

# Instant Messengers: The New Face of Dairy Industry

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In India, the dairy sector plays an important role in the country's socio-economic development, and constitutes an important segment of the rural economy. Dairy industry provides livelihood to millions of homes in villages, ensuring supply of quality milk and milk products to people in both urban and rural areas. India is the world's largest milk producers, accounting for around 17% of the global milk production and is known as 'oyster' of the global dairy industry. Besides it is one of the largest producers as well as consumers of dairy products. Due to their nutritional qualities, the consumption of dairy products has been growing exponentially in the country.

## Expansion of Dairy Industry

The Anand pattern of Dairy Co-Operative included the Dairy Co-operative societies at village level and a processing unit called "Union" at district level. Inspired by this pattern, similar milk unions were started in other districts too. To market the products of the milk unions, GCMMF was formed in 1973. GCMMF is the sole marketer for all the range of Amul products. Originally they were only milk powder and butter. Later it is expanded drastically to cover products such as: ice-creams, pizza, ghee, cheese, chocolates, shrikhand, paneer and so on. These made Amul the leading food brand in India. The new structure of GCMMF is shown in fig. 1.

## Dairy Industry and adoption of Instant messengers

With the progress of dairy industry in milk production and processing, it is also progressing towards modernization in terms of adopting new technologies of today's generation of

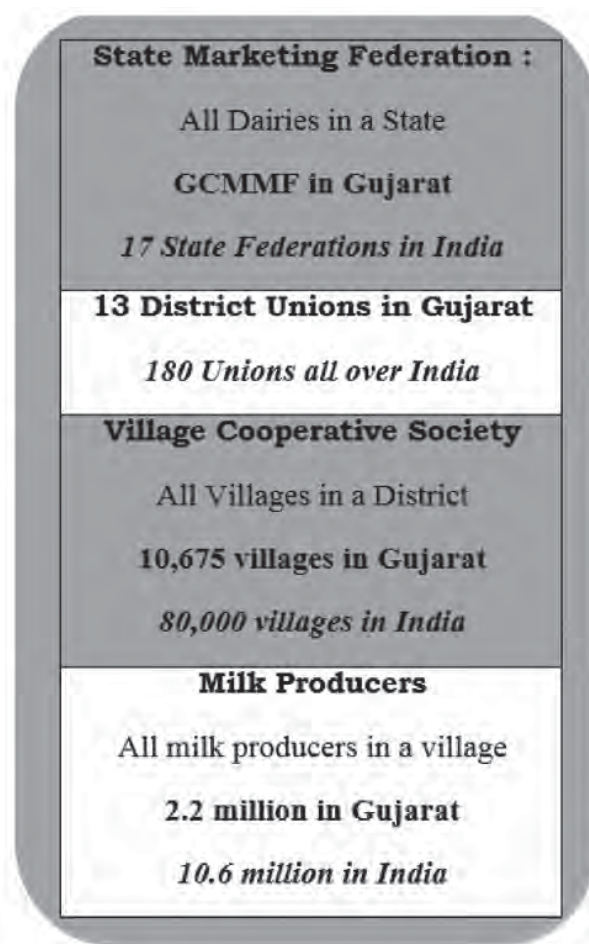


Fig.1 Structure of GCMMF

communicating 'social media' with each other leaving behind the old techniques of communication like SMS, Post, Phone calls and many other. It can be said that social medias have fundamentally changed the way in which we as a society, as an agriculture industry, and as a dairy community, communicate with each other and the best example is Instant messengers. It has significantly changed those to whom we are able to connect with; how



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quickly we correspond with each other; and the conversations that can now take place because of instant messengers interaction. Like many other ‘game-changers’ in the agricultural industry, such as the introduction of the first mass-produced gas-powered tractor in 1917 (Batchelor, 1994) and the innovation of milking machines in the early nineteenth century, the evolution of social media has also become a ‘game-changer’ in the way dairy farmers now connect to share information with each other and with consumers communicate with each other. Social media is no longer a fad; it has become a necessary vehicle to communicate and with 50% of the world’s population under the age of 30, it certainly has become the most prominent means for which the largest demographic wants to receive information (Qualman, 2012).

### Evolution of Social Media

Early social networking on the World Wide Web began in the form of generalized online communities such as Theglobe.com (1995), Geocities (1994) and Tripod.com (1995). Many of these sites initiated to bring people in contact with each other through chat rooms, and encouraged users to share personal information and ideas via personal web pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive web space. In the late 1990s, user profiles became a central feature of social networking sites, which allowed the users to compile lists of “friends” and search for other

users with similar interests. New social networking methods were developed by the end of the 1990s, and many sites began to develop more advanced features for users to find and manage friends. This newer generation of social networking sites began to flourish with the emergence of SixDegrees.com in 1997 followed by Makeoutclub in 2000, Hub Culture and Friendster in 2002 and soon became part of the Internet mainstream. Friendster was followed by MySpace and LinkedIn a year later, and eventually Bebo. Attesting to the rapid increase in social networking sites’ popularity, by 2005, it was reported that MySpace was getting more page views than Google. Facebook launched in 2004, became the largest social networking site in the world and since then it has drastically changed the social media landscape to how we experience the World Wide Web today (Facebook Newsroom, 2013). Additionally, 140-character micro-blogging site Twitter in 2006 (140 Characters, 2009) have helped people realize the power of social media for not only personal uses but for business purposes as well. Since the era of smart phones have come a new evolution of social media has took place in the form of Instant messengers like WhatsApp, Wechat, Line, Chaton, Gtalk and many more. The first instant messaging was used in 1990s in the form of multi user operating system like Compatible Time-Sharing System (CTSS) and Multiplexed Information and Computing Services (Multics) in the mid- 1960s (Multicans.org 2011). Since then the people



Fig. 2 Instant messages tools



have now started communicating through these messengers leaving behind SMS, MMS etc. Today the most used instant messenger in Dairy industries has now found to be WhatsApp. It has overtaken China's immensely popular WeChat, which has an impressive 300 million registered users but only about 195 million that are active. It is also ahead of Line (200 million users), Viber (200 million), and even Skype (280 million). The large user numbers across services are a clear signal of the overall popularity of OTT (over-the-top) messaging (SMS 2013).

### Era of IM

Instant messaging or Instant messenger or IM is a type of online chat with offers us real-time text transmission over the Internet opposite of SMS (short messaging service) which use network services of network provider. Class of IM which is also known as LAN messenger operates in a similar way over a Local area network. Short messages are typically transmitted bi-directionally between two parties, when each user chooses to complete a thought and select "Send" button the message reaches to the other user. Now a day, almost all IM provider/developer provides file transfer, voice messages, voice and video calling, picture message, multicasting/broadcast service, chat rooms and group chat facilities, status, peer to peer (direct point to point transmission), friends/buddies list and emotions (small images having different face emotions) etc. IM-chat happens in real-time. The main importance is that online chat and instant messaging differ from other technology such as email due to the perceived quasi-synchrony of the communications by the users. IM allows effective and efficient communication, allowing immediate receipt of acknowledgment or reply. Use of most new technology (IM) in most old technology (Agriculture / Dairy Industry) is very interesting subject and this review contains some points like Where, when, how to take benefits of new technology to improve communication? And second thing is why? Why we need IM in our sector? And simplest answer is to better output and improves the speed of News transmission with deeper information (by using file transfer and Image transfer facilities). Some of the social messaging tools are shown in figure 2.

### IM in Dairy Industry

'Social media has a good story-telling role to play in the dairy industry'. Instead of using email what draws us to use IM? And that is hidden in its name IM (instant messaging), that means IM facilitate us with fast delivery and also support the delivery reports faster than that of SMS. SMS provides delivery reports but they are costly for continuous and multi conversations and does not support file transfer. MMS services are also costlier than SMS, Voice Call and Video Calls. With the ease and cost-effectiveness of instant messaging platforms, the dairy industry must leverage the power of social media. The dairy industry has been very proactive in joining social media channels to help spread 'good news stories' with willing listeners, but for dairy producers who are not part of these conversations, they must now engage and involve themselves in this process. According to experts, Instant messengers can help market the dairy industry and develop a greater connection with consumers. Gerry McCusker of online reputation management business Engage ORM, said that internet blogs, websites and other social media like IM could be used to inform about dairy farming also he viewed IM as a conversational medium where "real chat" take place and dairy farmers could use this to provide the human story behind their industry and its issue. It can also be useful to avoid debate between farmers also those farmers which are extremely away from one other can also communicate. In November 2009 various dairy industry launched the industry's social networking site called Udderly Fantastic which had 700 members at the beginning and now it has 946.

Few people today have a connection to food and milk production, and they know little about how milk is produced. To resolve this, several programs have been launched to help dairy producers communicate with consumers and the media about modern dairy farming. IM also serve as a resource for farmers to actively respond to issues or misinformation in the media, or to join the national conversation on food-related topics. Through IM farmers serve as a 'voice of agriculture' for situations that call for those involved in modern agriculture to 'set the record



straight' through immediate and thorough response. IM offers messaging, materials, and best practices for engaging with consumers. These tools help creating a strong, positive online presence for the dairy industry to counter negative, uninformed attacks and maintain public confidence in dairy foods and the people who produce them. Research shows that communicating with the public about today's modern dairy farms helps create a positive image of producers and the industry, and dairy organizations and producers should get involved in IM to get a positive dairy message out to the consumers. A number of dairy farms are already online with different instant messengers.

Building a strong local voice is key for the dairy industry. To connect with other farmers, processors and industry members online through IM or set up our own social media presence. In this review we have discussed some of the Instant messengers used in dairy industry for communication between farmers, Village cooperatives, for taking the indent from markets, communication between dairy cooperatives they are WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, We chat, Line, BBM and many more. In this article we have discussed Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp use by the dairy industry in detail.

### Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read 'tweets', which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device app. Twitter Inc. is based in San Francisco and has offices in New York City, Boston, San Antonio and Detroit. Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and by July 2006, the site was launched. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with 500 million registered users in 2012, who posted 340 million tweets per day. The service also handled 1.6 billion search queries per day. Twitter is now one of the ten most-visited websites, and has been described as 'the SMS of the Internet'.

Twitter is a great way to communicate short messages (140 characters or less) with consumers and other farmers. It is easy, portable, and a great way to start a movement. It can be useful to follow and support other farmers by visiting their Twitter pages. Dairy farmers found twitter very useful. According to them it is a great way to find people's views on agricultural issues like badger culling, it is also a fantastic way to keep in touch and network, and it helps them to feel part of a wider community, rather than just any local group. Twitter is a valuable tool for farmers who want to stay informed – and more and more people are getting involved. Above 82% of farmers says that they want to work together more and share ideas (Farming Futures survey, 2010)

Twitter sounds more appealing versus someone who likes to write and would find a blogging platform like Word press or Blogger more desirable. Once the appropriate network has been chosen, choosing the content to share is just as equally if not more important. Dairy producers who are interested in connecting with consumers need to remember to find common ground with consumers - find what makes consumers tick and relate it to something that farmers share in common. Always keep in mind that while farmers may have positive experiences with most consumers on social media, there are always going to be the extremists whose minds you will never be able to change, connect and try and educate the rational majority (The Center for Food Integrity, 2009). Important messaging around farm history and connecting the past and showing how many generations have existed on the family farm will go a long way when relating to consumers. Dairy industry can use this site for marketing their product or for just giving the details of the product they produce. Market survey of the product liked the most can be done i.e. we just have to write the status for product comparison and tell the consumer groups for tweeting for the dairy product they like the most. Thus, Twitter can be a very useful site for the dairy industries to understand their consumer demand.

### Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook.



It was founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University students Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. Farmers can share pictures, post videos about their farm, and interact with their community through Facebook. They can also follow and support other local farmers by checking out and 'liking' their pages.

There is a big demand for the technology. 'There are more young farmers now and they're all on Facebook and using smartphones'. The future for farming is quite positive, the world has to eat and technology like this will be a major part of farming. Facebook can be used by dairy farmers to plan strategy. It can bring something invaluable to the community like communication and co-ordination. If a consumer is cheated and if he keeps his status on Facebook for not buying the product from any particular brand than the prestige of that brand can be hampered as the Facebook status can spread like fire. From sharing critical information in real time to eliminating middlemen to opening up marketing opportunities for companies looking to tap rural consumers, Facebook is becoming a powerful tool of communication across India's 600,000 villages. Technology experts say that the community has always been central to rural India and therefore its acceptance of social media tools is not surprising.

### WhatsApp

Facebook, Twitter and their likes have showed us what social networking means to us. But it is the time to redefine the benchmark for social media, especially with the whole paradigm shift to mobile. And WhatsApp, with its part messaging, part social networking angle, may just fit the bill. Technology/service has made it to mainstream media when a sabziwalla (a roadside vendor that delivers vegetable to our house with a "cash on delivery" option. They also use WhatsApp to publicize daily rates and delivery orders. Also some of the restaurants have also started taking order on WhatsApp. Time have come that people will now totally stop using SMS, Voice calls with mobiles and start using WhatsApp. This app is used all around the world and it offers applications

like for receiving and placing order, for chatting, for receiving voice and video messages and many more. Looking to all this applications dairy industry have also showed their interest for using this most exciting feature

WhatsApp was all started with the excitement of 'free mobile messaging' in in 2009 by American Brian Acton and Ukrainian Jan Koum (also the CEO), both former employees of Yahoo!, and is based in Santa Clara, California. It is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smartphones. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video, and audio media messages. The client software is available for Google Android, BlackBerry OS, BlackBerry 10, Apple iOS, Nokia Series 40 and Symbian S60, and MS Windows Phone. Over 27 Billion messages are sent by over 300 million users everyday on WhatsApp! That's more than any other social networking site by order of several magnitudes. Peoples use WhatsApp widely for informal, personal conversations that include sharing jokes and public or personal multimedia, to discussing controversial topics. With WhatsApp, we seem to take more liberty to communicate without reservation since we are in the confines of a private group or interacting with a trusted contact; making us worry less about community policing controls or repercussions to your public brand. Small Indian businesses use WhatsApp to communicate with their customers. But these interactions are more targeted and transaction-based, as opposed to those on Facebook/Twitter. Even some bigger corporations and services are using WhatsApp as their customer support, company helplines and to get customer feedback. The Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC) recently launched an online complaint redressal system and a Volvo helpline service through WhatsApp.

In dairy industry WhatsApp is mostly used by dairy farmers. WhatsApp gives producers the ability to interact with one another and engage with consumers by showcasing their stories, products and news with the click of a button on our smart phones. Trends in technology are not only bridging the gap in communication barriers, but also connecting generations, cultures, businesses



and consumers. This app has also entered a brand new world for customer and producer interaction. Nowadays for running any business we need to first survey the consumer demands from the producers and this is only possible when they will interact with each other also companies have to build a public relation and build personal connection between groups, individuals both inside and outside the company. For this various means can be used like websites, phone calls etc but the best is using WhatsApp which is cheap and feasible. WhatsApp was started with niche dairies but its marketing communications shift is spreading to farms which were considered more traditional. This app has become a new way of communication for farmers. Now, they just give their order by this app as it is free of cost and requires no understanding for complicated softwares and apps. Consumers keep their orders using WhatsApp in dairy, the daily stock forwarded to manager via SMS everyday is costly so simply by WhatsApp they can send their stock data to each other. Also if some invoices and bills are forgotten at the dairy and urgent order is to be delivered than we can just WhatsApp the address and also click the photograph and within second the photograph will reach to the driver. WhatsApp can be used by peoples having smart phones whether it is in India or abroad so if marketing of a new dairy product for launching it in Indian and International market we can just send the image and of the new products and its benefits through WhatsApp. Another exciting feature of WhatsApp is group messages i.e. simply a group can be made and if the dairy personnel want to convey a common news among certain village cooperatives than this app is the best to convey group message. Thus, it can be said that soon SMS, Phone calls will completely vanish and the new face of communication will be WhatsApp.

### Conclusion

When we are discussing about applications of IM in dairy sector than this topic ends with one answer and that is to communicate, for better, deeper and clearer communication with lightning speed with cheaper rate. Dairy farmers across the world have many tremendous stories and messages to share with the industries. We must understand that as

an industry the consumer drives the marketplace if they demand the product, then industry will continue to supply them. Dairy farmers are truly the beholders of their own destiny and will determine how viable the dairy industry will be in the future. A simple tweet, Facebook post, WhatsApp chat can single-heartedly change a person's perception of a dairy farm, whether good or bad.

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