



8. An Analytical Study of the Social Media Campaign: West Bengal Government (With reference to the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture)

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Abstract

The ongoing expansion of digitalisation and the introduction of communication technologies have transformed the way governments interact with their citizens. Social media platforms, specifically, have emerged as a significant tool to disseminate, engage, and transmit information and policy directly to a wide range of people. This study presents an analytical examination of the social media campaign strategies adopted by the Government of West Bengal, with special reference to the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture.

The Government of West Bengal, like other administrations, increasingly utilises social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X, and YouTube to disseminate welfare initiatives, agricultural schemes, developmental achievements, and awareness drives. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness, reach, engagement, and impact of the social media campaign in promoting rural and agricultural development across West Bengal.

The research focuses on understanding how content is designed and circulated for respective social media platforms by the departments to reach the public. The study attempts to assess whether social media campaigns effectively communicate government initiatives and policies into understandable and relatable messages for grassroots audiences. The study is significant because it contributes to the growing discussion on digital governance and e-governance communication in India. Furthermore, it highlights the government initiatives towards rural and agricultural advancement in a socially diverse state like West Bengal.

Keyword: Communication, Social Media, Society, Community, Technology, Governance

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a transformation in the mode of communication driven by rapid advancements in digital technology. In a diverse and dynamic country like India, this shift has marked a transition from traditional forms of interaction, such as face-to-face communication and community-based exchanges, to technology-based platforms. The rapid growth of the internet, smartphones, and data services has changed the way people share, create and consume information. Digital connectivity has become an integral part of everyday life, reshaping social, economic, and political interactions among people. The digital revolution has been impactful



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in India, with the country emerging as one of the largest internet user bases in the world, with data of 800 million users in recent years.

Social media is derived from the two words ‘social’ and ‘media’. The term ‘social’ refers to interaction among individuals within a community, while ‘media’ refers to various tools or channels used for communication. Altogether, social media represents internet-based platforms that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of ideas, information, and content. Social media, therefore, has emerged as an effective medium of communication and interaction. Platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube allow users not only to consume content but also to create, share, and interact in real time, thus facilitating two-way communication unlike traditional media.

In a country like India, where half of the population resides in rural areas and depends largely on agriculture for livelihood, effective communication plays a crucial role in development. It plays a crucial role in disseminating information about agricultural practices, weather updates, government subsidies, rural employment schemes, and financial inclusion initiatives. Furthermore, the use of multimedia formats, including videos, images, infographics, and regional language content, enhances comprehension and accessibility among rural people with varying literacy levels.

Studies on digital governance and initiatives under the broader ‘Digital India’ framework highlight that social media enables faster information flow, reduces reliance on intermediaries, and enhances accountability by allowing real-time citizen feedback. However, challenges like digital illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and unequal access to technology affect the overall effectiveness of social media communication in rural areas.

The Government of West Bengal, like other administrations, has actively adopted social media as an important tool for governance. According to the 2011 Census, West Bengal has a population of over 90 million, with nearly 68% residing in rural areas. Agriculture plays a crucial role in the state’s economy, employing a significant portion of the workforce. Along with being a major rice and jute-producing state of India, it also has a strong presence in the production of vegetables, fruits, and fisheries. This dependence on agriculture and a large rural population makes the effective dissemination of information about agricultural development and rural welfare schemes essential for improving productivity and living standards.

The Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal:

The Panchayats and Rural Development Department (P&RD), Government of West Bengal, plays an important role in advancing rural development through the state’s three-tier Panchayat Raj system. The department focuses on improving rural infrastructure, enhancing livelihood opportunities, alleviating poverty, and ensuring effective implementation of both state and central development schemes. Key initiatives include rural employment programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), construction of all-weather rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), and poverty



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reduction through livelihood enhancement programmes such as Anandadhara under the State Rural Livelihood Mission. Its broader vision is to promote a self-reliant and sustainable rural economy.

The Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal:

Similarly, the Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal, is responsible for improving agricultural productivity and supporting 71.23 lakh families. It operates with a mission to ensure holistic agricultural development by promoting sustainable growth and enhancing farmers' income through improved access to skills, modern technologies, markets, and financial inclusion. Key objectives include increasing crop productivity, maximising farm returns, promoting climate-resilient and resource-efficient farming practices, and strengthening irrigation and water resource management. The department adopts a farmer-centric approach through extension services, technological innovation, and institutional support.

Together, the initiatives of the Panchayats and Rural Development Department and the Department of Agriculture are further strengthened by the support of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), which serves as a key institutional partner in promoting integrated rural development in West Bengal.

In recent years, there has been a strategic shift toward the use of digital and social media platforms by government departments to enhance outreach and effectiveness. Official communication strategies highlight the use of structured social media campaigns, content calendars, and targeted messaging to ensure consistent engagement with rural audiences. Platforms such as Facebook, X, and YouTube are increasingly being used to disseminate scheme-related information, showcase success stories, and promote behavioural change. Rural internet users in West Bengal account for nearly 40-50% of the total user base, reflecting increasing digital adoption in rural areas and enabling better access to digital content. An estimate of 65-75% of rural internet users in West Bengal use YouTube for regional content and entertainment, whereas approximately 45-55% of rural users prefer Facebook for news, social connections, and community updates. Using these platforms, the department shares information about government schemes and benefits available to farmers.

Hypothesis

- **H1:** The West Bengal Government's social media campaign by the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture significantly improves awareness of rural development and agricultural programs among the target rural population.
- **H2:** Higher engagement (likes, shares, comments) with the department's social media posts is positively associated with increased knowledge of specific schemes and services.
- **H3:** Posts using local language and region-specific visuals produce greater engagement and recall among rural users compared with posts in standard Bengali or English.



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- **H4:** Timely, action-oriented posts (announcing deadlines, beneficiary steps) lead to higher offline uptake (scheme enrolment, attendance at meetings) than informational-only posts.
- **H5:** Urban residents show higher baseline engagement with the department's social media content than rural residents, controlling for internet access.

Objectives:

1. To assess the level of awareness regarding rural development and agricultural schemes promoted through social media by the government departments.
2. To evaluate the ease of understanding of social media content and the role of regional languages in enhancing and bridging the communication gap.
3. To identify the most commonly used social media platforms and the frequency of exposure to such campaigns.
4. To examine the effectiveness of social media campaigns in increasing awareness and influencing participation among the audience in government schemes.
5. To analyse the role of multimedia content, including videos, images, text, and infographics that are most preferred among users and make information understandable and engaging.

Literature Review

- **Shastri (2025)** analysed the marketing strategy of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), emphasising its role in rural development communication. It highlighted the increasing use of digital platforms and social media to promote awareness of financial and agricultural initiatives. It pointed out that NABARD adopts a community-focused approach, combining grassroots engagement with modern communication. Overall, the effectiveness of social media strategies in rural governance was studied.
- **Walia (2025)** discussed the objectives and impact of the Digital India Programme launched in 2015 to enhance digital connectivity and governance across the country. It emphasised the role of digital platforms in promoting transparency, efficiency, and citizen empowerment, as well as the progress in areas such as e-governance, digital payments, and online public services. Overall, the study concluded that Digital India has transformative potential but requires continuous policy support and inclusive implementation to reach every corner of the nation.
- **Thakur (2025)** analysed the changing political dynamics of West Bengal, highlighting shifts from Left dominance to the rise of regional and national parties. Both traditional and digital media have influenced the shaping of political discourse and voter behaviour. Challenges such as misinformation, political polarisation, and digital propaganda affected democratic processes. Overall, the media has become a central tool in political strategy.
- **Chaturvedi (2025)** analysed the evolving trends in political campaigns in India, with a particular focus on the role of social media in influencing youth voters. It highlighted how



platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become central tools for political communication, enabling direct engagement between political parties and young electorates. However, concerns such as misinformation and digital manipulation were identified as emerging challenges.

- **Pairst and Ahmed (2025)** examined the patterns of social media usage among undergraduate students in West Bengal. The study highlighted that social media platforms are widely used for communication, information sharing, and academic purposes. It emphasised that students rely on these platforms not only for social interactions but also for learning and staying updated with current affairs. However, concerns regarding excessive use, distraction, and its impact on academic performance were also discussed. Overall, it concluded that while social media offers significant educational and communicative benefits, its balanced and mindful use is essential.
- **Marak (2024)** examined the issue of linguistic identity crisis among first-generation tribal learners in West Bengal. The study highlighted the tension between the use of standard languages in formal education and the learners' native languages. This linguistic gap often leads to difficulties in comprehension, reduced academic performance, and a sense of cultural disconnection among students. Overall, the study concluded that addressing linguistic barriers is essential for improving educational outcomes and preserving cultural identity among tribal learners.
- **Saha et al. (2023)** examined the impact of the Digital India programme in Mautala village, West Bengal, focusing on its role in rural transformation. Digital initiatives enhance awareness of government schemes, improve governance, and contribute to economic productivity. The study concluded that strengthening digital infrastructure and effective execution were essential for achieving true rural empowerment through Digital India.
- **Pattabhi et al. (2023)** studied the role of social media in enhancing farmers' agricultural knowledge. The findings highlighted that social media serves as an effective medium for disseminating timely and relevant agricultural information among farmers. Overall, it emphasised the growing importance of digital communication tools in modern agricultural practices.
- **Majumder (2022)** examined the adoption and implementation of e-governance for administrative efficiency and service delivery in West Bengal. The study highlighted that e-governance initiatives have improved transparency, accountability, and accessibility of public services across various state sectors. However, challenges such as the digital divide, lack of technical infrastructure, and limited digital literacy hinder effective implementation. It concluded that while e-governance has strong potential to transform governance, its success depends on addressing infrastructural and capacity-related constraints.
- **Mandal et al. (2021)** analysed the status of agricultural production and marketing of major food crops and spices in West Bengal, highlighting the state's strong agricultural base and diverse cropping patterns. Farmers' income was enhanced due to strategic interventions, including improved infrastructure, better market integration, and policy support. Overall, it



emphasised the need for strengthening agricultural marketing systems to ensure sustainable rural development.

- **The Agricultural Department, Government of West Bengal**, highlighted the role of the Matir Srishti Portal as a digital marketing linkage platform connecting Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The platform aims to enhance market access, ensure fair pricing, and reduce dependence on intermediaries for farmers. This reflected the growing importance of digital tools in rural and agricultural development.

Research Design

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain in-depth insights into the utilisation and effectiveness of social media campaigns by the Government of West Bengal in rural development and agriculture.

- **Quantitative approach-** The quantitative approach focuses on collecting numerical data through structured questionnaires to measure the level of awareness, frequency of exposure, and engagement patterns. This approach enables the presentation of measurable and comparable results through percentages, charts, and statistical data.
- **Qualitative Approach -** The qualitative approach, on the other hand, is used to explore deeper insights into the perceptions, opinions, experiences, and the impact of communication strategies among the people instead of just relying on numerical data. The integration of both approaches ensures a more holistic analysis by combining statistical evidence with conceptual understanding.

This research aims to explore how these digital campaigns influence awareness, engagement, and participation among rural people and farmers. It also helps in understanding the role of language, multimedia, and digital accessibility in shaping the success of these campaigns.

Data Collection Method

This study relies on primary data collection using two methods, a structured questionnaire and a personal interview.

- In addition to the questionnaire, a personal interview was conducted with the **Gram Panchayat of Sulkha Para, Nagrakata Block, Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal**. The interview provides in-depth insights into the respondent's experiences and opinions. On the other hand, open-ended questions allow respondents to express themselves without any boundaries. The interview was semi-structured in nature, allowing flexibility for the respondent to express their views in detail. The method helps in understanding the practical impact of social media campaigns and provides qualitative insight that enriches the overall analysis.

Sampling Technique

This study uses a purposive sampling method, where respondents are selected based on their relevance to the research topic. 22 sample size have included in rural residents, social media



users, and citizens aware of government schemes. This targeted selection helps in obtaining relevant the collected data, ensuring that the findings are aligned with the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

Data is analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a better understanding of the research objectives. Quantitative data collected from the close-ended questionnaire is systematically summarised and presented using charts. Qualitative data gathered from open-ended responses and a personal interview are examined through common patterns and themes. Content from social media platforms is also examined to understand the strategies used in communication.

Justification of Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, supported by a questionnaire, a personal interview, and purposive sampling, to analyse the effectiveness of social media campaigns used by the Government of West Bengal in the context of rural development and agriculture. The methodology adopted aligns effectively with all research objectives in the following ways:

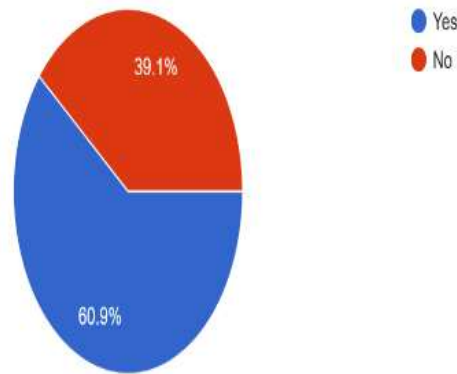
- Assessing awareness and effectiveness is fulfilled through quantitative survey data and supported by qualitative insights.
- Understanding audience engagement and perception is addressed through both questionnaire responses and interview findings.
- Analysing communication strategies and content effectiveness is achieved through qualitative analysis of social media content and user feedback.

Overall, the combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods ensure a balanced and in-depth understanding of the research problem, making the findings more meaningful.

Data Interpretation

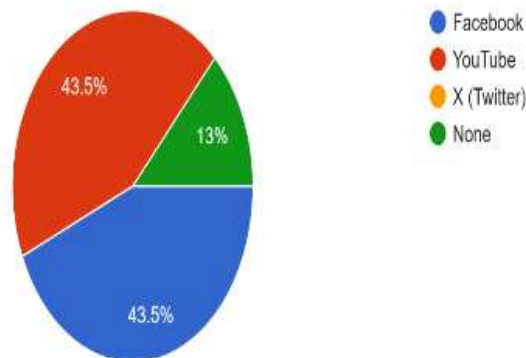
Data interpretation refers to the process of systematically analysing, examining, and presenting the collected data in order to deliver meaningful insights and conclusions. This study adopts a questionnaire and a personal interview as the primary research tools for data collection. The following questions were used to gather responses, and the collected data have been presented with the help of pie charts, followed by a detailed interpretation-

- 1. Are you aware of rural development schemes promoted by the Government of West Bengal through social media?**



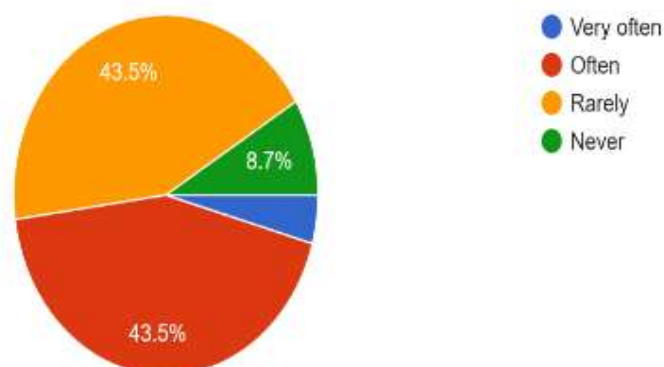
Interpretation: The data indicate that 60.9% of respondents are aware of rural development schemes promoted by the Government of West Bengal through social media. However, approximately 39.1% of respondents remain unaware of the development schemes, indicating that the reach of these campaigns is moderate and needs improvement.

2. Which social media platform do you mostly use to receive information about rural development?



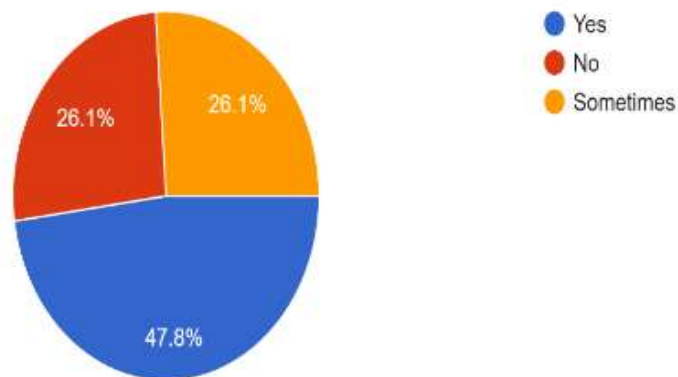
Interpretation: The data reveal that an equal percentage of 43.5% of respondents use Facebook and YouTube, respectively, to receive information on rural development. Therefore, Facebook and YouTube are the most dominant platforms among the respondents and should be the primary focus for government communication strategies.

3. How often do you see posts related to rural development schemes on social media?



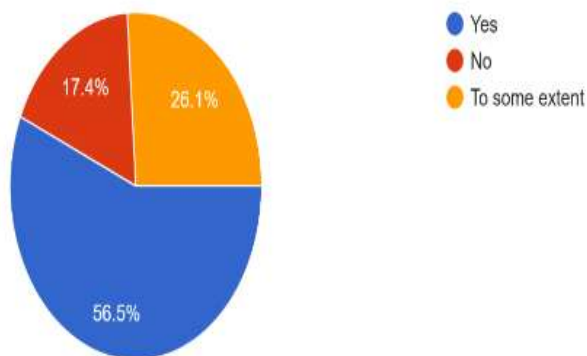
Interpretation: The data shows that respondents with equal 43.5% of the majority see posts related to rural development schemes occasionally or regularly. Whereas, 8.7% of the total respondents never see posts related to those schemes. This indicates that the frequency of content dissemination by official departments is limited.

4. Do you find the information shared on social media about rural schemes easy to understand?



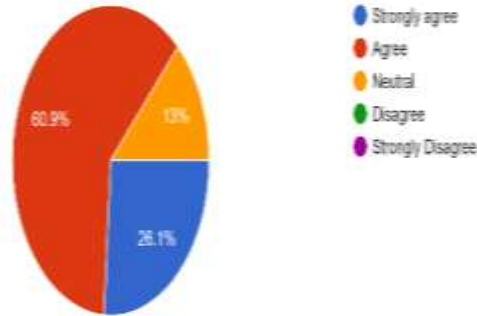
Interpretation: The majority of the respondents, with 47.8%, reported that the information shared on social media is easy to understand. However, some of 26.1% of respondents still find it difficult to comprehend. This suggests that while the content is generally user-friendly, further efforts are needed to make it more accessible for rural audiences.

5. Have social media campaigns increased your awareness of rural development programs?



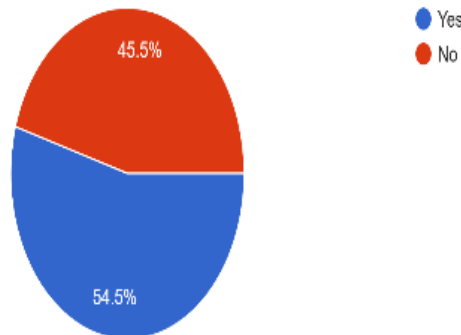
Interpretation: The findings indicate that social media campaigns have increased awareness among the 56.5% of respondents. However, the impact isn't common across all the respondents. This suggests the need to improve the reach and effectiveness of these campaigns.

6. Do you think that social media is an effective tool for promoting rural development schemes?



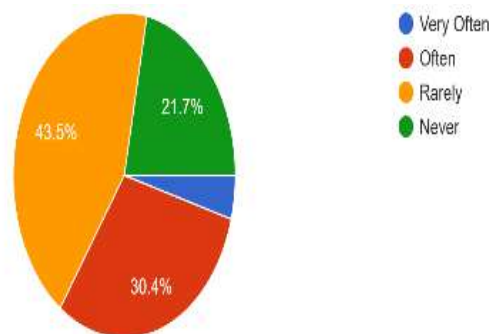
Interpretation: A large number of respondents believe that social media is an effective tool for promoting rural development schemes. However, the 13% of neutral responses indicate the need to enhance the impact and credibility of social media campaigns to achieve positive responses.

7. Are you aware of agricultural schemes shared on social media by the Government of West Bengal?



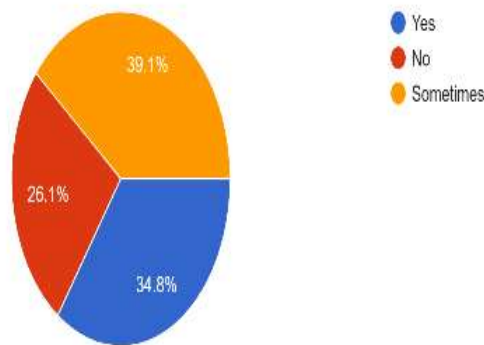
Interpretation: The data shows that 54.5% of respondents are aware of the agricultural schemes shared on social media by the Government of West Bengal. However, 45.5% of respondents remain unaware of the same, which indicates that the reach is moderate and requires improvement.

8. How frequently do you see agriculture -related posts (farming tips, subsidies, etc.) on social media?



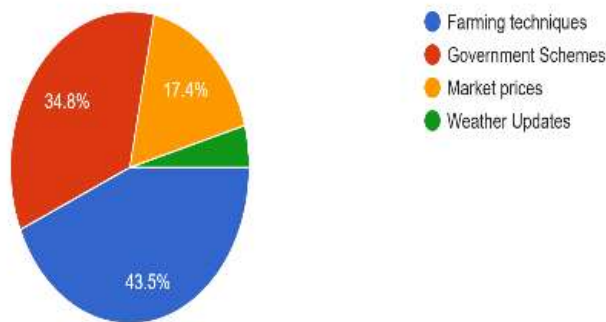
Interpretation: Most of the respondents reported that they see agriculture-related posts often or rarely. In contrast, 21.7% have reported that they never see such posts. This suggests that the frequency of the agriculture-related posts is very low and needs improvement to increase their reach among the target audience.

9. Do you find the agriculture-related information on social media useful for your farming activities?



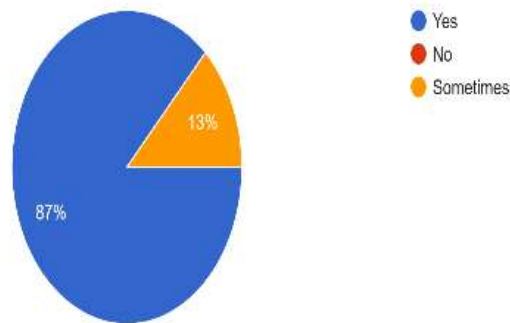
Interpretation: The data reveal that 34.8% of the respondents consider agriculture-related information on social media useful for their activities. However, a significant number of respondents do not find it useful for their activities, thus highlighting the need to make content more relevant, practical, and impactful.

10. Which type of agricultural content do you prefer?



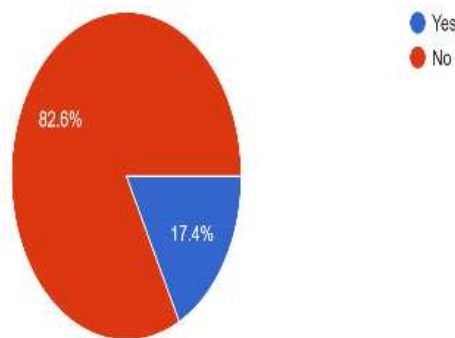
Interpretation: The data reveal that the responses about preferences for agricultural content vary based on the needs and interests of the respondents. Overall, it indicates the need for diverse and informative content.

11. Do you think videos and images make agricultural information easier to understand?



Interpretation: A majority of 87% of the respondents agree that videos and images make agricultural information easier to understand, unlike text. This reinforces the effectiveness of visual communication among rural folks.

12. Have you ever applied for an agricultural scheme after seeing it on social media?



Interpretation: The data reveals that the majority of 82.6% of the respondents have never applied for agricultural schemes after seeing them on social media. This again highlights the gap between awareness and practical implication

Findings

The present study provides a comprehensive analysis of the utilisation and effectiveness of social media campaigns in promoting rural development and agriculture under the Government of West Bengal. The findings from both data, including the questionnaire and interview, reveal a clear understanding of how digital platforms are influencing awareness, engagement, and participation among rural populations.

A key finding of the study is that social media has achieved significant penetration among rural users, with an equal percentage of 43.5% of respondents using Facebook and YouTube, respectively, according to the data collected through the questionnaire. This widespread usage of social media highlights its potential as an effective tool for governance and public outreach. Despite high usage, the study reveals that awareness of government schemes through social media remains moderate.



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While a section of respondents reported being aware of rural development schemes, a significant section still lacks awareness. The reason behind the finding is the limited exposure to official government posts, which indicates that the issue is not about access to social media but the limited visibility and reach of the official content posted by the government's departments, thus restricting the effectiveness of these campaigns.

The inconsistency in content dissemination is also a major concern. According to the responses, people come across posts related to rural development and agriculture very occasionally. This irregular exposure reduces the likelihood of increasing awareness and engagement among the audience. Effective communication requires consistent and frequent messaging to make social media campaigns impactful.

Regarding content comprehension, the findings suggest that most users find social media content easy to understand, particularly the use of images, videos, and infographics, which not only makes content more attractive and engaging but also helps retain information for a longer span of time, thus enhancing its comprehension and accessibility.

Language emerges as a critical factor influencing communication effectiveness. West Bengal is a linguistically diverse state, with major Indo-Aryan languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, and Urdu widely spoken, alongside several tribal languages. In this context, the study reveals that while the use of Bengali in social media campaigns is understandable to a section of the respondents, even among those for whom it is not their mother tongue. However, the study also featured limitations due to linguistic diversity. The interview indicates that not all users are equally comfortable with Bengali, suggesting the need for multilingual communication strategies to ensure inclusivity and broader reach.

One of the most important findings of the study is the gap between awareness and actual participation. Although social media campaigns have been somewhat successful in increasing awareness about rural development and agricultural schemes, they have not encouraged active participation. Many respondents reported that their exposure to such content is limited and not sufficiently engaging to motivate action. The rural folks are very simple and hesitate to trust the information they see on social media, further contributing to taking a step back from actual participation.

Conclusion

The present study examines the use and effectiveness of social media campaigns by the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture under the Government of West Bengal in promoting rural development and agricultural initiatives. Based on the analysis of both questionnaire data and interview responses, the study provides a comprehensive insight into the role of social media as a communication tool in the rural context.

- The research affirmed the strong penetration of social media among rural populations, indicating a significant potential for digital communication. However, awareness of



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government schemes through social media remains moderate. A considerable section of the population still lacks awareness, suggesting that the reach of these campaigns is not effective.

- While the content is generally easy to understand, the linguistic diversity of the region requires a more inclusive and multilingual communication approach. The reliance on non-government sources for learning indicates a need for more relevant and engaging official content.
- Social media holds significant potential as a tool for promoting rural development and agricultural initiatives, but its current utilisation is not very effective. The effectiveness of these campaigns is limited by multiple factors, as the study reveals.
- To enhance the impact of social media campaigns, it is important for the government's social media pages to adopt a more strategic and user-centric approach. They should build more credible, authentic, and transparent strategies to meet the audience's needs as well as to influence behavioural change.

Overall, the study concludes that by addressing these aspects, social media can be transformed into a more effective platform that not only raises awareness but also drives meaningful participation, thus contributing to the overall development of rural folks and agriculture.

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