CONSTRAINTS PERCEIVED BY DAIRY FARMERS IN ACCESSING ICT-ENABLED VILLAGE INFORMATION CENTRES*  

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to analyse the constraints perceived by dairy farmers in accessing one type of modern ICT interventions, namely village Information Centre. By following Ex-post-facto research design, the present study was conducted on three major ICT-Village Information Centres initiators in Tamil Nadu. Randomly two Village Information Centers from each initiator and 30 dairy farmers who are users from each centre were chosen. Thus, a total of 180 respondents constituted the sample for the study. It was found that general problem was considered as foremost constraint with highest mean score of 5.11 and was ranked first, followed by socio-personal (4.12), content problem (3.15), physical facilities (0.93) and socio-cultural problems (0.05). These problems could be overcome by providing battery back up during summer; in order to reduce connectivity problem broad band connection may be required and content should be updated regularly based on the need of people.

Key words : ICT, Village information centres, Dairy farmers, Tamil Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states of India in implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects and three sectors are being involved in this process. Major government, non-governmental and private initiators of ICT-Village Information Centres (VICs) in Tamil Nadu State are Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and n-Logue communication, respectively. With the revolution in the IT sector, ICT is being integrated with animal husbandry, agriculture and rural development. In spite of number of projects oriented towards the transfer of technologies through ICT, still the acceptability and utilization of ICT is very low in the rural areas. This created the need of investigating the constraints in utilization of ICT-VIC by the farmers. So far very limited studies have been attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives that too deal with broader aspects, not addressing specific issues like ICT in relation to transfer of technology for dairy development. Keeping in view these concerns, the study was undertaken to study the constraints perceived by dairy farmers in accessing ICT-Enabled Village Information Centres.

Following Ex-post-facto research design, the present study was conducted on three major ICT-Village Information Centres initiators in Tamil Nadu. The major government, non-government and private initiators are Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and n-Logue communication, respectively were purposively selected. Randomly two Village Information Centers from each initiator and 30 dairy farmers who are users from each centre were chosen. Thus, a total of 180 respondents constituted the sample for the study. Data were collected with the help of a pre-tested structured interview schedule.

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On the basis of available literature, survey of the localities and discussion with different groups of ICT experts, the possible constraints were prepared. The constraints were categorized under the major areas namely socio-personal, socio-cultural, content problem, physical facilities and general problem. The identified constraints were administered through a 4 point continuum as most serious constraint, constraint, less serious constraint and not a constraint with a score of 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively. The scores for each constraint were added and the mean constraints score was obtained and inference drawn.

i. **Socio-personal constraints**: The data given in Table 1 reveal that majority (58.00 per cent, 56.00 per cent and 57.33 per cent) of TANUVAS, MSSRF and n-Logue respondents, did not perceive socio-personal problem as a constraint. The remaining percentage of respondents perceived as most serious, serious and less serious constraint. This may be due to the fact that most of the respondents were literate and moreover, kiosk operators overcame their computer illiteracy.

ii. **Socio-cultural constraints**: It could be inferred from the Table 1 that, above 95.00 per cent of the respondents considered socio-cultural problem as not a constraint irrespective of the types of initiators. This is because, ICT-VIC is being established to empower the weaker section of the society and hence, this type of barrier won’t be hindering the respondents to access the VICs.

iii. **Content problem**: Majority (70.28 per cent, 65.83 per cent and 66.38 per cent) of TANUVAS, MSSRF and n-Logue communication respondents, considered the content as not a constraint, followed by less constraint (13.06 per cent, 18.06 per cent and 17.78 per cent) for TANUVAS, MSSRF and n-Logue communication respondents, respectively. This is because most of the content were provided in local language and value added information is provided by Infomediaries. The content pertaining to veterinary and animal husbandry were provided by TANUVAS to all VICs in Tamil Nadu and so respondents perceived the content as trustworthy in nature. These findings were in contrary to the findings of Benjamin (2000), Roman and Colle (2003), Sharma (2004) and Adhiguru et al. (2007). This may to due to the fact that they might have considered overall content provided through VICs but this study had considered exclusively the dairy farming content.

iv. **Physical facilities**: Over 68.00 per cent of respondents considered physical facilities provided in VICs as not a constraint irrespective of the type of initiatives. These findings were in contrary to finding of Cechinini and Scott (2003) and Narender and Nirmala (2003). This may be due to the fact that, selected VIC initiatives were well supported by the external funding agency like UNESCO, IDRC etc. and hence, VIC had good infrastructure facilities.

### Table 1. Constraints perceived by the dairy farmers in accessing Village Information Centres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>TANUVAS</th>
<th>MSSRF</th>
<th>n-Logue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-personal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>(10.83)</td>
<td>(13.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(3.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in parentheses indicates percentage.

MC = Most serious constraint, C = Constraint, LC = Less serious constraint, NC = Not a constraint.
v. General problem: It was clearly evident from the Table 1 that majority (40.84 percent) of TANUVAS respondent considered general problem as not a constraint. But around 77.00 per cent MSSRF and n-logue communication respondents perceived in different level of constraint. This may be due to the fact that in rural areas most of the time there was no power especially in summer days and so respondents perceived it serious constraints. This finding was in accordance with findings of Benjamin (2000) and Sharma (2004).

The pooled data (Table 2) revealed that among the constraints perceived by dairy farmers in accessing VICS, general problem was considered as foremost constraint with highest mean score of 5.11 and was ranked first. General problem includes power failure, connectivity problem, inadequacy of computer etc. This was followed by socio-personal constraint (4.12), content problem (3.15), physical facilities (0.93) and socio-cultural constraint (0.05) and these were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth, respectively.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the data on constraints perceived by the dairy farmers in accessing VICS indicates that, general problem i.e. power failure and connectivity problem was considered as foremost problem. This could be overcome by providing battery back up during summer season. In order to reduce connectivity problem, broadband connection may be required. Content should be updated regularly based on the need of people.

REFERENCES


