

Role of Media in Development Communication with Special Reference to *Kissan Call Centre (KCC)* in India

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Abstract

Agriculture is the main occupation in India and more than 55% of livelihood depends on agriculture directly or indirectly. Development of the agriculture and allied sector has been the main objective of the every successive government. Several new technologies have been introduced to develop the agriculture sector. Media is the important tool for the development of society and economy. With technology penetrating to the nook and corners of the country agricultural information dissemination is going through a renaissance. Government of India has announced several programmes such as Kissan Call Centre and Kissan SMS portal to disseminate information on agricultural and allied sector to farmers. The present study analyse the media in the development of agriculture sector in India. The main objective of this research paper is to study the importance and functions of the Kissan Call Centres in India. The study is based on secondary data. The study takes into account the government data of five years from 2007 - 08 to 2013 -14. The study clearly shows that there is a significant increase in the calls in 2013-14, compared to 2007- 08. The average calls in 2007-08 is 18,431 and 1,38,848 in 2013-14. Based on theoretical framework of Wilbur Schramm's studies on communication for development, the present study tries to analyse the role of media in development through use of Kissan Call Centre in informing, instructing and enabling participation among the farmers for a holistic development.

Keywords: *Kissan Call Centre, Agriculture, Development Communication, Media*

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INTRODUCTION

Multi cultures, multi tribes and castes, multi linguality characterize the Indian society and it the communication that has kept all these aligned within the societal fabric. Communication is always a two way process. Communication uses different forms like print, electronic and more recent new media to communicate. It is here that, media becomes an empowering tool, a tool that facilitates people's participation and paves way for development activities. Today, technology has been put to maximum use to effectively communicate the information towards developmental activities. This phenomenon is not just limited to urban cities but it is fetching its arms towards rural areas, where

with the help of communication technology a whole bouquet of programmes are launched to bring in rural areas within the ambit of inclusive development. Agriculture still being a major contributor in Indian economy, more often the availability of resources and related information becomes defunct. Many a times there is a dearth of information to the farming community on basic issues like seeds, farming practices, pest control, marketing and other related activities. It is seen through the statistics that, at present in India 58 % of rural households depend on farming activities (NSSO, 2013) and more than 55 % of total population depend on agriculture in India. Thus, it becomes important that, we harness the technology to empower people towards development of agriculture and allied activities. In this direction, many programmes have been introduced by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India which utilize technology to communicate. Some of the important programmes are *Kissan* Call Centre (KCC), *Kissan* SMS Portal (KSP) etc. These programmes and services aim to help the farmers in relation to their agriculture related queries.

OBJECTIVES

1. The main objective of the study is to identify the importance of *Kissan* Call Centre
2. To analyze the performance of *Kissan* Call Centres in India
3. To study the functions of *Kissan* Call Centres

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hemavathy Ramasubbian et al. (2015) in a similar study on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Indian Agricultural Sector with special reference to *Kissan* Call Centre (KCC) has analysed the performance of *Kissan* Call Centre. The study focuses on calls received at KCC and based on the number of calls received they have drawn conclusions. The study is based on secondary data analysis where data showed that, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal were in the first five places benefited by the KCC i.e., based on the call received by the KCC related to agricultural information. On the other hand Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Diu & Daman, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli were the states in the least five places in the use of

KCC service. The study also looks into the various ICT tools and applications related to agriculture sector.

Zia Anjum and Khan Ayesha (2012) analyzed the media in the development of agriculture sector, in their study on *Media Coverage for Development of Agriculture Sector: An Analytical Study of Television Channels in Pakistan*. The study is based on primary and also secondary data. The study has selected 82 sample and 12 TV channels. The major findings of the study emphasise the fact that, news channels should broadcast regular programmes regarding new technologies and advancements in farming for education and guidance of the farmers which will help development of agriculture. The study also brings out the point that, the local television channels can be of help in transmitting the information effectively in their local languages like PTV, a state run television has the highest viewership in rural areas but it telecasts only one programme in a week. So the study recommends for more programming space in native languages for effective dissemination of information.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is qualitative in nature. Secondary source of data including, various government reports, research documents, journals, books, reports from Department of Agriculture and Co-operation and various other publication formed the data source. Contributions of *Kissan Call Centre* are discussed to see the usefulness of such services towards community development. In all, the study aims to analyze the performance and functions of KCC in India based on data obtained from government records.

KISSAN CALL CENTRE (KCC) - ANALYSIS

Agriculture is the main occupation of Indian economy. More than 53% (2009-10) of people are dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly. At 2011-12 prices, GDP composition of Agriculture and allied sector was 16.11%. According to 2013-14, total food grains production was 265.57 million tons. Farming in India has come a long way from traditional to adapting to new technologies. The recent trend is contract farming with the involvement of private sector which has supported the move by increasing retail chain across India. All this has commercialized Indian farming sector. Yet, there is a lacuna in the growth of this sector that is due to the paucity of extension workers. At present, the ratio of farmers to extension workers is as low as 1000:1. However, the village local workers give

information but the information is biased or lacks accountability. It thus becomes necessary to disseminate information to poor farmers effectively at low cost and on right time. As Meera, Jhamtani & Rao, (2004) say, “These two issues have created an urgency to effectively address the information needs of poor farmers. In addition, the cost involved in face-to-face information dissemination at the right time and the difficulties of reaching the target audiences have also created the urgency to introduce ICT for this purpose. It is only through the introduction of ICT that information can also be updated and extended at the lowest cost. There are several ICT models in Indian agriculture, which have made significant difference to agricultural operations. "As F. Rosario Braid (Choudary, 2011) opines development communication is “an element of the management process in the overall planning and implementation of the developmental programs”. Thus, development communication is identification and proper utilization of available expertise in the development process that will assist in increase people’s participation right from grassroots.

Development communication has two primary roles of (a) transforming role, and (b) Socializing role. Where in transforming role communication acts as instrument in bringing the desired social change for achieving better quality of life and in socializing role it tries to maintain the established values. In a way communication creates an atmosphere for accepting the change by providing space to inventions and innovations. Indian society has paved way for innovative communication technology in development of agriculture for more than a decade or so. Hence, there is an immediate need for vibrant, energetic and novel approach to be adopted for agricultural extension in order to achieve targeted growth rate by helping farmers better at low cost. Estimates indicate that 60 percent of farmers do not access any source of information for advanced agricultural technologies resulting in huge adoption gap (NSSO). This is a serious concern. Nevertheless, *Kissan* Call Centre is emerging as the most popular among the ICT intervention in agriculture.

Kissan Call Centre (KCC) scheme was introduced by Government of India in 2004 and it is implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation. These calls centres can be accessed by all farmers in the country through a common toll free number 1551. The main objective of this scheme is to make agriculture knowledge available at free of cost to the farmers as and when desired. The location is immaterial as the calls can originate from any village. The specific call centre will have agriculture graduate who is well versed with local language and dialect and who has an understanding of regional agricultural issues will answer the call. The Call Centre service is available

from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. except on sundays and public holidays. The IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System) mode attends to the calls before and after working hours and thus, keeps track of the calls that are made. The farmers can call up in *Kissan* Call Centre and enquire about the various queries/problems related to the crops, seeds, fertilizers, agriculture commodity prices, pesticides, horticulture, veterinary, etc free of cost.

The Table 1 shows the number of *Kissan* calls received by the KCC in India. The data clearly shows that, there is significant increase in the calls made by farmers in 2013-14, compared to 2007-08. The average calls in 2007-08 is 18,431 calls whereas, 1,38,848 calls were received in 2013-14. The highest calls are from Uttar Pradesh (18.20%), Maharashtra (15.03%), Rajasthan (9.63%) and Karnataka (3.02%) states.

The Table 1 also shows that, over a period of six years the calls made to KCC have increased manifold and trust of farmers in this cost effective service is gaining more popularity. When we look at Karnataka, the calls made during the year 2006 -07 were 29678 which is increased to 134251 in the year 2013 -14.

It can be seen that, Andaman & Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Goa, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya States have performed low in the usage of KCC. In all, the union territories and 7 north-eastern states show a poor performance. This can be due to the fact that, union territories don't have a strong agriculture dependency. It is quite interesting to see that, Kerala along with north -east have seen lesser calls while compared to rest. An interesting observation can be made that, where the dependency is high on commercial crops the calls are lesser as compared to states where traditional agricultural crops are grown.

On an average the calls received at KCC over a period of time has increased from 18, 431 to 1,38,848. The surge in the calls can be attributed to the growing reach of the technologies to rural areas and also the effective working of KCC in delivering timely information cost effectively.

Table 1 Number of *Kissan* Calls Received By KCC

States&UTs	2007-08	%	2013-14	%
Andaman& Nicobar	37	0.01	77	0.00
Andhra Pradesh	16484	2.79	232847	5.24
Arunachal Pradesh	82	0.01	217	0.00
Assam	5552	0.94	37666	0.85
Bihar	6883	1.17	97226	2.19
Chhattisgarh	5280	0.90	39033	0.88
Dadar & Nagar Haveli	0	0.00	26	0.00
Delhi	2147	0.36	24232	0.55
Goa, Daman &Diu	80	0.01	94	0.00
Gujarat	51678	8.76	235596	5.30
Haryana	12964	2.20	208660	4.70
Himachal Pradesh	11703	1.98	55089	1.24
Jammu & Kashmir	24968	4.23	134281	3.02
Jharkhand	3372	0.57	24237	0.55
Karnataka	29678	5.03	134251	3.02
Kerala	16046	2.72	14900	0.34
Lakshadweep	0	0.00	19	0.00
Madhya pradesh	51826	8.79	315774	7.11
Maharashtra	40162	6.81	667888	15.03
Manipur	2348	0.40	1277	0.03
Meghalaya	387	0.07	537	0.01
Mizoram	895	0.15	42	0.00
Nagaland	27	0.00	159	0.00
Orissa	8691	1.47	176994	3.98
Punjab	55107	9.34	244657	5.51
Rajasthan	58453	9.91	427730	9.63
Sikkim	75	0.01	1757	0.04
Tamilnadu & Pondicherry	37874	6.42	226508	5.10
Tripura	1223	0.21	4534	0.10
Uttar Pradesh	115812	19.64	808585	18.20
Uttaranchal	16980	2.88	65545	1.48
West Bengal	12867	2.18	262709	5.91
Total	589781	100.00	4443147	100.00
Average	18,431		1,38,848	

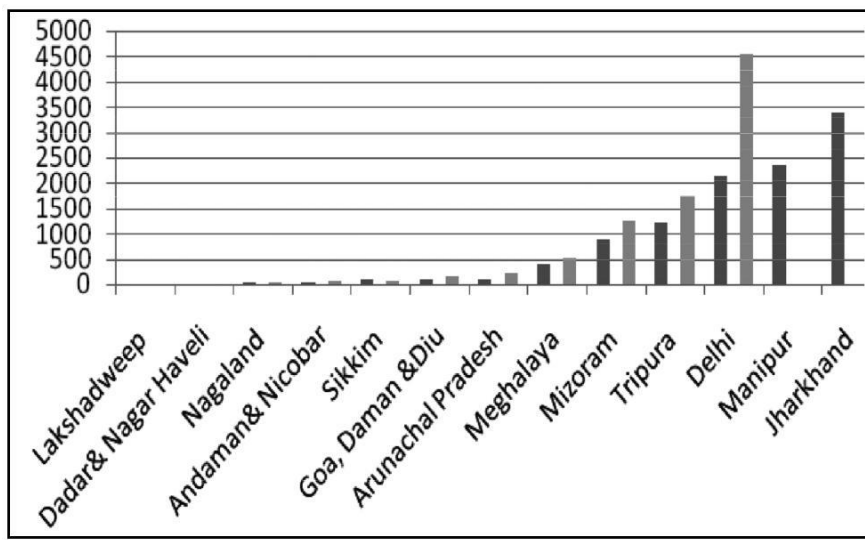
Source: Hemavathy et al (2015).

Further, for the purpose of better understanding of the growth of KCC based on the intensity of calls made. It was divided in to Low Calls (0-5000), Medium Calls (5000-25000) and High Call (Above 25000) categories.

Table2: Calls Registered Under Low Call Category

States	Low calls (0-5000)	Low calls (0-5000)
	2007-08	2013-14
Lakshadweep	0	19
Dadar& Nagar Haveli	0	26
Nagaland	27	159
Mizoram	895	42
Andaman& Nicobar	37	77
Sikkim	75	1757
Goa, Daman & Diu	80	94
Arunachal Pradesh	82	217
Meghalaya	387	537
Manipur	2348	1277
Tripura	1223	4534
Delhi	2147	-
Jharkhand	3372	-

Graph 1: Calls Registered under Low Call Category

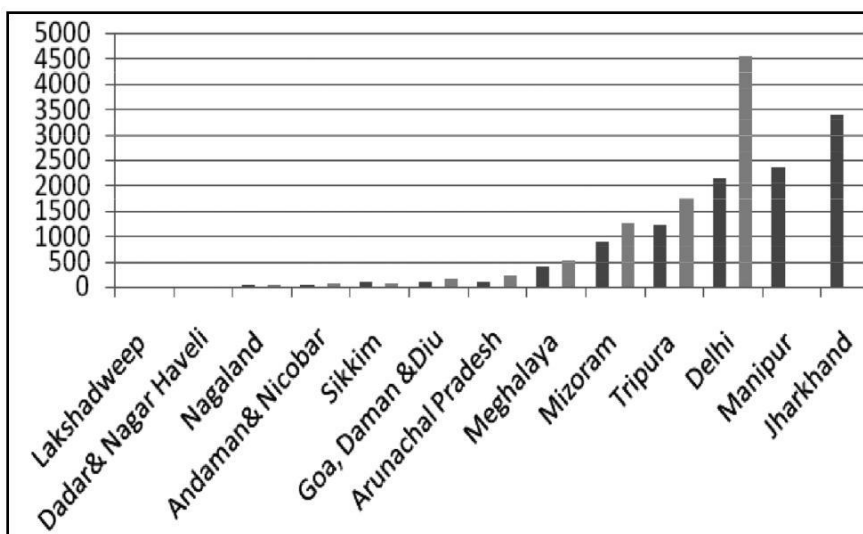


It is interesting observation that, over a period of 5 years there is increase in use of KCC and the number of states in the Low Call Category has reduced from 13 in the year 2007 – 08 to 11 in the year 2013 – 14. One needs to also take a note that, it is the union territories that there has been lesser call registered. Apart from union territories one can see that low calls are been registered in seven sisters state of North East India. It can be interpreted that, as compared to rest of India the agricultural pace in those regions are slow and also most of these places depend on cash crops and plantations.

Table3: Calls registered under Medium Call category

States	Medium Calls (5000-25000) 2007-08	Medium calls (5000-25000) 2013-14
Chhattisgarh	5280	
Assam	5552	
Bihar	6883	
Orissa	8691	
Himachal Pradesh	11703	
West Bengal	12867	
Haryana	12964	
Kerala	16046	14900
Andhra Pradesh	16484	
Uttaranchal	16980	
Jammu & Kashmir	24968	
Delhi		24232
Jharkhand		24237

Graph 2: Calls Registered under Medium Call Category



It is observed from the table 3 that, even in the Medium Calls Category there is a huge difference where states have moved from medium to high utilization states. Where there were 11 states that used KCC in the year 2007 – 08 the number has decreased to 3 states in the year 2013 -14. It can be said that, many states are applying digital technology to gain information on agriculture. It is also interesting to note that, the states producing main agricultural crops or sustainable crops have made more utilization of the *Kissan Call Centre* and have moved from states that have made medium calls to state using maximum KCC.

Table 4: Calls Registered Under High Call Category

States	Highest Calls (Above 25000) 2007-08	States	Highest calls (Above 25000) 2013-14
Karnataka	29678	Assam	37666
Tamilnadu & Pondicherry	37874	Chhattisgarh	39033
Maharashtra	40162	Himachal Pradesh	55089
Gujarat	51678	Uttaranchal	65545
Madhya Pradesh	51826	Bihar	97226
Punjab	55107	Karnataka	134251
Rajasthan	58453	Jammu & Kashmir	134281
Uttar Pradesh	115812	Orissa	176994
		Haryana	208660
		Tamilnadu & Pondicherry	226508
		Andhra Pradesh	232847
		Gujarat	235596
		Punjab	244657
		West Bengal	262709
		Madhya Pradesh	315774
		Rajasthan	427730
		Maharashtra	667888
		Uttar Pradesh	808585

Graph 3: Calls registered under High Call category

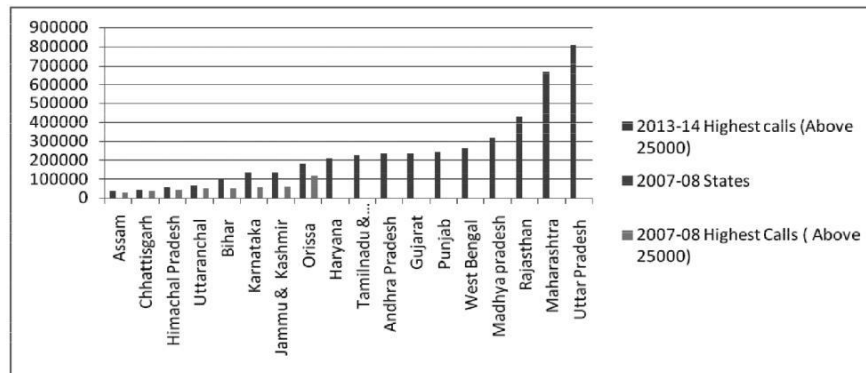


Table 4 shows that, there is indeed a vast increase in the usage of *Kissan Call Centre*. Over a period of 5 years the states that are avid users of KCC have risen from 8 to 18. It is loud and clear that, digital technology is been adopted by the farming community to gain information on agriculture and allied activities. This cost effective service is slowly and steadily gaining popularity. Interestingly, Uttar Pradesh has recorded highest number of calls with 808585 calls and the state of Maharashtra that recorded highest number of farmer's suicide in India has recorded second highest calls to KCC with 667888 calls during 2013-14 denoting the intervention of KCC in information dissemination to farmers.

CONCLUSION

When we talk of sustainable development through ICT in agriculture there are many issues that have to be thought of specially in rural context like economical, political sociological, cultural, ethical and ethnical. This form sustainable rural development definitely a new practice and the success story of KCC have heralded a new attitude towards life amongst the rural population relying upon agriculture. Thus, it can be said that, media communication has played a vital role in adapting to new policies and taking action and encourage people to be active part in the transformation process. According to Wilbur Schramm, the role of media in development involves; 1) to inform (2) to instruct and (3) to participate. Likewise, *Kissan Call Centre* is helping to provide information for the societal development. It is instructing people specifically people dependent on agriculture and allied activities by imbibing the knowledge and awareness. Thus, helps in improving their skills by educating them and bringing in people's participation in development of the society.

With technology penetrating to the nook and corners of the country agricultural information dissemination is going through a renaissance. The scenario from no communication to mass communication using technology is seeing a sea change. It is necessary at this juncture that, more innovative approaches in diffusion of related information in rural dialect for effective reach of information must be taken up. And more funds for R & D in agriculture communication should be set aside. Nevertheless, it can be said that, development communication is playing an effective role in the dissemination of agricultural information among farming community.

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