



Perception and Preferences of Farmers for Agricultural Telecasts in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu

Sree Madhumitha G¹ and Karthikeyan C²

Department of Social Sciences,
Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam – 628 252(Tamil Nadu)

ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the major occupation and only source of livelihood for majority of the small and marginal farmers in India. To enhance knowledge of the farmers, Government and extension agencies used communication tools like television. The television programmes with agriculture related content were specially designed for the farmers and were telecasted. This study assesses the perception and preferences of farmers about agricultural programmes telecast through television (TV). A random sample of 40 farmers from Namakkal district was selected for the study and the data were gathered through pre-tested interview schedule. This study implied that 55 per cent of farmers preferred to watch agricultural programme which had significantly impact on farmers' knowledge about overall farming practices. In order to make the agriculture sector economically viable, special efforts should be taken by government and extension agencies to develop more farming related programmes to transfer the recent technologies and to solve the farmer queries.

Key Words: Agricultural telecasts, Farmers' perception, Preference, Television, Viewing pattern.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture holds a share of 17-18 per cent to National GDP and serves as the source of livelihood for 70 per cent of its rural population with 82 per cent of farmers being small and marginal (FAO, 2019). In this modern age of information explosion and globalization, a powerful communication tool is needed to transfer new technologies to upgrade agriculture. Transferring new findings and technologies to rural farmers remained a promising strategy for increasing agricultural productivity. The new idea must reach farmers' farms and homes through effective extension and mass media channels, so that they can adopt new technologies and put them into use. Broadcast media have the ability to disseminate information to large audiences efficiently and television can be an important channel (Movius *et al*, 2007). Ani and Baba (2009) stated that information and communication are essential ingredients needed for effective transfer of technologies that are designed to boost agricultural production.

The information and communication technologies (ICTs) *viz*, television (TV) and other electronic and print media has important role in sustainable agricultural development (Sandhu *et al*, 2012). TV is acknowledged as the most important medium for communicating with the rural population of developing countries (FAO, 2001) which can be used for agricultural technology transfer among farmers. Both radio and TV have been successfully used in agricultural extension in many countries (Ogunmilade, 1984). Radio and TV are the most effective media to enhance knowledge and to transfer technology among literate and illiterate farmers, even to a remote area within a short span of time. The audio-visual features and simplicity of TV, shows a positive impact in enhancing the farmers' knowledge.

It is a known fact that, TV can be used as an effective tool for agricultural development and it serves as an inevitable source for dissemination of information. However the preferences of farmers

Corresponding Author's Email: angelinmadhumitha@gmail.com

¹PG Scholar, ²Professor and Head,

Table 1. Socio-personal characteristics of TV viewing farmer's. (n=40)

Socio-personal characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<15	0	0.0
	15-24	0	0.0
	25-44	9	22.5
	45-64	25	62.5
	>64	6	15.0
Gender	Male	39	97.3
	Female	1	2.8
Education	Nil	9	22.5
	Primary	7	17.5
	Matriculation	13	32.5
	Secondary	11	27.5
	Degree	0	0.0
Type of Farmer	Small Farmer	11	27.5
	Marginal Farmer	11	27.5
	Big Farmer	18	45.0
Type of land	Irrigated	17	42.5
	Garden	13	32.5
	Irrigated, Rainfed	1	2.5
	Irrigated, Garden	9	22.5

towards the agricultural programmes disseminated through various Tamil TV channels is not known. Hence, there is a need to understand the information through systematic research. A study was conducted to know the TV viewing pattern and the profile of farmers, the preference of farmer's over agricultural programmes and evaluate the farmer's perception over the content of the agricultural programmes telecasted through TV.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Details of agricultural telecasts

In Tamil Nadu, there were four popular channels which telecast agricultural programmes namely 'DD Podhigai' ('Ponvilaiyum bhoomi'), 'Makkal TV' ('Malarum bhoomi'), News 18('Payir thozil pazhagu') and 'Puthiyathalaimurai' ('Uzhavukku uyirootu'). 'DD Podhigai' was a free channel which telecast 'Ponvilaiyum bhoomi' during morning and

evening hours 5:30 -6:00, on daily basis. 'Makkal TV' was a paid channel and it telecast Malarum bhoomi during 5:30 -6:00 AM and 6:30-7:00 PM , on daily basis. 'Puthiyathalaimurai' was also a paid channel which telecast 'Uzhavukku uyirootu' during Saturday 4:30 PM -5:00 PM and Sunday 9:30 PM- 10:00 PM, on weekly basis. News 18 was an another paid channel which telecast 'Payir thozil pazhagu' during Saturday 8:30 PM-9:00 PM and Sunday 11.30 AM – 12.00 PM, on weekly basis.

Data collection procedure

The study was conducted in Namakkal district which comprised 64 blocks. Among these blocks, Rasipuram block was selected purposively since it was inhabited by farmers whose main occupation was agriculture. The block had 108 villages. The four villages with maximum number of direct-to-home (DTH) connections namely Kattanachempatty,

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Table 2. TV viewing pattern of farmers.

(n=40)

TV viewing pattern	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Purpose of watching	Entertainment	15	37.5
	Agricultural Programmes	13	32.5
	News	10	25
	Entertainment, Agricultural programmes, News	5	12.5
Frequency of watching	Very often	2	5
	Often	21	52.5
	Occasionally	15	37.5
	Rarely	12	30
Preferred watching time	Specific time	18	45
	Specific programme	13	32.5
	Flexible time	9	22.5
Preference to view agricultural programmes	Preferred	22	55
	Not preferred	18	45

Malayampatty, Pudhupati. R and Rasipuram were selected. From these 4 villages, a random sample of 40 farmers (10 farmers from each village) having TV sets and DTH connections were randomly selected for the study. Data from the respondents were gathered through pre-tested interview schedule. The data collected were classified according to standard procedures. The age classification was done based on International Standard on Age classification (1982). Education classification was done based on International Standard of Education. The data were tabulated and analysed using suitable statistical technique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-personal characteristics of farmers

The socio-personal characteristics of the farmers like age, gender, education, type of farmer (based on land holdings) and type of land (based on irrigation) were studied and subjected to percentage analysis (Table 1).

It can be seen that out of the total respondents 97.5 per cent were men and only 2.5 per cent women.

Most of the respondent were aged between 45-64 (62.5%) followed by the farmers aged between 25-44 (22.5%). The farmers were mostly educated up to matriculation level (32.5%) followed by secondary level (27.5%). Most of the respondents belong to the category of big farmers (45%) followed by small (27.5%) and marginal farmers (27.5%). Majority of the farmers had irrigated land (42.5%) followed by garden land (32.5%).

TV viewing pattern of farmers

The TV viewing pattern of farmers was studied by based on purpose of watching TV, frequency of watching, preferred watching time and also the preference of watching agricultural programmes (Table 2). It was evident that most of the farmers preferred entertainment programmes (37.5%) followed by agricultural programmes (32.5%). More than half of the respondents (52.5 %) watched TV often, 37.5 per cent farmers watched occasionally and less than one third (30.0%) of the farmers rarely watched TV programmes.

Majority of the farmers (45%) mostly preferred to watch TV at a specific time followed preference

Table 3. Farmers’ preference among agricultural telecasts.

Name of the Programme	Number of respondents *	
	Number	Per cent
Malarum bhoomi	17	42.5
Uzhavukku uyirootu	10	25.0
Payir thozil pazhagu	9	22.5
Ponvilaiyum bhoomi	7	17.5

*- Multiple response recorded

for specific programmes (32.5%). Majority of the farmers (55%) preferred to watch agricultural programmes.

Preference for TV programmes

The preference of agricultural programmes telecasted by ‘Makkal TV’, ‘DD Podhigai’, News 18, ‘Puthiyathalaimurai’ were recorded (Table 3).

It can be interpreted (Table 3) that most of the farmers preferred ‘Malarum bhoomi’ (42.5%) followed by ‘Uzhavukku uyirootu’ (25%). Farmers preferred ‘Malarum bhoomi’ and ‘Uzhavukku uyirootu’ over others Payir thozil pazhagu and Ponvilaiyum bhoomi because of practicability of the content. Farmers preferred these programmes due to content related to stories of successful farmers and discussion sessions.

Perception of farmers about agricultural telecasts

The perception analysis of farmers on the content of the agricultural programmes were studied through different attributes like satisfaction of the content, delivering the needed content, farmer friendly language, practicability, usefulness, extent of adoption, timeliness, real and exaggeration of content (Table 4).

It was observed (Table 4) that, among the farmers those who preferred to watch agricultural programmes; most of them were satisfied (77.23%) with the content while about one fifth (22.73%) of the farmers were not satisfied with the content of agricultural programmes. Similar finding also

reported by Sharma *et al* (2012) indicating that the farmers expressed un-satisfaction at the type of information is transmitted by one way media like TV.

Majority of the farmers (77.28%) were not satisfied with the delivery of the content. Devi and Sabharwal (2014) also criticized that the mass media were quick and economical but lack crucial elements of empathy and feedback which were apparent in face to face situation. Most of the farmer (95.45%) had the opinion that agricultural programmes used farmer friendly language. It seems the main reason for the popularity of TV lies in its simplicity for the audiences.

About sixty percent farmers (59.09%) agreed that the content and methods given were practicable. The great majority of farmers found the content and results as real (81.81%) while some farmers (18.18%) as exaggerated. About one half of the farmers (54.54%) reported that program were not timely i.e. according to crop season while 45.45% reported these programmes as timely. A great number of farmers *i.e.* 90.9% reported programme timings as suitable while remaining 9.09 per cent found programme timing as un-suitable.

Farmers suggested re-telecasting of the programmes at night, since they remain busy in fields at evening and morning times so they preferred night time. Even though, most of the farmers were not practising the content (77.27%) but 22.73 per cent of total respondents reported that they were practising learnt content. TV plays an important role in agricultural development and its

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Table 4. Perception analysis of farmer about the content of the programme.

(n=40)

Attributes	Category	Percentage of respondents
Satisfaction	Satisfied	77.23
	Unsatisfied	22.73
Delivering the needed content	Satisfied	22.72
	Unsatisfied	77.28
Farmer-friendly language	Satisfied	95.45
	Not satisfied	4.54
Practicability	Practicable	59.09
	Not practicable	40.91
Real or exaggeration	Real	81.81
	Exaggerated	18.19
Timeliness	Timely	45.46
	Not timely	54.54
Timing	Suitable	90.9
	Not-suitable	9.10
Adoption pattern of Farmers	Adopted	22.73
	Not-adopted	77.27
Usefulness	Useful	59.0
	Not useful	41.0
Preference for information	Neighbours	31.8
	Mass media	9.1
	Extension Agents	13.6
	Neighbours and Mass media	45.5
Preferred media	Newspaper	10.0
	TV	62.5
	Mobile & Internet	22.5
	Radio	5.0
Discussion about the content	Discussed	65.0
	Not discussed	35.0
Improvements needed	Yes	81.82
	No	18.18

effects are evident at the knowledge and awareness stages but its importance at other stages of adoption of innovation is also very high. About sixty percent of the farmers agreed that the programme were useful. The farmers mostly preferred their neighbour along with the media tools (45.5%) for transfer of technology followed by neighbours alone

(31.8%). They mostly preferred TV programmes (62.5%) for transfer of technology over mobile & internet (22.5%). About 2/3rd (65.0%) of the farmers discussed about the content of agricultural programmes with family, neighbours and with farming community. The majority of farmers (81.82%) had suggested improvements for the TV

programme. They suggested that the reason for low adoption of practices by farmers was due to lack of or low practicability of content and exaggeration. They also reported that that the agricultural telecasts were much more useful for big farmers and it was difficult for them to adopt suggested technologies due to lack of purchasing capacity and lack of supply of inputs in nearby areas. They adoption rate was even faster when the same technology was transferred through their neighbours and media tools. Majority of farmers gave first preference to TV. Murty and Abhinav (2012) also stated that in the context of India and Ethiopia TV played a most vital role as a medium of diffusion information about agriculture. Kavithaa and Vimal (2016) had suggested that Government and extension agencies should make special efforts to telecast agriculture and animal husbandry related programmes to promote economic development among them.

CONCLUSION

TV is an effective means for communication and technology transfer since it involves audio-visual features. Its simplicity; availability and accessibility make it powerful tool for farmers empowerment. Using TV information can be spread to a large group of audience within a short span of time and in a cost-effective manner. From the study, it can be concluded that, most of the viewer farmers were in old and middle aged category with an educational qualification up to matriculation. They mostly preferred entertainment and agricultural programmes to watch at a specific time. They mostly preferred 'Malarum bhoomi' programme of 'Makkal TV' and they preferred to watch at night. Since, TV uses audio-visual feature, it attracts the attention of more senses, which in turn facilitates easy understanding of content. They were satisfied with content and found content as

real and practicable. Some of them had adopted the learnt practices implying the role of role of TV in agricultural development. The farmers' preference towards these programmes can be increased further by providing up-to-date content, timely information, presenting information in regional dialect and delivering more information on Government schemes and policies.

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