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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO SHARE AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION AMONG RICE FARMERS IN BADE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated, use of social media to share agricultural information among rice farmers in Bade Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study was structured along three research objectives to identify types of social media platforms commonly used for agricultural information sharing, types of information shared by rice farmers using social media and challenges associated with use of social media for agricultural information sharing among rice farmers. Several literature and empirical studies were cited in line with the research objectives. A quantitative research method was adopted, using cross-sectional survey design. The target population for this study is made up the rice farmers of Bade local government area. The total population of rice farmers is one thousand two hundred and sixteen. Random sampling technique was adopted for selecting respondents. The purpose of this study one hundred and ten was randomly selected. A questionnaire was used, as an instrument of data collection. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using frequency and simple percentages. The findings of this study revealed that rice farmers used various social media platforms in sharing agricultural information such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, You Tube, and rice farmers shared different types of information through social media such as, information on crop variety, on new seeds, on insecticides and information on how to apply fertilizer which were fall in the highest information share by rice farmer, while challenges, like high data charge from telecommunication, erratic power supply, lack of adequate network were the most serious challenges militating against the use of social media in sharing agricultural information. It was therefore recommended that networks companies should reduce charge of data. Erratic power supply is another serious problem hampering the effective utilization of social media, therefore power should be improved. Also, Government and other stakeholders should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to reduce network problems more especially in rural areas where most of these rice farmers reside.
Keywords: Social Media, Information Sharing and Agricultural information.

Introduction

Information plays a pivotal role in our society, most especially in the development processes both in agriculture and rural development. Information is

an important ingredient in attaining competitive and sustainable development in both developed and developing countries. It is one among the major drivers of social and economic transformation in the world. Society needs information on every aspect of life ranging from Health, Agriculture, Commerce, Business, Education and others. Information has been one of the important elements that has established and maintained human relation across the globe. Every person requires information in their daily and professional life, rice farmers inclusive. Rice farmers have need various information regarding their agricultural activities which may include information on weed control, financial credit, market price, fertilizer, pests and insecticides etc. Availability of adequate and accessible information will improve the efficiency of agricultural development projects and programs. Information has a key role to play in agricultural development.

The present society is an environment where information is created as a result of human day to day interactions and activities. It therefore indicates that human interaction must occur before information is generated and exchanged (Hepler, 2018). Information therefore has an effect to human beings perceived, view and understand the world. Similarly, information is perceived by Roja (2018) as an essential resource for economic, political, social and technological development of any nation. Information is therefore the most important element for societal development.

Statement of the Problem

All over the world the use of social media to share and access agricultural information by farmers is gradually replacing traditional media outlets such as television, newspapers, radio etc. This is because social media has become a powerful tool that connects millions of people globally. Social media is now a mainstream form of communication around the world, and continues to grow in popularity with the increase in the number of smartphones and ease of use. It is becoming a very important tool in farming because farmers can exchange information and discuss issues concerning their agricultural activities based on experience and knowledge. The use of social media can contribute significantly to overcoming the inadequacies in knowledge of certain basics practice in rice production by greatly improving information exchange. Social media has given a good opportunity to farmers, especially rice farmers to obtain the best price for their products on time and take decision about land and sell of their rice at particular time. Most farmers' access agricultural information from agricultural extension workers, libraries or websites etc. Most of these farmers remain largely dispersed in wider geographical locations. Therefore, farmers face barriers to

obtaining agricultural information due to limited access. This is believed that, social media has potential to change the face of agriculture to improve and increase the channel of accessing agricultural information among rice farmers. Despite the importance of social media in improving farming practices, observation indicated that rice farmers are still finding it difficult to utilize them to share critical information that will improve their farming practices. If the rice farmers want to remain relevant and overcome information inadequacy, they must embrace use of social media in sharing agricultural information. However, based on the information available in the literature, there is empirical research on the use of social media in Agriculture, but based, on the knowledge of the researcher none of the study research conducted on the use of social media for sharing agricultural information among rice farmers in Bade Local Government Area of Yobe State.

In view of this, the study is designed to find out the types of social media platforms commonly used for agricultural information sharing by rice farmers, types of information shared using social media, and the challenges associated with the use of social media to share agricultural information among rice farmers in Bade Local Government Area, Yobe State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to explore the use of social media for information sharing among rice farmers in Bade local government area, Yobe state. The specific objectives were:

- To identify types of social media platforms commonly used for agricultural information sharing by rice farmers in Bade local government area.
- To find out types of information shared by the rice farmers using social media.
- To find out the challenges associated with use of social media for agricultural information sharing among rice farmers in Bade local government area.

Review of related Literature

Social Media

Social media refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media facilitates the sharing of ideas, interest and information through virtual networks which include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, YouTube etc.

Using social media platforms educates the farmers regarding agricultural issues and facilitates the buying and selling of farm products (Kuria, 2014). These

channels of platforms promote dialogue, mass communication, marketing and information dissemination (Paudel and Baral, 2018), Farmers use social media platforms: Twitter, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok etc. The widely use these platforms to interact with friends and colleague in search of information and to form collaboration with others farmers.

Social Media is a technology that relies on the existence of the Internet, and therefore bears. Most of the characteristics of the Internet. Mark-Anthony, Chukwuemeka and Martins (2021) define social media "as a web based tools that enhance user generated content and campaigns aimed at sharing of information in various forms. Its main goal is to promote interaction among people, their group and community." Similarly, Simisaye and Adeyoye (2015) defined social media as a group of Internet–based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (where sites facilitate interaction and collaboration among users in a social media dialogue), and that allow the creation and exchange of user–generated content. Among the technologies that shaped and improved communication today, are the so–called "social [media] communication technologies".

As an interactive technology, social media facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. The information a user generated could be an opinion, video, audio and multimedia, which can be shared and discussed over digital network.

Use of Social Media to Share Agricultural Information

Information sharing is a channel through which information is transferred and exchanged from one person or source to another It is an activity that encompasses two major aspects; giving information to others and receiving the information that has been provided by the information giver (Sovolaine, 2017). Social media can be used to support other information sharing sources used by rice farmers, as it easily facilitates exchanging information through sending images, pictures, links, video etc. Social media has indeed allowed rice farmers to share agricultural information among themselves through blogs websites, social networking site (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn etc).

As contemporary interactive communication technologies, Social media comprise of various tools that allow people to exchange information at local and global level. According to Kesherwani, Rout, Padhy and Ravichandran (2022) farmers can gain knowledge, information and ideas with the help of social media, and there are opportunities to reach experts, such as researchers, scientist,

agronomist, environmentalist and others. They argued that with the help of these media, "farmers have increased their production, quality, quantity and business."

On the use of social media by farmers, Team (2018),has revealed that farmers that use social media are using it almost every day and that Youtube is one of the most popular social media platform in which more than fifty percent of the farmers are using to know about general news, enjoy music or how-to-video on agricultural practices. This is similar to the submission of Spielman, Makhija and Campenhout, (2021) in which they indicated the acceptance of social media as a mode of communication between the farmers and agricultural extension workers in some developed and developing countries like United States, Pakistan, India, Kenya and many other developing countries.

Social media platforms/tools, such as Facebook, Youtube and WhatsApp are becoming better sources of information sharing on agricultural production and its promotion. The dissemination of the information can be one to one, or one - many. Latif, Iftikhar and Shahzadi (2020) explored the role of social media in dissemination of agricultural information in Pakistan. They noted that Youtube has been accepted as the best media for learning and skills development among farmers in Pakistan. In addition, their study also found that social media is suitable for the promotion of farming practices, as it allows farmers to save time and cost by collecting data from their smart phones conveniently anywhere, any time.

Agricultural Information

Agricultural information is a key in determining extent of productivity as farmers need to upgrade current practices for higher yield and income. Agricultural information when provided and utilized improves farm practices, farm income, living conditions and agricultural development.

The word agriculture is a general term considered by many to be a science and others as an art yet others consider it to an occupation concerned with cultivating land, raising crops, breeding and raising livestock. National Geographic Society (2023) defines agriculture as "the art and science of cultivating the soil, growing crops and raising livestock. It includes the preparation of plant and animal products for people to use and their distribution to markets" To buttress this view, Harrison and Fuller (2014) posited that agriculture is the most comprehensive word that is used to denote the many ways through which crop plants and domestic animals sustain the global human community by providing sufficient and adequate food and other products.

Agricultural information can thus be considered as man's accumulated knowledge in the field of agricultural practice**.** Tadesse (2008) cited in Adio, Yusuf,

information and messages that are relevant to agricultural production activities of farmers such as crop production and protection, animal production and management, and natural resource production and conservation etc

Information today is the most critical resource, all sources that could help users of such information to improve and develop intellectually on their activities. In other words, information provides the user with better alternatives when taking critical decision/s. This means that the major function of information is to increase the knowledge of the user, and to reduce his level of uncertainty or reduce the varieties of choices available to him. There is no doubt therefore, information is very important in all aspects of human endeavor including agriculture.

Discussing the constituents of agricultural information, Oyindeinbofa (2017) sees agricultural information as knowledge that helps farmers to achieve maximum agricultural yield. He noted that information is the least expensive input, as far as farming implements are concern, for improved rural agricultural development as it assist the farmers to have knowledge about new agricultural techniques and technologies, planting treated seeds, soil conservation, prevention of plants and animal diseases, application of fertilizer, proper storage of farm products, marketing techniques and other agricultural activities.

Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target of this study, are the rice farmers in Bade Local Government Area, Yobe state. Primary population of this study comprises one hundred and ten (110) rice farmers. Ten rice farmers were selected randomly from each of the 11 wards in the study area to make up a total number of 110 rice farmers as sample size. Random sampling was used for this study because it is considered the best due to its robustness and the equal chances of being selected. Abiola (2009) further said that "random sampling is the most fundamental method of probability sampling. Data were collected from the respondents with the use of well- structured questionnaire administered to rice farmers. The questionnaire was well structured in line with the objectives of the study. However, all were returned but 98 were correctly filled and these used for the data analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and simple percentages to achieve the objectives of the study.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms	Frequency	Percentages(%)
Facebook	72	73%
Whatsapp	63	64%
Instagram	36	37%
Twitter	18	18%
YouTube	11	11%

Source Survey, 2025

The findings of the study revealed that 72(73%) of the respondents uses Facebook to share agricultural information. This was closely followed by Whatsapp with 63(64%). While 36(37%) of the respondents uses Instagram, followed by Twitter and YouTube with 18(18%) and 11(11%) with the least of response.

Table 2 Types of Agricultural Information Shared by Rice Farmers

Types of Information	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Information on crop variety	82	84%
Information about new seeds	76	78%
Information on insecticides	74	76%
Information on fertilizer application	74	76%
Information about market price	68	69%
Information about soil management	59	60%
Agricultural technology information	52	53%
Information on birds control	49	50%
Information on water management	43	44%
Agricultural credit information	38	39%
Information on storage	32	33%

Source Survey, 2025

The table showed that majority of the respondents 82(84%) use social media to share information on crop variety. Similarly 76(78%) respondents shared information on new seeds. Whereas 74(76%) share information on insecticide and share information on how to apply fertilizer. 68(69%) share information about market. The table showed that the information with the least responses were information on agricultural credit information and information on storage with

38(39%) and 32(33%) respectively.

Rice farmers in the study area used social media to share various types of agricultural information. However, the finding reveals that most of the types of information shared among them were information on new crop variety and information on new seeds.

Table 3 Challenges Associated with Use of Social Media for Agricultural Information Sharing

Challenges	Frequency	Percentages (%)
High data charge from telecommunication	84	**86%**
Erratic power supply	78	**80%**
Lack of adequate network	**72**	**73%**
High cost of social media devices	**65**	**66%**
Low of IT literacy	**60**	**61%**
Difficulty of using social media	**52**	**63%**

Source Survey, 2025

The table showed that high data charge from telecommunication had the highest response with 84(86%) respondents. This was closely followed by erratic power supply with 78(80%) Similarly, lack of adequate network and high cost of social media devices were selected by 72(73%) and 65(66%) The options with the least responses were low of IT literacy and difficulty of using social media with 60 (61%), 52(53%) respectively.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of social media for information sharing by rice farmers in Bade Local Government Area, Yobe state, Nigeria. The social media platforms were first explored but the most social media platforms used by rice farmers to share agricultural information were Facebook and Whatsapp. The study also revealed that, the rice farmers shared different agricultural information through social media but, the most agricultural information shared were information on crop variety, information about new seeds, information on insecticides, Information about market prize as well as information on how to apply fertilizer. There were a lot of challenges associated with social media used for sharing agricultural information. Such challenges includes; High data charge from telecommunication, erratic power supply, lack of adequate network, high cost of social media devices etc. Despite the challenges

encountered by rice farmers in the study area when accessing agricultural information via social media, the benefits derived shows that, the role of social media cannot be overemphasized.

Recommendations

The recommendations were made based on the finding of the study;

- More other types of social media platforms apart from Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube should be utilize for agricultural information sharing by rice farmers in Bade local government area.
- More information should be shared to the rice farmers using social media platforms on information on crop variety, information about new seeds, information on insecticides, information on fertilizer application, information about market price, information about soil management, agricultural technology information, information on birds control, information on water management, agricultural credit information, and on information on storage
- The Federal and State Government should try as much as possible to address the challenges that militate against effective utilization of social media in information sharing most especially high cost of internet access and lack of adequate power supply in rural areas where most rice farmers reside.

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