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# EFFECTS OF MASS MEDIA UTILIZATION AMONG CASSAVA FARMERS IN OKOBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.

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**Abstract**

The study investigated the effect of mass media utilization among cassava farmers in Okobo Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State. Cassava farmers in the study area are formed the population of the study.A random sampling technique was used in the selection of 115 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage and mean. Results from the study shows that majority (50.4%) of the respondents were females. Most (76.5%) of the respondents had a household size of 1 – 5 persons. On the age of the respondents, majority (33.0%) fell within the age bracket of 36 – 45 years. Most of the respondents were married (38.3%) and educated (85.2%), had farming experience ranging from between 6 – 10 years (43.5%). Results on utilization of mass media revealed that radio had a mean score of 3.34, television (x= 3.24), newspaper (x= 1.84) and magazine (x= 1.92). Further results showed majority (72.2%) of the respondents agreed that mass media played major role in improvement and acquisition of improved seeds for planting, increased crop yield, profitability and improved timely information. Time of agricultural programme broadcast, erratic power supply, high cost of media devices, language barrier and institutional barrier were constraints faced by the respondents in study area in the utilization of mass media. The study concludes that the available mass media channels in the study area were capable of promoting agricultural development if the barriers or factors hindering utilization are removed. The study therefore recommends that social infrastructure should be provided in the study area to aid timely access to information and government should also re-orient its policies in order to harness information and communication technology potentials for

contributing to agricultural development in the rural areas of the state.

**Keywords: Effects, Utilization, Mass media, Cassava famers**

**Introduction**

In spite of growing urbanization and increased revenue from the oil sector, agriculture is still the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. Historical experiences have shown that there are no cases of successful development of countries in which the rise in agricultural productivity did not precede or accompany development (Audu, 2003).

Adams (1982) defined media as materials, objects, instruments or systems which serves to communicate information including leaflets, farming press, other written and printed materials, all types of cinema films, radio and television and video system. Communication has also been defined as a process by which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach mutual understanding. Rogers (1995) defined communication as a process of sending and receiving messages through channels and devices aimed at a convergence in meaning between a source and receiver.

The success of agricultural development programmes in developing countries largely depends on the nature and extent of use of mass media in the mobilization of people for development (Purushothaman, *et, al;* (2003). Thus, planners in developing countries have realized that, the development of agriculture could be hastened with effective use of mass media. Affirming this, Ajayi (2003) and Ani (2007) cited in Ndaghu and Taru (2012) noted that mass media are channels of communication which can expose large number of people to the same information at the same time within a short space of time. Furthermore, Shuwa *et, al;* (2015) see the mass media as agents of information education, entertainment and a source of motivation to farmers for accepting agricultural innovations. Therefore, mass media remains an important and necessary instrument which can act as a vehicle for agricultural technology transfer.

Ndaghu and Taru (2012) asserted that extension service organizations use mass media because of the high speed and low cost with which information can be communicated over a wide area. Therefore, mass media are generally useful as sources of initial information to farmers and veritable tools for conveying production information to farmers on new developments and emergencies. The media of mass dissemination of information makes it possible for the message to reach far beyond the immediate proximity of the sender. Orhewere (2012) identified media to include: the print (newspapers, magazines, books) and broadcast media (radio, television, film etc.).

Mass media constitute the main vehicle for wide and rapid transmission of agricultural information to farmers. According to Barn (1999) in Ani *et al* (2017), mass media teach new skills, attitudes and behaviours, and are therefore; a mobility multiplier with the capacity to communicate to large group of people. Also, Irfan *et al*. (2006) in Ani *et al* (2017)opined that mass media are used to reach a large number of people quickly. It is particularly useful in making large number of people aware of new ideas and practices, or alerting them of sudden emergencies. While the amount of detailed information that can be transmitted through mass media is limited, they can serve an important and valuable function of stimulating farmers' interest in new ideas. Once stimulated or made aware through mass media, farmers may seek additional information from neighbours, friends, extension agents or progressive farmers in the area (Behren and Evans, 1984).

It is against this background that this study is set out to find out alternative ways on how farmers in Okobo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria can effectively utilize the mass media for agricultural development.The overall objective of this study was to determine the effects of mass media utilization in agricultural development among farmers in Okobo Local Government Area.The specific objectives of this study were to;

i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of cassava farmers in Okobo Local Government Area;
ii. determine the extent of utilization of mass media by cassava farmers in the study area;
iii. identify the perceived roles which mass media play among cassava farmers in the study area;
iv. assess respondents' mass media preferences for sourcing agricultural information in the study area and;
v. identify the factors that affect the use of mass media by respondents in the study area.

**Methodology**

The study was carried out in Okobo Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom State. The area has a coordinate of $4^{0}$50'0 and $8^{0}$08'0"E.The LGA is bounded by Uruan Local Government Area to the south, Nsit Atai Local Government Area to the east, Oron Local Government Area to the west and Urue-Ofong/Oruko and Esit-Eket to the north. The area has (7) seven clans; Eta, Odu, Ataobong, Ukwong, Ebihi, Okiuso, and Ibighi.

The widely disputed result of the 2006 national population census put the population of

Okobo LGA at 102,753, with 52,395 males and 50,358 females. There are two distinct climatic seasons in the LGA; the rainy season which spans from March to October and dry season between November and February.The annual rainfall varies from 2,942mm to 3, 420 mm. The average temperature is about $28^0$C. Okobo is endowed with a tropical forest with mahogany for supply of wood for boat and canoe construction. There are significant deposits of clay and fine sand, fishing and farming are common in this LGA.

**Population and Sample Selection**

The population of the study consists of cassava farmers in Okobo LGA of Akwa Ibom State. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used in selecting clans, villages and respondents for the study. This was done to ensure unbiasedness in the choice of the respondents. At the first stage, four out of the seven clans were randomly selected. At the second stage, 5 villages were randomly selected from each of the selected clans to give a total of 20 villages. The final stage comprised random selection of 6 farmers from each of the 20 village to give a total of 120 farmers. However, 115 questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents and used for the study.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

All the Objectives were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Objectives1 and 3 were analyzed using mean, frequency counts, percentages and table.Objective 2 was analyzed using a 4-point Likert-type scale which was presented in the order: 4 = always, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, 1 = never. Objective 4 was analyzed using 3-point Likert-type scale. The media was presented in order of preference i.e. 3=most preferred, 2=preferred, 1=less preferred A mean weight was calculated to obtain respondents preference for three different mass media identified. Objective 5 was analyzed using a 4-point Likert scale type related as follow; 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3=Agree (A), 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean weight was calculated to obtain factors that affect the use of mass media.

**Results and Discussion**

**Socio-economic Characteristics ofRespondents**

The gender of an individual has a way of influencing the type and quality of work carried

out by the individual. Table 1 reveals that 50.4% of the respondents were females while 49.6percent were males. This corroborates earlier studies of Okwu and Acheneje (2011), Olukosi and Erhabor, (2008) and Olukunle (2004), who noted that the dominance of females in farming enterprises conform to the fact that farming, is highly laborious and technically and time demanding thus, attracted to more female farmers since they are always patient enough to go through the rigorous processes.

From Table 1, it can be observed that majority (33.0%) of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 36 – 45years, followed by respondents who are 45 years and above (24.3%). This agrees with the observation of Banjo,*et al*; (2009) who stated that population of age range between 35 and 45 years 45 years signifies the productive age which portends better future for agricultural production. About (38.3%) of the respondents were married, this suggests that the married farmers in the study area might have a reasonable family size providing more family labour compared to those with different marital status.

A farmer's level of education is expected to influence his innovativeness and ability to make decisions on various aspects of farming. Education is therefore highly important for sustainable mass media utilization as well as growth and development in the agricultural sector. A greater percentage of the respondents (34.8%) had up to HND/BSC/B.Agric. This implies that the respondents are not likely to have much difficulty in understanding and utilizing mass media technologies and innovation.

Farming experience, generally correlates with acquisition of improved skills in agricultural production. The result shows that many (43.5%) of the respondents had farming experience ranging between 6 and 10 years. This indicates that the farmers had reasonable years of farming experience that would facilitate their acquisition of some good skills in utilizing mass media for agricultural information acquisition.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents based on Socio-Economic Characteristics (n= 115)**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | |
| Male | 57 | 49.6 |
| Female | 58 | 50.4 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18 – 25 | 23 | 20.0 |
| 26-35 | 26 | 22.6 |
| 36-45 | 38 | 33.0 |
| 45 and above | 28 | 24.3 |
| **Marital status** | | |
| Single | 42 | 36.5 |
| Married | 44 | 38.3 |
| Divorced | 9 | 7.8 |
| Widow | 11 | 9.6 |
| Widower | 9 | 7.8 |
| **Educational Attainment** | | |
| No formal education | 17 | 14.8 |
| Primary education | 10 | 8.7 |
| Secondary level | 26 | 22.6 |
| NCE/OND | 18 | 15.7 |
| HND/BSC/B.Agric | 40 | 34.8 |
| MSc/Ph.D | 4 | 3.5 |
| **Farming Experience** | | |
| 1-5yrs | 37 | 32.2 |
| 6-10yrs | 50 | 43.5 |
| 11-15yrs | 18 | 15.7 |
| 16yrs and above | 10 | 8.7 |
| **Household size** | | |
| 1-5 | 88 | 76.5 |
| 6-10 | 25 | 21.8 |
| 11 and above | 2 | 1.7 |
| **Secondary occupation** | | |
| Civil servant | 38 | 33.0 |
| Pensioner | 11 | 9.6 |
| Artisan | 5 | 4.3 |
| Okada/bus drive | 8 | 7.0 |
| Keke rider | 9 | 7.8 |
| Large scale trader | 15 | 13.0 |
| Petty trader | 16 | 13.9 |
| Others | 13 | 11.3 |

**Source:** Field survey, 2019

**Extent of Utilization of Mass Media by the Respondents**

Table 2 shows the mean scores for the frequency of utilization of mass media by the respondents. The mean scores of the responses were calculated and ranked. The Table shows that the mass media frequently used included radio (x= 3.34), television (x= 3.24) and magazine (x= 1.92), while newspaper was the least utilized with a mean score of 1.84. This implies that radio and television were utilized very frequently by the farmers in Okobo, and reception of agricultural information channeled through these media will be high. This may be attributed to accessibility of these media tools as reflected in Table 2. This could be suggesting that the farmers who had low usage of some of the facilities were those who do not have interest in using these tools or perhaps they have scanty knowledge of how to use these media sources. This findings corroborates that of Obinna, (2014) that farmers mostly used radio and television for farm information since they could not use most of the computer based ICT components due to their high computer illiteracy coupled with other barriers and stressed on the need to build the capacity of the farmers in computer skills and literacy and to encourage them to own personal computers, to benefit fully from the advantages offered by the ICT technologies in modern agriculture.

**Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents based on Extent of Utilization of Mass Media**

| Extent of Utilization of Mass Media | Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Mean | Mean Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Television | 58(232) | 35(105) | 14(28) | 8(8) | 3.24 | 2 |
| Radio | 65(260) | 28(84) | 18(36) | 4(4) | 3.34 | 1 |
| Newspaper | - | - | 94(194) | 18(18) | 1.84 | 4 |
| Magazine | - | - | 106(212) | 4(9) | 1.92 | 3 |

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

**Analysis on Perceived Roles of Mass Media by the Respondents**

Mass media is crucial for increasing agricultural production and improving marketing and distribution strategies (Oladele, 2006). Information from mass media also opens windows for sharing experiences, best practices, sources of financial aids and new markets. By the same token, information enables farmers to make informed decisions regarding production and marketing and managing their lives successfully to cope with everyday problems and to realize their opportunities (Matavelo, 2008; Idiebeyan-ose *et, al;*2009). Results from analyzed data reveal that mass media were quite beneficial to farmers in

Okobo LGA as presented in Table 3.It was found that majority of the respondents (72.2%) agreed that mass media played a major role in the improvement and acquisition of improved seeds for planting, increased crop yield, profitability, and provides timely information. Similarly, majority (81.7% and 76.5%) of the respondents affirmed that listening to radio has given them awareness on new agricultural inputs and has introduced them to cooperative societies that have turned things around for them respectively. Agricultural experts have repeatedly pointed out that solution to agricultural production problems will require awareness and proper understanding of production techniques (Olaniyi, Adetumbi, and Adereti (2013), Aldashev; *et, al*;2016). Hence, rural farmers really need to harness the mass media to seek information about agricultural activities and how best to respond to innovations in agricultural production strategies.

**Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents based on Perceived Roles of Mass Media (n= 115)**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Roles of mass media** | | |
| Improvement in seeding | 8 | 7.0 |
| Increase profitability | 12 | 10.4 |
| Increase crop yield | 5 | 4.3 |
| Timely information | 7 | 6.1 |
| All of the above | 83 | 72.2 |
| **Awareness of new agricultural input as a result of listening to radio** | | |
| Yes | 94 | 81.7 |
| No | 21 | 18.3 |
| **Means of awareness of cooperative society** | | |
| Radio | 88 | 76.5 |
| TV | 23 | 20.0 |
| Newspaper | 4 | 3.5 |

**Source:** Field survey, 2019.

**Mass Media Preference for Sourcing Agricultural Information**

Table 4 shows the mass media channels farmers considered more preferable in gathering agricultural information in the study area. A three-point Likert scale consisting of most preferred, preferred and less preferred, was employed and a cut-off point of 2.0 was taken. The Table shows that radio with a mean value of 2.4was the most preferred mass media channel by the respondents in the study area, followed by television (x= 1.5), Newspaper (x= 1.1) and magazine (x= 1.1). Mass media with a mean value less than 2.0 were considered less preferred hence not well utilized by the farmers. From Table 3, it can be seen that majority (67.0%) of the respondents preferred radio most as their media channel, 7.0% just preferred

while 26.1% less preferred radio. The Table shows that the least most preferred sources where newspaper and magazine showing that they were most preferred by only 0.9% and 3.3% of the respondents respectively.

**Table 4: Mass Media Preference for Sourcing Agricultural Information**

| S/n | Preferred Mass Media Channel | Most preferred | Preferred | Less preferred | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Radio | 77 (67.0) | 8 (7.0) | 30 (26.1) | 2.4 |
| **2** | TV | 19 (16.5) | 5 (4.3) | 91 (79.1) | 1.5 |
| **3** | Newspaper | 1 (0.9) | 5 (4.3) | 109 (94.8) | 1.1 |
| **4** | Magazine | 4 (3.3) | 2 (1.7) | 109 (94.8) | 1.1 |

**Source:** Field survey, 2019**.**

**Note:** Values in parenthesis represents the percentages while that outside parentheses represents the frequencies.

**Conclusion**

The study has shown that few mass media channels are available to farmers in Okobo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study also revealed that the major mass media channels utilized by the respondents were radio, television and newspapers. Despite the availability of these mass media channels, the study has discovered major constraints to mass media utilization to include; time of agricultural programme broadcast, erratic power supply, and high cost of media devices. Based on the above findings, it is logical to conclude in this study that the available mass media channels in the study area are capable of promoting agricultural development if the barriers or factors hindering utilization are removed.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

i. Social infrastructure such as electricity should be provided in the study area to aid timely access to information since most of the sources utilized by the respondents depend on electricity for their functionality.

ii. Agricultural programmes should broadcast, especially on radio and television at a time when the farmers consider convenient.

iii. Radio and television should be used as a major channel of communication with the farmers, since they prefer communication using these channels.

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