

Good Practices 34: June 2020



YouTube – AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES



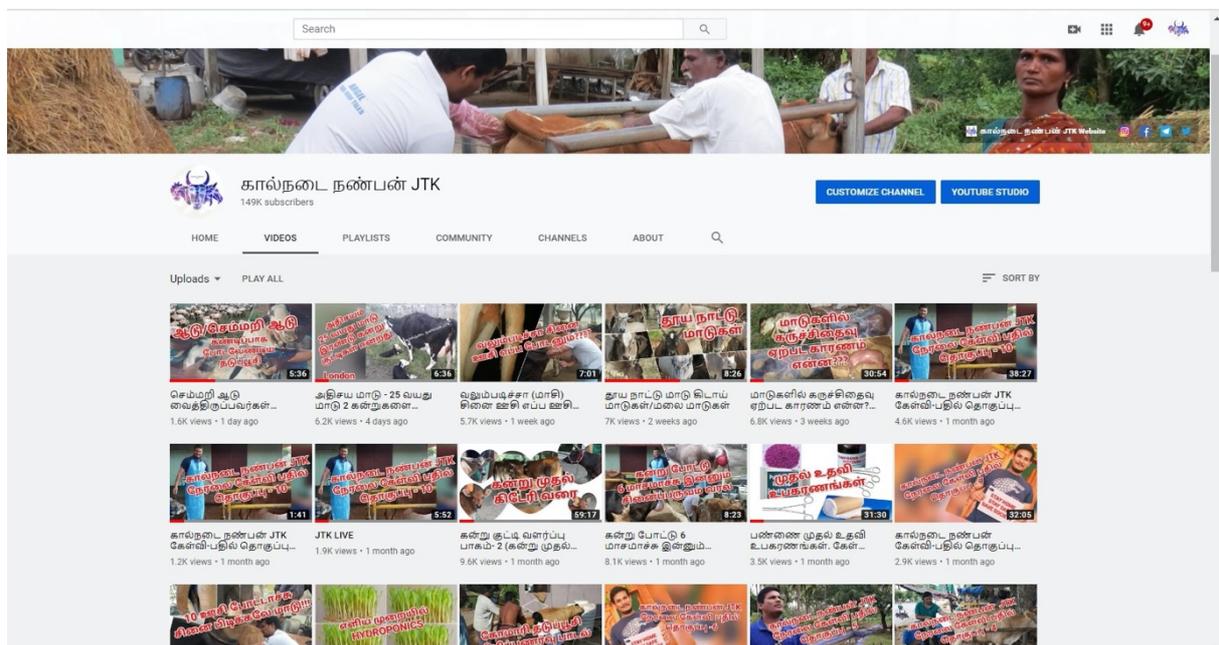
YouTube is a good platform to connect livestock owners through the virtual world. Videos enriched with valuable information, pictures, and short clippings capture greater attention from the audience. Here, J Tamizhkumaran and Saravanan Raj share their experience on how a YouTube channel can be an effective tool in the service of Extension and Advisory Services.

CONTEXT

Anything and everything one wants to know is available nowadays on YouTube. With mobile internet revolutionizing the use of social media and reducing the digital divide, YouTube has become everyone's search engine of choice, including livestock owners/entrepreneurs. Short videos keep the audience watching your content up to the very end and it could be an excellent tool for Extension and Advisory Services – to reach livestock farmers across the globe. The main purpose of this Good Practice Note is to share our knowledge on using YouTube to reach livestock farmers through Extension and Advisory Services.

INITIATION

In 2016, while practising as a private large animal doctor in Pondicherry, I (Dr J Tamizhkumaran), started a WhatsApp Group named கால்நடை நண்பன் JTK. (Livestock Friend J. TamizhKumaran [JTK]). At that time, the majority of my clients were asking questions relating to Livestock Rearing, for example, when to de-worm, bloat remedies, infertility problems, etc. Initially, short videos were prepared for the frequently asked questions in the WhatsApp group, with the idea of sharing them in future, when repeatedly asked for by group members. Then I had a question of where to save or store all these videos. That was the starting point for the YouTube channel கால்நடை நண்பன் JTK. [கால்நடை நண்பன் JTK- Livestock Friend J. TamizhKumaran-(JTK).



Home page of YouTube Channel₁

Most of the videos were prepared based on the felt need of the audience (Box 1). This felt need was assessed based on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Groups/YouTube/Meetings/ Field cases/ Disease outbreaks, etc. Most of the videos were prepared based on the need of the hour. Slowly the videos were shared by viewers and got a good response from the audience. The comments from the audience helped in uploading videos on various other topics.

As there were huge amounts of hoax content circulating via YouTube on Livestock Management, the plan was to upload authenticated information in a presentable way so as to prevent the spread of wrong information by other creators. Once we got good rapport with the viewers, we continued to upload videos on a regular basis. The videos were uploaded on a weekly basis purely based on need, ascertained according to what the audience needed the most. These were the repeated questions/comments on social media. The topics for new uploads were selected in this manner.

Box 1. Audience

The audience (147,352) includes livestock owners – varying from small farmers to large farmers – entrepreneurs who were willing to start a new venture, veterinary graduates, veterinary assistant surgeons, scientists, and the general public.

Majority (85%) of the viewers were male (125,250), and the remaining 22,102 (15%) were female. Majority of the viewers (87%) were between the ages of 18-44, of which 41.2% were in the age group of 25-34, which is a clear indicator that youngsters were keen on livestock farming.

Most of the viewers were from different regions but they had a common identity through language (Tamil). Most of them were from Tamil Nadu. The other states were Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The other countries were United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Srilanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Kuwait, USA and UK, etc.

There were several bogus channels which were spreading misconceptions through social media. Some of these had appalling content – for example, that broiler consumption is bad for health, A1 & A2 milk, and high yielding crossbred cows were a cross between cow and pig, etc. So, our YouTube channel helped in creating awareness on the misconceptions spreading in social media and establishing these as false information.

GOOD PRACTICES

The YouTube platform was used as a knowledge-sharing medium. All the uploaded videos were shared on the YouTube cloud and were available for the audience forever. We can upload videos, live stream videos which can be effectively used for interaction sessions, we can even premiere the videos based on the preference of the audience. It had good reach among the selected audience (livestock owners). We had a provision for categorizing the videos into different playlists based on the topic, since it would be widely used by everyone to search for specific information. It is a good platform where we can share our knowledge effectively among the public and we can also understand the needs and interests of the audience a lot. The audience comments on the videos proved how effective it was, and furthermore what information they required, how well it can be improved, and so on.

The videos were categorized into different playlists based on content similarity. Viewers searched only for the videos which offered solutions to their problems. Once they got that they did not look into other videos and playlists.

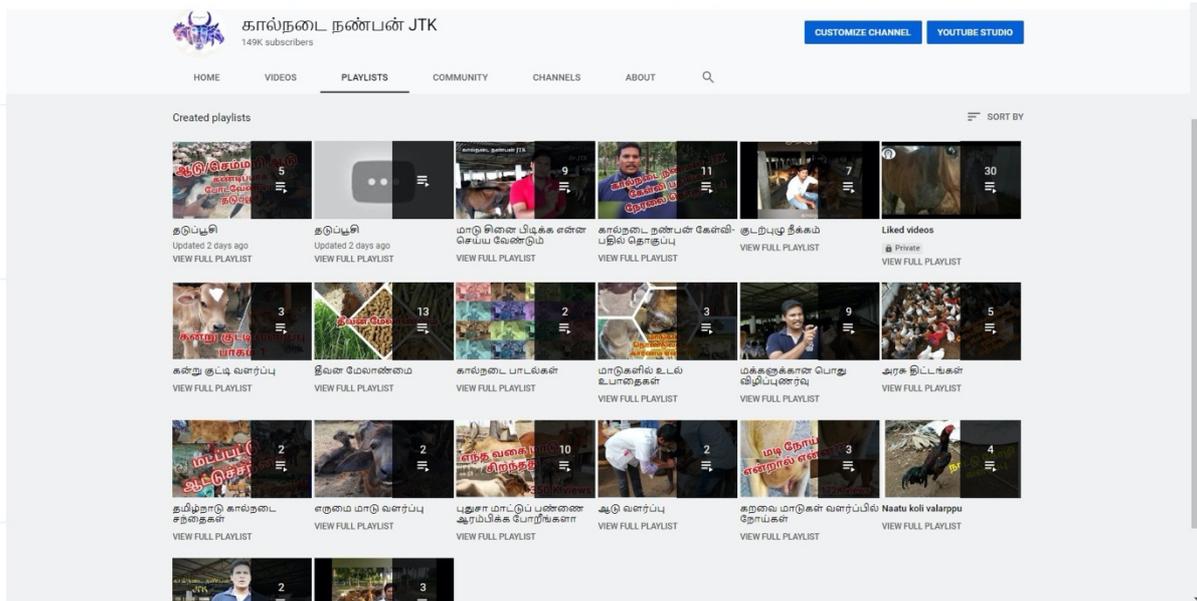
Most of the views came from the audience who were new to farming and who were working abroad and planning to start a dairy farm in future.

Box 2. Editing of videos

Videos were prepared using smart phones. No extra accessories were used to record videos. It was spontaneous, a narrative talk captured in a single take. After the videos are completed selected pictures were added to the video in the respective places in order to keep it lively. Sometimes small video clippings pertaining to the topic were also added to give better understanding to viewers.

The editing of the videos was done using two main software, namely Kinemaster and Power Director. Mostly the editing of the video included boosting the video volume, adding watermark logo/ channel name, inserting pictures/video clips, and revising the whole video thoroughly for final output. Editing took comparatively more time than recording the video.

YouTube Creator Studio is an effective tool to edit the content. It was only used to update end screens, cards, and thumbnails for the video. Adding subtitles was made easy, but lack of time restricted me from adding subtitles to all the uploaded videos.



The videos grouped into different playlist

Every comment received in the video was addressed on a daily basis. Replying to all the comments received on the site on a regular basis added credibility to our efforts, and this led us a few times to even make videos specifically based on the FAQs that came through comments [Box 3]. On average 20-30 comments were received every day, which were answered on a daily basis. A few of the members communicated through e-mail. The number of comments varied from video to video – ranging from 45 to 1028. Most of them would ask for the contact number and Telegram link. Most of the comments contained questions pertaining to the problems faced by the farmers, and thereafter came comments of appreciation. Every comment is acknowledged by clicking on the ‘like’ and ‘heart’ buttons.

Box 3: Frequently asked questions were on:

1. How to cure infertility in their cows;
2. How to cure mastitis;
3. How to control tick infestation;
4. How to control fly infestation;
5. What is the reason for blood in milk;
6. Why is my cow not taking food;
7. How to feed a pregnant cow;
8. Calf rearing;
9. Contact number.

YouTube advisory service started with the aim of sharing videos – initially in our WhatsApp group – but later when the channel became popular with the audience it began to be shared since they liked the content. The main objective was to convey the message in a way the audience could understand easily. At first it was really difficult as our channel was not subscribed to by many and got very few

views. The one video which changed the fate of the channel was the video on ‘Mastitis and how to control it’. The number of views increased for the channel and pulled in many viewers.

Later another video which attracted many viewers was on ‘which breed of cow to select if you want to start a new farm’. From this point onwards channel recognition increased among the audience. A dairy farmer, Mr Raj Kumar from Puducherry, used to call me every weekend to ascertain what video I was going to upload next. He also gave lots of inputs on how to craft the title of the video, and what are the important tags to be given in a video. The habit of documenting each and every case when I was a practitioner helped me in making effective videos. I didn’t use any feature made available by YouTube in the beginning. After reaching a milestone of 1 lakh subscribers and receiving a silver button Creator Award from YouTube I was greatly encouraged to upload more videos. We even planned to upload videos in a series which we couldn’t do due to lack of time. So we stuck to our earlier plan of uploading videos related to farmers’ queries. Recently the videos were updated with all the features available on YouTube (Box 4), such as community post, cards, end screens, and these have further increased viewership.

Box 4: Common features in YouTube

- Playlist - It is similar to the playlist on our music platform where you can group the videos based on their similarity.
- Community post - is a section in the channel where you can add short video clippings, pictures and polls to engage your audience with channel activities.
- Cards - These are interactive templates which can be used anywhere in the video if you want to give an additional link to the content which you are discussing in that video.
- End screen - An End Screen is a YouTube feature that appears in the last 5-20 seconds of a video. It is used to promote videos, playlists, external websites, and help subscribe to the channel.
- Analytics - It is an auto generated analytics of the channel which gives a clear picture of the channel and its contents. Using this resource, we can identify which video is liked the most, what is the duration of the video which gets most viewer attention, details of cards, end screens and Playlist.

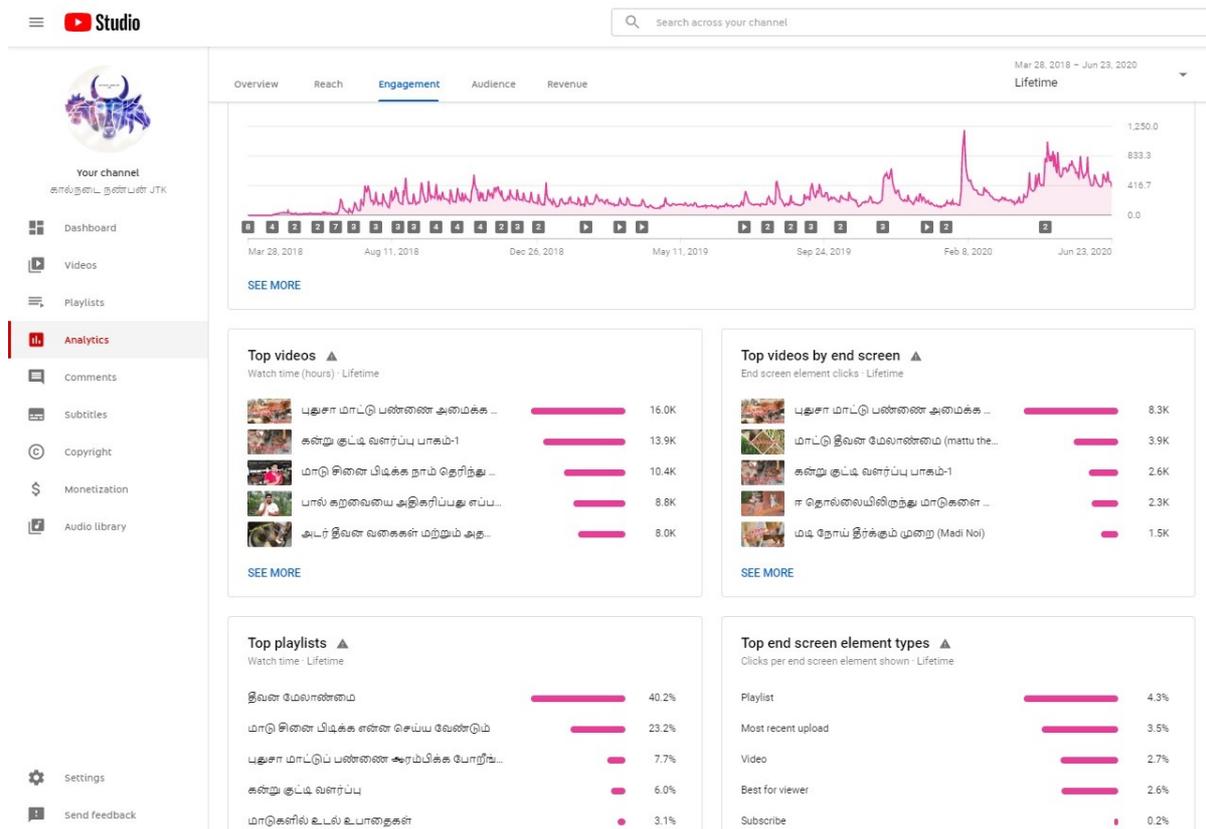
Video	Visibility	Monetization	Restrictions	Date	Views ↓	Comments	Likes (vs. dislikes)
புதுசா மாட்டு பண்ணை அமைக்க எந்த... கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Aug 10, 2018 Published	362,848	1,034	95.4% 10,829 likes
கன்று குட்டி வளர்ப்பு பாகம்-1 கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Feb 2, 2020 Published	237,757	299	93.7% 4,433 likes
மாடு சினை பிடிக்க தாம தெரிந்து கொ... கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Jul 6, 2018 Published	206,773	864	94.5% 4,602 likes
மட ரோய் தீரக்கும் முறை (Madi Noi) கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Apr 27, 2018 Published	190,368	418	95.3% 5,424 likes
மாட்டு தீவன மேலாண்மை (mattu theevan... கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Jun 22, 2018 Published	164,247	429	95.4% 3,164 likes
பால் சுறையை அதிகரிப்பது எப்படி??.. கால்நடை சார்த்த முதுவதலி மற்றும் பராமரிப்பு ஆலோசனைகளுக்கு கால்நடை...	Public	\$ On	None	Jan 4, 2019 Published	162,834	667	93.4% 3,738 likes
ஈ வெகல்வைசிவிதிக்ஷ (ஈவெகல்வைசிவிதிக்ஷ சா...)	Public	\$ On	None	Nov 17, 2018	162,163	140	90.0%

List of channel's Popular videos

A half-hour live programme was planned every month to address the problems of the viewers. Due to lack of time we couldn’t do it regularly. But it played a major role during troubled times, helped us to communicate better with the audience, and helped them with the required information during crises. In the chat programme the audience can take part and ask their questions via chat and answers are given during the programme. This was an interactive session so we get more feedback on what topics they expect to be addressed. Usually we get around 50-100 chats (questions) per session.

CHALLENGES

Initially the site didn't get much response on the videos uploaded. Then we did a small analysis on how to improve it for the viewers. The YouTube Creator Studio was of great help. It gave us clues on how channel views could be improved. The title, thumbnail and description made a huge impact in the viewership of any video. This particular activity required a survey on how well the audience searched the content. So, if the title, thumbnail and description is made based on the viewers' needs, the video got the desired recognition.



Glimpse of YouTube Creator studio showing the channel analytics

The general perception about farmers were that they mostly preferred to see videos which will benefit them financially –for example, videos such as ‘how to increase milk production’. They were not much interested in the content of the videos. Most of the videos which had good awareness content were not viewed by the farmers. But those with title and thumbnail of the video played an important role in determining the number of viewers for that particular video.

Although there were several videos uploaded on general problems and farmers' probable needs, the audience was more interested in the specific information they were searching for and not keen on looking at other videos on the site. One illustration of this is of a farmer who searched for content on mastitis, and once he located that he was not keen to look into other playlists of the channel unless there was another specific need.

Time was a constraint. Editing videos required more time as compared to documenting a video. Lack of time for the resource person limited the number of videos edited per week to one video. Responding to the comments on a daily basis was also very time consuming.

Many videos which the viewers required were already uploaded on the site but the viewers were not interested in searching for them, rather they wanted a link to those directly from the comment section.

Even though there were 1.47 lakhs subscriber in the channel, the average minimum views per video was only 4000, which indicated that all who had subscribed to the channel didn't regularly follow it. Randomly 4000 viewers were active and viewed the videos uploaded on a weekly basis. The views increased if the topic was of interest to the audience.

Identifying the needs of the viewers was also difficult as everyone had their own problems. As the viewers came from various parts of the world we could understand the different constraints they faced. But regional actions were difficult to address.

Adding subtitles to the uploaded videos was another challenge, which was time consuming. Livestock owners and veterinary graduates from other states wanted subtitles for all the videos to understand them better.

Though the audience was aware of how to search for content via YouTube, they have not understood the nuances of utilizing a channel. Creator Studio has helped creators in placing cards and end screens to promote other videos of the channel and to connect videos within the channel.

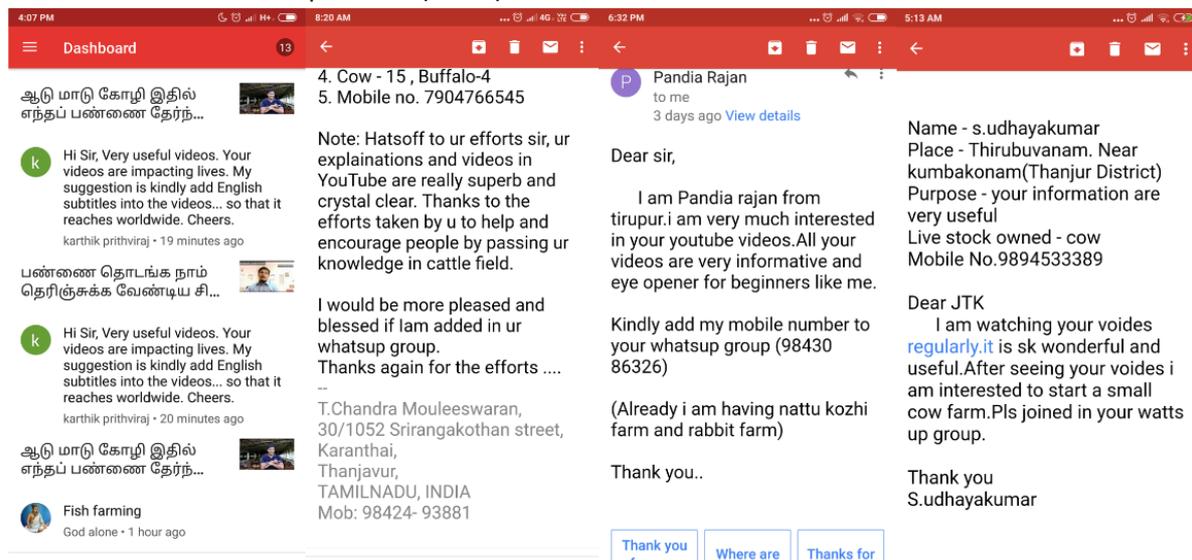
BENEFIT AND IMPACT

The biggest advantage of YouTube is that if your video is liked it will be shared by more viewers with their friends and peers – this will help to spread it to many people and the content will eventually get shared with a huge population.

It has benefitted all the viewers who were searching for answers to their specific queries from YouTube. Their feedback – through comments – gave clarity to the help they have received through YouTube. This was especially true for the entrepreneurs who wanted to venture into this business.

The impact was worldwide as many viewers from other countries were regularly seeing videos from the channel, one example is of a farmer living in London who owns a dairy farm in Srilanka and gets all his doubts cleared through our videos.

The impact: Many new entrepreneurs have realized that the knowledge shared via YouTube has motivated them to start a farm and some have already started their farms. Many members have commented, and even personally contacted me, to continue this method of educating them as they have learnt a lot from this platform (Box 5).



Screenshots of feedback from subscribers

Box 5: Some random feedback from the audience (Verbatim)

1. Became a fan in a day by seeing all your videos. Really thanks for sharing such wonderful information. Hats off to you.
2. Hats off to ur efforts sir, ur explanations and videos in YouTube are really superb and crystal clear. Thanks to the efforts taken by u to help an encourage people by passing ur knowledge in cattle field.
3. Your service is a real eye-opener for many farmers like me. Please continue and help us
4. Good video sir. Every time when I see your video its more interesting and more clearly explained sir. Being connected with you is a real gift sir. Please continue your service.
5. Seen all your videos. You're a different level. We are proud of you.
6. You should live 100 years for your selfless contribution without any expectations.
7. Dear Jtk sir, ur videos in Youtube fantastic sir.
8. I am watching your videos it is wonderful and useful. After seeing your videos, I am interested to start a small cow farm.
9. In this young age giving this many information to us. You are livestock friend JTK, you are our friend too.
10. I am very much interested in your videos. All the videos are informative and eye-opener for beginners like me.
11. I had seen your videos in YouTube and impressed by your advice.
12. If I had seen your videos two years back, I would have been a large farm owner by now.
13. You're a great person. I appreciate your social responsibility
14. Very useful videos. Your videos are impacting lives. My suggestion is kindly add English subtitles into the videos. So that it reaches worldwide.
15. No one will provide valuable information free of cost. Being a doctor your providing all this great information in your videos to all agriculture people. Thank you sir.

The overall impact of the channel can be gauged from the number who have subscribed to this channel. Within a period of two years and three months we amassed 147,352 subscribers to our channel, which clearly indicates that there is huge need for extension advisory services through YouTube.

The impact, particularly during a calamity, clearly shows that it is a big help to livestock owners. The network offers advice in crisis situations as well as on preventive measures during disaster situations, for example, during Gaja Cyclone in Nagappattinam, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Pudukottai, Karaikal, Trichy and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamilnadu, and also in the COVID-19 lockdown.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALING UP

Sustainability of the channel is purely based on viewership. This means that the channel must stay active always and upload videos on a regular basis.

Innovative way of connecting the viewers will generate the rapport required to sustain the channel. Mere lectures will only bore the audience, we need to update our knowledge from time to time and present the content in more effective ways to sustain this platform.

New ideas – shown in a presentable way – will enrich the contents uploaded onto the channel. On average we notch up 143-206 thousand views, 6.3-9.4 thousand hours of watch time, and 3.6-6.1 thousand subscribers per month. The views, watch time, and subscribers vary based on the videos uploaded periodically. The analysis is presented in Box 6.

So far the channel has addressed only the cattle owners. Uploading content on different livestock will improve the channel and satisfy the needs of the audience in the future.

I am planning to upload more innovative folk song videos, which will be of greater interest to them, to convey awareness messages.

Box 6: Analysis of the Channel

A total of 132 videos have been uploaded till date on a weekly basis, of which 107 were uploaded videos and 25 were live streamed videos. All these videos are categorized into 17 playlists.

Only 10 videos have more than 1 lakh views – ranging from 1.15 lakh to 3.6 lakh. Out of this seven videos had more than 1.5 lakh views. There were 16 videos each that had more than 25 thousand views and 14 videos which had more than 50 thousand views. A total of 36 videos had more than 10 thousand views.

Surprisingly only 34.7% of channel viewers had actually subscribed and the rest just watched without subscribing to the channel.

LESSONS LEARNED

It was not easy to address comments from the general public, especially for the awareness videos posted on the channel, as they held lots of queries. This platform not only helps us to create awareness and share our knowledge with the audience but also helps me in updating my professional knowledge.

The number of views per video was very few compared to the number of subscribers to the channel, which clearly indicated that people were interested only in those videos that answered their queries. They were not interested at looking into the channel for other videos unless there was a felt need. Mere subscription doesn't mean that every video will be watched.

The Extension and Advisory Services should take up this platform to transfer knowledge to a larger audience. Veterinarians, Institutions, NGOs and Extension agencies from all the states need to take up this initiative in their own language to give wider coverage. It has to be carried out in almost all languages. If this initiative is started after conducting a need-based analysis it will become effective. There are many channels which provide information on livestock rearing which were promoting business-based content and not technical-based content, e.g., promotion of a particular breed which has no marketing potential.

If Extension Advisory Services are carried out with commitment, dedication, and sincerity the approach can be spread worldwide.

To be an effective platform, it has to be operated by specialized extension personnel who can communicate messages effectively on a daily basis by replying to audience comments and queries.

Integration is necessary but it requires a lot of time, dedication and commitment from the producer's side to run the YouTube channel effectively. If a university needs to have a YouTube channel they need a good quality video camera, a technician to capture the videos, an expert who is good in communicating relevant information, good video editing software, a respectable collection of livestock-related pictures, and creativity (which will be available in most of the SVUs already). They need a full time professional to handle this channel on a daily basis. An extension expert can be appointed exclusively to undertake these activities.

Most of time the videos rich in content gets unnoticed due to a top-bottom approach. The contents should be purely based on the existing need of the audience. Understanding the audience and their needs play a major role in increasing channel viewership.

SVUs can use their extension outreach centres to identify the needs of the audience and then corresponding videos can be prepared with the help of experts in the veterinary colleges.

KVKs can have a greater impact by using YouTube for the Extension and Advisory Services. They can document all their Frontline demonstrations and On-Farm trials as short videos.

Do's

- Upload videos based on the need of the audience
- Use supporting images and videos
- Make simple and effective content that is easy to understand
- Regularly answer their comments and queries
- Validated and practical information gives more credibility
- Innovative delivery of content
- Good description/title/thumbnail about the video

Don'ts

- False information/hopes
- Too much of theoretical content
- Fancy titles which don't match the content



YouTube Channel URL:

[youtube.com/c/kalnadainanbanjtk](https://www.youtube.com/c/kalnadainanbanjtk)

Acknowledgement

Here, I would like to acknowledge several persons who made this attempt of mine a reality.

Dr SVN Rao – My inspiration, the real reason behind everything;

Dr S Ramkumar – A legend in communication skills;

Dr K Natchimuthu – My Advisor, mentor and well-wisher;

Dr DV Sivaji and Dr N Balaji – who motivated me to start a YouTube channel;

Thiru. Vijay Babu – The man behind the lens;

All my subscribers who have helped in sustaining this platform.

Above all, I am grateful to my father, mother, wife, and daughter who have generously supported me all these years.

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