UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.16 (2);
https://unijerps.org
2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355.
July-December, 2023
Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363

UTILIZATION OF MASS MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION AMONG FARMERS

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ABSTRACT

The Study aims at examining the adoption of mass media as means of sourcing agricultural information among farmers. The study reviewed various literatures on agriculture, agricultural information and mass media. The study viewed agricultural information as a long term strategy that would address food insecurity, poverty and unemployment. It was identifies that agricultural information is transmitted through adequate mass media. Mass media refers to a diverse array of media technology that reached a large audience via mass communication. However, the nature and extent of the use of mass media in the mobilization of people for agricultural determine the degree of success of agriculture. The major mass media sources of farmers' information include the broadcast, film, internet, podcast, video games, audio recording and reproduction, magazines, newspapers. Inadequate finance, irregular power supply, low literacy level among others pose as constraints to the effective utilization of mass media by farmers. The study recommends among others that more awareness to the farmers on the use of mass media in sourcing for agricultural information, the power sector should endeavour the regular power supply to enhance access to agricultural information through the electronic mass media, that agricultural information should be based on current agricultural realities.

Introduction

Agriculture is associated with the production of basic food crops and domestic animals. Hallison, (1993) noted that agriculture and farming are synonymous as long as farming was not commercialized but as the process of economic development accelerated, many more other occupation allied to farming came to be part of agriculture.Agriculture may be defined as the production, processing, marketing and distribution of crops and livestock products (Huffmann, 2006). Agriculture is defined as the art or science of production of crops and livestock on farm. Nevertheless, either some or portion of a population must be involved in agriculture in other to ensure food supply for the population (Arcand, 2000). Simons, (2002) stated that despite the immeasurable benefits of agriculture to any society its development is retarded by certain factors of which inadequate agricultural education which is packed as agricultural information is one of them. Agriculture is viewed as a vital means

through which food insecurity, poverty and unemployment can be addressed and one of the long term strategies conceived so far for its development is to improve on the availability and access to qualitative and quantitative agricultural education on which is transmitted to the form of agricultural information. Obiora (2016), noted that in other to achieve the goals of sustainable agricultural productivity in Nigeria, it is imperative to ensure adequate provision of agricultural information.

Agricultural Information

Agricultural information according to Tadesse, (2008) is defined as the various sets of information and messages that are relevant to agricultural production activities of farmers, such as crop production and protection, animal production and management and natural resources protection and conservation Agricultural information therefore, refers to agricultural related data which are transformed into meaningful and useful contexts or forms for effective decision making in agriculture or farming related activities. Emmanuel, Yussffu, Sheriff and Shehu, (2016), observed that agricultural information services contribute significantly to agricultural production.

Through agricultural information, farmers can adopt new technologies or farming system, know how and when to plant and harvest which crop to produce and which animal to rear and where to sell. It is also through agricultural information that farmers can know where and how to acquire loans and other farming inputs, as well as how to control pests and diseases. Such information will consequently increase agricultural production and improve the standard of living of farmers. Ekoja, (2000) defined agricultural information as published and unpublished knowledge on all aspects of agricultural which are inter-disciplinary, in nature and have universal application.

Aina, (1990) stated that agricultural information is inter-disciplinary, and therefore classified them under these sets;

- Technical/scientific agricultural information which arises from research and development work carried out in various agricultural research institutions including universities
- Commercial Agricultural information: Which refers to the set of agricultural information that gives enlightenment to farmers on the marketing of agricultural produce in other to maximize profits.
- Social- Cultural agricultural information which encompasses traditional information on agricultural practices, local cultures, background information on farming communities, labour availability etc. This type of information will be useful to agricultural policy makers and programme planners.
- Legal agricultural information which deals with all legislations that affect agriculture such as land use and tenure, the production distribution and sales of agricultural products. Aspect information and communication are essential ingredients needed for effective transition of or transfer of new knowledge/technologies that are

designed to boost agricultural production and for farmers to benefit from them they must first have qualitative access to them and learn how to effectively utilize them in their farming operations and practice (Obiora, 2018). However, the most important and effective approach to transmitted agricultural information to the great population for farmers irrespective of their location and time is through the mass means or mass media.

Meaning of Mass Media

Mass-media refers to a diverse array of media technology that reach a large audience via mass communication. It is a medium which can be used to large group, often simultaneously. (Nerone, 2006). Encyclopedia.com (2020) defined mass-media as tools for the transfer of information concepts and ideas to both general and specific audience. It is also viewed as the means of communication that reach large numbers of people in a short time. Kris, (2018) refers to mass media as the technologies used as channels for a small group of people to communication with a larger number of people. They are the transport forms of mass communication, which can be defined as the dissemination of messages widely, rapidly and continuously to large and diverse audience in an attempts to influence them in some way. Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. Mass-media plays significant roles in agricultural development have a major influence on the public opinion on certain topics.

The Influence of Mass-Media on Agricultural Development:

The nature and extent of the use of mass media in the mobilization of people for agriculture determines the degree of success of agriculture. The agricultural program planners in developing countries realize that the development of agricultural technology could be hastened with the effective use of Mass media. Radio and televisions have been acclaimed to be the most effect media for diffusing the scientific knowledge to the masses (Shelly and Coster, 2000). Mass media helps to enlighten farmers on the use of various technologies to boost agricultural productivity. With the mainstream of the population of Nigeria engaged in agricultural actively, television could as a suitable medium of dissemination farm information and latest technical know- how. Farmers easily understand the operations, technology and instruction through television.

Arokoyo, (2003) proved that Video, TV and radio are the major sources of information to farmers. Information sources for farmers as TV, radio publication s, practical education newspapers agricultural exhibitions an extension worker (Ekoja, 2003).Newspapers and farm magazines play vital role in the communication of agricultural information among the literate farmers. The increasing rate of or literacy in Nigeria offers new promises and prospects for utilizing print medium for agricultural information. The print media widens the scope of communication, cheap to afford and can be read at the farmers convince. It is permanent

medium in the message are imprinted permanently with high storage value which makes them suitable for reference and research (Perushothan, Kavaskar and Reddy, 2003). Radio plays a vital role in disseminating agricultural information (Muhammad, 2006). But radio is more powerful instrument for liberation of fast information due to its vast coverage in local areas. Rasak, (2012) disclosed that radio agriculture broadcasting is effective for farmers and must be undertaken on long duration for agricultural extension. Knan, (2010) revealed that the adoption of available technologies by farmers according to the recommendations, can enhance agricultural production.

Mass Media Sources for Farmers Information

Effective Communication of innovations on agriculture to farmers remains a promising strategy for increasing success in agricultural productivity endeavour. Moreover, for the farmers to adopt innovations and continue to put them into use, the new ideas must reach their farms and homes through effective communication medium (Undiandeye and Vosanka, 2008). Some of the mass media sources of farmer's information among others include:

- **Broadcast:** The sequencing of content in a broadcast is called a schedule. Radio and television programmes are distributed over frequency bands which are highly regulated. Such regulations includes determination of the width of the bands, range, licensing, types of receivers and transmitters, relevance and acceptability of the broadcasting content. Meanwhile, a cable television programmes are often broadcasting simultaneously with radio and television programme, but have a more limited audience. By coding signals and requiring a cable converter box at individual recipient's locations, cable also enables subscription-based channels and pay-per0view services. A broadcasting organization may broadcast several programmes simultaneously, several channels (frequencies). Agricultural information can be meant to reach target farmers through these means.
- **Film-** This encompasses motion pictures as individual projects, as well as the field in general. Films are produced by recording people and objects with cameras, or crating them using animation techniques or special effects. Films comprise a series of individual frames, but when these images are shown in rapid succession, an illusion of motion is created. Film is considered by many to be an important art form. Films entertain, educate, enlighten, and inspire audiences. Any film can become a worldwide attraction, especially with the addition of dubbing or subtitles that translate the film message films are also artifacts created films by specific cultures, which reflect those cultures, and in turn affect them.
- **Internet:-** The internet is a more interactive medium of mass media, and can be briefly described as a network of networks; specifically, it is the worldwide, publicity accessible

network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard internet protocol (IP). The internet is quickly becoming the center of mass media. Everything is becoming accessible via internet. Rather than picking up a newspaper, or watching the television or radio programme at a particular time, people can log on the internet to get the news they want, when they want it.

- **Podcast:-** A podcast is a series of digital-media iles which are distributed over the internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers. The term podcast, like broadcast, can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated. The latter is also called podcasting. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster.
- **Video Games:-** A video game is a computer-controlled games in which a video display, such as monitor or television, is the primary feedback device.
- **Audio recording and reproduction:-** This is the electrical or mechanical re-creation or amplification of sound, often as music and loudspeakers, Compact cassettes, and digital audio players are typical example. An album is a collection of related audio-recording, released together to the public, usually commercially.
- **Magazines:-** A magazine is a periodical publication containing a variety of articles, generally finamed by advertising or purchased by readers. Magazines are typically published weekly, biweekly. Monthly bimonthly or quarterly, with a date on the cover that is in advance of the date it is actually published. They are often printed in colour on coated paper, and are bound with a soft cover.
- **Newspaper:-** A newspaper is a publication containing news and information and advertising, usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest most often published daily or weekly. The most important function of newspapers is to inform the public of significant events- (Pavik and Mcintosh 2017).
- **Outdoor media**-Outdoor media is a form of mass media which comprises bull boards, signs, placards placed outside and inside commercial building/objects like shops/buses, flying billboards,. Many commercial advertisers use this mass media when advertising in public facilities such as sport stadiums.

Constraints to Effective Utilization of Mass Media by Farmers.

The utilization of mass media by farmers is faced, with the following constraints.

- Financial Constraints due to the fact that majority of farmers are peasants and poor and may not be able to afford the purchase of mass media facilities of gadgets in order to acquire the needed information.
- Irregular power supply:- The inadequate power supply in the

country hinder the production capacity of newspaper houses and as well hinder the access of farmers to the information through the electronic mass media gadgets or facilities.

- Inadequate agricultural information are provided by mass media operators as the information supplied are not always relevant to the current needs of the farmers and most information are communicated in vague languages.
- Another Crucial problem of the Nigeria media is its Urban, elite-centered bias, and it is almost cynical neglect of the rural areas (Kadiri, 2009).
- Most of the agricultural information provided by the media houses do not reflect the needs of the Nigerian farmers .Farming environment
- The low literacy level of Nigerian farmers makes it difficult for them to appreciates and access mass media information except those from friend and relatives or other local sources.
- The broadcast timing for agricultural information by electronic mass media hoses is inadequate to the farmer conveniences and thereby hindering the target audience access to it.
- Inadequate lack of resource at the disposal of the media practitioners inhibits their productivity on the reportage of technology and development news.
- Media programme interest of the people is selective as Campbell, (2004) noted that audiences around seem disinclined to be interested in serious news media, tending to prefer news with at least an element of entertainment in it, where choices are offered between serious news, audiences often seem to prefer the entertainment based output.

Recommendations

In order to enhance or improve on the utilization of mass media for agricultural information by farmers, the following should be put in place;

- There is need for more creation of awareness by agricultural extension agencies concerning the needs for the farmers to be accessing agricultural information through the mass media means.
- There is need for constant power supply, this will help in easy usage of the mass media and also enable s media houses in proper delivery and effective dissemination of information.
- There is needed for extension delivery system particularly the communication and input delivery components to be strengthened in terms of increase in number of frontline extension personnel, capacity building and proper supervision. This will enable the extension and related organizations to be in continues contact with the farmers and together they can fashion out appropriate communication patterns, upgrade knowledge, attitudes and practices.
- Government should assist farmer in the area of adult literacy education and basic skill acquisition so that farmers can effectively make use of

the different mass media for agricultural information.

- Agricultural information by the mass media should be based on the current needs of the farmers so as to get their interest in the news. Also the message content should be clear and simple.
- The broadcast should be done considering the time conveniences of the farmers.
- The mass media information should be broadcast repeatedly as the frequency of broadcast of news content reflects its salience and importance.

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