

Mass media utilization behaviour of farm women

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ABSTRACT

Farm women are the backbone of Indian agriculture. They represent the invisible work forces in a gamut of activities ranging from land preparation till harvest of the agricultural produce. The mass media utilization behavior of farm women is central to equipping women with the latest developments in farming technology and honing their technical skills which leads to their increased productivity in their farm and home. A study was conducted on a sample of 30 farm women to analyze their mass media utilization behavior. The findings revealed that, majority (60 per cent) had primary level of education, 90 per cent possessed radio and most of them were members of Farmers Discussion Groups (FDG's); and were regular listeners to agricultural programs on radio. They were also members of Youth Clubs, *Magalir Mandrams* (women's associations) and Media forums. Besides these women regularly attended training programs in agriculture and allied areas, imparted by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Only 10 percent of women were regular subscribers to farm magazines.

Key words: Farm technologies, Farm women, Feedback, Mass media, Media participation.

Introduction

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development in the country. Women constitute nearly half (48 Percent) of the human resources of India. (Sathiadhas *et al.*, 2003). Women play a significant role in agricultural production by contributing on an average, 60 to 70 per cent of their labor. They undertake a variety of tasks in agricultural production ranging from sowing to post harvest processing, and also looking after livestock, poultry and allied enterprises. Their working hours range from 13 to 15 hours per day. (Byra Reddy, 1992).

Though women have made their presence felt in all spheres of agriculture, they lag behind in technical competency and advanced information on farm technologies. In a study conducted on the knowledge level of farm women on farm technologies (Sankaran and Perumal, 1993), it was reported that 50 per cent of farm women belonging to small farm category and possessed a low level of knowledge on farm technologies.

Farm women should be fully aware of the latest agricultural technologies so as to achieve faster development in agriculture. The transfer of technology approach which mainly includes mass media is not paying much attention towards dissemination of adequate and timely agricultural information to the farm women. (Santra and Kundu, 2001).

Access to communication media prepares women for improving their communication and mediation skills to strengthen their capacity to contact and mediate with external world.

Looking to this background, a study was undertaken with the following objections.

1. To study the profile of farm women exposed to mass media.
2. To know the mass media utilization behavior of farm women.
3. To study the media preferences by farm women.
4. To illicit suggestions for the type of message preferred by farm women using different media sources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Linganoor village of Pudur block of Coimbatore district, based on the fact that a large number of farm women of this village involved themselves in mass media usage and also due to the fact that women had undergone a large number of trainings in farm technologies, imparted by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. A comprehensive list of farm women who exhibited varying degree of media participation was obtained from the women FDG (Farmers Discussion Group) convener of the village. A total number of 30 farm women randomly selected from this list formed the sample for the study. A total of 6 independent

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variables and 1 dependent variable were considered for the study. The independent variables (Socio-personal / Socio-Psychological / Socio-economic) and the dependent variable media utilization behavior was measured using standardized scoring procedures. Media utilization behavior was studied with respect to various dimensions such as media possession, use of media, place of use, purpose, media preference, programmer preference and adoption. Here adoption meant the full use of a farm technology after making use of the media.

The data were collected using a well structured interview schedule, and the data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as percentage, mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A perusal of Table 1 revealed that most of the farmwomen (63.33 percent) were middle aged, belonged to primary level of education (60.00 percent), had medium level of farming experience (70.00 percent) and had medium level of annual income, constituted by 50.00 percent of the farm women.

With regard to the social participation of farm women, it could be seen that 60.00 per cent of them had a medium level of social participation and as far as contact

TABLE 1: Socio personal / Socio psychological / Socio economic characteristics of Farm women (n=30)

Socio personal/Socio psychological/Socio economic characteristics of farm women	Number	Percentage
Age		
Young	10	33.33
Middle	19	63.33
Old	1	3.34
Education		
Illiterate	2	6.67
Primary	18	60.00
Secondary	9	30.00
Collegiate	1	3.33
Farming experience		
Low	7	23.33
Medium	21	70.00
High	2	6.67
Annual Income		
Low	11	36.67
Medium	15	50.00
High	4	13.33
Social Participation		
Low	4	13.34
Medium	18	60.00
High	8	26.66
Contact with extension agency		
Low	5	16.66
Medium	19	63.34
High	6	20.00

with extension agency was concerned, it could be inferred that 63.34 percent of farm women had medium level of contact with extension agency. It could be observed that the social participation, and contact with extension agency exhibited by farm women was good because of the farm women were members of Farmers Discussion Groups (FDG's); and were regular listeners to agricultural programs on radio. They were also members of Youth Clubs, *Magalir Mandrams* and Media forums. Besides these women regularly attended training programs in agriculture and allied areas, imparted by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

The Mass Media utilization behavior of farm women was studied and the results are furnished in Table 2. It could be seen from the table that majority of the farm women (90.00percent) possessed radio; followed by television (50.00 percent), newspaper (30.00percent) and only a meager percentage (10.00 percent) were subscribers of farm publications. Regarding the use of media, it could be observed that majority of the farm women (76.66 percent) used radio, followed by television (70.00 percent) a newspaper (36.67 percent) and only (10.00 Percent) used farm publications.

TABLE 2: Mass media utilization behavior of Farm women (n=30)

Mass media utilization behavior of farm women	Number	Percentage
Possession of Media		
Radio	27	90.00
Television	15	50.00
New paper	9	30.00
Farm Publication	3	10.00
Use of media		
Radio	23	76.66
Television	21	70.00
News paper	11	36.66
Farm Publications	3	10.00

As far as the place of utilization was concerned, (Table 2.1) radio was used by most of the women, (66.60 percent) in their own house, followed by use of television (50.00 percent), newspaper (30.00 percent) and farm publication (10.00 percent) in own houses. It was interesting to note that none of the farm women preferred to use the media in common place, with respect to all the four media.

Table 2.2 revealed the purpose of using farm programmes in media. It could be observed that, majority of the respondents used the radio and television for knowing about farm technologies, and news paper was used by majority of farm women for information on weather forecast, followed by information on market news by 72.72 percent of the farm women.

TABLE 2.1: Place of use of mass media

	Radio		Television		News Paper		Farm Publication	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Own house	20	66.60	15	50.00	9	30.00	3	10.00
Friend or neighbor's house	3	10.00	6	20.00	2	6.66	0	0.00
Tea shop	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Common place/library	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total users	23	76.66	21	70.00	11	36.66	3	10.00
Non users	7	23.33	9	30.00	19	63.33	27	90.00

TABLE 2.2: Purpose of using farm programs in media

	Number	Percentage
Radio		
Weather forecast	16	69.56
Farm technology	18	78.26
Advertisement	10	43.48
Market news	13	56.52
Television		
Weather forecast	10	47.62
Farm technology	15	71.42
Advertisement	7	33.33
Market news	11	52.38
News paper		
Weather forecast	9	81.81
Farm technology	7	63.63
Advertisement	2	18.18
Market news	8	72.72
Farm Publication		
Weather forecast	3	100.00
Farm technology	3	100.00
Advertisement	1	33.33
Market news	2	66.66

With respect to farm publications, cent percent of the farmers used farm publications for knowing the weather forecast and also about farm technology.

With respect to purpose of use of media, (Table 2.3) it could be seen that with regard to radio and farm publications, majority of the farm women used it for agriculture purpose, and as far as television and news paper was concerned most of them used it for general purpose.

As far as the extent of mass media exposure for farm programs was concerned, it could be observed from Table 2.4 that, radio, television and newspaper were occasionally used by farm women and cent percent of the farm women were regular users of farm publications.

The adoptions of technologies by farm women after using the different types of media were studied.(Table 2.5) It was interesting to observe that most of the farm women adopted technologies in Horticulture followed by Agriculture

TABLE 2.3: Purpose of use of media

	Number	Percentage
Radio		
Agriculture only	19	63.33
General	4	13.33
Television		
Agriculture only	2	9.52
General	6	28.57
News paper		
Agriculture only	1	9.09
General	6	54.54
Farm Publication		
Agriculture only	3	100
General	0	0.00

TABLE 2.4: Extent of mass media exposure for farm programs

	Number	Percentage
Radio		
Regular users	8	34.78
Occasional users	10	43.47
Television		
Regular users	6	28.57
Occasional users	7	33.33
News paper		
Regular users	3	27.27
Occasional users	6	54.54
Farm Publication		
Regular users	3	100.00
Occasional users	0	0.00

with respect to all the four media namely Radio, Television, Newspaper and followed by farm publications. Technologies in animal husbandry were adopted, following the use of Radio and Television.

With respect to the type of messages preferred over the media, (Table 2.6) it could be observed that farm women preferred information on topics such as summer ploughing, quality seed preparation, water management, weed management and forecast information on weather, pests and diseases.

Television was preferred for skill based technologies such as seed treatment, micronutrient application, bacterial culture treatment and post harvest and processing technologies.

TABLE 2.5: Adoption of technologies using media

	Number	Percentage
Radio		
Agriculture	4	13.33
Horticulture	8	26.67
Animal husbandry	3	10.00
Sericulture	1	3.33
Television		
Agriculture	2	6.67
Horticulture	3	10.00
Animal husbandry	2	6.67
Sericulture	0	0.00
News paper		
Agriculture	3	10.00
Horticulture	3	10.00
Animal husbandry	0	0.00
Sericulture	0	0.00
Farm Publication		
Agriculture	1	3.33
Horticulture	2	6.67
Animal husbandry	0	0.00
Sericulture	0	0.00

It could be observed that information pertaining to general nature such as the area and production potential for export, logical sequence of practices to be done from seed to seed, IPM and disease management and cost of cultivation and profits were preferred to be given in News paper and in-depth information on scientific practices such as package of practices and success stories were preferred to be given in farm publication.

It could be observed from Table 2.7 that, as far as the media preference of farm women were concerned, radio was the most preferred media followed by television, newspaper and farm publications.

As far as the feedback behavior of farm women was concerned, (Table 2.8) it could be observed that 56.67 per cent of the respondents expressed their feed back information through letters for radio and 3.33 percent through letters for farm magazines. For all the four types of media, none of the respondents used phone, for giving feed back.

TABLE 2.6: Type of messages preferred over the media

Radio	Television	News paper	Farm publication
Summer ploughing	Varieties	Area and production potential for export	Package of practice, crop wise, season wise.
Quality seed preparation	Seed treatment	Logical sequence of practices to be done from seed to seed	
Water management	Micronutrient application	IPM and disease management	
Weed management	Bacterial culture treatment	Cost of cultivation and profits	Success stories
Forecast information on weather, pests and diseases	Weedicide application, storage, Post-harvest technology processing and Preservation details		

TABLE 2.7: Media preference

Media preference	Ranking
Radio	I
Television	II
News paper	III
Farm publications	IV

As far as radio was concerned 16.67 percent of the respondents gave the feed back in person. It could also be observed that none of the respondents gave their feed back for information obtained through television and newspaper.

With respect to immediacy of feedback it was observed that 46.67 percent of the farmwomen gave delayed

TABLE 2.8: Feedback behaviors of farm women

Mode of feed back	Mode of feed back							
	Radio		Television		Newspaper		Farm magazine	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Letter	17	56.67	-	-	-	-	1	3.33
Phone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In person	5	16.67	-	-	-	-	-	-
Immediacy of feed back								
Immediate(1-2 days)	8	26.67	-	-	-	-	1	3.33
Delayed (3-5 days)	14	46.67	-	-	-	-	-	-

feedback followed by an equal number (26.67percent) who gave immediate feedback and never gave feedback respectively.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that radio was the most popular media used by the farm women probably due to its less cost, easy availability and portability. However skill based technologies involving audio and visual effects warrant the wide scale use of media like television. Community television sets can be installed in common places such as market shandies and community halls for facilitating easy viewing by farm women.

Although 60 percent of the farm women in the study area had primary level of education, the usage of farm publications was only by 10 percent of the sample, though

this 10 percent were regular subscribers to farm journals. The Agricultural Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras can promote the use of this media effectively by making available these publications free of cost to the farm women; who are members of local media forums. Similarly the feedback behavior of farm women can be enhanced by giving interesting agricultural programmers for women through television such as backyard farming, new farm equipments reducing the drudgery of farm women and also by increasing the coverage of agricultural features in news papers.

Farm women have been long accorded as invisible workers in Agriculture, and their contribution for agricultural development is tremendous. Hence organizing and promoting effective use of media forums in radio, television and print media would play a vital role in enlightening farm women for agricultural development.

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