



MAKING MOBILE A KNOWLEDGE BANK FOR FARMERS-A CASE STUDY OF IFFCO KISAN

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Mobile phone are spreading its tentacles beyond just serving communication needs is well known. People using mobile for education, entertainment, entrepreneurship, getting involved in social media are now a day's very common but such utility of mobile is more with elite and learned population, but Farmer, staying in rural area may or may not be educated, with less cosmopolitaness making use of mobile phone to access farming related information and getting benefit out of them, something special and unique.

Telecommunications is a fast growing arena to transform Indian rural landscape. In the recent years, it has demonstrated its potential to play a vital role in contributing to the empowerment of people living in Indian villages, Many institutes and companies are working in the area of making mobile phone a source of information for farmers by providing information in different sectors of farming but IFFCO Kisan is leading in this journey of converting mobile phone of a farmer into a knowledge bank by providing farming information in an integrated way to serve the information need of the farmers in a more interactive way.

'IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited(IKSL)' is Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)'s determination to take valuable information inputs to farmers - directly to their 'ears' and 'eyes. IFFCO Kisan has been formed with an exclusive mandate to design, develop, source and supply all most all information required by the farming community with value additions of content and services. The focus is to take the advantage of latest in technology to address several issues faced by the farmers for simple need for communication, access to input from experts and services of reliable quality. The objective is to empower people living in villages of the country in a sustainable and viable manner.

In order to achieve the objectives cited above, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited was incorporated on Apr 12, 2007. Initially pilot projects were launched in Eastern UP to test the model. IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited has forged strategic relationships to evolve products in mobile telephony which are tailor made to suit rural requirements. IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited is a joint venture of IFFCO with telecom giant Bharti Airtel and Star Global Resources Ltd. Airtel is extending its network backbone to IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited. The same SIM Card which is used for communication is turned into a powerhouse of knowledge for empowering people living in villages through relevant and pertinent information which is being provided by IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited through Value Added Service (VAS). IFFCO Kisan is now working in 19 states providing daily VAS in 10 local languages to 16,14,382 subscribers.

Regular airtel sim which is used for day to day communication is featured with customised value added services is called green sim. Farmer having green sim card is enabled to get IFFCO Kisan's value added services free of cost on daily basis. Value Added Services include; text message, voice message and helpline services.

Text Messages

Text messages go to farmers mainly as alerts regarding weather forecast, important farming related events and pest or disease outbreak.

Voice Message

Through the Green SIM Card, every day, up to four free voice messages are delivered to the Subscribers in their local language. Each such voice message is of one-minute duration and cover contextual alerts and advisories on diverse subjects like soil management, weather forecasts, weather based agro-advisory, crop management, plant protection, market rates, dairy and animal husbandry. Information of general use on health, employment, education, women empowerment, financial inclusion, awareness of climate change and Government schemes are also provided. These voice messages are prepared by experts on subjects of immediate interest to the rural Subscribers.

Call Back Facility

For those subscribers, who could not receive the voice message call or have missed a voice message, a facility is available to call a short code (534359) which provides for listening to the messages again. This facility is available for listening to the same days' alerts and advisories any time during that day.



Helpline

The subscribers of Green SIM Card of IFFCO Kisan have the privilege of access to a dedicated Helpline service, which has the potential to become a rural lifeline through a 6 digit number 534351. Farmers can get a solution to their problems, queries by using this short code. Experienced professionals are accessible on this helpline, who provide solutions to farmers. Where required, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are taken on conference call to provide a satisfactory resolution to queries.

Other Programmes through Mobile Phone

Apart from the free voice messages and helpline, IFFCO Kisan organizes live phone-in-program on specific subjects of interest to farmers. In these 'Phone In' programmes, subject matter specialists join IFFCO Kisan's officials at one place for redressal of specific issues of the caller, provide clarifications, etc. The Helpline number used by farmers is also used for these programmes. Mobile based quizzes are organized to sharpen the knowledge levels of subscribers and attractive gifts are provided to winners. Mobile based quizzes also help to encourage subscriber participation in IFFCO Kisan activities and to get feedback regarding impact of text and voice messages as these quiz questions are formed based on the content delivered through messages.

Focused Communities

To further improve the effectiveness of its services, IFFCO Kisan promotes Focused Communities / Groups with common interest - such as Sheep and Goat Rearing, Dairy, Fisheries, etc. This provides an opportunity to extend more focused services to the Community members. IFFCO Kisan offers an opportunity to like-minded Organizations to effectively communicate with their farmer/customer base through IFFCO Kisan's Green SIM card platform. Here, the partner organization is empowered to customize the content of 1 or 2 of the total 4 daily messages disseminated through Green SIM. IFFCO Kisan has already successfully promoted several communities with partners with refined services to meet the specific requirements of the community. Several partners are benefitting immensely with a continuous and economical means of engagement with their members / customers and strengthen their bond with their organization.

Providing right information to right person at right time is the main intention of Value added services. Maximum efforts are made to disseminate most relevant information to farmers at needy time, thus in each state messages are given based on the Agro-climatic zones. As a result, messages were disseminated in 60 zones spread over 10 states.

To accomplish quality parameter in content development and its delivery, pro active and reactive messages are disseminated, analysis of the helpline calls and feedback from the farmers helps in developing re- active messages and Crop calendars helps in making of Pro active messages. Crop calendars and factsheets were prepared for all the major crops of the country showing information needed at different stages of crop growth with the help of national experts and reputed institutions, Well defined quality auditing of voice messages and helpline solutions were done at regular intervals for content adequacy, authenticity, relevance and clarity. Based on this content team is trained on various skills and updated knowledge for better professional orientation and performance.

IFFCO Kisan Mobile App

Way ahead IKSL developed mobile App called IFFCO Kisan, which is very unique and integrated app, almost like one stop for many rural information needs. This App has different sections like, Weather, Mandi, ask experts etc., this farmer app is also capable enough to provide agriculture alerts and agriculture advisories in 10 Indian languages with agriculture audio clip for the conveniences of the farmers who are more comfortable in their own language. App consists of following sections, which helps farmer to get need based and timely information in their local language.

Weather: This section is Instant access of weather forecast for next 5-days with temp, RH, rainfall possibility, expected wind speed & its direction in set preferred location. Farmers may add and remove preferred locations for weather forecast. It will help farmers to plan and take corrective action for agricultural and farming related activities. At a time, 2 districts can be selected as preferences for weather data access. Data source is from IMD.

Market or Mandi: Farmer can get instant access of mandi price for their produce, market status and prevailing prices along with quantities arrived for trade. Farmers can also view price trends for their produce and plan sale of their produce. Farmer can get last 3-updates on transactions in market on any agricultural commodities at any point of time. Data source is from AGMARKNET (Major) & NCEDX/ ODISHA FISHERY (Minor).



Agricultural Advisories: This is crop specific advisories service for various agro-climatic zones. This agricultural advisories & agricultural alerts are provided based on research by industry experts; our agricultural advisories guide rural farmers to initiate necessary and corrective actions based on prevailing weather conditions.

Ask Our Experts: This is a USP of “IFFCO Kisan” Indian Farmer agriculture App. Through this farmers can talk to industry Agriculture experts and take agricultural advice in 1-click. It is very useful to those farmers who find difficulties in writing; even they can just take a photo of the plant or concerned area/ disease and can send to our experts to study the issue through the app only. Our experts will provide personalized agriculture solution through voice call.

Gyan Bhandar: Agriculture information library for farmer to get all Important agriculture Information related to any crops, agriculture cycle, agriculture field preparation, water management, agriculture diseases management & agriculture proactive actions.

Helplines: Farmers can access IKSL ‘534351’ agriculture helpline service from “IFFCO Green SIM card” user who can reach to IKSL experts through this exclusive helpline through 1-click and also One Touch connectivity to Kisan Call Centre Services “18001801551” number from the IFFCO Kisan app. KCC is the initiative of Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. It is managed by IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL).

Setting is setting up the preferences by farmer based on their interests and need; on weather, mandi, advisory, Gyan Bhandar. IFFCO Kisan app user can also change the preferred language.

Profile: Farmer can update personal data like crop details, land details, animal details apart from personal information. (<https://itunes.apple.com/in/app/iffco-kisan/id1076226587?mt=8>)

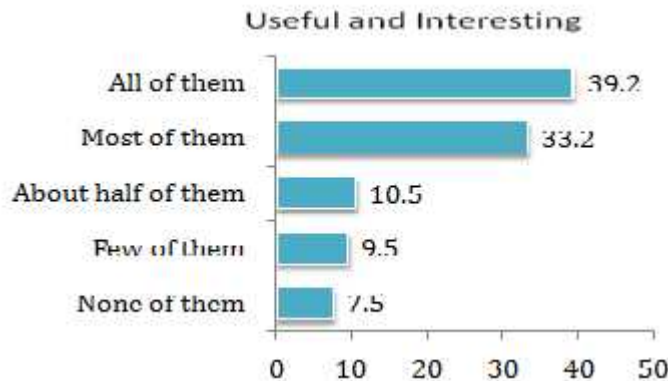
NEWS; Updated news related to rural community, Govt schemes etc., are posted in this section for the benefit of the farmers

Reflection on Value Added Services of IKSL

As per the survey conducted by TNS Engaged by GSMA Foundation, IKSL is disseminating its value added services to 71.4% of the rural people whose earning is less than a dollar per day and 87.5 % of the farmers having less than 2 dollars as their daily earning, it clearly shows that the service is reaching economically backward sector of the rural community

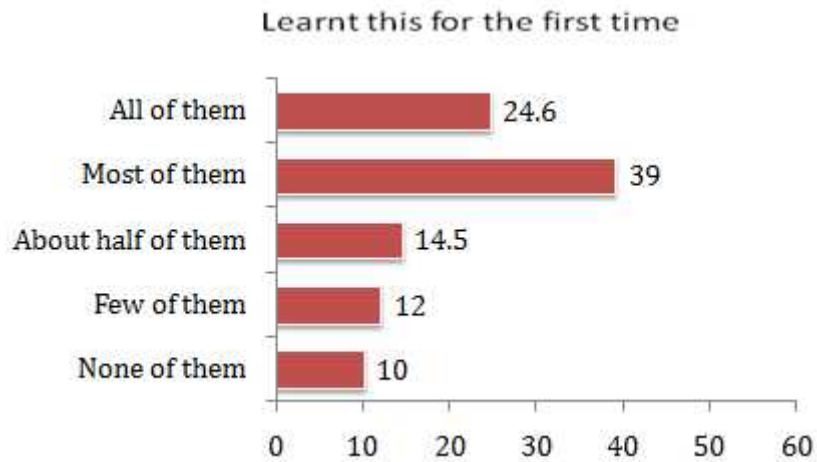


This study also revealed that 39.2 % of the farmers said that all of the messages delivered by IKSL are useful and interesting to them and 33.2 % of the farmers said that most of the messages are useful and interesting, in total 70% of the users have said that messages are useful and interesting.

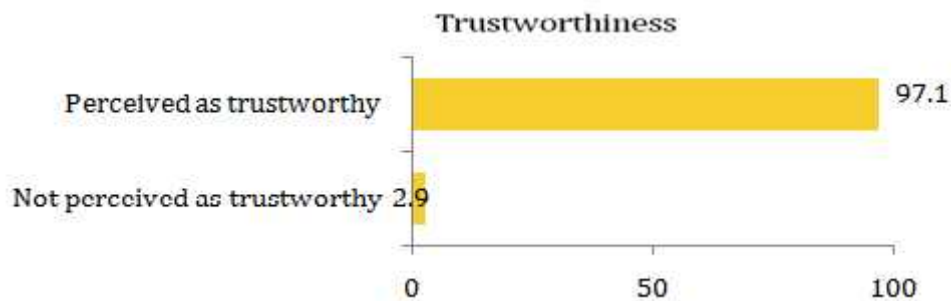




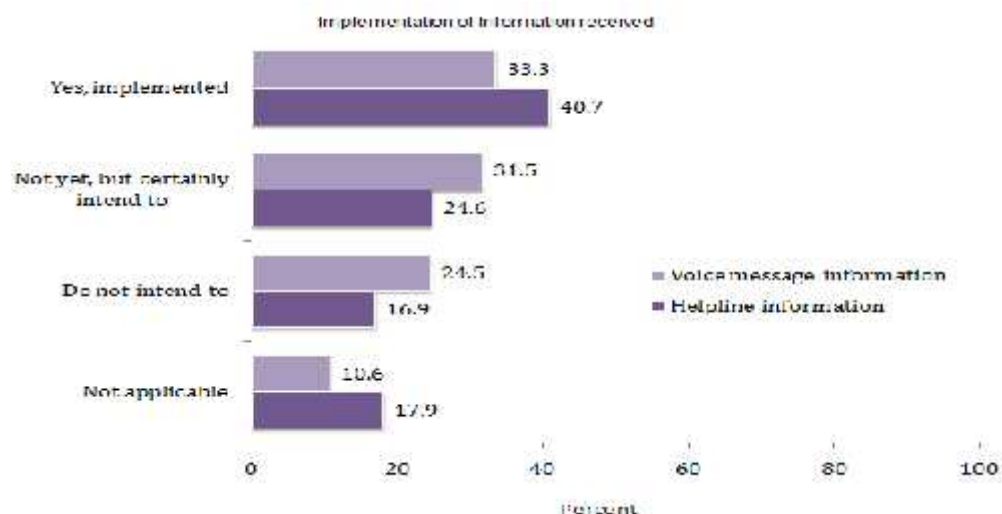
Below picture says that 39% of the users have said that most of the messages which they have received from IKSL VAS are learnt for the first time and 24.6 % of the users said that all of the messages received through VAS are learnt for the first time, it clearly shows that information disseminated through VAS is fresh, updated and unique.



Trustworthiness of the VAS services of IKSL was also studied and results shows that 97.1% of the users have said that the information received through VAS are trustworthy, it reflects on the IKSL's source of information is always authenticated and validated before dissemination



Below Graph indicates that 33.3% of the farmers have implemented the information received by IKSL voice messages and 40.7 % of the farmers have implemented the suggestion received by IKSL helpline, it conveys that the information provided through voice messages and helpline are need based, adequate and adoptable.





Conclusion

Mobile phones are almost taking a place in the list of basic needs, no doubt that this Information communication technology is serving beyond just communication purpose of an individual. In this changing trend of ICT, looking mobile as opportunity to reach the farmer and providing him information in his local language is a very significant effort and IKSL is using all forms of mobile based services starting from SMS to mobile App as it is the need of the hour. These endeavours are to empower rural subscribers, particularly farmers, with latest information for informed decision making and helping farmers to get maximum profit by reducing cost of production is appreciable. Many research studies have been done on the IKSL value added services and they have proved the services of IKSL are playing a vital role in narrowing the gap between information source to the target group by facilitating the dissemination of authenticated, validated and need based technologies moving from lab to land.

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