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Farmers' perception about agricultural advertisements in leading newspapers in Siang province, Arunachal Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Evidently, the agricultural sector is attracting numerous investors who are learned but have little or no technical knowledge of agricultural production. Potentials of agricultural production are yet to be explored in print media to disseminate agricultural information in order to promote success of agriculture as an enterprise. The study therefore investigated readership of agricultural advertisements in leading newspapers in West Sinag district of Arunachal Pradesh State, India. A list of four hundred and one (401) farmers was obtained from the local government office and thirty percent (30%) (122) of the farmers were randomly selected. A structured questionnaire guide containing open and close questions was used to elicit information from the respondents. The result of the analysis revealed that majority (79.50%) were between the age of 30 to 50, also indicates high (67.2.00%) literacy level above primary education. On marital status, (83.00%) were married, 78.6% of the farmers practiced farming as prime occupation, appreciable number (27.5%) have above 26 years farming experience. Quite high (63.11%) level of readership is recorded among respondents with larger percentage (43.4%) read newspaper daily. Respondents' perception and attitude (66.4 and 74.6%) were favourably disposed to advertising respectively. The inferential statistics analysis shows education (chi-square = 21.07; $p \leq 0.01$) significantly related with respondents' perception of agricultural advertisements. However, marital status (chi-square = 10.48; $p \geq 0.57$) and farming experience (chi-square = 25.25; $p \geq 0.11$) were not significantly related. Correlation analysis of farmers attitude and perception of agricultural advertisements in newspapers was found to be significant ($r = 0.385$; $p \leq 0.000$). Agricultural advertisements are a vanguard for awareness creation, boost agricultural enterprise and dissemination of agricultural information will receive wider reach within and outside farming population.

Keywords: Agricultural advertisement, Readership, Newspapers

Introduction

Agricultural extension, being a specialized form of adult education in agriculture is an educational process. It is mainly a communication process between extension agents and rural dwellers. It is very useful for involving rural dwellers in the agricultural development process, to teach them better farming practices with the aim of increasing their productivity and enhance their standard of living. Being mainly communication process, it requires efficient communication process (Adekun *et al.*, 2006) [1]. According to Rogers *et al.* (1998) [2], communication is a process that involves the exchange of ideas between two or more individuals in an attempt to arrive at convergence in meaning. James, (1990) [3] opined that communication is a process involving the passing of messages from one person to another through the use of symbols which all parties in the communication process understand. Communication is a two-way process in which the sender and receiver of information are seen as active participants who are involved in an exchange process and therefore, swap roles. The bottom line is the assertion by Rogers *et al.* (1981) [4] as quoted by Agbamu (2006) [5] is that communication is a transactional process that involves the exchange of ideas between two or more individuals in an attempt to arrive at a convergence in meaning.

Agriculture is becoming increasingly information intensive. At the same time, information and communication technology provides a range of sophisticated methods for enhancing communication with farmers. But much work remains to assess the effectiveness and feasibility of various communication strategies. Although electronic media are playing an ever more important role in agricultural communication, print media will surely remain an important source of agricultural information in many parts of the world for some years to come. It is important to assess the degree to which media such as newspapers and magazines can play an important role in fostering the diffusion of useful information to farmers.

emphasized that leading newspapers editors place more importance on national, regional and local politics, spicy news of big personalities of the country and revenue generating content than agricultural subject matter, which is necessary in stimulating development of farmers. Farmers who read newspapers and farm magazines are more likely to adopt more of all types of improved practices than those who do not. This can have

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effect on their perception of such advertisements. Now that the agricultural sector is attracting numerous investors who are learned but have little or no technical knowledge of agricultural production, it is therefore important that they are adequately considered in dissemination of agricultural information. The newspaper has pioneered the idea of encouraging farmers to regard themselves as sources of material and as authors of articles, and operates with the philosophy that farmers are most interested in hearing about the experiences of their counterparts rather than the formulaic recommendations of 'experts'. This strategy reflects an assessment of the inadequacies of conventional farm journalism and the limited usefulness of many publications aimed at farm households.

Theoretical framework

The role of advertising in agricultural production

Advertising is an important communication tool for creating awareness about agricultural products, inputs, technologies, services and market opportunities. Chang *et al.* (1991) [6] defined advertising as a means of making goods and services known for purchase or sale. In agriculture, advertisements can provide farmers with information on improved seeds, planting materials, machinery, plant protection measures, livestock technologies, farm inputs and market opportunities. Mass media provide an effective channel for disseminating such information to a large and geographically dispersed farming population. Advertising can create awareness, communicate persuasive information and influence attitudes towards products and services (James, 1990) [3]. It may also help farmers identify sources of agricultural inputs and services and improve access to market information. Borotisi *et al.* (2004) [7] highlighted the importance of advertising in creating awareness of new products and services, while Ekoja (2003) [8] emphasised its wider role in communication and development. Thus, agricultural advertising may be considered a complementary communication mechanism that strengthens farmers' access to information and may influence their perceptions and agricultural decision-making. The present study therefore examines farmers' exposure to agricultural advertisements and their perceived role in agricultural production in the Siang region of Arunachal Pradesh.

Methodology

Study area and sampling

The study was conducted in West Siang, Upper Siang and East Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. A multistage sampling procedure was followed. All three districts were included, and lists of farmers were obtained from the concerned government offices. Approximately 30 per cent of the listed farmers were selected randomly from each district.

The final sample comprised 122 farmers, including 52 from West Siang, 30 from Upper Siang and 40 from East Siang. Data were collected through personal interviews using a structured interview schedule containing open- and closed-ended questions related to farmers' exposure to agricultural advertisements, sources of advertisements and their perceived influence on agricultural information and decision-making.

Table 1. Sample of farmers for the study

Sl.No	Local government	No. of farmers	No. of farmers samples (30%)
1	West Siang	175	52.00
2	Upper Siang	101	30.00
3	East Siang	132	40.00
4	Total Respondents of Siang Region	408	122.00

Measurement of variables

Farmers' attitude towards newspaper advertisements was measured using **25 positive and negative statements** developed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Each statement was measured on a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). For negatively worded statements, the scoring was reversed. The total attitude score was obtained by summing the scores across all statements. The mean score was used to classify respondents into favourable and unfavourable attitude categories.

Age : Age was measured as the actual age of the respondent in completed years, as reported by the farmer.

Marital status: Marital status was recorded under four categories: single, married, divorced and widowed. A score of one was assigned to the reported category for classification purposes.

Farmers' perception of agricultural advertisements in leading newspapers: The scores obtained from these indicators were used to assess farmers' exposure to and perception of agricultural advertisements in newspapers.

1. Readership of newspapers Yes (1) and no (0)

- Frequency of reading: everyday (4), 1 to 2 days (3), 2 to 4 days (2), every week (1).
- Purchase of newspaper: Yes (1), no (0)
- Frequency of purchase: every day (4), twice a week (3), thrice a week (2), once a week (1)
- Perception of advertisements, very favourable (3), favourable (2), unfavourable (1). The mean score was used to categorize them.
- Response to advertisements: Yes (1), no (0)

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows that **79.5** per cent of the respondents were 30–50 years of age, comprising 28.7 per cent in the 30–40 year group and 50.8 per cent in the 41–50 year group. Thus, the respondents were predominantly middle-aged. A large majority (83.0%) were married, while 8.19 per cent were single, 2.46 per cent divorced and 6.55 per cent widowed.

Regarding educational level, 46.72 per cent had secondary education, followed by 32.80 per cent with primary education, 13.93 per cent with adult education and 6.55 per cent with tertiary education. Farming was the principal occupation of 78.7 per cent of the respondents, while 12.30 per cent combined farming with their family occupation, 4.10 per cent were engaged in service and 4.90 per cent in other occupations, mainly trading.

With respect to farming experience, 27.0 per cent had more than 26 years of experience, followed by 24.6 per cent with 6–10 years, 17.2 per cent with 11–15 years, 16.4 per cent with 16–20 years, 6.6 per cent with 21–25 years and 8.2 per cent with less than six years. The findings therefore indicate considerable variation in farmers' educational attainment and farming experience, with a substantial proportion having long-term involvement in agriculture.

Table 2. Socio Economic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age range (years)		
Upto 30-40	35	28.70
Between 41-50	62	50.80
Above 50	25	20.50
Marital status		
Single	10	8.19
Married	101	83.00
Divorced	03	2.46

(continued on next page)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Widower	08	6.55
Educational level		
Primary	40	32.80
Secondary	57	46.72
Adult Education	17	13.93
Tertiary education	08	6.55
Occupation		
Farming	96	78.70
Farming+ family occupation	15	12.30
Service	05	4.10
Others (Trading)	06	4.90
Farming experience (years)		
< 6	10	8.2
6-10	30	24.6
11-15	21	17.2
16-20	20	16.4
21-25	08	6.6
> 26	33	27.0

Sadighi *et al.* (2002) [9], in a related study, reported that middle-aged farmers constituted a considerable proportion of newspaper readers and possessed varying levels of farming experience. The present findings are broadly consistent with this observation.

It is evident from Table 3 that 63.11 per cent of the farmers read newspapers, whereas 36.88 per cent did not. Regarding the frequency of reading, 43.4 per cent of the respondents read newspapers every day, followed by 23.0 per cent who read them every week, 19.7 per cent who read them 1–2 days and 13.9 per cent who read them 3–4 days. With respect to newspaper purchase, 47.5 per cent of the farmers purchased newspapers, while 52.5 per cent did not. The frequency of purchase showed that 35.2 per cent purchased newspapers every day, 30.3 per cent once a week, 18.9 per cent twice a week and 15.6 per cent thrice a week. Regarding perception of agricultural advertisements, 66.4 per cent of the farmers had a favourable perception, while 15.6 per cent had a very favourable perception and 18.0 per cent had an unfavourable perception. Thus, a majority of the respondents perceived agricultural advertisements favourably. Further, 74.6 per cent of the farmers had a favourable attitude towards newspaper advertisements, whereas 25.4 per cent had an unfavourable attitude, based on the mean attitude score of 30.92. The findings indicate that newspapers provided an important medium for farmers' exposure to agricultural advertisements and related information. The favourable perception and attitude reported by a majority of respondents suggest that agricultural advertisements were viewed positively as a source of agricultural information. However, favourable perception and attitude should not be interpreted as evidence of actual adoption or behavioural change. Nazari *et al.* (2008) [10] opined that farmers are favourably disposed to reading newspapers to access information relating to farming as an enterprise.

Table 3. Farmers' perception of agricultural advertisements in leading newspapers.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Readership of newspaper		
Yes	77	63.11
No	45	36.88
Frequency of reading		
Everyday	53	43.4
1-2 days	24	19.7
3-4 days	17	13.9

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Every week	28	23.0
Purchase of newspapers		
Yes	58	47.5
No	64	52.5
Frequency of purchase	Frequency of purchase	
Everyday	43	35.2
Twice a week	23	18.9
Thrice a week	19	15.6
Once a week	37	30.3
Perception of advertisements	Perception of advertisements	
Favourable	81	66.4
Unfavourable	22	18.0
Very favourable	19	15.6
Attitude ($\mu = 30.92$)		
Unfavourable ≤ 30.92	31	25.4
Favourable > 30.92	91	74.6
Response to advertisements		
Yes	91	74.6
No	31	25.4

Table 4 presents the chi-square analysis of farmers' personal characteristics in relation to their perception of agricultural advertisements. Educational level ($\chi^2 = 21.067$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.01$) and occupation ($\chi^2 = 30.767$, $df = 18$, $p = 0.03$) were significantly associated with farmers' perception of agricultural advertisements at the 5 per cent level of significance. This indicates that farmers' perception of agricultural advertisements varied significantly across educational and occupational categories.

In contrast, marital status ($\chi^2 = 10.480$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.57$) and farming experience ($\chi^2 = 25.250$, $df = 18$, $p = 0.11$) were not significantly associated with farmers' perception of agricultural advertisements. Thus, the findings suggest that educational level and occupation were associated with differences in farmers' perceptions, whereas marital status and farming experience did not show a statistically significant association.

Table 4. Chi square analysis of farmers' personal characteristics and their perception of agricultural advertisements.

Variable	X2	Degree of freedom	P value	Decision
Marital status	10.480	12	0.57	Not significant
Educational level	21.067	15	0.01	Significant
occupation	30.767	18	0.03	Significant
Farming experience	25.250	18	0.11	Not significant

Level of significance = 0.05,

The findings are in agreement with Meera *et al.* (2004) [11] and Lightfoot (2003) [12], who reported that education and primary occupation were significantly related to farmers' readership of agricultural news.

Table 5 shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between farmers' perception and attitude towards agricultural advertise

ments ($r = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that farmers with more favourable perceptions generally tended to report more favourable attitudes towards newspaper agricultural advertisements. However, the correlation indicates association rather than causation and does not establish that perception caused a change in attitude. The finding is consistent with Padre *et al.* (2003) [13] and Ramirez *et al.* (2004) [14].

Table 5. Correlation analysis of farmers' attitude and perception of agricultural advertisements in the leading newspapers.

Variable	R- value	P value	Decision
Attitude	0.385	0.000	Significant

Conclusion and recommendation

The study revealed that 63.11 per cent of farmers read newspapers, indicating substantial exposure to print media. Therefore, leading newspapers should provide regular and adequate coverage of relevant agricultural advertisements and information, particularly on improved technologies, farm inputs, agricultural services and market opportunities. A favourable perception of agricultural advertisements was reported by 66.4 per cent of farmers, while 74.6 per cent had a favourable attitude towards such advertisements. This positive orientation provides scope for newspapers and agricultural organisations to strengthen print media as a channel for disseminating credible and farmer-relevant agricultural information. Since perception and attitude were positively and significantly associated ($r = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$), clear, credible and practically useful advertisements may further improve the usefulness of agricultural information provided through newspapers. Educational level and occupation were significantly associated with farmers' perception, whereas marital status and farming experience were not. Accordingly, agricultural advertisements should be designed in simple, clear and easily understandable language, with content tailored to the occupational and information needs of farmers. Such targeted presentation may enhance the accessibility and relevance of agricultural advertisements across different categories of farmers.

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