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Constraints in accessing agricultural information through ICT services

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Abstract

The present era is of Information and Communication Technologies. The extension workers, farmers and other stakeholders are using ICT tools for transferring agricultural and allied fields. Information and Communication Technologies are to meet the location specific information needs of the farmers. The information and communication networks are expanding very fast. In spite of continuous efforts of various functionaries, there are still areas where improvement is needed to be able to take advantage of the benefits of ICT. The study was conducted in Junagadh, Rajkot and Amreli districts of Saurashtra region of Gujarat state. Total twenty-four villages from six talukas were selected randomly and ten farmers from each village were selected as respondents making sample of total 240 farmers. The most important constraints faced by farmers were: Inadequate literacy skills to use ICTs, High cost of some ICT gadgets and services, Lack of technical knowledge to operate the ICT tools, Difficulty in understanding the language of ICT gadgets, Lack of interest in using modern tools of ICT.

Keywords: Constraints, information and communication technology and farmers

Introduction

ICTs are technologies offering new ways for communicating and exchanging information and knowledge. Information Communication Technology is a term which is currently used to denote a wide range of services, applications and technologies using various types of equipments and software, often running over telecommunication network. The importance of ICT is not the technology as such, but it is enabling function in access to knowledge, information and communications, which are important elements in today's economic and social interactions. The farmers are least equipped with proper tools for knowledge and information access to operate efficiently in a dynamic global environment. Information Technology (IT) will bring new information services to rural areas which farmers as users, will have much greater control than over current information channels.

Even if every farmer does not have a computer terminal, these could become readily available at local information resource centres, with computers carrying expert systems to help farmers to make decisions.

Objective

To identify the constraints faced by respondents in accessing agricultural information through Information and Communication Technology services

Methodology

The present study was undertaken in three districts of Gujarat state namely Junagadh, Rajkot and Amreli. Two talukas were selected from each district and four villages were selected randomly from each selected taluka. Total twenty-four villages from six talukas were selected randomly and ten farmers from each village were selected as respondents making sample of total 240 farmers.

For ascertaining the constraints faced by the respondents in accessing agricultural matter through Information and Communication Technologies, the constraints were kept open before the respondents to offer their difficulties. The ICT service wise constraints were collected from the respondents and percentage were worked out for each constraint. To trace the relative importance of constraints, overall ranks were assigned on the basis of percentage.

Results

The data regarding the constraints faced by farmers are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Constraints faced by farmers in accessing agricultural information through Information and Communication Technologies (n= 240)

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1	Lack of technical knowledge to operate the ICT tools	223	92.92	3
2	Inadequate literacy skills to use ICTs	234	97.50	1
3	High cost of some ICT gadgets and services	230	95.83	2
4	Problem of signal/network connectivity	198	82.50	7
5	Lack of stable electric power in rural area	163	67.92	11
6	Lack of interest in using modern tools of ICT	209	87.08	5
7	Insufficient servicing centres of ICTs in villages	138	57.50	12
8	Difficulty in understanding the language of ICT gadgets	217	90.42	4
9	High cost of servicing charges of ICT gadgets	121	50.42	13
10	Lack of technical guidance to use ICTs	171	71.25	10
11	Non – availability of updated contents in local language	186	77.50	8
12	High charges of internet services	204	85.00	6
13	Lack of need based information	117	48.75	14
14	Lack of awareness about mobile applications in agriculture	179	74.58	9

Most (97.50 per cent) of respondents experienced the constraint “Inadequate literacy skills to use ICTs” with first rank followed by “High cost of some ICT gadgets and services” (95.83 per cent), “Lack of technical knowledge to operate the ICT tools” (92.92 per cent) and “Difficulty in understanding the language of ICT gadgets” (90.42 per cent) with second, third and fourth rank, respectively.

The data also reveal that majority (87.08 per cent) of farmers experienced the constraint “Lack of interest in using modern tools of ICT” with fifth rank followed by “High charges of internet services” (85.00 per cent), “Problem of signal/network connectivity” (82.50 per cent), “Non - availability of updated contents in local language” (77.50 per cent), “Lack of awareness about mobile applications in agriculture” (74.58 per cent) and “Lack of technical guidance to use ICTs” (71.25 per cent) with sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth rank, respectively.

The data in table reveal that more than two-third (67.92 per cent) of farmers experienced the constraint “Lack of stable electric power in rural area” with eleventh rank followed by “Insufficient servicing centres of ICTs in villages” (57.50 per cent), “High cost of servicing charges of ICT gadgets” (50.42 per cent) and “Lack of need based information” (48.75 per cent) with rank twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth, respectively.

These finding was in line with the findings of Adigun (2013), Avilesh *et al.* (2017) ^[2], Vivek (2017) and Naik (2018) ^[3].

Conclusion

Majority of the farmers faced the constraints like inadequate literacy skills to use ICTs, high cost of some ICT gadgets and services, lack of technical knowledge to operate the ICT tools, difficulty in understanding the language of ICT gadgets, lack of interest in using modern tools of ICT. Extension personnel should put efforts to tackle the constraints faced by the farmers assessing the agricultural information through ICT services.

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