



Agriculture and social media: A study of WhatsApp use by livestock value chain actors in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

- Value chain actors in SSA struggle due to **a lack of access to timely information, information asymmetries, a lack of interaction, and missing market links** (Fabregas et al., 2019) – resulting from extension services inefficiencies
- The proliferation of smartphones and increasing internet connectivity (Mabaya, E., & Porciello, J. 2022)
- Raises prospects of leveraging digital innovations, such as social media platforms (especially WhatsApp), for information dissemination and networking
- What kind of challenges can WhatsApp address for pig, broiler, and dairy value chain actors?**

2. Purpose of the study

- To analyze the potential roles of WhatsApp in improving value chain efficiency

3. Materials and Methods

- Research design: exploratory qualitative study
- Sampling: Purposive and snowballing
- Semi-structured interviews: 196 key informant interviews
- 7 WhatsApp group chats
- Analysis; Content analysis, descriptive statistics



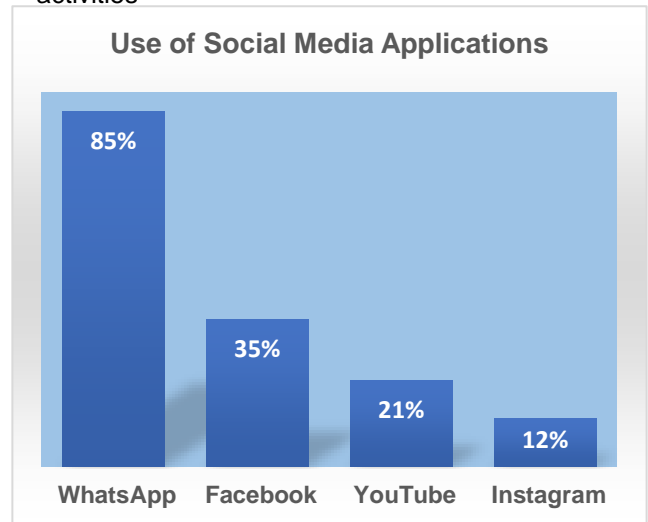
A pig producer interviewed at the farmers' meeting



A dairy producer interviewed on his farm

4. Findings

- 85% use WhatsApp
- 81% regard WhatsApp as important
- 68% belonged to a WhatsApp group for livestock production activities



Roles

- Reduce transaction costs of communication
- Solidarity, support, and Collective action
- Peer and expert knowledge sharing
- Enhance bargaining position
- Enhance social networking

Drawbacks

- Message overload
- Misinformation
- Echo chambers

“One can find real-time information or help with an immediate problem. WhatsApp also allows sharing of information via text messages, videos, images, and documents in larger groups fast, prompt, and cheaper.”

A broiler producer

“Having a lot of information from many diverse sources can be confusing. Often it becomes difficult to pinpoint what is more accurate especially when there is contradicting information and in the cases of false information [...]”

A dairy Farmer

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- WhatsApp holds immense potential** for knowledge and information exchange, networking, and communication
- Integrating WhatsApp into public extension services** can have transformative effects on agricultural productivity and rural development
- However, there is a need to **mitigate the risks** associated with misinformation, and echo chambers.

References

- Fabregas, R., Kremer, M., & Schilbach, F. (2019). Realizing the potential of digital development: The case of agricultural advice. *Science*, 366(6471). <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay3038>
- Mabaya, E., & Porciello, J. (2022). Can digital solutions transform agri-food systems in Africa? *Agrekon*, 61(1), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03031853.2022.2032223>