

ACCESS TO INFORMATION THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN FISHING COMMUNITIES OF LAKE VICTORIA, UGANDA

ALICE ENDRA E.

ABSTRACT

Access to accurate and relevant information is critical for sustainable fisheries management and the improvement of livelihoods in small-scale fishing communities. This study examined how fishing communities around Lake Victoria, Uganda, access information through digital technologies and the challenges they face in doing so. Adopting an interpretivist worldview, the study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. The study population comprised fishing communities in selected districts and organisations affiliated with the Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda (AFALU). A purposive sampling strategy was used, and data collection continued until saturation was reached, resulting in a total of 35 participants.

Findings reveal that fishing communities have diverse information needs, including weather updates, market data, financial support, sustainable fishing practices, fish quality, legal regulations, health and safety, security, and effective communication. Despite the availability of digital technologies, communities face significant barriers, such as high costs, inconsistent internet connectivity, language barrier, and resistance to technological adoption, which limits their ability to access and utilize information effectively.

The study concludes that digital technologies have the potential to meet the varied information needs of fishing communities. The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and partner organisations provide practical digital literacy training in local languages, implement sensitization programs to promote the adoption of smartphones and digital tools, and reduce taxes on digital devices to improve affordability. Additionally, the study proposes the establishment of information kiosks and proposed two conceptual models: a Digital Literacy Model and a Framework for Information Access and Dissemination for fishing communities in Uganda.

Keywords: Digital Technologies, Information Access, Small-Scale Fisheries, Lake Victoria, Digital Literacy, Sustainable Livelihoods, Uganda