

(A No. 163) Social Media Agri-Influencers as Change Agents in Agricultural Extension

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural extension systems are witnessing a major transformation with the rapid spread of digital technologies and social media. In countries like India, where public extension services struggle with limited manpower and outreach, social media has emerged as an alternative and complementary knowledge-sharing platform. Within this digital space, social media agri-influencers-progressive farmers, Agri-entrepreneurs, scientists, and content creators are increasingly acting as change agents in agricultural extension.

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These Agri-influencers use platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram to disseminate farm information, demonstrate practices, and influence farmers' decisions. Their growing popularity highlights a shift from institution-centric extension to farmer-centric, peer-to-peer digital extension.

Agri-Influencers:

Agri-influencers are individuals who regularly create agriculture-related digital content and command credibility and trust among farming communities. Unlike traditional extension personnel, they operate informally but exert strong influence due to:

- Practical field experience
- Use of local language and context
- Visual demonstrations and storytelling
- Continuous interaction with followers

From an extension perspective, Agri-influencers closely resemble **opinion leaders** described in diffusion of innovations theory, accelerating awareness, persuasion, and adoption of new practices.

Social Media as a Knowledge Dissemination Tool

Social media has become an easy and powerful tool for sharing knowledge in today's world. Through platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram information can reach people quickly and in simple forms such as videos, images and short messages. People not only receive information but can also ask questions, share experiences and learn from each other. Because the content is often shared in local language and real-life examples, it becomes easier to understand and trust. This makes social media especially useful for spreading practical knowledge among farmers, students and communities in a fast and friendly way.

Agri-Influencers as Change Agents

Agri-influencers play a transformative role in agricultural extension through multiple mechanisms:

1. Simplifying Scientific Knowledge

Agri-influencers translate complex scientific recommendations into simple, practical and visually appealing content. Short videos, live sessions and field demonstrations make technologies easier to understand and adopt.





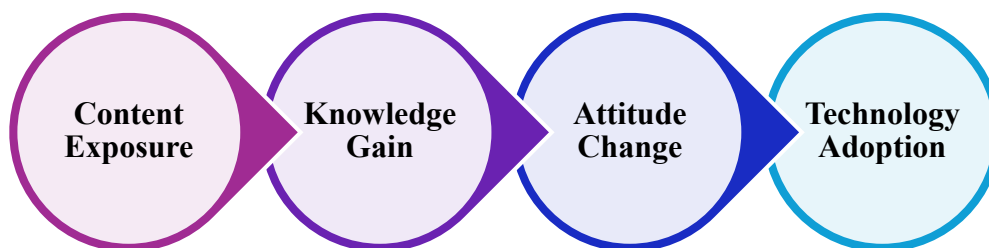
Agri-influencers help in knowledge dissemination through:

- **Information Dissemination:** Influencers break down complex agricultural research and data into easily digestible formats (e.g., short videos, infographics, simple language) that are accessible to a broad audience of farmers.
- **Practical Demonstrations:** They provide real-world examples and practical advice from their own fields or

- **Community Building:** Influencers create online communities where farmers can share experiences, ask questions, and support each other, fostering a positive collective attitude towards innovation and learning.

3. Improving Farm Economics

Agri-influencers increasingly influence farm profitability. Preethi et al. (2024) reported that influencer-led advisories help farmers reduce costs, improve productivity, and access better



experiences, which often builds more trust than traditional extension services.

- **Accessibility:** Digital platforms ensure that this knowledge reaches remote areas quickly and efficiently, overcoming geographical barriers.

2. Shaping Attitudes and Behaviour

Regular exposure to influencer content builds positive attitudes toward improved practices. Agri-influencers help in shaping attitudes and behaviour of farmers through:

- **Building Trust and Credibility:** Agri-influencers, especially those who are also practicing farmers, are often seen as peers. This peer-to-peer relationship fosters trust, making their recommendations more acceptable than those from external experts or commercial entities alone.
- **Challenging Norms:** They help shift attitudes towards modern or sustainable farming techniques by showcasing successful outcomes and demystifying new technologies or practices that farmers might initially be skeptical about.

market information, ultimately enhancing farm economics.

- **Agri-influencers role in shaping knowledge, attitudes and adoption**

KAA flow model in social media extension Evidence from India and South Asia

Empirical studies from South Asia confirm the growing relevance of social media in extension. Joshi et al. (2025) observed that social media significantly improves access to agricultural knowledge among Tharu farmers in Nepal. Similarly, Chepkirui (2021) highlighted the effectiveness of social media in expanding extension outreach and encouraging farmer participation.

These findings suggest that Agri-influencers are not limited by geographical boundaries and can reach farmers across regions faster than conventional extension systems.

Complementing Formal Extension Systems

- Agri-influencers should not be viewed as replacements for public extension services but as **complementary actors**.

Dimensions	Agri-Influencers	Formal Extension Services
Nature	Informal, digital	Institutional, public
Key Actors	Progressive farmers, YouTubers	KVKs, SAUs, ICAR, DoA



Knowledge Source	Experiential, practice-based	Scientific, research-based
Credibility Basis	Popularity & peer trust	Institutional authority
Scientific Accuracy	Variable / unverified	High / validated
Reach & speed	Very high, instant	Limited, slow
Farmer Engagement	High (interactive)	Low–moderate
Adoption Impact	Quick, short-term	Sustained, long-term
Major Risk	Misinformation, bias	Bureaucratic delays

Compared to formal systems, Agri-influencers offer faster and wider dissemination, High farmer engagement Real-time feedback, Context-specific solutions.

However, concerns related to misinformation, commercial bias, and lack of scientific validation remain. This calls for collaboration between Agri-influencers, KVKs, SAUs, and extension departments.

Challenges and Way Forward

Despite their potential, Agri-influencers face several challenges:

- Risk of spreading unverified information
- Digital divide among small and marginal farmers
- Absence of accountability mechanisms

To address these issues, policy support is essential. Capacity building, content verification, ethical guidelines and institutional partnerships can strengthen the credibility and effectiveness of Agri-influencers.

Conclusion

Social media Agri-influencers have emerged as powerful change agents in modern agricultural extension. By combining experiential knowledge, digital tools and peer trust, they enhance information access and accelerate innovation adoption. Integrating credible agri-influencers into pluralistic extension systems can significantly strengthen last-mile connectivity and contribute to sustainable agricultural development.

कृषि विज्ञान की मासिक पत्रिका

