



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2018; 4(2): 198-202
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 03-03-2018
Accepted: 06-04-2018

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Use of Information Communication Technologies by Rural Women of Uttarakhand

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Abstract

ICTs play an important role in disseminating information, acquiring knowledge, skills and changing attitude of rural communities. In spite of this, most of the farming related technologies do not reach female farmers due to lack of awareness and use of ICTs. Female farmers need to be empowered to use information communication technologies to update themselves with latest technologies. Present study was conducted to assess the awareness and use of ICTs by rural women of Uttarakhand. Study shows that among various ICTs, television and mobile was available with maximum number of households. Regarding access to various ICTs, half of the respondents had complete access to television and 43.00 per cent had complete access to mobile. Rural women were using television mainly for entertainment. Only a few rural women were using it for education, agriculture and health purpose. Mobile was mainly used for call purpose. A few respondents also used it for entertainment and education purpose. Almost all rural women were aware of calling facility in mobile whereas 61.00 per cent respondents were aware of SMS facilities. Regarding use 82.00 per cent respondents were using mobile for calling, and only 24.00 per cent respondents were using SMS.

Keywords: ICT, knowledge, ownership, accessibility

Introduction

ICTs play an important role in disseminating information, gaining knowledge and changing attitude of rural communities. They support rural communities in acquiring new skills and availing employment opportunities. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are a principal driver of economic development and social change, worldwide (Kozma, 2005)^[1]. ICT provide inexpensive access to vast amount of information and networks, access to market information and the ability to directly access lucrative markets. Information and communication technology has led to significant changes in the way people live, work, interact, and learn to be active (Nechita and Timofti, 2011)^[3].

Despite technological advances in crop cultivation, crop varieties, fertilizers and irrigation techniques most technologies do not reach female farmers due to lack of awareness and inability to use ICTs. The percentage of women using the internet lags behind the percentage of men using the Internet in developing countries across all age groups (Antonnio and Taffle, 2014)^[6]. When training opportunities for rural agricultural producers arise, men farmers are considered as the client. Many women also opt out of training programs because of cultural, religious restrictions or family pressures. Women need access to and training on new and appropriate technologies. Female farmers will have to be empowered to use information communication technologies to update themselves with latest technologies. Present study was conducted to assess the awareness and use of ICTs by rural women of Uttarakhand.

Objectives

1. To study ownership of ICT by rural women.
2. To conduct situational analysis on awareness and use of ICT.

Methodology

To study the awareness and use of ICT by rural women, situational analysis on knowledge and use of ICT by rural women was conducted. Data was collected from both Tarai and Bhabhar zone; and Hill zone of Uttarakhand state.

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Udham Singh Nagar district of Tarai and Bhabhar zone and Nainital district of Hill zone was selected for data collection. Data was collected from ten villages and from each village 20 households were selected for the purpose of study. Thus data was collected from a total of 200 rural women of Uttarakhand state. PRA technique with semi- structured interview schedule was used for data collection.

Result and Discussion: Results of the study have been discussed under various subheadings.

Table 1: Mass media ownership and frequency of its use (N=200)

Mass media	Owned %	Use owned by others (%)	Not available %	Frequency of use			
				Always	Sometime	Rarely	Never
Radio	1.00	-	99.00	-	1	-	99
Television	90.00	5.00	5.00	58	36	1	5
News paper	10.00	5.00	85.00	5	5	5	85
Magazines	4.00	-	96.00	2	1	1	96
Journals	2.00	1.00	97.00	1	2	-	97

Table 1 reveals that maximum respondents (90.00 %) owned television. Out of the 10.00 per cent respondent that did not own television, 5.00 respondents used to watch television at neighbour's place. Among the respondents who possessed television, 58.00 per cent respondents used to watch programmes regularly and 36.00 per cent used to watch television sometimes. Regarding availability and use of newspaper, table 1 envisaged that only 10.00 per cent respondents owned newspaper and 5.00 per cent respondents used to read newspaper from other source (neighbours, nearby shops). Rest 85.00 per cent respondents neither own nor read newspaper. Table 1 further reveals that radio, magazine and journal were rarely owned by the rural households (1.00-4.00%).

It can be interpreted from the findings that television is the most popular mass media among rural masses. Further it was

Ownership of mass media and frequency of use: Mass media ownership was studied in terms of ownership of radio, television, newspaper, magazines and other journals by the rural women respondents and the frequency with which they were using it whether owned by respondents themselves or borrowed from others.

seen that since television was found an interesting, attractive mass media and there is variety of programmes, it has left behind radio which is cheaper and much easy to carry anywhere. It was further interpreted that even if it is not available, rural women viewed their desired programmes in neighbour's television.

Availability and accessibility of different ICTs: Information regarding availability of various Information Communication Technologies i.e. television, radio, mobile, computer, internet and e-mail and extent of women's access on these technologies was collected to know the extent of access of rural women in their own house on these ICTs. Access was studied in terms of complete access, partial access and no access.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to availability and accessibility to different ICTs hardware (N=200)

S. No.	ICTs hardware	Availability	Extent of Access		
			Complete	Partial	No access
1.	Television	91.00	52.00	39.00	9.00
2.	Radio	1.00	-	1.00	99.00
3.	Mobile	99.00	43.00	52.00	5.00
4.	Kiosk/common service centres	-	-	-	100.00
5.	Computer	3.00	1.00	2.00	97.00
6.	CD/DVD	10.00	3.00	5.00	92.00
7.	Internet	16.00	4.00	11.00	85.00

Table 2 shows that television and mobile was available with maximum number of households (91.00% and 99.00%, respectively). CD/DVD was available with only 10.00 percent households and internet was available only to 16.00 per cent households. Only 3.00 per cent households had computer. Regarding extent of access to various ICTs, findings shows that 52.00 per cent had complete access and 39.00 per cent had partial access to television. Tandon (2009)^[2] found that most of the respondents (76%) use a cell phone daily compared to 43 per cent who use landlines daily. Regarding access to mobile, table 2 reveals that 43.00 per cent had complete access and 52.00 per cent had partial access to mobile. Only few families had computer, CD/DVD or internet and women had partial access to these ICTs.

Ownership of mobile: Table 3 reveals that only 48.00 per cent respondents had their own mobile set. Those rural

women that did not have their own mobile sets were using the mobile phone of their family members whether husband, children or relatives.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to ownership of mobile

Mobile	Ownership of mobile	
	Yes	No
	48.00	52.00

Mehta, 2013 also reported that most of the respondents in Bihar owned mobile phone. Majority of the women got their mobile phone sets from their spouses or parents. Those who did not have mobile phones used mobiles belonging to their neighbours, relatives/friends and family members.

Reasons for owning mobile: Information regarding reasons of owning mobile was collected from those respondents only that owned mobile.

Table 4 shows that 72.92 per cent respondents expressed that they own the mobile phone as it is required for connecting with friends/relatives, 33.23 percent owned it as it was gifted to them by their husband,. Other reasons for owning mobile were that it is required for seeking information (14.48%),

12.50 per cent women owned because women of other families have it and 10.42 % own due to prestige issue/status symbol. Approximately 13.00 per cent respondents owned mobile as it is required for social networking. It can be interpreted from the data that rural women owned mobile mainly because it is required for connecting them with family members, relatives or friends.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their reasons for owning mobile (N=96)

S. No.	Statements	Respondent
1.	Prestige/status	10.42
2.	Other women have it	12.50
3.	Other family members have it	16.67
4.	It was gifted	33.23
5.	Required for connecting with relatives/friends	72.92
6.	Social networking	10.42
7.	Seeking information	14.58

Reasons for not owning the mobile: Information regarding reasons for not owning the mobile was collected from those

members that did not own mobile.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to their reasons for not owning mobile (N=104)

S. No.	Statements	Percentage
1.	Cannot afford	50.00
2.	Women are not allowed	9.62
3.	I do not need it	51.92
4.	I can use my family member's mobile	59.62
5.	One common phone in the family is enough for everyone	36.54

Almost sixty per cent respondents (59.62%) expressed the reason for not owning mobile as they can use their family member's mobile. Other reasons were that they do not need it (51.92%) or they cannot afford it (50.00%). Almost thirty seven per cent respondents opined that one common phone in the family is enough for everyone. Only 9.62 per cent respondents expressed the reasons that women in their family are not allowed to own the mobile phones.

It can be interpreted from the data that those rural women that did not own their own mobile set did not own it because they can use their family member's mobile for connecting with family, relatives or friend. Another main reason was that they could not afford it as reported by rural women.

Awareness & use of different ICT services: Information regarding awareness of different ICT tools among rural

women along with its use was collected to know the frequency of respondents that are aware of various apps and how many of them were using it.

Table 6 depicts that 94.00 per cent respondents were aware of calling facility in mobile and 61.00 per cent were aware of SMSing facilities. Findings further reveals that 82.00 per cent respondents were using mobile for calling, and 24.00 per cent were using it for SMSing also. Regarding various apps and internet sites, findings reveals that only 25.00 per cent respondents were aware of whatsapp, out of which only 18.00 per cent were using it. Twenty two per cent were aware of face book and only 11.00 per cent were using it. It was also observed that only 24.00 per cent respondents were aware of apps related to game/movies/songs and 15.00 per cent were using it whereas 20.00 per cent were aware of accessing different sites and only 12.00 per cent were accessing it.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to their awareness & use of different ICT tools & services (N=200)

ICT tools and services	Awareness	Use
Mobile with internet		
Calling facility	94.00	82.00
SMS ing	61.00	24.00
Whats app	25.00	18.00
Face book	22.00	11.00
Games/ movies/ songs	24.00	15.00
Accessing different internet sites	20.00	12.00
Youtube	5.00	3.00
Computer/laptop with internet		
Office documents/presentations etc.	8.00	5.00
Face book, social media	11.00	6.00
Accessing different internet sites	12.00	9.00
You tube, games	4.00	1.00

Table further shows that only 8.00 per cent were aware of office documents/presentation in computer/laptop and 3.00-5.00 per cent were using it. Almost 11.00-12.00 per cent were

aware of different apps that can be accessed in computer and 6.00-9.00 percent were using it.

On the basis of data it can be concluded that majority of the

respondents were aware of only making calls and sending SMS in mobile but they were using it mainly for calling. Regarding various apps in mobile, almost one fourth respondents (20.00-25.00%) were aware of whatsapp, face book, games/movies/songs but only 11.00-18.00 percent were using it for the above purpose. Thus it can be interpreted that although women respondents were aware of calling and SMSing facilities but mobile was mainly used for calling.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of use of different ICT tools (N=200)

ICT tools	Frequency of usage			
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Television	61	34	2	3
Radio	-	-	1	99
Mobile	40	32	7	7
Kiosk / common service centres	-	-	-	100
Computer	1	2	1	96
CD/DVD	4	3	1	92
Internet	3	10	8	79

Computer was owned by only 4.00 per cent respondents and out of this, 2.00 respondents used it sometimes and 1.00 percent rarely used it. CD/DVD was regularly used by 4.00 percent followed by 3.00 per cent as sometimes. Internet was regularly used by 3.00 per cent respondents whereas it was used sometimes by 10.00 percent and rarely by 8.00 percent. Radio was rarely (1.00%) used as it was not owned. Therefore it can be interpreted that television was most frequently used ICT tool among rural women followed by mobile. Nagamani and Veni, 2016 also opined that amongst various

kinds of ICTs the cell/ mobile phone and television have reached a significant place. These two technologies are providing knowledge, economic independence, social security, social networks and self confidence to rural women.

Purpose of using ICTs: Respondents were asked the purpose for which they were using ICTs, whether for education purpose or to gain knowledge regarding health issues, business, agriculture, social welfare, entertainment or any other purpose.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to their purpose for using ICTs (N=200)

ICT tools	Education	Health	Agriculture	Social welfare	Entertainment	Any other
Television	17.0	25.00	26.00	12.00	87.0	64.0
Radio	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mobile	9.00	9.0	3.00	7.00	14.0	76.0
Kiosk	-	-	-	-	-	-
Computer	1.00	1.00	-	1.00	3.00	-
CD/VDV	-	-	-	-	8.00	-
Internet	3.00	2.00	-	2.00	4.00	-

Table 8 reveals that television was used mainly for entertainment i.e. watching serial and bhajans (87.00%), 64.00 per cent were using television for other purposes like watching news, education (17.00%), Agriculture by 26.00% and health by 25.00%. Ramakrishna (2012) also found that majority of rural women were more interested in entertainment programme followed by popular serial/reality shows/films, religious programme, news, agriculture and sports programme.

Result further shows that mobile was mainly used for call purpose (76.00%). Sometimes it was also used for entertainment (14.00%), education and health (9.00%). Study conducted by Mehta, 2013 in Bihar also shows that almost every single respondent used the mobile phone for keeping in touch with friends and family members (social networking). Around one-fifth of respondents were found to be using mobile phones for economic purposes like securing information on agriculture, employment, trading and credit. Computer was used only by 3.00 per cent and that too for entertainment. Only 1.00 percent was using it for education, health and social welfare purposes. CD/DVD was used by 8.00 per cent for entertainment purpose only. Regarding use of internet, findings reveals 4.00 per cent used it for entertainment, 3.00 per cent for education, health and 2.00 per cent for social welfare and 1.00 per cent for business purpose.

Conclusion

To update rural women farmers with latest technologies related to home, farm and allied areas it is important to make them aware of various information communication technologies and also help them to use the ICTs. Study reveals that majority of the rural women have complete or partial access to various ICTs like television, mobile but they were using it mainly for entertainment purpose or to make calls. Only a few rural women were using these ICTs for education, health, agriculture or social welfare. Thus, there is need to educate and train rural women to utilize these ICTs for gaining knowledge, skills and update themselves with latest technical knowhow for achieving sustainable development.

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