilized by everyone in digital communities and networks. Aspects of social media that lead them to essential and on hand device in improvement conversation are clean get right of entry through cellular telephones, mass-private conversation and mass-self conversation, a bigger set of susceptible ties to make sure receipt of novel thoughts, excessive diploma of connectedness and likability and content materials sharing throughout more than one structures⁸.

Social media is greater approximately sociology and psychology of communicate than approximately technology⁹. Major traits of social media that distinguishes this shape of online conversation from others are participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness¹⁰. The extra special boom of social media can generally be attributed to the not unusual place platform it offers to human being to percentage their thoughts and create their very own content materials be it texts, images, sound clips or movies and additionally the affordability of those

structures as they may be accessed without incurring more charges. Convergence of technology and evolution of multi-useful transportable devices are different motives for increasing social media attain. The recognition of those social media structures to an international target market is like by no means earlier than attributable to the accelerated attain of net enabled cellular telephones and accelerated quantity of social media structures throughout the globe¹¹.

Social media websites won their recognition now no longer simplest due to the fact they linked pals and own circle of relatives however the massive ability of conversation become observed and it began out locating its use in professional conversation. The possibility of social media system are nonetheless one of the kind primarily based totally at the purpose. While Facebook has the best attain among all social media structures, LinkedIn remains the primary desire for expert verbal exchange as it is far much more likely to have a professional, properly knowledgeable dialogue in LinkedIn which isn't always viable in Facebook or Twitter^{12,13}. The benefits of social media a long way outweigh the disadvantages. Based on previous result proving that maximum extension print substance seem pretty attractive, a few fail to bring supposed which means or produce the preferred impact on farmers due to the fact they're poorly edited, and so incorporate unwanted element-noise¹⁴. For effectiveness of social media in agricultural data transfer, the subsequent elements will be considered in programming and disseminating of such statistics the farmers, their desires and interest, layout wherein statistics is preferred, their ideas and culture, the approach of presentation with a purpose to serve them higher and justification of price of statistics mission earlier than Extension Agents (EAs) is to take gain of developing social media utilization in the present ADPs' operations^{15,16}. It is in the light of the relevance of social media in this dispensation that this study was carried out to examine the level of aware and knowledge of usage of social media tools by extension agents in Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are: ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of the agricultural extension agents in the study area; determine the level of awareness of social media tools by extension agents; and determine the level of knowledge in the use of social media.

Methodology

This research was conducted in Ondo State. Ondo State is located in the south-western zone of Nigeria and is made up of 18 Local Government Area. It is bounded in the North by Ekiti and Kogi States, in the East by Edo State, on the West by Osun and Ogun states and in the South by the Atlantic Ocean. The Ondo State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) is the organization saddled with the responsibility of extension activities in the state. Its head office is located in Alagbaka Akure with four Zonal headquarters which are Ikare, Owo, Ondo Okitipupa, respectively. The population of the study comprises of all the Extension agents in Ondo State Agricultural

Development Programme (ADP). The total number of extension agents in the ADP as at the time of the study was 117. Twenty five (25) were randomly selected from each zone for the purpose of the study. However, a total of 100 extension agents were selected for the study. Primary data was obtained through the administration of pre-tested and validated selection questionnaire. The research focused on the awareness and knowledge of social media usage, Data from the study were analyzed using frequency, percentages, mean score, statistics and chart.

Results and Discussions

Social-economics Characteristics of Respondents: Age: Table-1 shows that majority (77.1%) of respondents were males while (23%) were females. The result implies that there are more males than females in the profession. There is gender imbalance in the recruitment of extension agents¹⁷. This will definitely have implication for extension work as socio cultural gender norms may make it difficult for male agricultural extension agents (AEAs) to interact with female farmers¹⁸. Thus, Extension organizations must encourage and recruit more females for extension work done at the same time evolve strategies that will help. (43%) of the respondents were within the age of 31-40 years, (44%) were within the age of 41-50 years while (14%) of the respondents were between 51 years and above. The analysis shows that the respondents were between the active ages of 40 and 49 years. The mean age of the respondents was 42 years. These findings show that respondents were middle aged, matured for the extension job and in their economically active age of life. Past literatures explained that middle aged persons are found to be most active and appropriate for extension service delivery¹⁹.

Table-1: Distribution of Respondents According to Socio-economic Characteristics.

| Variable | Frequency | (%) | Mean | N=96 |
|------------|-----------|------|------|------|
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 74 | 77.1 | | |
| Female | 22 | 22.9 | | |
| Age | | | | |
| 31-40 | 41 | 42.8 | | |
| 41-50 | 42 | 43.8 | 42± | 8.45 |
| >51 | 13 | 13.5 | | |

Marital Status of Respondents: Figure-1 shows that 4.2% of the respondents were single, 91% were married while 1.0% were divorced.

This indicates that married have the largest percentage among the respondents which means they have more responsibilities at home. There could also be role conflicts which may necessitate the use of the social media, to cover up for lapses.

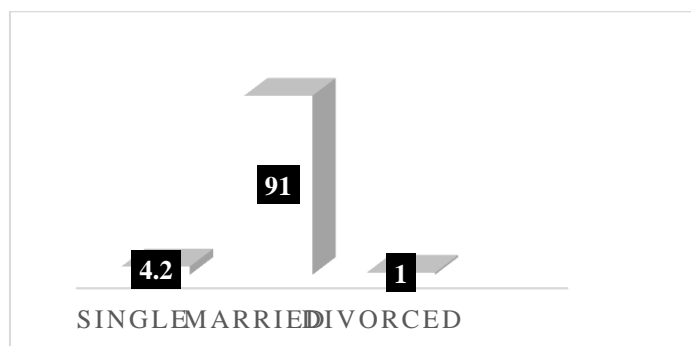


Figure-1: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status in percentage.

Level of Education: The results as shown on Figure-2 shows that 8.3% of the respondents had OND, 64.6% of the respondents had HND, while 27.0% of the respondents had B.Sc. The average year of formal education was 27.1 ± 2.3 years. The analysis shows that 8.3% of the respondents had between 16 and 20 years of formal education while only 4.0% of the respondents had formal education greater than or equal to 21 years. The highest percentage of the level of education of the extension agents is HND holder. This implies that HND holders are more preferred as their training may have been more of practical oriented. And extension work is more of practical works so the level of education that involved more of practical are likely to be needed. Also the findings shows that respondents were qualified for their job and were also in their formative stage of learning on the job and extension delivery. This will assist them in performing their duties effectively. Similar result confirms that education is vital to the success of agricultural extension agent’s work²⁰.

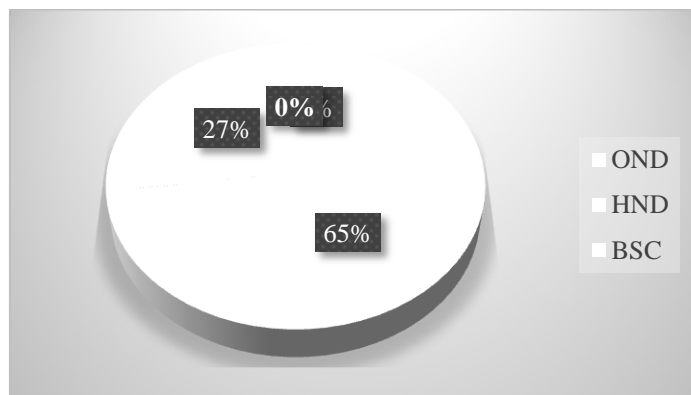


Figure-2: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education in percentage.

Awareness of social media tools: It was assumed in the study that awareness of social media by extension agents is a

prerequisite for its usage. Result in Figure-3 shows that 94.8% of the Extension Agents were aware of Facebook while the same percentage (94.8%) were aware of Whatsapp. Those aware of twitter were 33.3% and 15.6% were aware of blogs. Instagram was known to 63.5%. 13.5% were aware of second life, 14.6% were aware of wiki, 16.7% were aware of word press, 8.5% were of linkedin and 72.2% were aware of yahoo. The level of awareness of Facebook and Whatsapp was highest in the study area. Majority of the extension agents were thus aware of the usage of Facebook and Whatsapp and they are likely to use social media in disseminating agro-information. This will help to promote wide spread agro-information among the clients. LinkedIn has the lowest level of awareness which means the extension agent were yet to be fully aware of LinkedIn for dissemination of agro information.

Based on the grand mean of 4 used as cut off point, 57% of the Extension Agents had low awareness of the various social media tools while 40.68% had high awareness of social media tools. This implies that the overall awareness of the respondents to social media usage is still low and this can lead to negative impacts of social media usage for agro-information dissemination. However, the possibility of leveraging on the high awareness of Facebook and Whatsapp is very encouraging, as it has features for video, voice and pictures and emogies/symbols that can be taken advantage of in agro-information dissemination, while other tools are been pushed. Hence, the awareness of social media by extension agents was considered as variable that could influence social media usage²¹. Therefore, to change the mindset and promote thoughtful use of social media among agricultural extension personnel, mass awareness and interaction with one’s clients needs to be emphasized.

Table-2: Distribution of respondents showing the level of awareness of Social media.

| Levels of social media usage | Frequency (n = 96) | Percentage |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Awareness level | | |
| High > 4 | 39 | 40.6% |
| Low < 4 | 57 | 59.4% |

Knowledge about usage of social media tools: Knowledge plays a fundamental role in promoting innovation and the exchange of ideas. Based on the awareness of three major social media (SM) tools, Table-4 reveals that the knowledge of the utilization of SM tools for chatting was the highest in Facebook (86.5%) followed by Whatsapp (71.9%) and then Yahoo (53.1%). Knowledge of the Usage of the SM tools for posting pictures was highest for Facebook (88.5%) followed by Whatsapp (71.9%) and Yahoo (53.1%). Respondents who knew Facebook could be used for posting videos were 67.7%. This was followed by Whatsapp (61.5%) and Yahoo (55.2%).

Also 64.6% knew Facebook could be used to send audio messages. This was followed by Whatsapp (62.1%) and Yahoo (55.2%). Furthermore 81.3% of the extension agents knew Facebook could be used for exchanging messages followed by Whatsapp (67.7%) and also Yahoo (55.2%). Furthermore, for disseminating personal information, 68.8% of the respondents used Facebook followed by Whatsapp (65.6%) and Yahoo (54.2%) Also, 70.8% of the extension agents use Facebook to interact with clients followed by Whatsapp (63.5%) and Yahoo (52.1%) to interact with clients. 64.6% of the extension agents use Facebook for entertainment purpose followed by Whatsapp (57.2%) followed by Yahoo (52.1%) Also 70.8% of the extension agents use Facebook for business purpose, followed by Whatsapp (61.5%) and Yahoo (51.1%) for business purpose. Finally 76.0% use Facebook for making friends followed by Whatsapp (65.6%) and for Yahoo (53.1%).

This implies that majority of the extension agents have knowledge of using Facebook, Whatsapp and Yahoo for various purposes but their knowledge about other social media is very

low. This means there should be orientation for the extension agents in using different social media and not to be limited to some of the social media but the knowledge of all to assist them to be expose to the new modern of agricultural communication technology²².

However, their high knowledge of the use of Facebook, Whatsapp and yahoo should be leveraged upon for the dissemination of agro-information. Extension agents can thus be encouraged to send details of procedures of activities in video or picture form or send pictures of plants, animals and agro-chemicals to farmers. Even meetings wherein farmers were absents can be recorded and sent to them²³. On the other hand, the knowledge of farmers in using these media should also be considered so that the effort of the agents will not be in vain. Therefore, extension agents also needs to familiarize themselves with social media tools and how they can enhance rapid and cost effective transfer and sharing of knowledge to their clients^{24,25}.

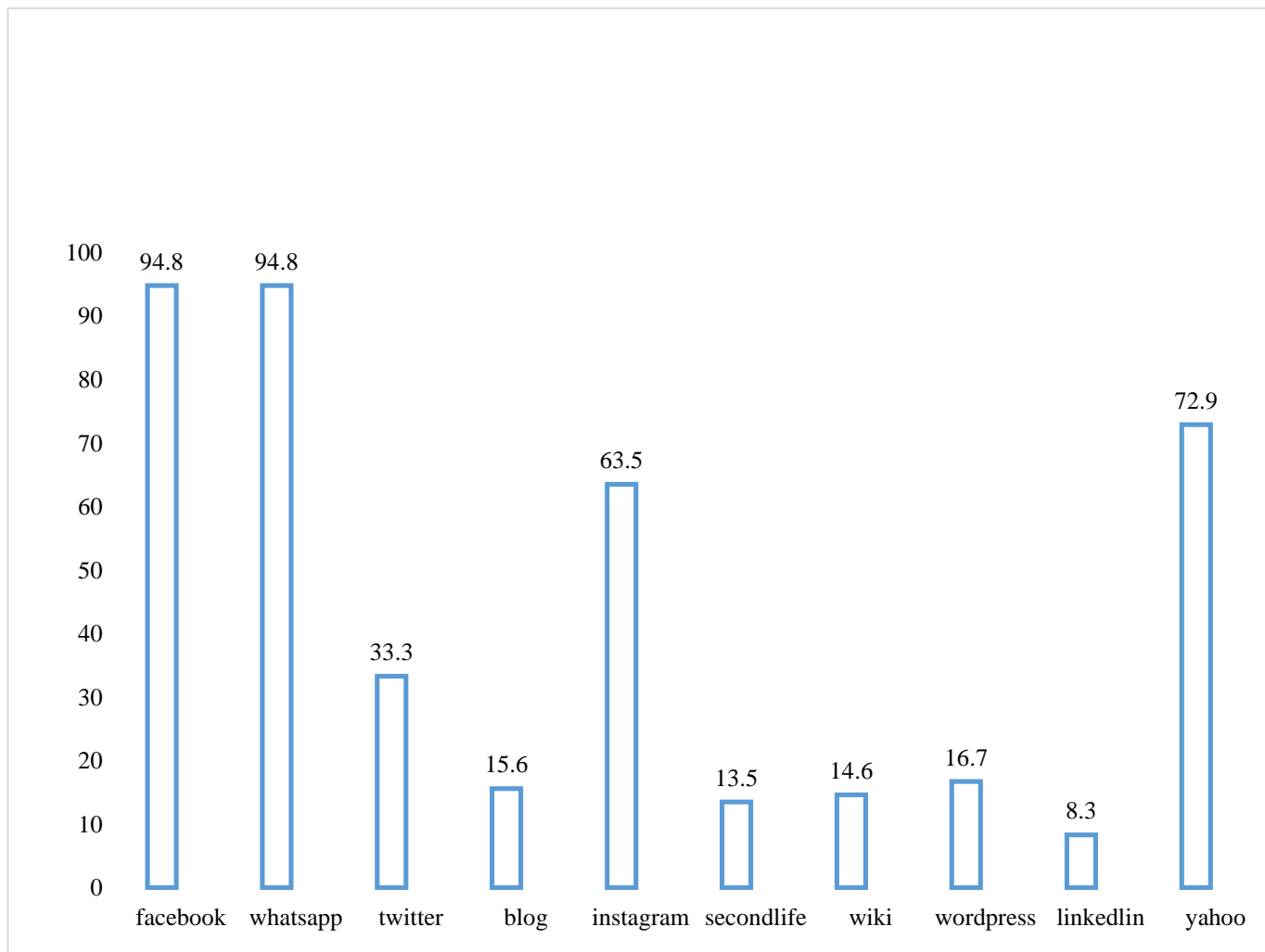


Figure 3: Awareness of Social Media Tools among Agricultural Extension Personnel.

Table-3: Distribution of Respondents According to their Knowledge of the Usage of Social Media.

| Social media applications and knowledge of usage | Chatting | Posting Pictures | Posting Video | Audio message | Exchanging Message | Disseminating Personal information | Interact With clients | Entertainment | Business purposes | For making friend |
|--|----------|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Facebook | (86.5) | (88.5) | (67.7) | (64.6) | (81.3) | (68.8) | (70.8) | (64.6) | (70.8) | (76.0) |
| Whatsapp | (71.9) | (71.9) | (61.5) | (61.5) | (67.7) | (65.6) | (63.5) | (57.2) | (61.5) | (65.6) |
| Twitter | (5.2) | (6.3) | (3.1) | (4.2) | (8.3) | (5.2) | (8.3) | (4.2) | (5.2) | (4.2) |
| Blog | (10.4) | (6.3) | (6.3) | (6.3) | (8.3) | (6.3) | (5.2) | (4.2) | (5.2) | (5.2) |
| Second life | (4.2) | (1.0) | (1.0) | (4.2) | (5.2) | (6.3) | (7.3) | (7.3) | (7.3) | (7.3) |
| Wiki | (2.1) | -- | -- | (1.0) | (2.1) | (1.0) | (1.0) | (2.1) | -- | (2.1) |
| LinkedIn | (10.4) | (5.2) | (5.2) | (7.3) | (6.3) | (6.3) | (5.2) | (4.2) | (5.2) | (5.2) |
| Instagram | (6.3) | (7.3) | (7.3) | (6.3) | (8.3) | (8.3) | (7.3) | (7.3) | (8.3) | (7.3) |
| Wordpres | (2.1) | -- | -- | (4.2) | (1.0) | (1.0) | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Yahoo | (53.1) | (53.1) | (54.2) | (55.2) | (55.2) | (54.2) | (52.1) | (52.1) | (51.0) | (53.1) |

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage.

Table-4: Distribution of respondents showing level of knowledge usage of Social media.

| Level of knowledge | Frequency (n = 96) | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Knowledge of usage | | |
| Low <33 | 84 | 87.5% |
| Moderate > 33.01-67 | 12 | 12.5% |
| High | - | - |

Conclusion

This study identified the awareness and level of knowledge of usage of social media tools among agricultural extension agents in Ondo State. It concluded that the agents are mostly aware of three (Facebook, Whatsapp and Yahoo) out of the ten social media tools examined. Majority also used it for chatting, sending personal information and exchanging information through pictures and videos. Their knowledge was generally low if the ten social media tools are considered. However, considering the three major ones they were aware of, they can be said to be very knowledgeable in the use of those social media tools. The study thus recommends that adequate information and capacity enhancement on the usage of Facebook, WhatsApp and yahoo for extension service delivery

should be encouraged. This will enhance the future use of these social media in extension service delivery.

Technology appreciation seminars can also be organized for the agents. The policy implication of this study is that government needs to reorient its policies in order to harness social media potential for contribution to agricultural development in the country. This is because the study shows that the extension agents are ready for such implementation. It will reduce distance with farmers, reduce dearth of information at the appropriate time and reduce cost of extension services. However, research on farmer’s use of social media and their competency should be carried out to ensure the receivers have capacity to manipulate such information sent via Social media.

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