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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL SCIENCES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE (CAVM)

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**Topic: *Use of television and social media in disseminating agriculture information among farmers***

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**Introduction**

Nowadays, we are in the era of technology where almost all activities connected to technology. Television and various social media tools are almost used as the way sharing information, in such case the sector of agriculture uses them in spreading all information concerning agriculture.

Media communication is regarded as a machine which helps to spread messages among different groups of people often all at the same time (Defleur & Ball–Rockeach, 1975). In media communication we use different means including social media and television.

Social media is defined as the term that often used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive participation where two or more people who are in different locations can communicate easily (Manning, 2014). Social media include WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, Tik-tok and son, all of these are used to spread information.

According to (Marc, 2014), Television is simply explained as to see at a distance, this explain all activities and devices used. Television disseminate information through images and videos with or no audio. In Rwanda there are different stations of television including Rwanda Broadcasting agency (RBA), TV1, TV10, Flash TV and so on.

In agriculture, production factors ( land, labor, capital and managerial ability) need relevant and reliable agricultural information to maximize their productivity, these information are supplied by extension (Vidanapathirana, 2019). The agriculture information includes the recommendations on fertilizers, source of seeds, proper technology whether new or existing technologies, market information, and so on. This agriculture information are disseminated in their receivers through various ways, among them social media and television are also preferred.

This topic covers the role of television and social media in disseminating agriculture information among farmers and it aims at the following objectives:

* Identifying the meaning of television and social media
* Identifying different agriculture information needed by farmers and extension agents
* Role of television in disseminating agriculture information among farmers
* Constraints in use of television in disseminating agriculture information among farmers
* Use of social media in disseminating agriculture information among farmers
* Constraints in use of social media in spreading agriculture information

**Contribution of social media in disseminating agriculture information among farmers**

Social media is the interactive forms of media that allow users to interact with and publish to each other, generally by means of the internet. I.e. Internet and mobile technologies for interactive social networking (Lathiya, Rathod, & Choudhary, 2015). Different types of social media including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp etc. are becoming greater ways of sharing information in different sectors including agriculture. Some of common social media platforms are discussed below:

* **Facebook:** On this platform, People have their own profile, pages, and groups. They login onto Facebook using their email and or phone number. Farmers can exchange information as well as extension agents can communicate to farmers through this platform as it is a virtual platform where you can type a message, use photos and even videos
* **LinkedIn: This** Connects professionals and share information related. Extension agents can use this type of social media to spread information over the target group of farmers who can subscribe to LinkedIn. This is mainly associated to the e-mail of user where you subscribe on it using your e-mail and updated information are sent to your email.
* **Twitter:** Nowadays, large part of Youth who has access to internet have subscribed to Twitter. This platform is a key to communication where different leaders and influential people use it. It is easy to disseminate agriculture information to digital farmers because Twitter is fast and can share videos and photos and even typed twits. Many different institutions which are related to agriculture have been subscribed on Twitter like RAB, NAEB, and so on. Follows agricultural marketing experts, tweets regularly if you are an extension agent and or even anyone wish to spread information to farmers, share information and join Twitter Charts (Mills, Reed, Skaalsveen, & Ingram, 2019).
* **YouTube:** This is a medium of communication mainly through videos and livestreaming. This can be utilized for knowledge generation through observation and social interaction, in different sectors it is used to disseminate knowledge to the receivers where videos are uploaded there and the receiver of information can directly view and or download videos related, and also can subscribe on given channel to get updated videos notifications (DeWitt, et al., 2013). In agriculture we can use this means to disseminate agriculture information to farmers as it is a good channel of communication.
* **WhatsApp**: This is one of effective means of interpersonal communication which allows the spread of information as quick as possible, not only typed messages but also audios, videos and documents can be shared on WhatsApp in addition to that the people using this application can express their emotions (Ali & Kootbodien, 2017). People can discuss in groups or in personal, in agriculture we can benefit from this medium of communication where farmers who can have access to WhatsApp can communicate through it and extension agents can reach farmers through this platform.

Social media is of great important in different fields, among of them agriculture is the one and it contribute in different ways as there are many kinds of social media as we cannot each everyone in this short document.

**Role of social media in disseminate agriculture information among farmers.**

* It overcomes geographical boundaries and creates communities who share common interests, social media really helps farmers to get useful information at large scale and farmers share common knowledge. When farmers are in same group of WhatsApp, the extension agent can share same message to all participants of the group
* Agricultural programs are using social media to engage audiences and obtain feedback in short time of period. It is easy for the user of a given social media to react and comment thus to get feedback could be as that easy.
* Social media helps farmers to get quick communication in times of emergency. This is can be understandable in this period of Covid19 where during lockdown period, there was no person contact, in such case agriculture extension agents used social media to reach farmers as it was the only possible mean of communication.
* Less expensive due to more coverage. One message is derived to many receivers at once and even interpersonal chats can be done but the cost of bundles still remains the same.
* It helps in transferring knowledge in farming and changing opinions. Through discussions that can be done on group chats either on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and so on, a farmer can change his opinions and attitudes.

**Contribution of television in disseminating agriculture information among farmers**

Mass media play an important role in dissemination of agricultural information. Television is one of powerful channel of mass media, it transmits information very first about agriculture information among farmers (Chhachhar, Qureshi, Khushk, & Ahmed, 2014). Television as essential communication tool:

* Television is used in transferring new findings from works of researchers to individual farmers. Through different programs and videos that can be published on Tv
* It is used to educate farmers how a new technology works for them to adopt. This is for example how Rwanda education board use television for home learning, also extension agents can use this form of communication
* It is used to disseminate weather forecasting information to farmers so that they can be prepared for future weather constraints.
* Some natural calamities like flood expectations can be disseminated to farmers by responsible agencies through Television.
* Environmental change prediction.
* Guidelines to farmers at beginning of next season.
* Alerting farmers to a sudden emergence.
* Sensitize farmers on new technology.

**Constraints of social media in agriculture**

Not everything goes well, during communication among farmers and extension agents, there are many barriers they face with. Social media as a mean of communication is not used as 100% in disseminating information among farmers because of various constraints. Some of these constraints are explained below:

* All social media require telephone or computer. Not all farmers have ability to have their own cell phones or computer as the cheapest telephone is valued 7500Rwf in Rwanda this become a big problem for farmers to get all information through telephones.
* Not every resident area of Rwanda has access to mobile connection due to demography of our country even though most parts of Rwanda can have mobile connection. This become the great barrier to farmers and extension agents because it slow down the level of communication.
* Cost of making calls and sending short messages is still a barrier for farmers because some of them see these to be expensive. This reduce the level of communication through mobile phones.
* Some farmers are not educated and they have low skills on use of technology and computers, this limits them to use of phones and computers.
* There is a negative thinking /myth among some old people whose understandings today say that social media is for youth! This restrict the use of social media in disseminating agriculture information through social media.

**Constraints in use of television in disseminating agriculture information among farmers**

As social media, television as a part of technology have different constraints including the followings:

* As illustrated above cost of park is seems to be high for some farmers and this reduce the level that television could be used on.
* Cost of television receiver is high, not every Rwandan has ability to buy his/ her own television. This become a great barrier in disseminating agriculture information among farmers because they do not owe television.
* Television is used only in the area where television and radio frequencies are covered. This is the small part of Rwanda and this become a great limitation to uses of television in disseminating agriculture information among farmers.
* Inadequate infrastructures are a barrier to use social media and televisions. This is like shortage of electricity and water.

Even though there are many barriers in use of social media and television in disseminating information among farmers, our government in Rwanda has arranged different programs that can help a farmer. Among those, there are:

* Twigire muhinzi which could rise the development of a Farmer and become able to buy those tools, televisions, computers and cell phone that could help them in use of social media.
* Empowerment of cooperatives and ibimina which could help farmers to get short term loan and reinvest in agriculture.
* Cana uhendukiwe, a program that use solar energy to generate electricity, this sometime give bonus of television to the clients. It is like mobisol.

By conclusion social media and television are the fastest way of spreading agriculture information among farmers, youth are one to take responsibilities to emphasize to farmers to rise I their utilization of social media and television hence agriculture will develop as soon as we practice this.

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