

FARMERS' AWARENESS OF AGRI. RADIO AND TV BROADCASTS AND THEIR PREFERENCES FOR DIFFERENT FORMATS IN THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

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The paper is a reflection of farmers' awareness about various avenues of agri. information available in terms of agri. radio/TV broadcasts besides looking into their preferences regarding various formats of the broadcasts. Awareness regarding agricultural radio and TV broadcasts can pave the way acquiring agricultural information thereby leading towards its subsequent adoption by farmers. Considering the significance of electronic media in swift information delivery to the clientele at larger scale, the study was conducted in three districts of the Punjab taken from various agro-ecological zones of the province. The study districts included Faisalabad (Mix cropping zone), Sheikhpura (Rice zone), and Rahim Yar Khan (Cotton zone). The data were collected with the help of a pretested and validated interview schedule. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The overall scenario revealed that the awareness of agri. radio broadcasts was very poor as a vast majority (80.3% and above) was quite unaware of agri. radio broadcasts. However, agri. TV broadcasts were relatively better in this regard. The most favourite formats of the broadcasts as perceived by the respondents were dramatic presentation (score value 556) followed by panel discussion (549) while straight talks were least preferred. For harnessing the maximum benefits from the agri. broadcasts the farmers should be made aware of the regular agri. radio/TV broadcasts. Moreover, it is also recommended that the producers of agri. radio/TV broadcasts should give the priority to the dramatic format of the agri. programme for creating interest among the farmers.

Key words: awareness of agri. broadcasts, radio, TV, electronic media

Introduction

Agricultural extension facilitates the dissemination of agricultural technologies to the farming community through various communication channels including electronic media (Ahmad et al., 2007). Among electronic media radio and TV are very common and are expected to play an important role in this context. The contribution of TV and radio with the perspective of transition for development is vital (Bhatia, 2005). Moreover, Bhat-tacharjee (2005) highlighted the importance of these media with respect to coverage and speed for better communication. The technological development in radio and TV also looks a healthy sign for getting more benefits from these media.

Farmers always need agricultural information for which they may use a number of agri. information sources including mass media like radio, TV (Irfan, 2005) which are easily accessible to them. Radio is a medium with multifaceted benefits (Fossard, 2005). Irfan et al. (2006) found TV in a leading position as compared to radio for obtaining agricultural information and its perceived effectiveness. Farooq et al. (2007) affirmed that TV also appeared as a prominent medium for agri. information. Radio and TV have opened new horizons of information for farmers as well as other people for getting multidimensional benefits (Singh, 2001).

These media can be used in an effective way for information dissemination keeping in view various aspects like

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wide coverage, low cost easy access to people (Singh, 2007). Shaikh (2007) while giving an overview of media in Pakistan pointed out that radio occupied a prominent position with respect to its popularity among the masses, however, with the passage of time TV appeared a very strong medium.

Ramchandani (2004) highlighted the importance of TV and radio in dissemination of information in the milieu of massive coverage with attractive messages. Butt (2002) argues that TV is said to be the most efficient medium for disseminating agricultural information among the farmers and the extent of information obtained through TV may be considered as an indicator of usefulness and effectiveness of the medium. He emphasized that programmes should be attractive, interesting and easy to understand. Awareness of the respondents about various agri. programs reflects the popularity of agri. broadcasts among the farmers. Knowledge of the farmers about various agri. programs telecast on TV not only shows their interest in the programs but also reflects the effectiveness of programs as perceived by the farmers (ibid). Therefore, an attempt has been made to assess the awareness of farmers about various agri. Radio and TV broadcasts besides knowing their preferences about various formats of agri. broadcasts.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Punjab province. Three districts Faisalabad (Mix cropping zone), Sheikhpura (Rice zone), and Rahim Yar Khan (Cotton zone) were selected. From each of the selected districts, five union councils were selected randomly and from each of the selected union councils, two

villages were selected at random. From each of the selected village, 10 farmers were selected randomly, thereby making a sample of 300 farmers. For data collection, an interview schedule was developed and pre-tested for its validity and reliability. The data were collected by a team having sufficient background of agriculture and interviewing skills under the close supervision of the researchers. The collected data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used besides using a five point Likert scale to determine respondents' preferences regarding different formats of agricultural radio/TV broadcasts. Weighted scores were computed by multiplying the score values with the frequency counts and then adding up the same against each format under study.

Results and Discussion

Awareness about agricultural radio/TV broadcasts

There were six agricultural radio broadcasts namely Sandhal Dharti (Faisalabad); Khait Khait Haryali (Lahore); Jithey Teray Hal Wagday (Lahore); Wasnay Rehan Gran (Rawalpindi); Utum Khaiti (Multan); and Dharti Bakht Bahar (Bahwalpur). The other agri. radio broadcasts were short messages and advertisements. Concerning agri. TV broadcasts there were two prominent programmes i.e. Kissan Time and Haryali in addition to short messages and advertisements. The respondents were enquired about the awareness of above mentioned agri. radio/TV broadcasts and the information collected in this regard is depicted in Table 1.

The information given in Table I reflects a desperate scenario pertinent to the awareness about agri. radio broadcasts.

Table 1
Distribution of respondents according to their awareness about agricultural radio/TV broadcasts

Agri. Radio/TV Broadcasts	Faisalabad (N = 100)		Sheikhpura (N = 100)		Rahim Yar Khan (N = 100)		Total (N = 300)	
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware
(a) Radio	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sandhal Dharti	16	84	12	88	-	100	9.3	90.7
Khait Khait Haryali	15	85	16	84	3	97	11.3	88.7
Jithey Teray Hal Wagday	17	83	8	92	2	98	9.0	91.0
Wasnay Rehan Gran	-	100	-	100	-	100	-	100.0
Utum Khaiti	-	100	-	100	15	85	5.0	95.0
Dharti Bakht Bahar	-	100	-	100	15	85	5.0	95.0
Short Messages	21	79	16	84	22	78	19.7	80.3
Advertisement	22	78	15	85	11	89	16.0	84.0
(b) TV								
Kissan Time	36	64	49	51	15	85	33.3	66.7
Haryali	14	86	37	63	31	69	27.3	72.7
Short Messages	55	45	70	30	69	31	64.7	35.3
Advertisements	57	43	66	34	32	68	51.7	48.3

In this context, it appeared from the data that unawareness about agri. broadcasts was more conspicuous in all the districts (78% and above). None of the respondents was found aware of "Wasnay Rehan Gran" in all the three districts. Similarly, "Utum Khaiti" and "Dharti Bakht Bahar" depicted a poor picture in terms of awareness.

Looking at the overall portrayal, it is reflected from the data that a vast majority (80.3% and above) was quite unaware of agri. radio broadcasts. However, awareness pertaining to short messages was relatively high (19.7%) followed by advertisements (16%). Awareness about radio programmes "Khait Khait Haryali" (11.3%) was relatively ahead followed by "Sandhal Dharti" and Jithey Teray Hal Wagday" (9%). "Utum Khaiti" and Dharti Bakht Bahar" were at the lower positions.

The data given in Table 1 also depict that awareness regarding agri. TV broadcasts were relatively more than that of agri. radio broadcasts. It appeared from the data that short messages and advertisements were relatively at more prominent place followed by "Kissan Time" and "Haryali". In the total picture, more or less similar pattern came on the scene where short messages and advertisements were known to 64.7 and 51.7% of the respondents respectively. While regarding agri. TV programme, unawareness was dominant in case of "Haryali" and "Kissan Time".

It may be inferred from the above results that unawareness about agri. radio programme and agri. TV programme were more prevalent. However, the awareness regarding short messages and advertisements in cases of agri. radio/TV broadcasts reflects a relatively healthy sign of popularity thereof.

The present findings are supported by those of Khan et al. (2010) affirmed that the awareness regarding agri. radio/TV broadcasts appeared as weak. However, among these broadcasts, awareness regarding short messages and advertisements were relatively more than that of other programmes. The findings are also in line with those of Irfan (2005) in terms of unawareness of agri. radio broadcasts. In another study, Muhammad et al. (2004) also revealed that majority of

the respondents was unaware of regular agricultural broadcasts. Similarly, Abbas et al. (2003) in their study conducted in the Punjab province disclosed that majority of the respondents did not report the names of agricultural radio and TV broadcasts.

Respondents' preferences regarding formats of agricultural radio/tv broadcasts with respect to effective information dissemination

The presentation style/format of the broadcast can be closely linked with its effectiveness. According to Butt (2002), it is the presentation style which may contribute in making a programme interesting and attractive. Agricultural programmes may be presented in various formats such as documentaries, features, interviews, discussions and straight talks.

Knowledge about the preferences of the respondents regarding various formats of agri. programmes can be useful in effectively delivery the messages through media. For this purpose, the respondents were asked about this aspect and their responses were recorded on a five point Likert scale. The weighted scores of all the given formats were calculated by multiplying the score value allotted to each category of the scale with frequency count, which are depicted in Tables 2.

The information depicted in Table 2 reflects that preferences for various formats varied in the three districts. In Faisalabad district, the respondents gave first preference to "interview" in Sheikhpura district, the respondents gave first preference to "dramatic presentation", while in Rahim Yar Khan district, the respondents gave priority to "panel discussion". In all the districts, "straight talk" got the least preference by the respondents. Overall, the respondents' first choice was "dramatic presentation" (score value 556), followed by "panel discussion" with score value 549, and "interview" with score value 492.

The results are more or less similar (in some aspects) to those of Butt (2002) who found that most of the respondents preferred dramatic presentation as well as documentaries, no one preferred straight talks. Interviews and features were

Table 2
Respondents' preferences regarding formats of agricultural radio/TV broadcasts with respect to effective information dissemination by districts

Format	Faisalabad	Sheikhpura	Rahim Yar Khan	Total	Rank Order
	Score	Score	Score	Score	
Dramatic presentation	138	252	166	556	1
Panel discussion	165	197	187	549	2
Interview	176	153	163	492	3
Straight talk	124	119	142	385	4

also reported by a negligible number of respondents. In another study conducted in Faisalabad district, Khan (2010) found that interview was format preferred the most by the respondents. In a study conducted in Faisalabad district, Khan and Shabbir (2000) revealed that suggested formats (by the farmers) of “Sandhal Dharti” programme were interview with farmers and question answer sessions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Farmers’ awareness of agri. radio broadcasts was very poor. However, their awareness regarding agri. TV broadcasts was relatively more than that of agri. radio broadcasts. The most favourite formats as perceived by the respondents were dramatic presentation followed by panel discussion.

There is a dire need to create awareness about regular agri. radio/TV broadcasts through all possible means so that the farmers may get benefit from these programmes. Extension field staff can play an important role in this regard. Dramatic presentation was the most favourite format as perceived by the respondents, thus, it is recommended that the producers of agri. radio/TV broadcasts should prefer the said format to create interest among the farmers.

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