

FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF DIALOG GOVI MITHURU SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF PADDY FARMING SECTOR IN DRY ZONE OF SRI LANKA

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Enhancing the use of mobile phones and mobile agricultural services give the opportunity to gain more valuable information for farmers especially in developing countries. Though information is widely available, low performance of the current extension system creates an information accessibility gap. The purpose of mobile extension service is to address the above-mentioned issue. This study analyzed the factors affecting the use of Dialog *Govi Mithuru* service by the paddy farmers in the dry zone of Sri Lanka. The study used a sample of 180 farmers selected randomly from Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Ampara districts who use this mobile extension service. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, telephone interviews were carried out to collect data related to the use of Dialog *Govi Mithuru* service for their cultivation needs. A Binary Logistic Regression model was employed to obtain the magnitudes of the factors affecting for the farmers to become a frequent user of this service. The results revealed that the variables such as frequency of government agricultural instructor meetings hold, farmers' engagement in paddy cultivation (full-time vs. part-time), and the satisfaction gained from the service are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in determining the farmer being a frequent user. Over 90% of farmers rate the availability of information on new farming techniques as the key benefit gained through the service. However, approximately 18% of farmers perceive that the time of message receiving is inconvenient. Hence it suggests that the service need to be improved with convenient timing of message delivery. The study concludes that farmers perceive mobile agricultural services as a potential source to bridge the information accessibility gap in the country.

Keywords: Binary Logistic Regression, Dialog *Govi Mithuru* Service, Information accessibility gap, Mobile agricultural services.