

Utility behaviour of post graduate students about TNAU agritech portal

CK NIVEDHA and C KARTHIKEYAN

Department of Social Sciences

Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam 628252 Tamil Nadu, India

Email for correspondence: nivedhanive05407@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Advancement in technology has always had major impact in agriculture. ICT tools help to transfer technology to farmers in an effective manner. TNAU agritech portal is one of the web portals to disseminate agricultural information to farmers and other stakeholders. It was launched by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University during 2009. The present study was conducted in Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. The main objective of the study was to assess the utilization behaviour of post graduate students about TNAU agritech portal. Data were collected from 31 post graduate students using questionnaire. It was found that 64.51 per cent respondents were aware of the year of launch of the portal; majority (90.32%) visited this portal occasionally; used agriculture sector (77.41%) for preparation of assignments (87.09%) through their mobile phones (93.54%). For most of them (87.09%) the images and for 61.29 per cent the videos of the portal were very clear; 87.09 per cent did not obtain market related news on the portal; only 61.29 per cent obtained information on recent events; 73.19 per cent did not access weather data; 70.96 per cent perceived the portal as easily accessible; 83.87 per cent rated the portal as good and 87.09 per cent expressed that handling of portal was not risky.

Keywords: Agritech portal; students; behaviour; information; visit

INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in the field of available information and communication technology (ICT) resources have led to a renewed interest of learners in knowledge acquisition through various means. It makes students better prepared, skilled and informed in comparison to their earlier counterparts (Singh and Rao 2016).

Portal is a gateway to network of information. It is a specially designed website. It brings information from wide variety of sources, like e-mails, online forums and search engines to a digital platform (portal) together in a uniform way. A website differs from web portal by the way; website is a location on the internet that is unique and which is accessed via a web browser using a specific URL (web address) while portals are also accessed via a web browser and specific URL but content is login-protected and user-specific. A portal helps its users with a single and customized entry. Web portals are of different types. Among them there are

also agriculture-based web portals (agriportals). Some of the agriportals in India are farmers' portal (www.farmer.gov.in), India Development Gateway (IndG) portal (www.indg.in), Agropedia (agropedia.iitk.ac.in), mKisan portal (www.mkisan.gov.in), aAQUA (almost all questions answered) (www.aaqua.org), KISSAN Kerala (www.kissankerala.net), DACNET (www.dacnet.nic.in), IFFCO agriportal (www.iffco.nic.in), Rice Knowledge Management Portal (RKMP) (www.rkmp.co.in), Agri Exchange (www.agriexchange.in), AGMARKNET (www.agmarknet.nic.in), TNAU agritech portal (<http://agritech.tnau.ac.in>) etc. The objective of these agriportals is to integrate agricultural community together which in turn helps in better production planning for farmers and other agricultural producers by providing information on market prices, daily weather, schemes and new techniques on overall farming process and its allied sectors to establish a digital platform to promote marketing of agricultural commodities and to create an information platform for agriculture.

Among the different agriportals, TNAU agritech portal is the most widely used one because of its contents presented in Tamil version. It is a known fact that many agriculture students have been using this portal for clarifying their doubts regarding agriculture. TNAU agritech portal is one of the web portals with the slogan ‘transforming the lives of farmers’ and acts as a gateway of information about agriculture. It was launched by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on 27 October 2009 and was sponsored under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). It offered a wide range of information from agricultural and horticultural crops to weather information, daily market prices, schemes and programmes for farmers, daily news, events, publications supported by multimedia (images and videos), expert systems and much more. The portal has the feature of providing information in bilingual (Tamil and English) mode and holds around 5.5 lakh web pages. Many agriculture students, research scholars, extension officials, subject matter specialists etc are using this portal for clarifying their doubts and to obtain knowledge regarding agriculture.

TNAU agritech portal has been catering to the needs of farmers, extensionists and other stakeholders in agriculture and allied sectors since 2009 (Sujeetha and Karthikeyan 2016). It provides information on various sectors like agriculture, horticulture, agricultural marketing, agricultural engineering, seed technology, organic farming and certification, sericulture, fishery, forestry and animal husbandry. Each sector acts as valuable source of information (knowledge bank) which comprises production and protection technologies, related information like schemes, policies, success stories, video galleries, photo bank and updated news and technologies. It also provides information on farmers’ associations like farmers producer organisation (FPO) for different commodities like banana, mango, tea, sugarcane, flowers etc. It displays the innovations of other farmers, students, research scholars and scientists for easy accessibility and wide dissemination of information with images and video clips.

Among the different agriportals, TNAU agritech portal is being used by many agriculture students for clarifying their doubts regarding agriculture. But the utility behaviour of PG students about this portal was not yet studied so far. Hence the main objective of this study was to examine the utility behaviour of PG students about TNAU agritech portal.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu during 2019. The study was particularly focused on finding out the usage of TNAU agritech portal by the first year post graduate agricultural students. Hence all the 31 PG students were considered as respondents. Data were collected with the help of well-structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The collected data were tabulated and subjected to percentage analysis.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The data regarding utilization behaviour of students about TNAU agritech portal were collected through different characteristics like awareness, frequency of usage, frequently used sector, accessibility through mobile, purpose of visit, clarity of images and videos and analysed using percentage analysis (Table 1).

It was found that 64.51 per cent respondents were aware of the year of launch of the portal. As they were regular users of the portal so they were aware also. Rest of the respondents (35.84%) were unaware about the year of launch because they visited the portal only for obtaining information and were not interested to know about the launching year. Majority of the respondents (90.32%) visited this portal occasionally only on need basis whereas 9.67 per cent visited it weekly.

It was also found that majority of the respondents (77.41%) used agriculture sector because it covered the information about production technologies of all agricultural crops like cereals, millets, pulses, oilseeds, fibre crops, sugar crops, forage crops and also included all management practices, schemes, publications etc. Some respondents (19.35%) used crop protection sector.

Majority of the respondents (87.09%) visited TNAU agritech portal for preparation of assignments. Portal contained all information at a single platform and hence students used the portal for their assignment purpose. This was followed by 41.93 per cent who used the portal for knowledge gathering.

Most of the respondents (93.54%) used the portal through their mobile phones which could be due to the reason that mobile phones were always with

Table 1. TNAU agritech portal utility behaviour of students (n= 31)

Characteristic	Category	Respondents	
		Number*	Percentage
Awareness about launch year	Aware	20	64.51
	Unaware	11	35.84
Frequency of usage	Occasionally	28	90.32
	Weekly	3	9.67
Major sector used	Agriculture	24	77.41
	Crop protection	6	19.35
	Agricultural marketing	1	3.22
Purpose of visit	Assignment preparation	27	87.09
	Knowledge gathering	13	41.93
	Research purpose	5	16.12
	Guiding farmers	10	32.25
Mobile accessibility	Easy access	29	93.54
	Not easy access	2	6.44
Clarity of image	Clear	27	87.09
	Not clear	4	12.90
Clarity of video	Clear	19	61.29
	Not clear	12	38.70

*Multiple responses

Table 2. TNAU agritech portal information seeking behaviour of students (n= 31)

Characteristic	Category	Respondents	
		Number*	Percentage
Market-related news	No	27	87.09
	Yes	4	12.90
Recent events	Yes	19	61.29
	No	12	38.70
Weather data	No	23	74.19
	Yes	8	25.08

*Multiple responses

them and they could visit the portal anywhere anytime. For most of them (87.09%) the images on the portal were clear and for 61.29 the videos of the portal were also very clear.

From the data in Table 2 it could be seen that majority of the respondents (87.09%) did not obtain market related news on TNAU agritech portal and only 12.90 per cent did so.

It could also be inferred that majority (61.29%) of the respondents obtained information on recent events through the portal. About three-fourth (74.19%) of the respondents did not access weather data from the portal.

From the data given in Table 3 it could be noted that majority of the respondents (70.96%) perceived the portal as easily accessible followed by 19.35 per cent who expressed their satisfaction over the contents of the portal. Most of the respondents (83.87%) rated the portal as good and 87.09 per cent expressed that handling of portal was not risky.

The respondents also pointed out the shortcomings of TNAU agritech portal viz lack of updated news, information provided was not comprehensive, recommendations were there on banned pesticides and fungicides, market price information was not updated, recent innovations such as newly released varieties, pesticides, herbicides were

Table 3. Students' perception about the TNAU agritech portal (n= 31)

Category	Category	Respondents	
		Number*	Percentage
Reason for preference	Easy access	22	70.96
	Satisfaction	6	19.35
	Content design and validation	4	12.35
	All the above	1	3.22
Rating	Good	26	83.87
	Very good	3	9.67
	Bad	2	6.45
Handling of portal	Not risky	27	87.09
	Risky	4	12.90

*Multiple responses

not updated on portal etc. They reported that they wanted to use this portal in the form of an app. They wanted to have current updated news regarding market price, schemes, subsidies and information on newly released varieties, pesticides, insecticides and all other agricultural information on the portal. They also suggested to include news articles and information about agriculture related job alerts on the portal.

CONCLUSION

TNAU agritech portal disseminates all kinds of technical information regarding agriculture and allied sectors. Nowadays agriculture students are mostly using smart phones. They obtained all the technical information through smart phones. They easily accessed the portal through their smart phones.

From this study it is revealed that awareness about TNAU agritech portal was high which was visited occasionally and agriculture sector was mainly used for gathering knowledge. The students found accessibility to market related information, recent events and weather data. They preferred this portal as it was easy to access and also for its content design and validation. By providing updated information and agriculture related job alert news to the student users it was possible to increase their satisfaction level on the utility of TNAU agritech portal.

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