

FOLK MEDIA PREFERENCES AND PROSPECTS FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE DELIVERY IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated folk media preferences and prospect for use in agricultural extension service delivery in two Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Benue State. A total of 100 farmer respondents were selected using a random sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, mean, percentage and chi-square. Majority (62%) of the respondents were married while 65% were males indicating a non gender sensitive population. A chi-square analysis of the degree of association between respondents' personal and socio-economic characteristics and preference for folk media usage to obtain agricultural information indicated that marital status, educational status and farm size determine folk media preference. The study further revealed that folk media preference in descending order were: folk songs, town crier, folk dance, friends/relations and groups/association. Major reasons for folk media usage was effectiveness for information dissemination, entertainment and promotion of culture. It is, therefore, recommended that since marital status, educational status and farm size determine folk media preference, development agencies should take advantage of farmers' preferences to ensure optimum effect. Secondly, the major reasons for folk media usage reinforce the suitability of folk media for information dissemination in the study area. Therefore, agencies involved in rural development should use folk media to complement conventional media in Benue State.

Key words: Extension, Folk Media

INTRODUCTION

Folk media are the vehicles the common people or rural farmers employ for the delivery of their messages such as folk scripture, folk music, folk dance or folk painting (Ng'ombe 2000 Van Der Stichele 2000). Far reaching innovations that are capable of boosting the farmer's agricultural production do not get to the farmers and this has been attributed to lack of effective agricultural information dissemination machinery (Ozowa 1995; CTA 1996). Therefore, the importance of communication in national development has been recognized in developing countries undergoing socio-economic changes.

Thus the search for appropriate communication media for information dissemination for development is on-going (Dare 1990; Olowu and Yahaya 1993; Ilevbaaje 1998). Many scholars have suggested that folk media should be used effectively to reach the rural people (Van den Ban and Hawkins 1996; Kamlongera 2000). According to Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996) interest in the use of folk media is increasing in less developed countries because mass media have been less successful in promoting rural development.

The FAO's communication for development group considers that there is a definite potential in applying folk media for rural development work

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but suggested that more research must be conducted in order to understand how to apply it correctly (Van den Stichele 2000). According to Yahaya (2003) the role of folk media as a credible and acceptable source of information among the rural people is well known. Traditional methods of information dissemination have not received the attention they deserve in modern communication efforts. He suggested that the traditional methods should be examined and utilized where appropriate if the dissemination of information to the grass roots is to have the desired impact.

Despite the existence and use of folk media in agricultural information dissemination in the rural areas of Benue State, there is scarcity of data on empirical studies carried out to assess, characterize and validate the preferences, reasons for use and prospects of folk media usage for extension service delivery in Benue State. This study was designed to fill this gap. Which folk media do farmers prefer for agricultural information dissemination? What are the farmers' perception of the usefulness of these media in information dissemination?

The purpose of this study was to assess the prospects and preference of the use of folk media in agricultural extension service delivery in Benue State. The objectives of the study were to: 1 identify the personal and socio-economic characteristics of the farmers; 2 determine the relationship be-

tween socio-economic characteristics of farmers and folk media type preference; 3. assess farmers' preference of the types of folk media and 4. determine the reason for the use of these folk media in Benue State.

METHODOLOGY

Benue State, the food basket of the nation, lies in the central agro-ecological region of Nigeria. It is located on Longitude $6^{\circ}35'E$ to $10^{\circ}E$ and Latitude $6^{\circ}30'N$ to $8^{\circ}10'N$ of the equator. According to the 1991 national census, it has a population of 2,780,359 and a total landmass of 3,095 km² (Benue State Government, 2002).

Majority of the people are arable farmers while fishing is the primary occupation of most of the riverine inhabitants. The major ethnic groups are; Tiv in the northern and central zones and Idoma and Igede in the eastern zone. Major food crops include yam, rice, beans cassava, soyabean, beniseed (sesame), maize, sorghum, millet, tomatoes, oil palm and citrus. Livestock kept include poultry, goats, sheep, pigs and cows. The two distinct seasons in the state are rainy and dry seasons.

The target population of the study is farmers in Benue State. Two local government areas, Gboko (Northern zone, Tiv) and Otukpo (eastern zone, Idoma) were purposively selected for the study because of their fame in Kwagh-hir puppet theatre, traditional songs and dances. Ten farmers were randomly selected from each ward and interviewed. Thus 50 farmers were selected from each LGA by random sampling method. A total sample of 100 respondents was selected.

Primary data for this study were collected using a validated interview schedule in the form of structured and unstructured questionnaire. These were used to obtain information in line with the objectives of the study.

Personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents were recorded through structured questionnaire. To determine the folk media preference a three point Likert scale was constructed. Respondents were asked to indicate the preference level ranging from not preferred to highly prefer. Analyses of data were carried out as follows: Objective 1: Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the data on personal and socio-economic characteristics of respondents; Objective 2: Chi-square analysis using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to determine the relationship between personal and socio-economic characteristics and folk media preference (Yahaya 2002; Omotaya and Fakoya 2005; Adekoya and Ogunfiditimi 2005); Objective 3: Frequency, percentage and mean preference score (\bar{x}) were used to determine the preference level of each folk medium. To deter-

mine the preference level, a three point Liker-type scale with responses ranging from "not preferred", "moderately preferred" and "highly preferred" and scaled from 1 to 3 were adopted to get a value of 6 which was later divided by 3 to get a mean score of 2. Then respondents' mean scores were obtained on each response item, such that any one higher or equal to 2 was regarded as preferred, while any mean response lower than 2 was regarded as not preferred; Objective 4: Frequency and percentage were used to analyze reasons for use of folk media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal and socio-economic characteristics of farmers

Age: Highest proportion of the respondents (33%) was within the 41-50 year bracket; followed by those in the 31-40 years bracket. The implication of this finding is that farmers in the study area were active, matured and at the peak of their productivity (Umeh *et al.* 1994).

Marital status: Majority (62%) of the respondents were married, suggesting a stable population as married people tend to take profitable activities productively.

Educational status: We observed a significant relationship between folk puppet theater ($\chi^2=27.395$, $p<0.05$) and Drama ($\chi^2=23.175$, $p<0.05$) (Table 2). This means educational status determines farmer preferences for folk puppet theatre and drama.

Gender: There was no significant relationship between gender and farmers preference for folk media examined. This means that gender does not determine farmer's preference for any of the folk media. This is probably because folk media is entertainment media and entertainment has no boundary. This contradicts the findings of Olowu and Yahaya (1998) and Yahaya (2002) who found a significant relationship between gender and folk media preference and recommended that agriculture information needs of men and women farmers differ. This may probably be because women farmers in Benue State perform virtually the same task as their male counterparts and are mainly adherent of Christian religion.

Household size: House hold size has no significant relationship with folk media preference. This means household size does not determine farmers' preference for any of the folk media.

Farm size: There is a significant relationship between farm size and preference folk dance ($\chi^2 =$

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by personal and socio-economic characteristics (n = 100)

Personal and Socio-economic Characteristics	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	
21 – 30	18
31- 40	31
41 – 50	33
51 and above	18
Marital status	
Single	20
Married	62
Divorced	6
Widowed	12
Educational status	
No Formal Education	27
Adult Literary Certificate	7
First School Leaving Certificate	24
SSCE/WASC/NECO	19
ND/NCE	13
HND/Bachelor Degree	10
Gender	
Male	65
Female	35
Household size	
1-4	51
5-8	35
9 and above	14
Farm size	
Small Scale	34
Medium Scale	52
Large Scale	14

20.884, $P < 0.05$), folk song ($x^2 = 16.16$, $P < 0.05$), friends/relations ($x = 26.174$, $P < 0.05$), groups association ($x^2 = 16.808$, $P < 0.05$). This means that farm size determine farmers' preference for folk dance, folk song, friends/relations and groups/association as media for agricultural information dissemination. This is probably because folk dance, folk song, friends/relations and group/association do not require formal setting for performance whereas other folk media require formal setting. Therefore, hard working farmers may not have time for formal setting but may spare a little time on informal means of information dissemination.

Folk media preference

The respondents indicated that they preferred town crier ($x = 2.30$), folk dances ($x = 2.13$), folk songs

($x = 2.37$), Friends/Relations ($x = 2.13$), Group/Association ($x = 2.07$) for dissemination of agricultural information (Table 3).

Reasons for folk media usage

The three most frequently mentioned reason for use of folk media for agricultural information dissemination was its effectiveness in information dissemination (75%), followed by entertainment (56%) and promotion of culture (35%) (Table 4). Consequently folk media has many attributes among which are its effectiveness for information dissemination, a source of entertainment and promotion of culture. This makes folk media a medium of choice to effectively reach rural farmers (Valbuena 1993).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Majority (64%) of the respondents were between 31 and 50 years. They were considered matured to know the appropriate communication system that benefits their farming enterprise. Most (62%) were married and a majority (73%) were literate and males. Whereas most (51%) of the respondents were members of small households. Most (53%) were medium scale farmers by local standards. Thus, these respondent may probably patronize folk media for agricultural information dissemination.

2. The personal and socio-economic profile of farmers in Benue State indicated a good prospect for folk media usage. Consequently, agencies involved in rural development should use folk media to complement conventional media in the state for optimum effect.

3. Marital status of farmers should be considered when using folk puppet theatre, while educational status of farmers should be considered when using folk puppet theatre and drama. Also farm size of farmers should be considered when using folk dances, folk songs, friends/relations and groups/association because these personal and socio-

Table 2: Chi-square analysis of respondents' personal and socio-economic characteristics and preference of folk media usage to obtain agricultural information

Personal and socio-economic characteristics	Df	Folk media							
		Town crier	Folk dances	Folk songs	Folk puppet theatre	Drama	Friends/Relation	Groups/associations	
		X^2	X^2	X^2	X^2	X^2	X^2	X^2	
Age	6	5.205	6.332	10.558	4.313	7.701	8.814	6.962	
Marital status	6	10.864	8.787	4.611	15.511*	10.023	9.646	2.815	
Educational status	10	13.988	9.448	12.722	27.395*	23.175*	11.419	16.579	
Gender	2	0.187	4.875	1.561	0.810	0.039	0.925	4.554	
Household size	4	5.733	6.441	2.381	1.503	3.153	5.236	2.110	
Farm size	4	2.525	20.884*	16.716*	8.387	6.704	26.174*	16.808*	

* Significant, $P < 0.05$

Table 3: Respondents preferred folk media

S/No.	Folk Media	Mean Score (x)
1	Town crier	2.30*
2	Folk dance	2.13*
3	Folk songs	2.37*
4	Folk puppet theatre	1.29
5	Drama	1.31
6	Friends/Relations	2.13*
7	Groups/Association	2.07*

* preferred economic characteristics determine folk media preference.

4. The folk media preference in descending order was folk songs, town crier, folk dances, friends/relation and group/association. In this regard, policy makers and practitioners may choose the appropriate media considering the level of preference to ensure adequate impact.

5. The major reason farmers' use folk media are dissemination of information, entertainment and promotion of their cultural heritage.

6. Agencies interested in rural development especially agricultural information dissemination should note that there is a good prospect for folk media usage for extension service delivery in Benue State.

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Table 4: Reasons for preference of folk media

Reason for folk media usage	Frequency
Effective for information dissemination	75
Entertainment	56
Promotion of culture	35
Attracts attention	27
Educative	14
Meaningful to assimilate	14
Local people trust it	13

* Multiple responses recorded.

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