

Mass Media Agencies and Information Programming for Agricultural Development in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Vestigation was carried on mass media Agencies and Information Programming for Agricultural Development in Imo State. A total of 135 farmers, agricultural information officers of Imo ADP and programme officers in the mass media organisations in Imo State were used as respondents. The farmers were drawn from the three agricultural zones of Imo State namely Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri, each providing a sample of 35 farmers selected randomly from three local government of each of the zones. Personal interview and questionnaires were used as instrument for data collection while descriptive statistics (Percentages and frequencies) and chi-square test was used as instruments for data analysis. Results show that majority (91.10%) of the farmers had one level of formal education or the other. Majority (63.7%) that had access to radio used it as a source of agricultural information and only 37.03% of the farmers that had access to television used it for information on agriculture. Most of the respondents (69.6%) believed that agricultural extension agencies should initiate and programme agricultural information, which could then be jointly processed and tested with the experts in the mass media agency for dissemination through such media. It was recommended that government should ensure adequate availability of rural infrastructural facilities to enable more of the rural dwellers cultivate the habit of utilizing mass media as source of information on agriculture.

Key words: Mass media agencies, information and programming

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process through which information is transmitted from a source to a receiver, generally with the intention of modifying the behaviour of the receiver to the direction desired by the sender. It is also the process whereby a source tries to transmit or convey thoughts, ideas, wishes or emotions to other in order, not only to modify their attitudes towards an issue but also to effect changes in the overt behaviour of the receiver. Communication has been described as the basis of all social activities, necessary for the orderly functioning of all living organisms (Ayichi, 1995).

Agricultural development, which is synonymous with rural development, has to do with fundamental transformation of a nation's mode of production with the hope of bringing about an efficient activity pattern capable of promoting massive production of food, fibre, goods and services. It is also concerned with raising the quality of life of people living in the rural areas through improved and a more efficient mode of production, raising the quality of nutrition, housing, health, education as well as creating opportunities for employment and human development (Eluagu, 2000).

It is clear that adequate and timely information make for better understanding and appreciation of relevance of new programmes as well as encourage a closer link between effort. Therefore, the primary motivation for stimulating agricultural development is through generation and dissemination of relevant information.

According to (Folorunso, 1987), a well-informed society is a mobilized society because it will be information literate and more responsive to government. The agencies mostly responsible for disseminating activity to the agricultural development process are the Agricultural Extension Systems and the Mass Media. It is the information from the mass media that are mediated upon during inter-personal relationship (Anyanwa, 1987).

It should be pointed out that rural farmers are ready for information but the prevalent problem as identified by Farinde (1999) is non-availability and or lack of access to some information sources. This lack of availability of information probably led to the conclusion drawn by Akinwande (1998) from the evidence of his research that problems of information dissemination associated with limitation, dissemination expectation and obstacles of geography, fragmented audience and limited economic resources demand sophisticated strategies beyond the

capacity of face-to-face communication activities. All these and may other factors alike make Mass Media to be very useful in the present circumstance.

Mass media constitute the main vehicle for wide and rapid transmission of information. However, for effectiveness of the mass media in agricultural information transfer, the following factors should be taken into consideration in the programming of such information. The target audience, their needs and interest, format in which information is desired, in what order of time, their beliefs and culture, which method of the presentation will serve them best and justification of information (Adedoyin, 1989).

For a long time, there has been policies, strategies, projects, or institutions established by Nigerian government to aid the development of agriculture and improvement of rural life. Virtually all these programmes are good for agricultural development and can better the life of the people in rural area. But in spite of all these programmes, agricultural productivity is yet to reach the level at which it could attain and sustain self-sufficiency in food production in Nigeria.

Aboyade (1987) took a critical look at this problem and found out that farmers were neither adequately nor appropriately informed about innovations that could be applied by them to achieve improved agricultural productivity and enhance standard of living. In short, extension agents in disseminating agricultural innovation did not adequately and appropriately utilize the mass media to complement contact.

Against this backdrop, the study was designed to investigate the process by which agricultural innovations spread through the use of mass media to farmers in Imo State. Specifically the objective of the study were to determine.

- The socio-economic characteristics of the farmers reached with agricultural information presented on the mass media;
- The capability of mass media agencies to appropriately programme agricultural information meant for farmers;
- The linkage between the mass media and the state agricultural extension agencies;
- The relationship between location of farmer's residence and their use of mass media as sources of agricultural information.

Hypotheses: Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers and their use of mass media as source of agricultural information.

Ho 2: there is no significant relationship between location of farmers' residence and their use of mass media as sources of agricultural information.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: The study was carried out in Imo State. The state lies between Latitudes 5°2' and 5°9' North and Longitudes 6°5' and 7°7' East. The state is bounded in the East by Abia State; in the West by Delta State; in the North by Anambra State and in the South by Rivers State. Imo State covers about 5,430 square kilometers. The state has an estimated population figure of about 1,166,445 persons based on the 1999 population census.

Sampling technique: The population for the study was made up of farmers and producers of agricultural programme in the electronic mass media agencies and ADP in Imo State. Imo State has three geo-economic zones namely Okigwe, Owerri and Orlu. For the purpose of this study, three L.G.A.s each were randomly selected from the three zones of the state. These were Okigwe, Obowo and Ehime Mbano L.G.As for Owerri zone and Orlu Oru East and Ideato L.G.A.s for Orlu zone.

From selected L.G.A.s a total of 15 farmers were randomly selected. This gave a total of 45 respondents from each zone. In all, 135 respondents were interviewed. Similarly, two producers each of agricultural programme in the electronic mass media agencies and the Imo ADP in Imo State were also interviewed.

Data collection: Both primary and secondary data were collected and used for the study. Primary data were collected using a set of well-structured and pre-tested questionnaires administered, using personal interview. For to the information, which was not generated from the primary source, secondary data from journals and other available research work were used.

Analytical technique: Descriptive statistics (response frequencies, Percentages) and chi-square (X^2) were used to analyse the data specifically collected on the variables involved in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristic of farmers: Majority (88.81%) of the farmers who served as respondents, were males while only few 11.5%) of them were females. On the other hand, majority (59.25%) of the respondents were between 26-45 years of age. These results suggest that the farmers involved in the study were within the middle age group

and they are expected to be very active and desirous of information capable of improving their lives and farm works.

On educational background of respondents, 5.9% had primary education, 59.25% had secondary education and 25.95% had post secondary education, which 7.40% had informal education.

This shows that majority (91.10%) had one level of formal education or the other and as such can be said to be relatively literate. Similarly, majority (57.77%) was married. From these results, it could be concluded that majority of the respondents were literate which should enhance their desire for productivity-oriented information. Moreso, most of the respondents were settled family men and women who would most likely be desirous of information that could be applied towards increasing their income earning capacity and improving their standard of living.

Majority (62.96%) had farming as their main occupation while the remaining 37.04% took farming as secondary occupation. Hence, they are more likely to be serious with their farm work and should treat matters affecting progress of their farm work with deserved attention. They were mostly small-scale farmers since 79.63% had farm holdings below 4.0-9.0 hectares. Also, majority (73.42%) of the respondents were residing in the villages where their farms were located or near their farm locations. They were likely to pay greater attention to another farm work. However, those that lived outside their farm locations were either those who took farming as their secondary occupation or the few affluent farmers who had means of moving in and out of their farm locations easily.

The response to questions on access to and use of mass media as source of agricultural information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that 85 (62.97%) out of 125 farmers that had access to radio were using it as their sources of agricultural information. On the other hand, only 50 (37.03%) out of the 52 farmers that had access to television used it for obtaining information on agriculture. Radio was thus the most commonly used among the mass media for agricultural information. Some people also used television for purpose of agricultural information. Hence, farmers in Imo State were conscious of the role of mass media agencies in the dissemination of information in agriculture. However, it is interesting to note that majority of those who used the various media for information on agriculture did so occasionally. For example, 54.67% of people listening to radio agricultural programmes did so occasionally while 65.14% of those

Table 1: Access to and use of mass media as source of agricultural information

Media	Percentage that had access (%)	Those using them for agricultural information	
		Frequency	Percentage
Radio	125	85	63.70
Television	52	50	37.03

Table 2: Agriculture programmes listened to or viewed by respondents on mass media

Type of programme	Frequency	Percentage
Ceremonial	45	33.33
Entertainment	05	03.75
Public announcement	09	06.66
Educational/extension teaching	36	26.66
Input distribution announcements	25	18.51
Public/propaganda	11	08.14
Others	04	02.96
Total	135	100

viewing agricultural programmes on television sets did so occasionally. These might be due to problems associated with inappropriate timing of the presentation of such programmes or problems associated improper programming of the innovation disseminated.

Respondents' access to direct extension services were also investigated. A total of 50.67% of the respondents claimed to be availing themselves of direct extension services while 49.33% claimed to have been unable to avail themselves of such services. Among the services used were (a) Use of extension agents (23.33%) (b) Use of extension literature (14.00%) (c) Combination of extension agents and literature (13.34%). Table 2 shows that the type of agricultural programmes listened to or viewed on the electronic mass media by the respondents.

Table 2 shows the various purposes for which respondents listed to or viewed agricultural programmes on the mass media. Those that use mass media for ceremonials had 33.33; educational/extension teaching (26.66%) while input distribution announcement has 18.5.

On timing of agricultural programmes, majority (79.33%) preferred evening time (4.00-8.00 pm) while only 14.00 and 6.64% preferred afternoon (12.00 noon- 3.00 pm) and morning (7.00-11.00 am), respectively. The results support the view that agricultural programmes should always be slated for presentation in the evening when farmers would be more relaxed and patient enough to pay adequate attention to the message. On the presentation methods preferred, majority (56.67%) of the respondents preferred demonstration or teaching and discussion, 21.67% desired role-playing, while 6.66% preferred some other methods.

In the area of language presentation, 60.00% of respondents preferred their native language (Ibo). 31.67%

preferred English Language, while 8.35% desired either English or Ibo Language. The result agrees with the existing idea that the language best understood by people should be used in communicating with them to ensure grater understanding on the message.

Capability of mass media to initiate and programme information for farmers: In response to a question on who should rightly initiate and programme agricultural messages meant for presentation to farmers the mass media or the agency in which the expertise for carrying out such activities affecting abound, the view expressed by the farmers on this issue are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that majority (69.62%) of respondents believed that agricultural extension agencies should initiate and programme agricultural information which could then be jointly processed and tested with the experts of the mass media agency for dissemination through such media. However, fewer (30.37%) of respondents believed that the mass media agencies could as well carry out such responsibility. But it is pertinent to highlight the fact that most personnel in the mass media have neither been specifically trained in agriculture nor have they personally developed the capability to understand agricultural messages to the extent of programming them specifically for farmers in a perfect manner. The full understanding of farmers, their characteristics and their needs will put agricultural extension officers at advantage with regards to initiating and programming agricultural messages specifically meant for farmers. Aboyade (1987), supported this view by saying that agricultural extension workers are the most important agents of information to rural people. Programming of agricultural information should however be done in collaboration with media specialists or practitioners to ensure professional touch and effective delivery or presentation of the programme.

Linkage between mass media and agricultural agencies:

On mass media agencies contact with the agricultural extension agency (Imo ADP) 100% of the respondents from the mass media claimed that they seldom visited Imo ADP. They claimed that 70% of such visits were for ceremonial purposes while 30.00% were usually for purpose of seeking information on innovations to be disseminated to farmer.

Table 3: Agency best suited for programming agricultural information meant for farmers

Agency	Frequency	Percentages
Mass media	41	30.37
Agricultural extension agent	94	69.62
Total	135	100

It is however important to acknowledge the cooperation of mass media agencies with Imo State Agricultural Development Programmes (Imo ADP) in disseminating agricultural messages. Such programmes which were produced in Ibo language include Onye Orubi (IBC radio and in IBC/TV); and in English. The farmer (IBC radio and IBC TV). Apart from these programmers, they still covered ceremonial programmes and ageicultural shows as well as promote agricultural policies. They however, have not as yet popularize success stories of some distinguished farmers and reputable agricultural enterprise as a way of enhancing agricultural and rural development. All the respondents therefore requested information regularly for the media to disseminate. Imo ADP claimed to have enjoyed full cooperation of mass media agencies but still criticized them for not coming around as much as possible for information which they could disseminate to farmers. The mass media organisations on the other hand expects the Imo ADP to pay for any programme they want them (mass media) to air, since they have now been commercialized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS ON HYPOTHESES FOR THE STUDY

Table 4 presents the results obtained from testing the hypothesis that there was no relationship between socio-economic characteristics of farmers and their use of mass media as sources of agricultural information.

Table 4 shows that age, marital status, level of education and farm size were individually independent of the use of mass media.

On the other hand, results from the test of the hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between location of farmers' residence and use of mass media as sources of information are in Table 5.

Table 4: Relationship between respondent's socio-economic characteristics and the use of mass media

Socio-economics characteristics	Chi-square calculated	Chi-square tabulated	Decision at 0.05
Age	3.65	8.81	NS
Marital status	1.85	8.81	NS
Educational level	6.86	9.49	NS
Farm size	4.37	6.99	NS

Table 5: Relationship between location of farmers' residence and use of mass media

Residence location	Radio	Television	Newspaper	Total
Village	40	12	02	64
Local govt. town	93	75	35	193
Govt. house estate	02	03	10	15
Total	135	90	47	272

X² Calculated = 16.26; X² Tabulated = 12.60, Since 16.26 > 12.60, Decision: H0 rejected (at X² = 0.05)

The result shows that significant relationship existed between farmer's residence and their use of mass media as sources of agricultural information. This result is not unexpected because people living at places with electricity and other facilities are most likely to be better disposed to using mass media than those living predominantly in rural areas. However, since it is easier to use radio in places without electricity supply, considerable information and presentation of agricultural messages should take place on radio.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the farmers had access to radio and use it as source of agricultural information. While only few that had access to television use it for information on agriculture. Majority preferred evening time (4.00 -8.00 pm) for agricultural information and also preferred it on their native language.

Findings also show that respondents believed that agricultural extension agencies should initiate and programme agricultural information, which could be jointly processed and tested with the experts of the mass media agency for dissemination through such media.

Regular and timely agricultural programmes disseminated by mass media organisations will complement extension effort in promoting and ensuring adoption of innovations by farmers. This will in turn lead to improved agricultural productivity.

There is however, the need for government to ensure adequate availability of rural infrastructure and facilities to enable more of the rural dwellers cultivate the habit of utilizing mass media as sources of information on agriculture. The government should also equip the mass media with modern equipment and direct them not to change the agricultural programme for farmers aided through their stations.

There is also need for private electronic mass media in Imo State who can collaborate with Imo ADP to disseminate agricultural information regularly.

Evidences of this study revealed that at the time of the study, agricultural programme was being aired, also mass media organisations lacked the personnel with adequate training and experiences to effectively utilize agricultural information meant for farmers. Hence, agricultural extension agencies should always programme agricultural information meant for farmers in collaboration with media specialist/producers for effective dissemination through the mass media and proper and well-sustained linkages should also exist between the agricultural extension agencies and the mass media

organisation. Mass media personnel should regularly participate in training and other relevant activities of the extension agencies.

Finally, mass media agencies and the agricultural other relevant activities of the extension agencies. extension system should always consider, among other things, the following to ensure effective agricultural information programming and dissemination to farmers; the understanding of the target audience, the need and interest of the intended beneficiaries, the order of time the programme should be presented to ensure the greatest impact and the appropriate methods of presentation to serve the intended beneficiaries best.

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