ASSESSING THE KNOWLEDGE OF AGRIPRENEURS ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Social media is an efficient tool for marketing value added products. This study examined 149 agripreneurs to analyze their knowledge on social media marketing during May 2024. The findings indicate that many agripreneurs have a moderate level of decision making behavior, marketing behavior and economic benefits along with the knowledge of agripreneurs. Agripreneurs had more knowledge on advertising rather than indicators and different types of social media marketing. Age, education, annual income, enterprise scale, entrepreneurial experience, access to mass media, account purpose, decision-making behavior, marketing practices, market intelligence, and economic benefits all showed a significant positive correlation with agripreneurs' knowledge of social media marketing. Social media provided opportunities for microenterprises to market their product and enhance their business growth.

KEYWORDS: Microenterprises, knowledge, indicators, advertising, business account, marketing behavior, decision making.

INTRODUCTION

Information is essential for decision-making and as important as other resources for boosting productivity. Social media is a modern platform for individuals to connect and share ideas, experiences, photos, messages, and relevant information. These platforms create an interactive network enabled by ICTs, using the internet and telecommunication devices to link contemporary society (Eke *et al.,* 2014). The emergence of Web 2.0 has introduced new methods for communication, collaboration, and content sharing (Enders *et al.,* 2008). Social media has become the fastest-adopted media technology worldwide. In comparison, radio took about 38 years, television took 13 years, the iPod took 4 years, and the internet took 3 years to reach 50 million users. But Facebook reached this milestone in only one year, and Twitter in only 9 months (Chiu *et al.,* 2013). Social media (Web 2.0) is a powerful tool for enterprises, including SMEs, to enhance their business operations. It significantly influences the business activities of these enterprises (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Walsh & Lipinski, 2009). Mobile phones and social media have emerged as effective tools for connecting enterprises with customers, customers with each other, and enterprises with other enterprises (Ashrafi & Murtaza, 2008; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). Social media encompasses a range of word-of-mouth and online activities, such as blogs, consumer-to-consumer emails, moblogs, and social networking websites, among others (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The enterprises use strategy to conduct their business activities using social media is said to be Social Media Marketing (SMM) (Shareef *et al.,* 2019). In 2024, the total number of social media users worldwide is estimated to be 5.17 billion. According

to Statista (2024), the global count of active social media users will exceed 5 billion in 2024, and it will be projected to reach almost 6 billion by 2027. Facebook is the most widely used platform by marketers globally, with 89% utilizing it, while Instagram holds second place at 80% (Sprout Social, 2024). Small businesses try new methods to enhance their marketing strategies and gain exposure. Despite some business owners' resistance to the idea, statistics show that consumers are active on social media, making it an excellent platform for increasing brand awareness and promoting content (Sean Peek, 2024).

Social media is also recognized for its significant impact on businesses. Past research has demonstrated that enterprises respond to these technological and social shifts by increasingly adopting social media over traditional media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Baruah, 2012). According to David Cotriss (2024), social media enables to draw in new customers and deepen engagement with current ones. It provides a cost-effective, personalized way to connect with the audience while gaining valuable insights into the brand. Various studies have explored the impact of social media on organizational business activities (Kapoor *et al.,* 2018). One of the primary attractions of social media usage for microenterprises is the ability to access markets beyond their geographical boundaries without requiring physical presence (Alarcon *et al.,* 2015).

Microenterprises' reluctance towards formal structures stems from their informal operational nature. Owners of microenterprises often lack extensive academic qualifications or specialized expertise, preferring to rely on intuition and past experiences to guide their enterprises toward their goals. Social media enhance the business of microenterprises through marketing mix components such as promotion and place (Hsieh *et al.,* 2019). Customer feedback is highly valued to promote new offerings or ideas (Snyder & Garcia-Garcia, 2016). According to Bhattacharjee & Raj (2016), notable difficulties related to social media usage encompass unreliable internet connections, inefficiencies in time management, worries about privacy and controlling online presence, insufficient business utilization of social media, and the fear of missing out. The knowledge of agripreneurs was needed while using social media for marketing value added products. Agripreneurs should be aware of the strategies in social media for marketing their products. The current study evaluated the knowledge of agripreneurs when using social media for marketing value added products.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized an ex post facto research design to investigate 149 agripreneurs in the Western Zone of Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore, Erode, and Tiruppur) who are engaged in marketing value added products through social media. The sample was selected using purposive random sampling, ensuring that the participants were relevant to the research focus. The survey was conducted in May 2024, with data collected quantitatively through a well-structured interview schedule. Following data collection, the gathered information was analyzed using statistical methods, specifically correlation and regression techniques. These methods were employed to examine the relationships between the variables under study and discuss the results with some implications.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

The study employed correlation function between independent variables and knowledge of agripreneurs using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r).

$$r = \frac{\sum xy - \frac{(\sum x)(\sum y)}{n}}{\sqrt{(\sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{n})(\sum y^2 - \frac{(\sum y)^2}{n})}}$$

Where,

r	:	Pearson correlation coefficient
x	:	the values of x variable
y	:	the values of y variable
$\sum xy$	:	the sum of xy
$\sum x$	:	the sum of x
$\sum y$	:	the sum of y

$\sum x^2$	:	the sum of the square of x
$\sum y^2$	:	the sum of the square of y
n	:	the number of scores for the variables

Multiple Linear Regression

The study employed multiple linear regression to estimate the knowledge of agripreneurs using the independent variables' values.

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1 X1 + \beta 2 X2 + \cdots + \beta n Xn + \varepsilon$$

where,

Y	:	dependent or predictor variable
β0	:	intercept (the expected value of Y when all X variables are zero)
β1, β2,.., βn	:	coefficients of independent variables
X1, X2,.., Xn	:	independent variables
ε	:	error term

RESULTS

The research found that the respondents expressed an interest in social media marketing. The respondents are willing to use social media marketing to gain more knowledge and enhance the marketing of agri-value-added products through social media. The data gathered from 149 respondents in the Coimbatore, Erode, and Tiruppur districts were analyzed and presented in Table 1. Table 1 depicts the socioeconomic characteristics of agripreneurs from the Western Zone of Tamil Nadu. Out of 149 agripreneurs, 46% of the agripreneurs were young, 37% of them were middle-aged and 17% of them were old-aged people. Among those respondents, the majority (52%) were male, while female was 48%. Based on their education, the majority of the agripreneurs were completed graduates (59%), 15% of them had completed higher secondary education (11th-12th), 3% of them had completed diploma courses, 15% had completed secondary education (6th -10th), 7% of them had completed only primary education and there is only 1% illiterate among 149 agripreneurs. According to the respondents' places of residence, 92% of agripreneurs lived in rural areas, 5% resided in peri-urban areas, and 3% were from urban regions. Considering the annual income, 62% of agripreneurs earned Rs.1-2 lakh per annum, 29% of agripreneurs earned above Rs.2 lakhs, and 9% of agripreneurs earned below Rs. 1 lakh. As per the enterprise scale, 89% of agripreneurs had micro-enterprises, 11% had small enterprises, and no one had medium-sized enterprises. Regarding the experience of the agripreneurs, most (91%) had less than 10 years of experience, 8% had 11-20 years, and only 1% had more than 20 years of experience. The variables affecting the knowledge on social media marketing are indicated in Table 2 using percentage analysis.

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of 149 agripreneurs in the Western Zone of Tamil Nadu

S.No.	Characters	Categories	Frequency (N=149)	Per cent (%)
1.	Age	Young	69	46
		Middle	55	37
		Old	25	17
2.	Gender	Male	77	52
		Female	72	48
3.	Education	Illiterate	1	1
		Upto Primary school (1st -5th)	10	7
		Secondary education (6th - 10th)	23	15
		Higher secondary education (11th - 12th)	23	15

		Diploma or certificate holders	5	3
		Graduates	87	59
4.	Geographical Location	Rural	137	92
		Peri-Urban	7	5
		Urban	5	3
5.	Annual Income	Below Rs. 1 lakh	13	9
		Rs. 1-2 lakhs	93	62
		Above Rs. 2 lakhs	43	29
6.	Enterprise scale	Micro	132	89
		Small	17	11
		Medium	0	0
7.	Experience as an entrepreneur	Less than 10 years	136	91
		11-20 years	12	8
		More than 20 years	1	1
8.	Access to mass media	Low (<11)	12	8
		Medium (11 to 13)	111	74
		High (>13)	26	17
9.	Purpose of account	Personal Account	118	79
		Business Account	31	21
10.	Decision making behavior	Low (<12)	9	6
		Medium (12 to14)	123	83
		High (>14)	17	11
11.	Marketing behavior	Low (<29)	13	9
		Medium (29 to 32)	120	81
		High (>32)	16	11
12.	Market intelligence	Low (<12)	17	11
		Medium (12 to14)	101	68
		High (>14)	31	21
13.	Economic benefits	Low (<21)	13	9
		Medium (21 to 24)	132	89
		High (>24)	4	2

It shows that most agripreneurs have a medium level of access to mass media (74%) for obtaining information on marketing agri-value-added products, whereas 17% of agripreneurs have a high level of accessibility and 8% of agripreneurs have a low level of accessibility. Agripreneurs use social media for marketing through both personal and business accounts. However, the majority use personal accounts (79%) for marketing, while 21% use business accounts. According to Table 2, most agripreneurs exhibit a medium level of decision-making behavior (83%) when selecting suitable platforms, content, target audiences, packaging, and pricing, while 11% demonstrate a high level of decision-making behavior, and 6% show a low level. In terms of marketing behavior, 81% of agripreneurs operate at a medium level by engaging in activities like price setting, enhancing product quality, choosing packing materials, and advertising their products through social media, 11% demonstrate a high level of marketing behavior, and 9% operate at a low level. Regarding market intelligence, which involves analyzing market trends and price fluctuations, most agripreneurs are at a medium level (68%), with 21% at a high level and 11% at a low level. In terms of economic benefits, focusing on profit maximization and large-scale marketing, the majority of agripreneurs experience a medium level (89%), while 9% are at a low level and 2% at a high level. The respondents' knowledge was evaluated in three areas: social media marketing indicators, different types of social media marketing, and advertising.

Table 2: Knowledge level of respondents based on three dimensions of social media marketing

S.No.	Dimensions	Total mean score	Rank
1.	Indicators for social media marketing	4.32	II
2.	Different kinds of social media marketing	4.14	III
3.	Advertising	4.54	I

Table 3 details the distribution of respondents concerning these dimensions of social media marketing. Table 3 revealed that agripreneurs exhibited more knowledge in advertising relative to the other two dimensions: indicators of social media marketing and various types of social media marketing. Agripreneurs are knowledgeable about using social media for advertising agri-value-added products. However, they have a limited understanding of the indicators used to measure social media marketing success and the various types of social media marketing strategies. Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents based on agripreneurs' overall knowledge levels in social media marketing.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on the overall knowledge of agripreneurs on social media marketing

Knowledge level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low (<12)	28	19
Medium (12 to 14)	104	70
High (>14)	17	11

Table 3 categorized the overall knowledge of agripreneurs on social media marketing into three levels: low, medium, and high. According to Table 4, 70% of agripreneurs have a medium level of knowledge in social media marketing, 19% have a low level of knowledge, and 11% have a high level of knowledge. This distribution is based on percentage analysis using mean and standard deviation. Table 5 depicts the correlation between knowledge and independent variables to show the relationship between independent variables and knowledge.

Table 4: Correlation coefficient between independent variables and knowledge

S.No.	Variables	r-value	Significant
1.	Age	0.266	**
2.	Gender	-0.186	*
3.	Education	0.224	**
4.	Geographical Location	-0.076	
5.	Annual Income	0.241	**
6.	Enterprise Scale	0.162	**
7.	Experience as an entrepreneur	0.310	*
8.	Access to mass media	0.166	*
9.	Purpose of account	0.470	**
10.	Decision making behavior	0.479	**
11.	Marketing behavior	0.277	**
12.	Market Intelligence	0.432	**
13.	Economic benefits	0.607	**

** represents Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
* represents Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 5: Multiple linear regression between 13 independent variables and dependent variable (Knowledge of agripreneurs on Social media marketing)

S.No.	Variables	Regression Coefficient B	Std Error Beta	Beta	t value

1.	Age	0.011	0.010	0.079	1.132
2.	Gender	-0.218	0.172	-0.084	-1.268
3.	Education	0.159	0.073	0.130	2.181
4.	Geographical Location	0.111	0.185	0.035	0.601
5.	Annual Income	-0.031	0.137	-0.014	-0.229
6.	Enterprise Scale	0.026	0.277	0.006	0.095
7.	Experience as an entrepreneur	-0.009	0.032	-0.026	-0.288
8.	Access to mass media	-0.072	0.060	-0.071	-1.194
9.	Purpose of account	0.799	0.193	0.250	4.151
10.	Decision making behavior	0.252	0.072	0.218	3.527
11.	Marketing behavior	0.058	0.044	0.077	1.324
12.	Market Intelligence	0.203	0.064	0.194	3.186
13.	Economic benefits	0.318	0.065	0.322	4.888

Table 6: R value of multiple linear regression analysis

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard Error of the estimate
1.	0.766	0.586	0.546	0.879

Table 4 revealed that variables such as age, education, annual income, enterprise scale, entrepreneurial experience, access to mass media, purpose of the account, decision-making behavior, marketing behavior, market intelligence, and economic benefits had a significant positive relationship with knowledge of social media marketing by agripreneurs. In contrast, gender had a significant negative relationship, and geographical location had no significant relationship with agripreneurs' social media marketing knowledge. The table indicates that age is significantly related to social media knowledge, as younger agripreneurs are more engaged with social media, and most agripreneurs are young. Education is significantly related to social media marketing knowledge because educated individuals have better access and understanding of social media. Enhanced knowledge of social media marketing can boost sales of value-added products, which correlates with higher annual income. Most agripreneurs run micro-enterprises, where social media serves as an optimal tool to market value-added products and reach target customers. Experience as an entrepreneur also shows a significant relationship with social media knowledge, as experienced agripreneurs can better visualize and promote product quality through social media. Access to mass media is significant because it provides valuable information on app updates, new product varieties, and market trends. Most agripreneurs use social media for personal and business purposes, improving their ability to manage accounts for various objectives. Agripreneurs independently set prices for value-added products, choose packaging materials, advertise on suitable platforms, create appropriate content and follow market trends, all of which significantly relate to their knowledge of social media marketing. Furthermore, agripreneurs focus on profit maximization, benefiting economically from social media marketing, and are motivated to stay informed about social media trends and updates to effectively market value-added products. The regression model based on the β coefficients in Table 5 is as follows:

Knowledge on social media marketing among agripreneurs = 2.08 + (0.01x age) – (0.21 x gender) + (0.15 x education) + (0.11 x geographical location) - (0.03 x annual income) + (0.02 x enterprise scale) – (0.009 x experience as an entrepreneur) - (0.07 x access to mass media) + (0.79 x purpose of account in social media) + (0.25 x decision making behavior) + (0.05 x marketing behavior) + (0.20 x market intelligence) + (0.31 x economic benefits)   (1)

Table 5 presents the multiple linear regression analysis between the independent and dependent variables. The model's 58.6% R Square value explains 58.6% of the variance in the knowledge. The adjusted R-squared value (Radj) is 0.546, reflecting the understanding of agripreneurs, represented in Table 7 and, the p-value in the ANOVA table indicated that the overall regression model has a significant correlation, as it is less than 0.001.

Each b-coefficient in Equation (1) indicates the average increase in knowledge from a one-unit increase in a predictor, assuming all other factors remain constant. Therefore, a 1-point increase in agripreneurs' knowledge is associated with an average age increase of 0.01 years. A 1-point shift from male to female in gender corresponds to a decrease in agripreneurs' knowledge by 0.21 points. Similarly, an additional year of education increases agripreneurs' knowledge by an average of 0.15 points. A 1-point increase in geographical location increases agripreneurs' knowledge by 0.11 points, while a 1-point increase in annual income decreases their knowledge by 0.03 points. In addition to, a 1-point increase in enterprise scale results in a 0.02-point increase in agripreneurs' knowledge. A 1-point increase in entrepreneurial experience leads to a 0.009-point decrease in knowledge. A 1-point increase in access to mass media decreases agripreneurs' knowledge on social media marketing by an average of 0.07 points. By changing the purpose of an account from personal to business results in an average increase of 0.79 points in knowledge. An increase of 1 point in decision-making behavior raises agripreneurs' knowledge by 0.25 points, and a 1-point increase in marketing behavior raises it by 0.05 points. Moreover, a 1-point rise in market intelligence increases knowledge by 0.20 points, while a 1-point rise in economic benefits enhances knowledge by an average of 0.31 points. Beta coefficients, represented as β, are derived by standardizing all the regression variables before computing the coefficients, making them comparable both within and across different regression models. Economic benefits (β=0.322), purpose of account in social media (β=0.250), and decision making behavior (β=218) are the strongest predictors of the knowledge of social media marketing among agripreneurs. Market intelligence (β=0.194) is slightly more than half of the predictor of economic benefits, age (β=0.144) is slightly less than half of the predictor of economic benefits, and education (β=0.130) is slightly more than half of the predictor purpose of account in social media. Marketing behavior (β=0.077) is slightly more than half of the predictor age and enterprise scale (β=0.037) is slightly less than half of the predictor education. Understanding these dynamics can help agripreneurs leverage social media more effectively to achieve economic benefits and enhance their marketing strategies.

Table 7: Stepwise Regression analysis between 13 independent variables and knowledge of social media marketing among agripreneurs

S.No.	Variables	Regression Coefficient B	Std Error Beta	Beta	t value
1.	Economic benefits	0.358	0.063	0.363	5.659
2.	Purpose of account in social media	0.879	0.189	0.255	4.643
3.	Decision making behavior	0.296	0.070	0.255	4.234
4.	Market Intelligence	0.200	0.063	0.191	3.165

R Square: 58.6%, The Standard error estimate: 0.879

Table 7 presents the stepwise regression analysis of agripreneurs' knowledge of social media marketing using the specified independent variables. The study reveals that economic benefits, the purpose of social media accounts, decision-making behavior, and market intelligence are significant contributors to agripreneurs' knowledge of social media marketing. Increasing economic benefits correspond to a higher understanding of social media

marketing among agripreneurs. Switching from personal to business accounts similarly improves this understanding. Furthermore, enhanced decision-making skills and greater market intelligence are linked to increased social media marketing familiarity.

DISCUSSION

Agripreneurs had more knowledge on advertisements than indicators of social media marketing and different kinds of social media marketing as supported by the study of Brown (2006). Most agripreneurs possess a moderate level of knowledge, which aligns with their decision-making behavior, marketing practices, market intelligence, and economic benefits. Young agripreneurs, in particular, stand out due to their daily connection to social media. As per the report of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 4.9% were facing unemployment. Thus, social media plays a key role for those people to emerge as a startup or entrepreneur. Many agripreneurs prefer using personal accounts for business purposes, reflecting their level of knowledge in social media marketing. However, utilizing business accounts is advantageous, as it helps establish a brand identity and enhances the product's visibility. Microenterprises can enhance their branding through social media marketing as it is a cost-effective method. Due to its affordability, social media marketing proves to be an accessible and scalable option, enabling microenterprises to compete in the market without the large financial commitments usually associated with traditional marketing methods. Since the commercialization of products is important for profit making (Collier and Dercon, 2014), social media marketing is especially important for microenterprises, which often have limited financial resources and must optimize their return on investment. The study's results show that men and women are equally involved in social media marketing, highlighting its broad accessibility. Value added products were mostly preferred by female entrepreneurs as it is related to food commodities (Agwu *et al.,* 2015), they have also significantly benefited Self Help Groups (SHGs) and microenterprises (Maurya *et al.,* 2024) by enhancing brand visibility and increasing customer awareness through social media. Women can be empowered as entrepreneurs (Sharma & Varma, 2008; Uma, 2012; Kumari *et al.,* 2019) through the help of social media marketing. Social media marketing has proven to be a highly effective tool for agripreneurs, particularly those targeting micro-level markets. These platforms enable these small-scale businesses to reach a wider audience and effectively communicate their product offerings, contributing to their overall growth and success.

CONCLUSION

Understanding social media marketing is crucial for agripreneurs' success in today's digital landscape. Although many agripreneurs have a moderate grasp of it, there is ample room for growth, particularly as younger generations become more engaged with social media. By enhancing their expertise and promoting the use of business-specific accounts, agripreneurs can strengthen their brands, expand their market reach, and increase economic returns. As social media evolves, those who invest in improving their digital marketing skills will be better equipped to seize new opportunities in microenterprises and advance their businesses.

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