

Small-scale farmers use of mobile-based farm advisory services – study on behaviour intention and information gaps in Sindh, Pakistan

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A decline in the use and provision of traditional AS due to socio-economic and political reasons in rural Pakistan was observed. Following a massive boost in mobile phone usage by rural community led to the introduction of the mobile phone-based farm advisory service throughout the country. This study aimed to analyse the use of mobile phones for receiving agricultural information, investigate the information gaps in using Mobile phone-based Farm Advisory Services (mFAS), its contents and evaluate the usage intention using the UTAUT and the limitations to access.

A semi-structured questionnaire, which targeted at determining patterns of socio-demographics, UTAUT constructs and the limitations encountered, to verify the research objectives of this study. The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and a secondary data review to investigate the overall objectives of the study. In addition, the region investigated included a marginalized, illiterate, and an unaware small-scale farmer population, facing exogenous problems. Although farmers were highly motivated to use mFAS, the supply side rarely launched awareness programs. This was discovered using both primary and secondary sources. While the farmers were highly experienced, most were uneducated and more than half of the respondent's used mobiles for receiving information on irrigation, livestock and calling other farmers. All constructs of the UTAUT model revealed a positive behaviour intention to use mFAS, although gender could not be included as a construct moderating factor.

Recommendations would be to introduce a strict legal framework for mFAS. In addition, a multi stakeholder model should be established that also includes small-scale farmers along with other actors. An unaware farmer cannot perform and may quit farming in extreme cases. Lastly, formal education in agriculture along with efficiently enforced mFAS could contribute to retaining farmers.

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