

UTILISATION OF INFORMATION SOURCES BY THE TRIBAL FARMERS IN RAMPACHODAVARAM AGENCY AREA : A MICRO STUDY

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Introduction

Communication plays a vital role in all social changes. Studies in India and elsewhere have pointed the need for an 'Effective Communication Strategy' to enable research results to reach the farmer's fields without much time lag. It is obvious, therefore, that the change from traditional to modern ways of life essentially involves communication of new ideas and their unhesitating acceptance by people. For this purpose, various communication media ranging from the sophisticated TV to the common and casual ones like interpersonal channels have to be utilized.

There are many sources through which farmers seek or get information about the technological changes in farming. The preference and selectivity for a particular source may vary with the individuals. Nevertheless, interpersonal communication still plays an appreciable role in communication of technology in tribal areas because of their social bindings.

The available and relevant research information in mass communication indicates that the interpersonal channels both cosmopolite and localite enjoy the confidence of farmers and have obviously the capacity to influence them to willingly adopt what is urged through these channels (Rogers with Svenning, 1969 and Daniel Lerner and Schram, 1967).

In tribal situation today, the effectiveness of the sophisticated media can at best be very limited because majority of the tribal farmers are socially backward, economically poor, psychologically traditional and a majority of them are illiterates. In such a situation greater stress should inevitably be

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placed on the fostering of less sophisticated media like informal, interpersonal channels of communication to reach the isolated tribal farmers.

The main thrust of all the tribal agricultural development programme is to spread farm technology in tribal areas through different communication sources. Extension workers use various channels to send the developmental messages. Hence the pattern of source utilization is likely to be different from tribal farmers to non-tribal farmers because of their culture and personality. Keeping this in the view the present study is taken with the following objectives.

Objectives

1. To understand the personal sources of information utilized by the tribal farmers.
2. To know the extent of utilization of extension staff and mass media as a source of information by tribal farmers.

Methodology

Three villages in R.C.Varam agency area i.e Cheruvupalem, D.N.Palem and Madicherla were selected purposively to represent 3 major tribal groups i.e Konda reddy, Konda kammara and Konda kapu. 10 % of the village population was selected as a sample respondents. Thus the size of the sample is 150 which covers 30 respondents from Cheruvupalem, 60 respondents from D.N.Palem and 60 respondents from Madicherla. Utilisation of information sources is measured by taking into consideration all the 18 sources available to the tribal farmers which are listed and classified into three categories viz., personal localite, personal cosmopolite and mass media on the lines followed by Sadamate (1978), Sangle and Kulkarni (1980), Kulkarni (1985) and Pandey (1989). Each respondent will be asked to indicate how often he will utilise farm information from each of the listed sources. Based on the responses the utilization percentages of each source was calculated.

Profile of the Respondents

The household profile of the sample respondents is presented in the following table.

Profile of the Respondents

S.No	Particulars	Cheruvupalem	D.N.Palem	Madicherla
1.	Average literacy (%)	10.76	15.04	13.78
2.	Average farm size (acres)	7.22	3.979	4.026
3.	Average family size (no)	7	6	7
4	Average asset composition (Rs)			
	a) Buildings	62000	5985	6402
	b) Livestock	5964	6491	5631
	c) Implements	525	585	489
5)	Gainful employment (in man-days/annum)	134	158	163

From the above table, it can be seen that the average literacy percentage of the sample villages were 15.04 in D.N.Palem, 13.78 in Madicherla and 10.76 in Cheruvupalem. This clearly shows that the literacy percentage is very low in these villages. The average farm size of these 3 villages are 7.22 acres in Cheruvupalem followed by 4.026 acres in Madicherla and 3.979 acres in D.N.Palem. This farm lands includes uplands, medium lands, low lands and irrigated lands. Negligible amount of irrigated land is existing in Cheruvupalem and D.N.Palem. The average family size of the respondents is in between 6-7. After seeing the average asset composition the total assets in livestock and implements are more when compared to the building assets in all the 3 villages. This clearly indicates the dependency of the farm on the livestock for the purpose of draught, manure, fuel, meat etc. It is seen that the total employment in a year is between 134-163 mandays, which includes agriculture and non agriculture sources. The income from non agricultural sources like collection of forest produce, wages from forest department, road construction and watershed works were more when compared to regular farm activities. This key issue is to be addressed in terms of increasing the cropping intensity by the introduction of double cropping or bringing additional area under cultivation so that the additional employment on the agricultural lands could be brought about which ultimately leads to the production, income and employment status of the farmers and thus improve the standard of living.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion of the utilization of information sources was presented below.

Utilisation of Information Sources

n-150

Category	Sl. No	Sources of information	Most often	Often	Some times		Never			
			No.of respondents	Percentage	No.of respondents	Percentage	No.of respondents	Percentage	No.of respondents	Percentage
Personal	1	Family members	28	18.66	99	66	13	8.67	10	6.67
Localite	2	Friends / neighbors	126	84.00	20	13.33	3	2.0	1	0.67
	3	Other farmers	126	84.00	22	14.67	1	0.67	1	0.67
	4	Local leaders	125	83.33	20	13.33	3	2.0	2	1.33
	5	Tribal farmer leaders	107	71.33	13	8.67	19	12.67	11	7.33
	6	Religious leaders	14	9.33	31	20.67	55	36.67	50	33.33
Personal	7	Sub Assistant			-		2	1.33	148	98.66
Cosmop -olite	8	A.O			-		1	0.67	149	99.33
	9	ITDA personnel			1	0.67				
	10	APAU scientist			-		1	0.67		
11	11	Cooperative personnel			2	1.33				
	12	Voluntary agency					1	0.67		
	13	Bank personnel								
Mass media	14	News paper					1	0.67		
	15	Information material					1	0.67		
	16	Radio					3	2.0		
	17	Demonstration					1	0.67		
	18	T.V	1	0.66	3	2.0	1	0.67		

Personal Localite Category

Among all the 6 sources of information available to the farmers the priority of the sources which were used 'most often' are friends/neighbors (84 %), other farmers (84 %) followed by local leaders (83.33%), tribal farmer leaders (71.33%), family members(18.6%) and religious leaders (9.33%). The sample farmers had expressed their first priority to friends/neighbors, other farmers and local leaders as their main source of information because of their social values in the tribal setting. The other reason may be they have less or no social awareness of different sources of information. Only 18.66 % of the respondents are utilizing the family members as a source of information followed by religious leaders (9.33%). Keeping this in view, the ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) has to take up their extension activities through these identified sources.

It can be observed from the above table that 66% of the respondents are 'often' utilizing family members as their source of information followed by religious leaders (20.67%), other farmers (14.67%), local leaders, friends/neighbors (13.33%) and tribal farmer leaders (8.67%). In tribal habitats, before the onset of monsoon family members used to discuss about the activities to be carried out in the field. Due to this reason more than half of the respondents (66%) were 'often' used family members as a source of information. The extension personnel in agency area has to involve all the family members in all the extension activities.

The respondents were also 'some times' using the information sources like religious leaders (36.67%) followed by tribal farmer leaders (12.67%), family members (8.67%), friends/neighbors; local leaders (2.0) and other farmers (0.67%). In Rampachodavaram agency area few religious institutions are working for upliftment of the tribals. Along with the religion they are organizing some awareness programmes on health, education, agriculture etc. Because of this reason sometimes 36.67 % of the farmers are utilising the religious leaders as their source of information.

From the above table it can be clearly seen that the farmers had never used the information sources like religious leaders (33.33%), tribal farmer leaders (7.33%), family members (6.67%), local leaders (1.33%) and other farmers (0.67%).

Majority of the farmers expressed that most often they use information sources like local leaders, friends/neighbors, other farmers and tribal farmer leaders.

Personal Cosmopolite Category

Under the personal cosmopolite category the sources of information like GCC - personal and ITDA personal were found to be utilized 'often' by very few respondents' i.e (1.33%) and (0.67%). Similarly, a very few respondents were utilizing the other four sources of information 'some times' i.e. sub assistant (1.33%), agricultural officer, ANGRAU scientists and voluntary organizations (0.67%) each respectively. And (98%) a majority of the respondents "never" utilize the sources like Agriculture Sub Assistants, Agricultural officers, ITDA personnel, APAU Scientists, Cooperative personnel and Voluntary Agency. None of the respondents utilized bank personnel as their source of information. The reasons for never or poor utilization of the above said source of information by the tribals may be attributed in many ways, their habitat (living on the hill slopes amidst thick forest) difficult to reach, lack of awareness, illiteracy, non-recognition of the extension personnel etc. Some of the leaders and outspoken tribals utilize the sources of information and others do not. The meetings conducted by the extension personnel at village level and Government interventions like "Janmabhoomi (a scheme of Andhra Pradesh Government) conducted in each village provides an opportunity to the tribal farmers to utilize the sources.

Mass Media

It is evident from the table that the utility of mass media is very limited. The sources of information like news paper, information material, demonstration, radio and television are used. Among these 5 sources of information television was used as a information source most often by 0.66%, often by 2.0% and sometimes by 0.67 % of the respondents. A percentage of 2 and 0.67 of the respondents use radio and newspaper respectively as a source of information sometimes. A majority of the respondents (almost 98 per cent) do not use any of these mass media as the source of information. The reasons for a majority of respondents not utilizing the mass media as a source of information is poverty, illiteracy, unaware of receiving messages from such sources etc.

Conclusions

Majority of the respondents indicated that they were using friends, neighbors and local leaders as their main source of information. Most of the tribal farmers had **never** used information sources like sub assistants and agricultural officers. Negligible amount of farmers are utilizing **newspaper** and information material as their source of information. This finding is in line with the findings of Kulkarni (1985) that the neighbors and tribal leaders were found to be most utilized and trustworthy for seeking farm information and the less used and low credibility sources were demonstration, radio, newspaper and magazines etc. In light of the above finding the ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) has to take up their extension activities extensively through these sources of information. The findings further, indicate that it is high time the awareness of the farmers was improved on the importance of the information sources like Agricultural Sub Assistants, Agricultural Officers, Radio, News papers etc., and their utility in regular day to day life for adopting better practices in agriculture and allied fields which ultimately leads to enhance the crop- yields and better living.

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