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The Role of Television in Dissemination of Agricultural Related Information among Farmers

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Abstract: Pakistan is an agricultural country and agriculture has remained the mainstay of the Pakistan economy as it provides employment to 45% of the population. In addition, it has continuously provides input for the agro based industry. Agriculture income has created demand for industrial products. Agriculture provides the main impetus to economic growth by creating additional demand of goods and services. Nonetheless, agriculture sector in Pakistan is lacking in term of information technology usage. Such situation has resulted a need for developing agro based information technology facilities for farmers to augment their agriculture productivity. The main objective of this study was to analyse the perceptions on the role of television in dissemination of agricultural related information among farmers in Sindh, Pakistan. Quantitative approach by means of survey questionnaire was adopted to generate the primary data of the study where a total of 300 farmers from the District Jamshoro, Sindh province in Pakistan were selected as the main respondents of the study. The study indicates that only small number of respondent preferred to watch agriculture related program on television and more than half of them understand that television is not the main source of agriculture information dissemination among farmers. A large majority of the respondent said that television is not providing such kind of programs which can increase their income. Findings of the study further shown that a large majority of the respondents have their own television set.

Key words: Television set, agriculture information, farmers development, agriculture development, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, first television station was introduced in 1964 and the main aim of such introduction was to raise the nation generally, socially and culturally. As Pakistan gained its independent on 14th of August 1947 and by that time was a new state and under-developed, it was assumed that media particularly the television could bring the changes and support through the diffusion of information and knowledge with regard to education, health and agriculture. Primarily, television centre was set up with the help of UNESCO, Colombo Plan and Japanese government. During the early establishment, the government of Pakistan has set up a private company with collaboration of Japanese Nippon Electrical Company (NEC) and Thomas Television International which initially started their television programming in 1964. Currently, Pakistan has five television stations in the country including Karachi and Rawalpindi which was established in 1967 while Peshawar and Quetta were established in 1975. Great development on television broadcasting has resulted in the first colour transmission were switched over in 1976. Furthermore, the fifth television station, Pakistan Television (PTV) started PTV world channel in 1991 (Zia, 2007).

Television is one of the powerful channels of the mass media which transmit agricultural technology information to the farmers at instance. It can be said that most important communication tools presented today is the mass media and through the usage of this technology, agriculture related information can be transferred easily to the farmers (Irfan *et al*., 2006).

According to Hussain mass communication is one of the most important methods in transferring of agricultural technology through mass media like radio, television, documentary film and print media. There is need of using

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the new farming technologies to enhance the productivity of agriculture in Pakistan. Such technologies are beneficial for farmers to increase their productivity and gain better market prices. Muhammad (2001) described the significance of television for rural communities and agriculture development. Television produces many agriculture programs for the rural communities in their local languages.

Khan (2002) explained that Pakistan per hectare yield of almost all crops is far below than other countries. There is need to increase farmers access to adopt ICT in the field of agriculture. Under such condition farmers need sufficient information exposure to the latest technologies and mass media is believed to have the capacity to disseminate the sufficient information effectively.

Mahmood and Sheikh reported that mass media are playing very significant role in creating awareness and updating knowledge about latest agriculture technology information among farmers. Media is one the best sources in spreading information about new technologies and innovations among farmers which is faster than personnel contacts. Communication technology is needed and it is crucial in creating awareness about different agricultural technologies among farmers.

Doubtlessly, radio and television are effective mechanisms for diffusing the technical, systematic and scientific information to the people. In a country where literacy level is very low especially in rural areas, the roles of mass media are very crucial. Within this context, the television and radio are playing the major role in transferring modern agricultural technology to educated and uneducated farmers within a short time (Nazari and Hasbullah, 2008). Mass media offer powerful channels for communicating agricultural messages and related information which can enhance the capacity building of farmers. Broadcast media have the ability to disseminate information to large audiences efficiently and television can be the preferred channel among farmers (Nazari and Hassan, 2011).

Statement of research problem: Farmers are facing many problems in rural areas and inadequate access towards proper agriculture knowledge and information is one of identified problems. Lack of awareness and resources have resulted in a slim network for farmers to market their product. In addition, illiteracy is one of the main problems among farmers. Such problems have resulted in inadequacy on information related to pesticide, fertilizers and new techniques and technology in farming. Information through mass media is spreading very fast. But non-availability of infrastructure and electricity is one of the big problems in rural areas where people could not know how to use these technologies in proper way.

It is expected that latest technology accessibility could producing centres and successfully transmitting information with regard to modern agricultural techniques to the farmers (Muhammad *et al*., 2004). Farmers need to be informed and educated about enhanced agricultural practices as it shall enable them to double their productivity and income. Several channels such as extension agents, individuals and farmer to farmer can transfer the information regarding agriculture related problems. Electronic media such as radio, television, film, slides and film strips have been widely used to disseminate information to farmers in rural areas but due to non-availability of electricity, farmers are still facing many problems to gain agriculture information (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1992; Olowu and Oyedokun, 2000).

In developing countries, television is the most important medium for communicating information among rural people (FAO, 1998). Due to geographical factors, rural people are facing many problems and hindrances to gain the agriculture information. Farmers have no accessibility and approach to obtain information in rural areas.

Research questions: The discussions are exploring the main problems and issues on role of disseminating the agricultural related programs by the television channels in Sind, Pakistan. A number of questions have been asked on this. Therefore, based on the discussions presented, the following research questions are therefore formulated and outlined:

- What are the respondents' television viewing habits in Sindh, Pakistan?
- What are the respondents' perceptions on the role of television in dissemination of agricultural related information in Sindh, Pakistan?

Objectives of the study: The main objective of the study is to examine the role of television channel on disseminating the agricultural information in Sindh, Pakistan. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine respondents' television viewing habits in Sindh, Pakistan
- To identify respondents' perceptions on the role of television in dissemination of agricultural related information in Sindh, Pakistan?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was quantitative in nature whereby the respondents of the study were interviewed based on the developed questionnaire and their responses were recorded by the interviewer. A total of 300 of the respondents from District Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan were selected for this study. These respondents were interviewed on March 2011 to obtain their perceptions and views about dissemination agricultural related information on television channel in Sindh, Pakistan. A purposive sample was used in major agro-ecological areas were selected for data collection in district. The quantitative data obtained were analyzed by using the SPSS.

Respondents demography: In terms of respondents demography, the data shown in Table 1 shows that the distribution of the respondents gender, marital status, age group, education achievement and monthly income. Data gained have indicated that there is a significant relationship between dissemination information with regard to agricultural related knowledge and television viewing habits among the respondents.

The data shown in Table 1 clearly indicated that the respondents of the study were comprised of mainly male respondents. It can identified that majority of the respondents of the study were married, comprised of 239 individuals (79.7%) who were married as compared to 64 individuals (20.3%) were not married. The age distribution of the respondents' data explored that a majority of the respondents are aged between 30-39 (46%) years old while 94 (31.3%) respondents age was 40-49 years. Furthermore, 49 (16.4%) respondents age was 20-29 years old. Only 19 (16.3%) respondents age was 51-59 years.

In term of level of education among farmers, a majority of the respondents had no formal education which comprises of 170 individuals (85.0%) while 68 (22.7%) of respondents possess matriculation certificate. Apart from this a total of 46 (15.3%) of respondent possess education primary level of education. A total of 11 (3.7%) of respondents were intermediate and only 5 (1.7%) of them possess bachelor certificates.

Table 1 shows data with regard to income per month which indicated that majority of the respondents (31.7%) earned monthly income of 3001-5.000 rupees while 26.0% of respondents' income was >10 thousand in a month. However, 16.7% of the respondents' earned between 1000-3000 rupee per month. A total of 16.0% of respondents earned 7001-10000 rupee in a month while 9.7% of them earned respondent 5001-7000 rupee in a month. Majority of the respondents' income level was at the lower range and this might be the main reason why some of the respondents not even afford to purchase television sets.

Table 1: Respondents' demographic data

Demographic data	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
20-29	49	16.3
30-39	138	46.0
40-49	94	31.3
50-59	19	6.3
Gender		
Male	300	100.0
Female	-	-
Marital status		
Single	61	20.3
Married	239	79.7
Education level		
No formal education	170	56.7
Primary education	46	15.3
Matriculation	68	22.7
Intermediate	11	3.7
B.A	5	1.6
Monthly income		
1000-3000	50	16.7
3001-5000	95	31.7
5001-7000	29	9.7
7001-10000	48	16.0
>10000	78	26.0

Table 2: Ownership of television set

Television ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	263	87.7
No	37	12.3

The respondents' television ownership and viewing habits will be shown in Table 2 were mostly focused on respondents ownership of television the television viewing on a daily and weekly basis among the respondents programmes.

The ownership of television sets at home, the results of the study as indicates in Table 2 that a majority of the respondents, 263 of respondents (87.7%) revealed that they own have television set at home however, a small number of the respondents, comprising of 37 of respondents (12.3%) was no television set at their home.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In term of daily television watching habits among farmers, a total of 184 respondents (61.3%) watch television between 3-4 h day^{-1} while 72 of them (24.0%) watch television 1-2 h daily and 14.7% of the respondents watch television daily between 5-6 h. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents, comprising of 104 respondents (34.7%) who said they watch television between 3-4 days per week and 93 (31.0%) of them watch television for 5-6 days in a week. This is again a strong suggestion of high availability rate of television viewing among the farmers of the study. In relation to this, the

government and television stations should capitalise on this point and should therefore focus more on introducing more agricultural-related development programmes on television. Furthermore, 78 (26%) of the respondents told that they watch television 7 days in a week and it can be identified that most of the farmers have their own television set at home and watch it daily. However, 25 (8.3%) of respondents only watch 1-2 days in a week and there are probability that they have limited time to watch television daily as most of them spent most of their day in the farm for conducting their farming routine. With regard to television knowledge satisfactory as shown in Table 3, it reflects that 157 (52.3%) of the respondent claimed that television did not broadcast satisfactory information regarding agriculture related information while 91 (30.3%) of the respondents understand that television provide satisfactory knowledge about agriculture development. Nonetheless, a total of 52 (17.3%) of the respondents understand that some time television broadcast satisfactory information about agriculture fertilization and use of pesticide in farming. The respondents were also asked about their preferred program and majority of them (29.3%) said that they prefer to watch drama as it fulfil their entertainment needs. A total of 28.2% of the respondents watch news on television as it keep them up to date on the current local and international situations. It is good to know that 54 (18%) of the respondents prefer to watch agriculture related program and 28 (9.3%) of respondents watch educational programs and only 9 (3%) of respondent watch sports. Data analysed have revealed that more than half of the respondents (54.3%) said that television is not the best source for disseminating agricultural related information. Only 19 (6.3%) of respondents understand that television is the best source for disseminating agriculture information among masses.

The respondents were also asked on whether agriculture programs on television has any impacts on their income and most of the them (84.3%) said that television was not play any role in increasing their agricultural income as compared to 19 respondents (6.3%) who understand that television was very good for in terms of increasing their agricultural income. In addition, 28 respondents (14.0%) felt television some time provide important information in increasing their agricultural income. The assumption can be made on respondents' findings that the content of television programmes may not be devoted fully on agricultural-related programmes therefore, farmers only gain other information, especially about politics, economics and fluctuations of the country. In terms of time allocation to watch the programs on television, majority of the respondents (81.7%) said that 7-10 pm is the best time for for them to watch the agricultural related programs on television. However, 32 (10.7%) of respondents understand that from 1-6 pm is good time for watching agricultural related programs. Furthermore, only 23 (7.7%) of respondents indicated that they prefer to watch agricultural related program from 7 am to 12 noon. On the finding basis it can be said that majority of respondents prefer to watch agricultural related program in evening time as most of their farming routines are conducted during morning and afternoon (Table 4).

Table 3: Television watching habits among farmers

Viewing habits	Frequency	Percentage
Daily hours watching television		
1-2	72	24.0
3-4	184	61.3
5-6	44	14.7
Days watching television in a week		
1-2	25	8.3
3-4	104	34.7
5-65	93	31.0
7 days in a week	78	26.0
Television telecast agricultural related data information is satisfactory		
Yes	91	30.3
No	157	52.3
Sometime	52	17.4
What kind of program you prefer to watch on television		
Education	28	9.3
Drama	88	29.3
Entertainment	34	11.3
Agricultural related program	54	18.0
News	85	28.3
Sport	9	3.0
The television is best source for disseminating agriculture information		
Yes	82	27.3
No	163	54.3
Sometimes	54	18.0
Agricultural television program on television has impact on your income?		
Yes	19	6.3
No	253	84.3
No response	28	9.3

Table 4: Respondents response about increase their income

Agriculture programs on television has any impact on your income?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	6.3
No	253	84.3
Sometimes	28	9.4
Preferred time to watch television agriculture program		
7.00 am to 12.00 pm	23	7.7
1.00 pm to 6.00 pm	32	10.7
7.00 pm to 10.00 pm	245	81.7

CONCLUSION

Results indicated that majority (87.7%) of the respondents have their own television sets. Meanwhile, only 18% of the respondents prefer to watch the agricultural related programs on television and 54.3% of them claimed that television is not main source for

disseminating agriculture information. Furthermore, it was disclosed that 6.3% of the respondents said that television programs enhanced their source of income. Based on the results gained, it can be concluded that the contribution of television in disseminating the agriculture information to farmers can be considered as low.

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