

Original Research Article

**EFFECTIVENESS OF WHATSAPP IN DELIVERING LIVESTOCK
ADVISORY SERVICES**

ABSTRACT:

In the present ICT era of communication, Social media is playing a pivotal role in reducing the communication gap and sharing the information instantly anywhere in the world. Especially WhatsApp helps in formation of interest groups for different categories of people for sharing information. A total of 95 farmers and 10 doctors who were using WhatsApp in their Smart phones were selected to include in the WhatsApp group "PasuVignanaVedika" to provide the livestock related information to the farmers instantly. After 90 days of study period, the results were collected by personal interview method through structured interview schedule. Majority (96.84%) of the livestock farmers were using WhatsApp to find livestock related information through different WhatsApp groups. Majority opined that it is easy to read, listen and share information through WhatsApp. Majority of the queries in WhatsApp group were regarding health of animals especially skin, mastitis and digestive disorders. Further, most of the farmers used text based messages followed by photos of ailing animals. In view of the vast opportunities through WhatsApp group formation, government policies should be framed in such a way to utilize the full potential of this method of communication for the welfare of farming community.

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Key words: WhatsApp group, Livestock services, Communication, Type of queries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to the internet-based digital tools for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers to the user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia that is shared and discussed over digital networks [1]. It is a way to build relationships, share information, and connect with diverse audience of people you may never meet in real life. The benefits of this can be as large or as small as the farmers choose, depending on how much time we wish to spend on it. WhatsApp offers several advantages in the livestock sector, it help in one to many and many to many type conversations. In this specific interest group for livestock farmers, veterinary doctors and scientists will help the farmers to stay updated on all latest information and schemes and especially when they have emergency health issue for livestock by providing first aid help. It usually uses less internet data, convenient to use by even illiterate farmers by photo, audio and video messages. It is a more participative and demand driven tool. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has been exploring the possibilities of utilizing social media tools for expanding its reach by engaging with farmers, partners and other stakeholders [2]. WhatsApp can increase the ambit and effectiveness of livestock advisory services, but the animal husbandry institutions are yet to harness this tool [3]. In fact, a systematic study under Indian context to understand the effectiveness of WhatsApp as an option for offering livestock advisory support to the farmers was found to be very scarce and hence, this study was undertaken to study the attitude of farmers towards utilization of WhatsApp as a tool of Livestock information delivery.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Experimental research design was adopted for the present study. This research work was taken up For the first time to use this medium for the benefit of farmers in Andhra Pradesh, India. The research is planned initially by creating a WhatsApp group entitled "PASU VIGNANA VEDIKA" by the researcher under the expert professors guidance. A total of ten Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (Field veterinarians) and 95 progressive Livestock farmers from six different villages in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh state thus the total group members came to 106 (including the researcher). All the farmers were personally called by phone and explained about the research work before adding to the group. This group

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was planned to make available for farmers for three months, the researcher got the answers for the farmer's queries from the subject matter specialists from the university and post in the group for the benefit of farmers. Field vets were also actively involved in providing answers to the farmer's queries.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The results of present study were estimated by personal phone calls and direct interview and presented as follows.

3.1 Attitude - Majority (61.05%) of the respondents were having a favourable attitude towards using the WhatsApp for livestock advisory services. This might be due to the fact that the easy access to android phones, easy to operate, multiple information sharing styles and also farmers can get the reply instantly and exchange experience of other farmers easily. [4], [5], [6], [7].

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Table 1. Attitude towards using the WhatsApp

S.No	Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less favourable	15	15.79
2.	Favourable	58	61.05
3.	More favourable	22	23.16

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3.2 Reasons to use WhatsApp- Majority (96.84%) of the livestock farmers were using WhatsApp to find livestock related information through different WhatsApp groups. There are many Next to this they were using for chatting with farmers (93.68%), followed by other reasons.

Table 2. Reasons to use WhatsApp

S.No.	Reasons	Yes	No
1	Find livestock related information	92 (96.84%)	3 (3.16%)
2	Share professional livestock activities	86 (90.53%)	9 (9.47%)
3	Connect with livestock experts and farmers	68 (71.58%)	27 (28.42%)
4	To share livestock information	72 (75.79%)	23 (24.21%)
5	Find out livestock related news and events	49 (51.58%)	46 (48.42%)
6	Chatting with friends and family	89 (93.68%)	6 (6.32%)

Table 3. Visibility and audibility of the content as perceived the farmers-

S.No.	Statements	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
1	Easy to read the message	95 (100%)	0	0
2	Voice is clear and easy to listen	89 (93.68%)	6 (6.32%)	0
3	Easy to understand a discussion	69 (72.63%)	26 (27.37%)	0
4	Easy to understand any photo shared	43 (45.26%)	45 (47.37%)	7 (7.37%)

Table 4. Applicability, reliability and credibility as perceived by the respondents

S.no.	Statements	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	Accuracy of the content	81 (85.26%)	14 (14.74%)	0
2	Timely Available	85 (89.47%)	10 (10.53%)	0
3	Easy and accurate language	80 (84.21%)	15 (15.79%)	0
4	Fully understandable	23 (24.10%)	59 (62.11%)	13 (13.68%)
5	Change in livestock practices according to the message received	13 (13.68%)	60 (63.16%)	22 (23.16%)

Results were similar to that of the results of [4].

- Queries received from farmers:** out of the total queries received, majority are related to health aspects of the animals like skin, digestive and mastitis followed by feeding and schemes. The miscellaneous queries included farmers success stories, milk fever case, suggestions to improve milk yield, dairy, sheep and poultry farm management. [8].

Table 5.Queries received from farmers

S.No	Parameter	Number of queries received	Percentage
1	Feeding	7	14.58
2	Breeding	1	2.08
3	Health 1. Respiratory -1 (3.85%) 2. Digestive -6 (23.07%) 3. Circulatory -1 (3.85%) 4. Nervous -1 (3.85%) 5. Skin -11 (42.31%) 6. Mastitis -6 (23.07%)	26	54.17
4	Schemes	5	10.42
5	Miscellaneous	9	18.75
Total		48	100

5. **Distribution of farmers queries based on mode of query:** Majority (56.25 %) of the queries were in the form of Text in both local and English language based on the respondents education levels, followed by queries by posting photo, audio and video messages.

Table 6. Distribution of farmers queries based on mode of query

S.No	Mode of query	Number	Percentage
1	Text	27	56.25
2	Photo	15	31.25
3	Audio	3	6.25
4	Video	3	6.25
Total		48	100

During the study period the researcher posted 6 videos and 17 articles in local telugu language regarding different aspects of animal care, management, health, feeding, breeding, selection and government schemes etc.

CONCLUSION:

Majority of the respondents felt that the unnecessary messages posted in the WhatsApp group were developing a negative impact on the main purpose of WhatsApp. So they opined that those farmers misuse the group should be warned and removed from the group instantly. Some respondents who were staying in the few meters radius from the Veterinary hospital used the WhatsApp services rarely to share livestock information as they are in nearest reach to the hospital and veterinary staff. So the further researchers can select the respondents who were staying far away from any veterinary hospital and from the areas where there is good network connectivity for mobiles.

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