



## Social Media: New Avenue to meet Communication gap in Farming sector

<sup>1</sup> B.N.Ambarisha\* and <sup>2</sup> Dr. H.K.Mariswamy

<sup>1</sup> PhD Scholar, <sup>2</sup> Professor and Head (Retd)

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Bangalore University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

### Abstract:

In spite of services rendered by several extension agencies, information reach to the farming sector is not up to the expected level. Despite wide range of reform initiatives in agricultural extension in India in the past decades, the coverage of, access to, and quality of information provided to marginalized and poor farmers is uneven. Though transfer of technologies from lab to land has become motto of all research institutes and Government agencies, on an average public extension services reach only 6.8 per cent of farmers. On the other hand due to the non availability of public extension system, farmers have found alternate mode of receiving information through television channels, neighboring progressive farmers and more importantly through social media in recent years. Due to the increasing level of mobile network penetration in rural areas, It makes instant access of information by the farmers through. social media. It has become most convenient in accessing new technologies adopted by famers across the globe. Hence exploring other options of alternate communication delivery mechanisms gains more importance in present scenario. At this moment Social media stands as a prime source for farmers to gain knowledge and sharing views on farm technologies.

This paper tries to explain the constraints faced by the farmers in accessing information from public extension agencies and also tries to prove that social media can be utilized effectively as an alternate communication channel. As a result of this analysis, farmers are in regular access to social media to meet their knowledge requirement and YouTube remains most preferred by farmers due to the audio visual communication. This helps in increasing efficiency in reaching farmers and minimize communication gap in farming sector.

**Introduction:**

The new agricultural policy of Government of India highlighted the need to integrate the extension service delivery at the grassroots level. This means technologies of livestock, agriculture, horticulture and rural livelihoods should be delivered in unified manner. In this scenario the requirement of a specialized and multiple service functionaries adequately equipped to deliver a basket of services at the village / block level becomes essential.

There is a paradigm shift in agricultural extension from a transfer of technology to a demand driven approach has been accompanied by new extension methods.

For communicating an idea, experience or technology, extension worker use audiovisual aids because audio-visuals help to communicate the message effectively and efficiently. They provide the audience with a situation nearest to the reality and readily get the idea. These audio-visual aids help to make out the meaning of the spoken words clear as the ideas or information are put across through more than one sense. Research showed that the use of visual aids help people to learn faster and better than by verbal method, alone. With the advancements in communication technology mobile usage has increased rapidly not only in urban area but also in rural areas. Apart from this, due to the penetration of mobile network in rural areas, information delivery system is so fast. Within a fraction of second one can access what is happening around the world. Here social media gains more importance due to the interactive communication modes.

WhatsApp specifically is an instant messaging platform that has made users much more connected. The nature of Facebook is more of a public platform and has higher viral content than WhatsApp which is a relatively closed medium. YouTube remains a content community in which videos are seen and shared.

To overcome the difficulties in contacting scientists and extension officers, farmers now have started to access social media for getting required information related to their farming practices. Among the social media platforms, you tube plays vital role in communicating technologies to farming community. Documentary films shared through social media have become most opted source of information by farmers in recent days. These developments have opened up new avenues for improving reach of extension services for the needy farmers and other stakeholders.

Social media can be advantageously used in agricultural extension (Saravanan et al., 2015) because of several reasons like Highly cost effective, Simultaneously reaches large numbers of clients, Easily accessed from mobile phones , Increases internet presence of extension organizations and their client reach , Brings all stakeholders into a single platform, Can measure reach and success by tracking number of visitors, friends, followers, mentions, Facebook 'likes', conversation index and number of shares.

YouTube YouTube, a video sharing platform, is the third most visited website in the world. A total number of 3.25 billion videos are watched on the website each month and more than half of the views are from mobile. Many individuals, organizations, and networks are leveraging its advantages.

Thus, research Study was undertaken to know the effectiveness of documentary films in communicating technologies to dairy farmers research through which social media too can be explored effectively as a communication platform.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

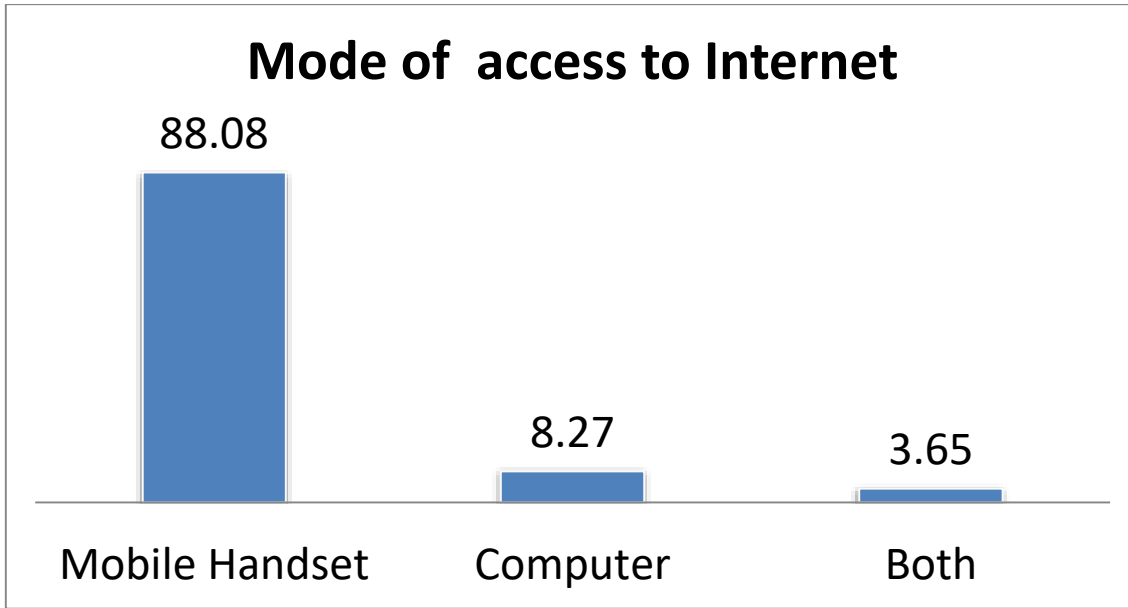
Study was conducted in Six districts of Karnataka state which includes Bangalore urban and Rural District, Kolar, Chikkaballapur in southern Karnataka and Belagavi and Bagalkot in northern part of Karnataka. Random sampling method was followed with pre structured questionnaire to collect data from 520 respondents spread across Karnataka.

Table 1: Demographic data

SUB VARIABLE			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Age	20-30 years	F	92	42	134
		%	68.7	31.3	100
	31-50 years	F	189	95	284
		%	66.5	33.5	100
	>50 years	F	73	29	102
		%	71.6	28.4	100
Education	Primary	F	81	72	153
		%	52.9	47.1	100
	Higher	F	110	33	143
		%	76.9	23.1	100
	degree	F	115	15	130
		%	88.5	11.5	100
	illiterate	F	48	46	94
		%	51.1	48.9	100
Occupation	Agriculture	F	308	89	397
		%	77.58	22.42	100
	Non agriculture	F	46	77	123
		%	37.40	62.60	100
TOTAL		F	354	166	520
		%	68.08	31.92	100
SUB VARIABLE			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
ing dai ry far	1-5years	F	162	107	269

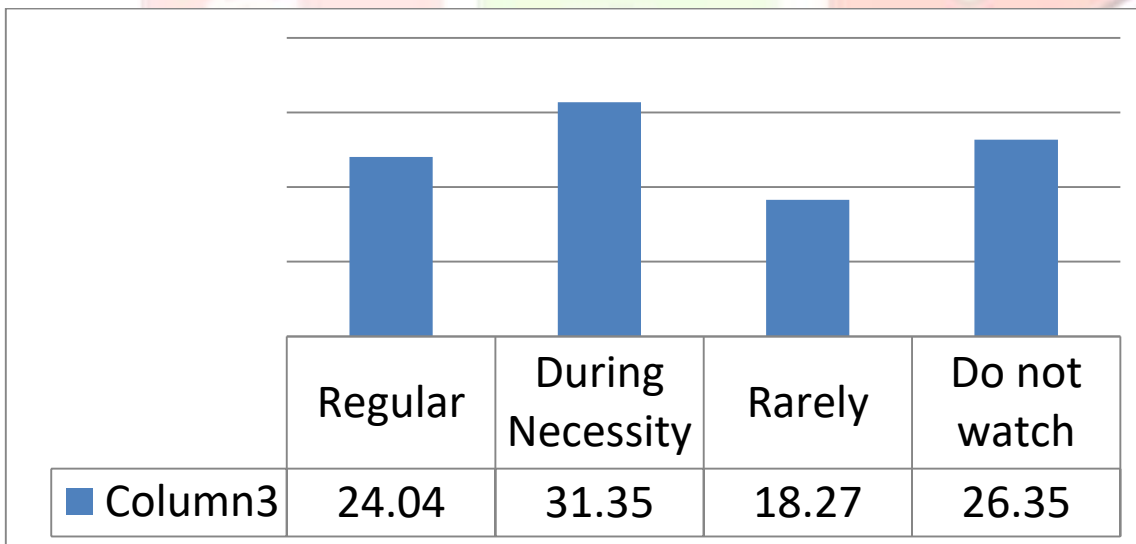
		%	60.22	39.78	<b>100</b>	
		<b>5-10years</b>	<b>F</b>	68	29	<b>97</b>
		<b>10-20years</b>	%	70.10	29.90	<b>100</b>
			<b>F</b>	61	9	<b>70</b>
		<b>&gt; 20years</b>	%	87.14	12.86	<b>100</b>
			<b>F</b>	63	21	<b>84</b>
<b>Number of dairy cows owned</b>	<b>1-5</b>	<b>F</b>	301	145	<b>446</b>	
		%	67.49	32.51	<b>100</b>	
	<b>6-10</b>	<b>F</b>	31	16	<b>47</b>	
		%	65.96	34.04	<b>100</b>	
	<b>&gt;10</b>	<b>F</b>	22	5	<b>27</b>	
		%	81.48	18.52	<b>100</b>	
<b>Milk production / day /liters</b>	<b>&lt;10L</b>	<b>F</b>	242	128	<b>370</b>	
		%	65.41	34.59	<b>100</b>	
	<b>11-20L</b>	<b>F</b>	52	29	<b>81</b>	
		%	64.20	35.80	<b>100</b>	
	<b>&gt;20L</b>	<b>F</b>	60	9	<b>69</b>	
		%	86.96	13.04	<b>100</b>	
<b>Income/day</b>	<b>&lt;250</b>	<b>F</b>	243	127	<b>370</b>	
		%	65.68	34.32	<b>100</b>	
	<b>251-500</b>	<b>F</b>	42	27	<b>69</b>	
		%	60.87	39.13	<b>100</b>	
	<b>501-1000</b>	<b>F</b>	19	7	<b>26</b>	
		%	73.08	26.92	<b>100</b>	
	<b>&gt;1000</b>	<b>F</b>	50	5	<b>55</b>	
		%	90.91	9.09	<b>100</b>	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>520</b>	
		%	<b>68.08</b>	<b>31.92</b>	<b>100</b>	

Chart 1:



In Chart -1 it is found that majority of the rural farmers (88.08%) use mobile devices to get connected with internet access. This shows that mobile penetration in rural areas is expanding at higher rate. Indirectly it helps extension officers reach farmers easily and communicate technologies or any information related to farming practices.

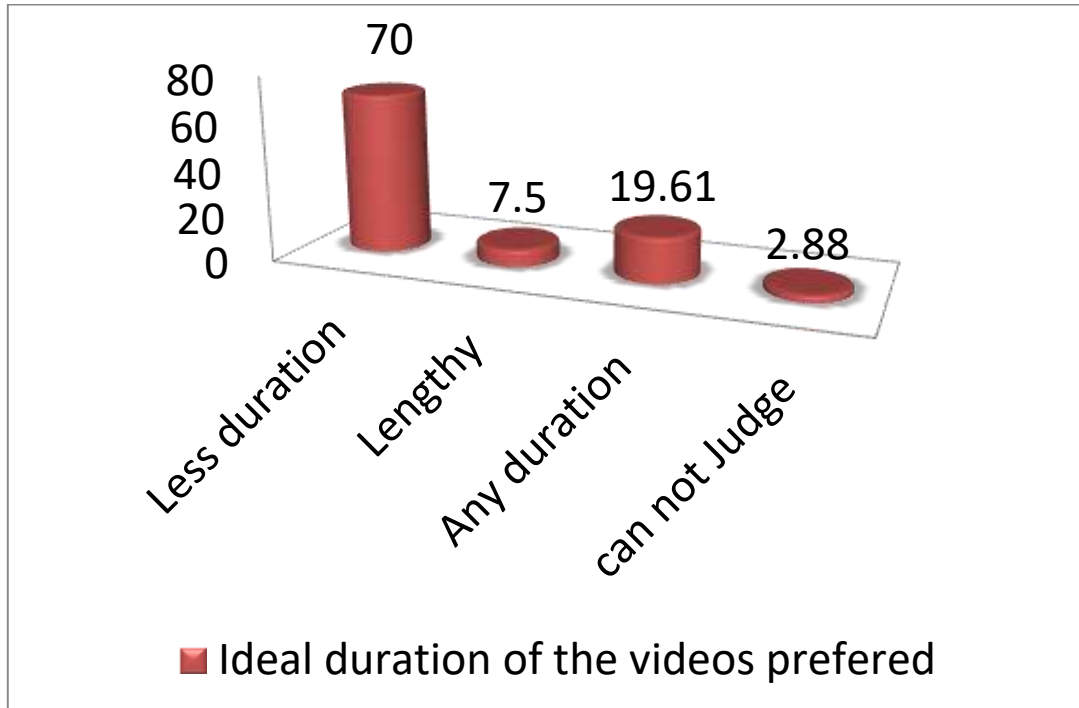
**Chart 2: Frequency of accessing social media for dairy related information**



Providing the information at right time is most important in effective communication. Farmer expects to get required information instantly. But it is highly impossible to get the instant information physically since farmers stay very far from the reach of extension offices or farm research stations. At this stage use of new media or internet fulfils the need of farmers at an instant assistance. Hence farmers’ access to social media was studied as part of the research. chart 2 shows that 31.35% of farmers access social media during necessity. But interesting thing is 24.04 % farmers

are in regular access to social media. Apart from this 18.27 % farmers visit social media rarely and still 26.35 % of the farmers have no access to social media.

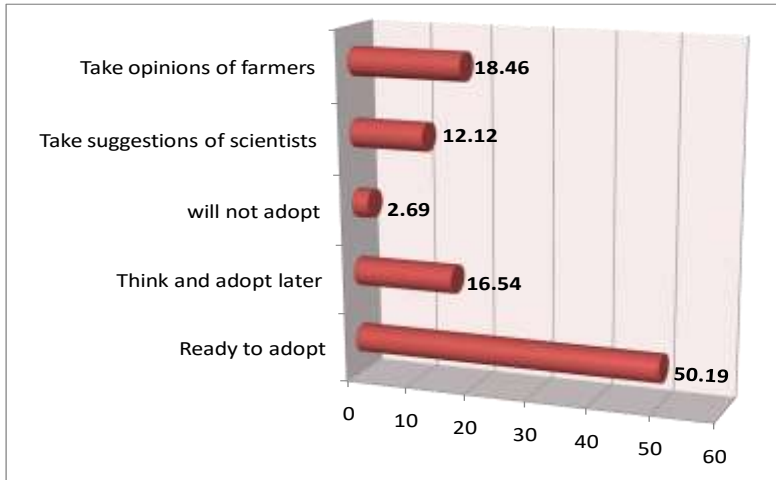
**Chart 3:**



Size or duration of videos matters a lot in transfer of technologies to farmers through social media. Even though lot of internet packages are available for mobile users, many users (70%) opt for videos with less duration. Reasons are like high charges on data usage, time consumed to download lengthy videos, and patience level farmers to wait until the video gets downloaded.

Those who seek detailed information (19.61%) are not worried about the duration. They are in need of complete details related to the subject which they are looking at.

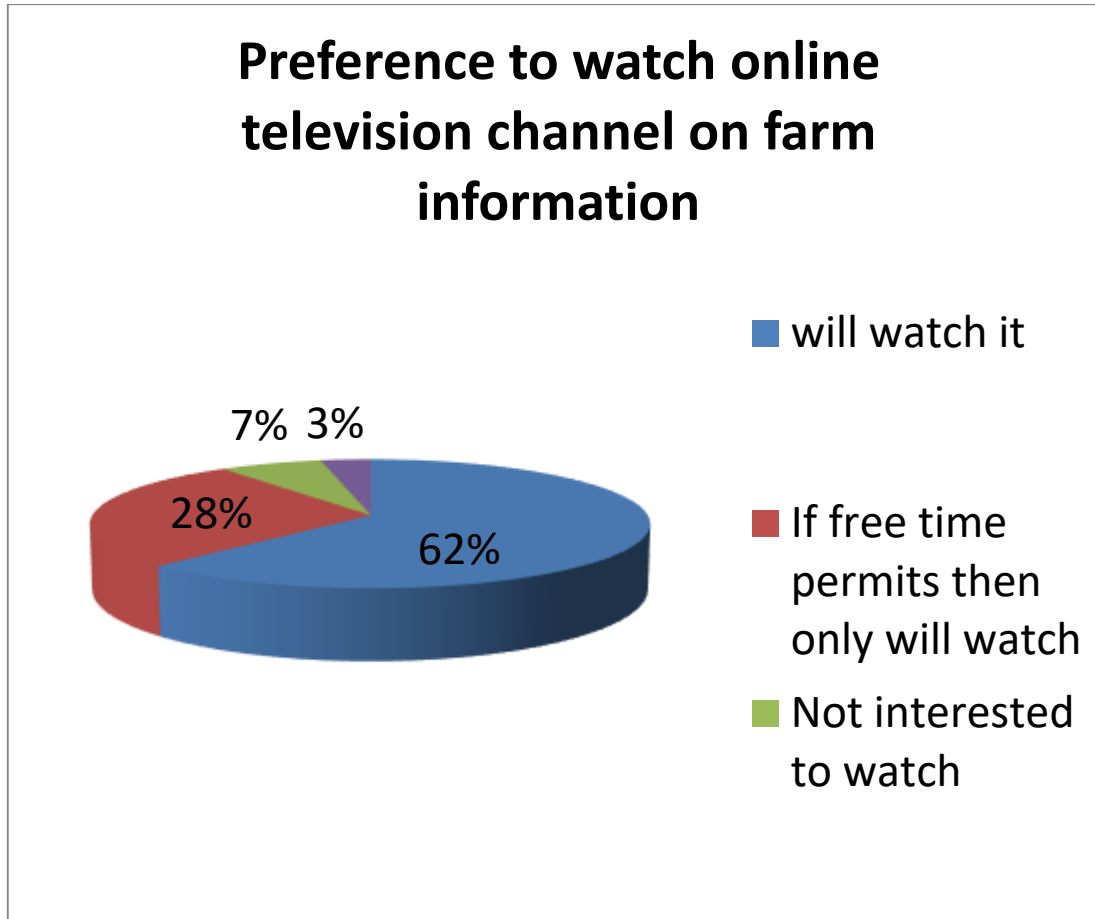


**Chart 4: Adoption of information accessed through social media**

If technology transferred is implemented by the user, then only it becomes an effective extension. Chart - 4 indicates that about 50.19 % of the farmers who accessed social media are ready to adopt the information gained. 18.46 % of the farmers prefer to take opinion of the neighboring successful farmers and 12.12 % of the internet users would like to take second opinion from the experts. About 2.69 % of the farmers are not willing to adopt the information gained in social media because they are not sure that information is truthful.



Chart 5:



Since technology is in the hands of people in the form of mobile technology everyone intends to access information instantly and where ever they are. No doubt farmers too are very eager to know and learn the information through online web services. It is found that 62 % of the respondents want to access online television channels related to farming information. 28 % of the respondents have the option to watch online channels if they are able to manage with free time. 7 % of the respondents are very clear that they don't want to opt for online channels whereas 3 % are unable to decide whether to opt for online channels or not to watch it.

#### Response to youtube channel:

As part of research work, a YouTube channel was launched on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept 2018. Documentary video on dairy farming was uploaded to the channel for public access. For more publicity and connectivity among the farmers, video link was shared in different social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and mobile messages. Social media access by farmers for information on dairy farming particularly YouTube was studied over one year.



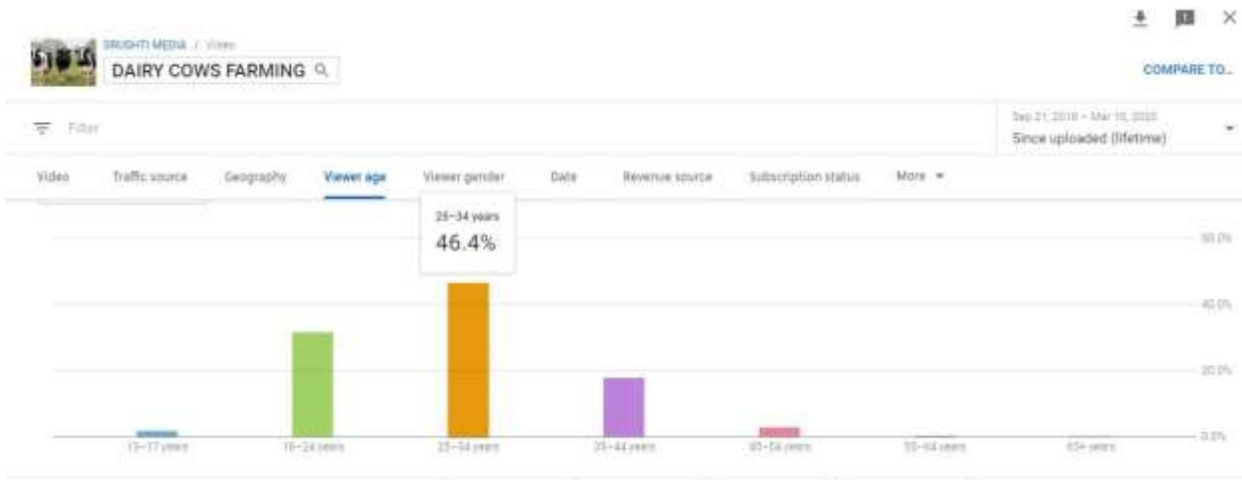
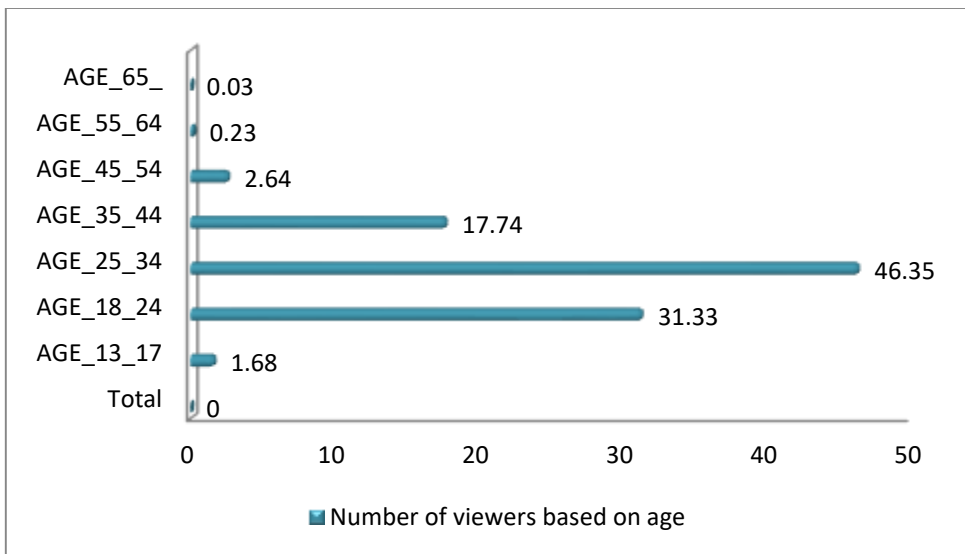
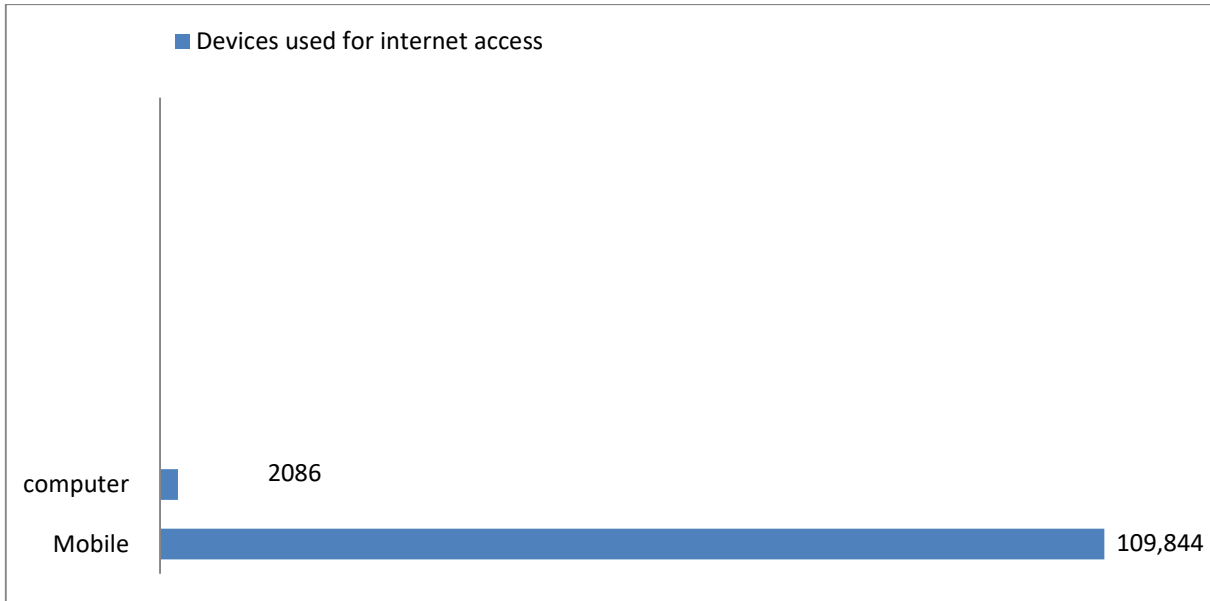


Chart 6:



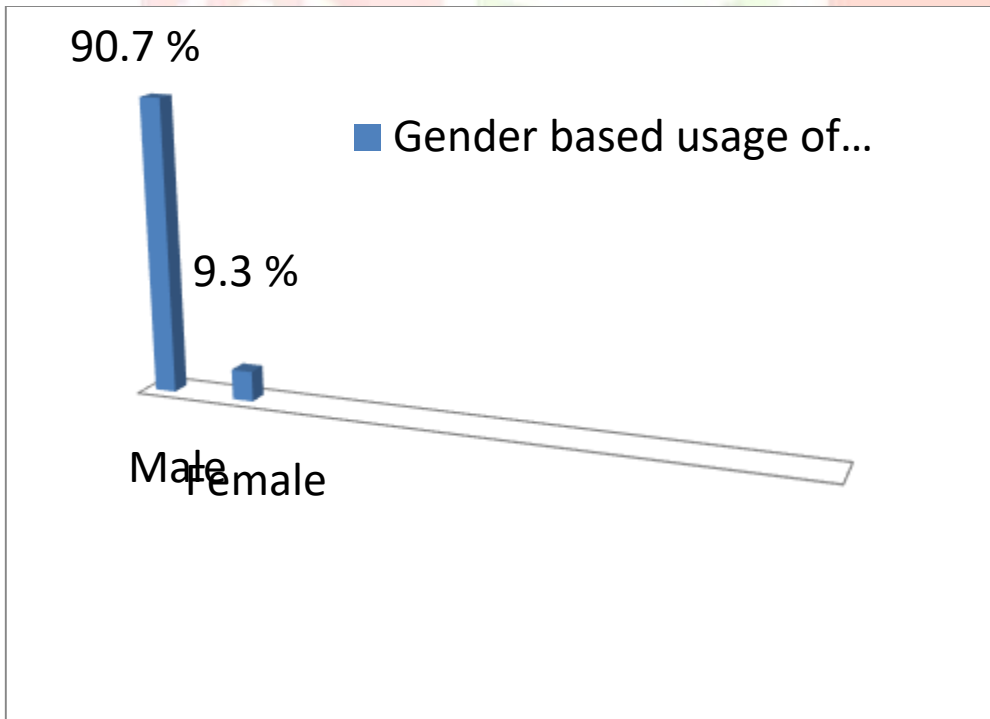
From chart 6, it is observed that viewers with age group of 25 -34 have more access (46.35%) to internet and social media compared to the other age group.. Whereas very less number of users are found in the age group of more than 65 years. This shows that now a days young generation people are interested to know farm related information through social media.

Chart: 7



This study strengthens earlier research outcomes which revealed that mobile penetration in rural areas as well as urban areas has increased rapidly due to the developments in communication technologies. About 98 % of the users (109844 numbers) in this particular you tube channel have accessed internet facility through mobile devices and only 2 % of the users ( 2086) have used computer desktops.

Chart 8 : Gender based usage of youtube



Since earlier days generally we observed that decision making on implementation of farming practices rests with the male farmers. This male domination continues in present situation too. From the research

study it is observed that Male farmers dominates to access information in social media. About 90.7 % of the users belongs to male category and only 9.3 % are women users.

### Conclusion:

Social media which is new generation communication platform plays a key role in taking technology to farmers doorsteps at a very faster rate. You tube is most popular platform in social media used by farmers because it provides video based information. Hence documentary films can be hosted in social media to make easy access to farmers where ever they are and when ever they are in need of information. Due to the availability of cost effective smart phones, effective mobile network service and provision of internet packages at cheaper cost in rural areas farmers now have easy access of internet services. It also benefits them in getting required information instantly. Through social media, farmers can easily get access to technologies adopted by different farmers across globe which was very difficult to access physically. Combination of documentary films and extension officer's guidance can strengthen the farm information which in turn improves the farmer's knowledge. It will minimize the gap in providing information by extension personnel in rural areas.

### References:

- Anandaraja.N (2006), *Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies through Interactive Multimedia Compact Disc (IMCD): An Innovative Approach*, Computers in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Tamil Nadu
- E. SURESH PAUL , 2018, SHORT FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES ON ENVIRONMENT IN TAMILNADU-A STUDY
- Goyal, A (2011). ICT in Agriculture Sourcebook: Connecting Smallholders to Knowledge, Networks, and Institutions, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- Devesh Thakur and Mahesh Chander (2018) USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: SOME EVIDENCES FROM INDIA, International Journal of Science, Environment and Technology, Vol. 7, No 4, 2018, 1334 – 1346
- Mr. Ayobolu, Y.O & Adebayo. K (2018), *Video documentary training in agricultueal extension in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A qualitative assessment of cassava farmers in south west Nigeria*, Internaational Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Studies, Vol 5, No.3.
- K.Ranjith Kumar (2013), *Effectiveness of an educational DVD developed for dissemination of improved dairy farming practices among dairy farmers in Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu*, NDRI, Karnal.
- Suchiradipta, B., and Saravanan, R., (2016). Social media: Shaping the future of agricultural extension and advisory services, GFRAS interest group on ICT4RAS discussion paper
- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319291803\\_Use\\_of\\_social\\_media\\_for\\_livestock\\_advisory\\_services](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319291803_Use_of_social_media_for_livestock_advisory_services)
- Internet usage in India - Statistics & Facts Published by Statista Research Department, Jan 17, 2020