

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Effectiveness of Traditional Communication Media Used in the Dissemination of Agricultural Information among Farmers in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study was carried out in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State. The aim was to find out the effectiveness of Traditional Communication Media used in the dissemination of agricultural information among farmers. The following objectives were used for the study, to: examine the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers in the study area, ascertain the various commonly used traditional communication media (TCM) in the study area and determine the perceived effectiveness by farmers of these TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information. The hypothesis tested was to establish if there is relationship between farmers' perceived effectiveness of TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information and their socio-economic characteristics. Out of nine communities, five were selected. A sample of sixteen farmers was randomly selected from each of the five communities resulting in a sample size of eighty farmers. Interview schedule was used in eliciting information from farmers. Descriptive statistics and chi-squared were used to analyse the data collected. The result showed that 58.8% of the farmers were male, 64.9% were between 36 and 50 years, 63.7% were married, 78.7% were Christians and as many as 22% had tertiary education. The most commonly used TCMs for agricultural message dissemination were cooperatives (45%), friends and neighbours (18.7%) and relations (15%). The farmers perceived town criers (56%), community elders (38%), cooperatives (36%), friends and relations (31%) and discussion groups (30%) as the very effective TCMs. The test of hypothesis showed significant relationship between age, marital status, educational level and religion with farmers' perception of effectiveness of TCMs. From the findings of this study it is necessary that TCMs especially town criers, friends and neighbours, community elders and cooperatives should be integrated into innovation delivery system to facilitate quick dissemination and diffusion of agricultural innovations as this will increase the effectiveness of extension service delivery in the study area.

Key words: Traditional Communication Media, Dissemination, Agricultural Information

1. Introduction

Communication is core to development. Boon (1992) and Camble (1994) noted that "an absence of and methods information may impede development". It is said that knowledge is power. This is because knowledge helps an individual to rationalize and act in ways that will better his life and bring progress to humanity. Knowledge when discovered cannot be useful unless communicated to end users who will put it into use for the good of mankind. Apata and Ogunrewo (2010) postulate that "information is an important tool used in the realization of any objective or goal set by individuals". To achieve this, knowledge/information needs to be communicated from source to the end users. To ensure that message is effectively communicated the right channels must be used.

Although the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) is gaining ground even in the rural areas of African societies though not without its associated problems of access, connectivity, literacy poverty, and rural infrastructures are the challenges confronting the use and spread of ICT in rural areas (CTA, 2003; Arokoyo, 2005 and Omotayo, 2005). Meanwhile, the use of traditional communication media (TCM) has been identified as being influential in improving adoption of innovations among the rural people (Aboyade, 1987 and Adedoyin, 1989).

Furthermore, as a result of the poor access of rural farmers to ICT and the problems they encounter when making use of it, it is being advocated that TCM should be used in the dissemination of innovation. In retrospect, various TCM have been used and some are still being used. The various TCM being utilized includes, town criers, friends, relations and neighbours, community elders, cooperatives, traditional meetings and Discussion groups (Adedoyin and Dada 2006)

Those advocating the increased use of TCM are of the opinion that agriculture in Nigeria and other developing countries will receive a boost. This is because these traditional media is the grass root culture of the rural populace. Also they will serve as a significant tool in the process of motivating people in desired direction and useful developmental messages will be conveyed to the

target group in a context understandable. It will also help in making the task of nation building and socio-economic development easier and acceptable to rural masses.

In developing countries like Nigeria there is dearth of information lying waste in research institutions. Even those already packaged for dissemination in some cases do not get to end users because of ineffective communication channels and methods. To determine an effective communication channel the culture, age, educational level and even gender should be considered.

According to Boon (1992) and Camble (1994) traditional indicators are still widely used as modes of forecasting and land use management. Okoola (1996) discovered that the indicators are mostly local and well understood in the communities. These indicators include plants, animals, insects (bees, butterfly, red ants, and termites), stars, hill shadows, moon, wind (direction, strength and time of starting and ending), clouds (position and movement), lighting (location and pattern), springs and swamps, cowries and so on.

Abraham (2009) postulated that "in traditional African societies, the communication methods are basically oral". "In most traditional African communities, where most residents are illiterates the mode of passing information are town criers, their activities are notable" (City of East Yorkshire, 2007). "This medium of information dissemination is found to be effective, cheap, simple and reliable" (Abraham, 2007). Furthermore Meyer (2005), affirm too that "the Africa's rural population is mostly illiterate and they get information this way at no cost. With the introduction of cars, motorcycles and electricity, the work of town criers in rural areas have been made easier. Instead of trekking, they now save a lot of time and energy and ensure wider coverage by using motorcycles and bicycles or cars with loudspeakers fixed and sometimes with recorded messages which they play, thereby exerting less energy.

According to Igboke and Atinmo (2002), "information/communication channels in Nigeria such as extension institution have collapsed, leaving no effective communication channels in the country. The small numbers of extension officers that exist congregate in the urban town leaving behind those at the rural areas. The village heads are forced to rise up to the challenge of disseminating information using traditional methods."

In communicating agricultural information to farmers, tradition communication methods is still very relevant since the average Nigerian farmer is still grappling with educational and financial constraints. Most times it is difficult for them to assess information through modern ways of information delivery in print and electronic media. Adoption of agricultural innovations has been limited because of inappropriate selection of communication methods by extension workers resulting in low agricultural productivity. Therefore, this research work seeks to examine the effectiveness of TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information among farmers in Ughelli North, Local Government Area of Delta State

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information among farmers in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta state. The specific objectives are to:

- examine the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers in the study area,
- ascertain the various commonly used traditional communication media (TCM) in the study area and
- determine the perceived effectiveness by farmers of these TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information,

1.2. Hypothesis of the Study

There is no relationship between farmers' perceived effectiveness of TCM in the dissemination of agricultural information and their socio- economic characteristics.

2. Methodology

The study area is Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. Delta state lies approximately between longitude $5^{\circ}00'$ and $6^{\circ}00'$ east of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude $5^{\circ}00'$ and $6^{\circ}00'$ north of the Equator. The total area of the state is 7,440 square kilometer. One third of this is swampy and water – logged. Delta state is bonded on the north by Edo State, on the east by Anambra State on the south by Bayelsa State. The Atlantic Ocean forms the western boundary. (Ministry of Agricultural and Nation resources, M.A.N.R., 2000). Delta is divided into three senatorial districts namely Delta North, Delta Central and Delta South. The study area Ughelli is in Delta Central and it is occupied by Urhobos. Farming is the primary occupation of the rural dwellers.

There are nine (9) communities in the study area (Affisere, Agbarha, Ekiugbo, Otovwodo, Oto-iwhreko, Orogun, Ogor, Agbarho and Uloho). Five of the communities were randomly selected (Affisere, Agbarho, Orogun, Ogor and Agbarha), followed by random selection of 16 farmers from each of the selected communities to give a sample size of 80 farmers for the study.

Primary data for the study were collected with the use of Interview Schedule which was administered to the respondents in the selected communities. The socio-economic characteristics of the farmers were measured at ordinal level. For the most commonly used TCMs the farmers were asked to mention the frequency of use of the listed TCMs. The effectiveness of TCM was measured using a 3-point Likert like rating scale (Very Effective = 2, Effective = 1 and Not Effective = 0). The data generated from the study were analyzed using descriptive which included frequency counts, percentages and means. Inferential Statistics used was Chi – Square.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The results of the socio-economic characteristics were shown in Table 1. More of the farmers were male (58.8%). This is typical of most studies in the developing world that report higher number of farmers to be males though most of the work of food production is done by females. The study done by Adedoyi and Dada (2006) stated that 81.7% of sampled farmers were male while 18.3% were female is a typical example. A high proportion of the farmers (64.9%) engaged in farming activities were within the age range 36 – 50 years. By implication, since majority of farmers are relatively young, there will be high propensity for adoption when information is disseminated to them. According to Omaruaye (1987), there was low level of adoption among older farmers and that was because they generally resist change because of their risk adverse tendency. Results on Table1 further revealed that most of the respondents (63.7%) were married. The implication of this is that majority of the farmers had family to take care of. The increase in food production is therefore critical to ensure their family food security. According to Siokwu, 2007 family size affects the seriousness of farmers to meet their family needs through food production and income generation. Majority of the farmers were Christians (78.75%). Christians are more liberal in interacting. It is therefore easy to work with the farm families as a whole or through their church heads. Furthermore, majority of the farmers had varied levels of formal education with as many as over 22% having attended tertiary institution. This implies a high improvement in farmer's literacy level. Basically, they could read and write. This was contrary to Adedoyin and Dada, (2006) which reported that majority of farmers were illiterate.

Personal Characteristics	Percentage
Gender	
Male	58.8
Female	41.2
Age (Years)	
26-30	5.0
31-35	10.0
36-40	13.7
41-45	18.7
46-50	32.5
51-55	8.8
56-60	6.3
Above 60	5.0
Marital Status	
Single	16.2
Divorce	6.3
Widow	10.0
Widower	3.8
Married	63.7
Religion	
Christianity	78.7
Islam	6.3
Tradition Religion	15.0
Educational level	
Non formal	14.1
Primary	23.0
Secondary	40.3
Tertiary	22.6

Table 1: Socio-economic distribution of respondents (N = 80)

Source: Field Survey, 2013

3.2. Commonly Used Traditional Communication Media

Table 2 shows that many (45%) of the farmers accessed agricultural innovations most frequently through cooperatives while 18.7% got information through friends and neighbours. Since majority of farmers were literate, this might have been the reason for their high participation in farmers' cooperative societies. This was contrary to Adedoyin and Dada (2006), who reported that farmers have low level of participation in cooperatives but Agbamu (2006) reported that agricultural cooperatives dominated in egg plant grafting.

TCM	Percentage (%)
Town criers	3.8
Community elders	8.7
Friends and neighbours	18.7
Cooperatives	45
Traditional meetings	5
Discussion groups	3.8
Relations	15
Total	100

Table 2: Traditional communication media commonly used
Sources: Field survey, 2013

3.3. Perception of Farmers on the Effectiveness of Traditional Communication Media in Agricultural Information Delivery

From Table 3, town criers (56%), community elders (38%), cooperatives (36%) friends and neighbours (31%) and discussion groups (30%) were rated by respondents as very effective in disseminating agricultural information. This finding agrees with City of East Yorkshire (2007) that noted that in spite of the fact that several channels and methodology are being used to bring information to audience, such as media, institutions, social functions, town-criers, but in the traditional African settings where most of the residents are illiterates the mode of passing information is through town-criers. Abraham (2009) discovered that it is effective, cheap, simple and reliable. Furthermore, Adedoyin and Dada, (2006) asserted that the effectiveness of the use of town criers and community elders as TCM might be related to farmers' socio – cultural background while friends and neighbours could be linked to the type of social communication network that exists in the community. Cooperatives was effective because of the literacy level of farmers

TCM	Very effective	Effective	Not Effective	Total
Town crier	56	17	7	80
Community Elders	38	20	22	80
Friends and Neighbours	31	20	29	80
Traditional Meetings	26	23	31	80
Discussion groups	30	18	32	80
Relations	16	25	39	80
Cooperatives	36	30	14	80

Table 3: Farmers' perception on the effectiveness of TCM in agricultural information delivery.
Source: Field survey, 2013

4. Test of Hypothesis

- H_0 : There is no significant relationship between farmers perception of effectiveness of TCM and their socio – economic characteristics.

Chi – Square test was used in analyzing the hypothesis in order to determine the relationship between farmers' perception of effectiveness of TCM and selected socio –economic characteristics. Results in Table 4 confirmed that gender did not have any significant relationship ($X^2 = 1000$, $P > 0.05$). The other socio – economic characteristics which include age, marital status, educational level and religion had significant relationship with farmers' perception of effectiveness of TCM.

Socio – economic characteristics	X^2	Df	P-Value	Remark
Gender	1000	1	$P > 0.05$	NS
Age	41.60	7	$P < 0.05$	S
Marital status	122.20	5	$P < 0.05$	S
Education level	22.30	3	$P < 0.05$	S
Religion	207.40	5	$P < 0.05$	S

Table 4: Relationship between farmers' socio-economic characteristics and effectiveness of TCM
Source: Field Survey, 2013 NS= Not Significant; S= Significant

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of TCM has been perceived by rural farmers as useful and effective in dissemination of innovation. The implication of these findings is that tradition communication media are very accessible, relevant and effective at the level of rural farmers. Therefore, it is recommended that traditional communication media such as town crier, friends and neighbours, community elders and cooperatives should be integrated into innovation delivery system to facilitate quick dissemination and diffusion of agricultural innovations as this will increase the effectiveness of extension service delivery in the study area.

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