



Perception of farming households on agricultural information dissemination by mass media channels in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Knowledge of farmers' perception towards agricultural information being disseminated by the media is necessary if agricultural information will be harnessed maximally by farmers. This study was conducted to assess the perception of farming households towards the effectiveness of agricultural information dissemination by mass media channels in Southwest, Nigeria. A multistage random sampling procedure was employed to select 180 farming households. Data were collected using a well-structured interview schedule. Frequency counts, percentages and mean were adopted to analyse data collected. The result from the study revealed that 68.9% of the respondents were between the ages of 41 years and 60 years, 62.2% of the farmers were male while 37.8% were female. Respondents who acquired primary school education were 51.7%. A majority of the respondents (80%) have household size between 5 and 10. Furthermore, the study revealed that Radio was the most preferred channel of agricultural information retrieval (86.7%), the next preferred was Television (10.0%), while the least was Newspaper (3.3%). Nine (9) out of 12 (twelve) perception variables were relevant to the effectiveness of agricultural information dissemination. The study recommends that farmers should be involved in the creation and dissemination process of effective agricultural information.

Keywords: Perception, farming households, radio, agriculture, information dissemination, mass media.

Introduction

Significant growth will be absent if the agricultural sector does not harness all available means of disseminating information¹. For enhanced agricultural production, it is essential that agricultural information reaching farmers is timely and relevant. Production risks and uncertainty will be greatly reduced if information is transferred to small scale farmers throughout the production stages². According to them, timely information conveyed in a familiar language to local farmers have a positive effect on agricultural production and food security. Timely agricultural information has the ability to foster rapid dissemination of innovation from research to farmers³. Ayisi and Kozári⁴ note that agricultural information has the ability to keep farmers abreast of close markets, price changes in agricultural produce and better market pricing.

Agricultural information dissemination needs involvement of all stakeholders, for its effectiveness to be seen and felt. With the extension agents handling their own part of the dissemination process, farmers should not be left behind. Farmers should be given a voice to express their views and problems, that way far-reaching solution will easily be provided. Munyua⁵ opines that rural farmers be given freedom of expression and permission to be decision makers. Giving farmers a voice could also include giving them the chance to create programmes that will be beneficial to them.

According to Uganda⁶ an appropriate channel of information dissemination is vital for farmers to access timely information. Thus, several channels of communication such as extension agents, individuals, farmer-to-farmer contact, print media and electronic media have been widely used to disseminate agro-information to farmers.

The major aim of the study was to assess the perception of farming households towards the effectiveness of agricultural information dissemination by mass media channels in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives were to: i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of farmers in Southwest Nigeria, ii. identify the channels of information retrieval mostly used by farmers, iii. determine the attitudinal perception of farmers towards agricultural information dissemination through mass media channels, and iv. provide recommendations relevant to the findings of the study.

Methodology

Study Area: The study was carried out in Southwest Nigeria. Southwest Nigeria falls between Latitude 6° North and 4° to the South and Longitudes 4° West and 6° East. The southwest region is majorly a Yoruba-speaking area, although there are different dialects even within the same State. The temperature ranges from 210°C to 340°C, while the annual rainfall ranges between 1500mm and 3000mm.

The weather conditions vary between the two distinct seasons in Nigeria; the rainy season (March–October) and the dry season (November–February).

Sampling Technique: A multi-stage sampling method was employed to select respondents for the study. At the first stage, three (3) out of six (6) States were randomly selected (Ondo, Oyo and Ogun). Secondly, two (2) Local Government Areas in each of the selected states. The third stage involved a random selection of three (3) farming communities from each LGA. At the final stage, ten (10) farming households were randomly selected in each of the communities, making a total of 180 farming households.

Data Collection and Analysis: A well-structured interview schedule was used to collect data relevant to the study. Oral interview was also adopted to get more answers relevant to the study. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive tools such as frequency counts, percentage and mean. A Five-point likert scale was employed to understand attitudinal perception of respondents towards information dissemination by mass media. Perception responses were categorized as 1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree. The mean score of each response was marked at 3.0, where any score greater than x-3.0 was considered relevant and scores less than x-3.0 was considered irrelevant.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents: Table-1 shows that 62.2% of the farmers were male while 37.8% were female. The result indicates that males were involved in farming as against females in the study area. The findings of this study conforms with that of Ariyo et al.⁷ in which majority of the respondents interviewed on agricultural needs of farmers were male and female (90% and 59.3%) respectively. The age distribution of farmers in Table-1 indicates that most of the respondents were adults and fall within economically active age. Also, this study conforms with the work of Ariyo et al.⁷, who assert that such a group is most likely active in farming and tend to develop more interest in sourcing for agricultural technology or information through mass media. At least half of the respondents (51.7%) had primary education and below. The result conform to the findings by Churi et al.⁸, where they state that majority of farmers in rural areas had not gone for higher level education. The household size of the respondents was fairly large, as the majority of the farmers (80%) had household size between 6 and 10. This implies that there could be availability of farm labour and at least a member of the family would have access to useful agricultural information. Moreso, large households can promote access to agricultural information as every household member is a potential source of information.

Channels of Information Retrieval Mostly Used by Farmers: The major channel of agricultural information retrieval by the respondents through mass media was Radio which accounted for 86.7% of the respondents.

Comparing this result with the educational qualification of the respondents, it is evident that Radio does not often require literacy in order to be effective on its audience. The pastoralists who are often physically unable to access many other mass media channels, can be mobilized at the same time with Radio without necessarily interfering with their daily activities at home or in the farm. Furthermore, the result also shows that 10.0% of the respondents got their agricultural information through Television. Newspaper was the least preferred source of agricultural information retrieval in the study area, accounting for 3.3% of the population.

Aside from the low literacy level of farmers, there has been a decline in reading habits in recent times. With the advent of mobile phones and similar technologies, most people get information from other means like Internet and Radio, rather than from books. More so, Television and Newspapers require total concentration from the user to understand what is being shown or read, unlike information disseminated through Radio. Information disseminated through Radio can easily be understood while engaging in other activities.

Another reason for the use of Newspaper by the respondents can be retrieved from Apata¹ where it states that information can be kept for future reference when Newspaper is used for agricultural information dissemination.

Table-1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their Socio-economic Characteristics.

Socio-economic variables		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Age	<30	2	1.1
	31-40	19	10.6
	41-50	58	32.2
	51-60	66	36.7
	>60	35	19.4
Sex	Male	112	62.2
	Female	68	37.8
Educational Qualification	Primary	65	36.1
	Secondary	49	27.2
	Tertiary	27	15.0
	Adult	11	6.1
	Informal	28	15.6
Household size	<5	08	4.40
	6-10	144	80.0
	>10	28	15.60

Attitudinal Perception of Farmers towards Agricultural Information Dissemination by Mass Media Houses: The results in Table-2 reveal that 9 (nine) out of 12 (twelve) perception variables were relevant. These include: Farmers should be given the opportunity to create agricultural programmes in media houses (x=4.02), politics have taken the place of agricultural information in media houses (x=3.99), lack of/poor electricity supply make it difficult to access and utilize electronic media (Radio and Television) (x=3.98), agricultural information are disseminated only at convenient times by media

houses (x=3.97), more focus should be placed on the establishment of rural/farm Radio (x=3.82), agricultural information disseminated in local dialects are more preferred and understood (x=3.80), mass media find it difficult to disseminate agricultural information in local dialects (x=3.65), mass media do not disseminate new agricultural information (x=3.39) and mass media encourages the adoption of new innovations (x=3.30). These were ranked first to ninth positions respectively.

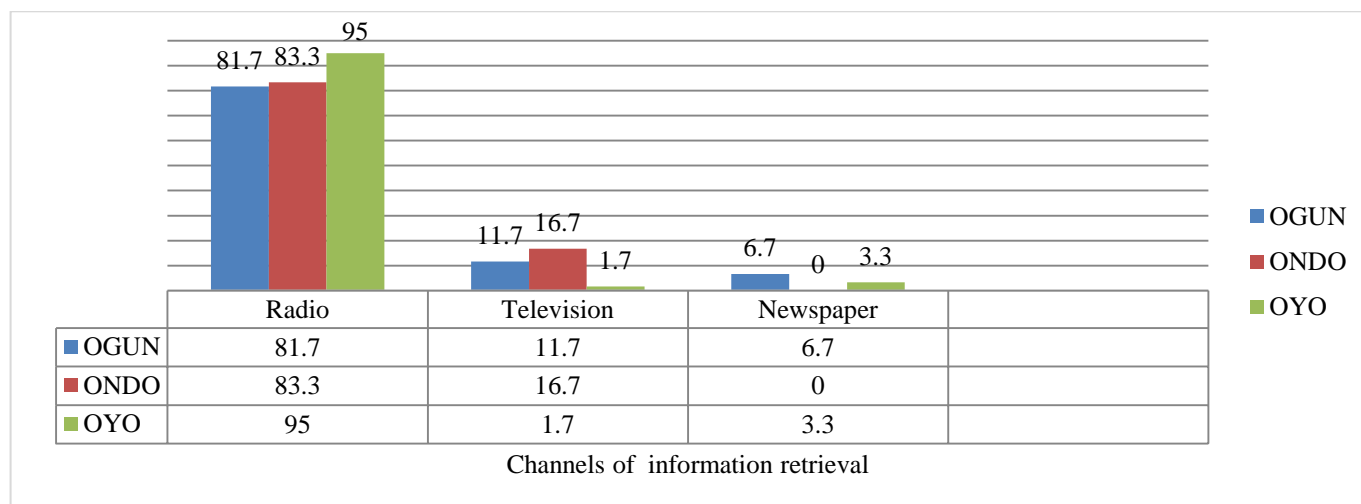


Figure-1: Channels of information retrieval mostly used by Farmers.

Table-2: Attitudinal Perception of Farmers towards Agricultural Information Dissemination by Mass Media Houses.

Perception Statement	Total	Mean	Rank
Agricultural information disseminated by media houses is vital in improving agricultural production	386	2.14	11 th
Mass media do not disseminate new agricultural information	611	3.39	8 th
Agricultural information are not frequently disseminated by mass media houses	379	2.11	12 th
Agricultural information are disseminated only at convenient times by media houses	715	3.97	4 th
Lack of / poor electricity makes it difficult to access and utilize electronic media (Radio and Television)	718	3.98	3 rd
Politics have taken the place of agricultural information in mass media houses	719	3.99	2 nd
Mass media encourages the adoption of innovations	577	3.20	9 th
Agricultural information dissemination by mass media houses is not vital in the development of rural areas	512	2.84	10 th
Agricultural information disseminated in local dialects are more understood and preferred	682	3.80	6 th
More focus should be place on the establishment of rural/farm Radio	687	3.82	5 th
Mass media find it difficult to disseminate agricultural information in local dialects	657	3.36	7 th
Farmers should be given the opportunity to create agricultural programmes in mass media houses	724	4.02	1 st

Conclusion

The study concluded that the farmers had a relatively large household size which encourages availability of farm labour. Also, there is a high probability that at least a member of the family would have access to agricultural information. However, low literacy levels limit farmers' utilization of agricultural information via Newspaper. Radio was the most preferred channel of agricultural information retrieval by the respondents. Furthermore, farmers perceived that mass media are not effective in disseminating agricultural information. They believe that there should be more involvement on their part in the agricultural information dissemination process and not just retrieval alone to improve its relevance and effectiveness.

Recommendations: Based on the research findings, the followings are recommended: i. The bulk of agricultural information should be directed to Radio and Television stations to reach a larger number of farmers. ii. Media houses should place more priority on creating and disseminating more agricultural information. iii. Farmers should be given the opportunity to create and air their own programmes in media houses at a low cost. This could be in the form of call-in programmes where farmers get to share their experiences, achievements, as well as problems they face in farming. They will also create programmes that will be beneficial to them and not just accepting what is been aired on Radio or Television. This will also cover up for the loopholes created in media houses on agricultural programmes. iv. Government and other organizations as well as farmers should encourage the establishment of rural/farm Radio. In so doing, farmers will be encouraged to create and air programmes at their convenient time and communicate in their own dialect.

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