

Credibility of Farm Magazine as perceived by Farmers

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Introduction

Communication is an important key to the process of socio-economic and cultural transformation. It contributes significantly to bring about social change in the desired direction. Communication plays a vital role in diffusion of information. New knowledge is to be disseminated to the farmers to bring about change in their living conditions; better the communication, faster will be the development of the society as a whole. A powerful system of mass communication is required for the development of society. Such a system would enable farmers to exchange their ideas faster for implementation of new technologies.

In the process of development of communication there is a wealthy tradition of communication research geared towards third world development needs, an area of concern, which has now come to be known as development communication. This research flourished especially during the development decade of the sixties when it held much promise of assisting the development cause. Learners examined correlation between the expansion of economic activity being equated with development and a set of modernizing variables such as literacy, mass media use and democratic participation. It was believed that the interaction of literacy and mass media was the means by which the masses would eventually break free of their stupefying bonds of traditionalism. The diffusion of innovations was communicated by mass media from extension agents to opinion leaders and from them to others for adoption.

Communication process is said to consist of four basic elements viz., source, message, channel and receivers. In order to have a desired impact, all these elements must be properly balanced and judiciously used. Message is

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the stimulus in the process of communication. It is behaviour manifested in physical form, the transmission of ideas, purpose and intentions into a code, a systematic set of symbols. It is only through the appropriate use of this stimulus element that communication will have an impact on its audience. Message is one of the important variables which influences the effectiveness of communication.

Mass communication is gaining credibility in carrying agricultural innovations to a large number of farmers, in recent years due to need for reliable information for triggering off adoption by farmers and consequent diffusion.

In the present days of dynamic agriculture, farmers have become the target of a number of sources of information, which are bringing out new information every day. It is seen that farmers are selective in their use of information sources. The reason for this could be better delivery of information, competency, prestige, trustworthiness, availability of required information etc, leading to its credibility. Farmers must understand and act upon the new agricultural technology and its application on their fields as increased agricultural production depends on access to accurate and reliable channels for steady flow of credible information. Thereby the credibility of information is one of the most important elements of the communication process and its effectiveness will increase proportionally if the recipients of the information perceive the sources to be trustworthy and competent.

Several researchers in the area of agricultural communication have focused on the study of credibility. They have assessed credibility pattern of different mass media and arrived at a credibility hierarchy. Empirical studies measuring extent of credibility attached to each of the media by farmers are limited. In order to achieve this, there is a need to identify the important components of source credibility that the farmers keep in their mind while attaching credibility to mass media. The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study level of exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers.
2. To study level of usefulness of Farm Magazine content among farmers.

3. To study level of credibility of Farm Magazine among farmers.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was ex-post facto research technique. The study was conducted in Transitional belt of Dharwad and Belgaum talukas of North Karnataka. The farmers of Dharwad and Belgaum talukas formed the population of the study. Multi stage random sampling procedure was followed to select the respondents for the study. Five villages of Dharwad taluka namely Nigadi, Kurubagatti, Mangalgatti, Shivalli and Lokur and five villages of Belgaum taluka namely Ambewadi, Halga, Kadoli, Sambra and Mubge were randomly selected. Of the population of these villages only literate farmers were selected for the study. From each selected village 20 literate farmers were selected for the purpose of collection of data, which totally constituted a sample size of 200 literate farmers. Data collection was through personal interview with the help of an interview schedule developed for the research study.

Based on the review of past studies related to credibility of mass media and suggestions offered by social scientists independent variables like Age, Education, Annual Income, Land Holding, Extension Participation and Social participation were selected for the research study.

Credibility of mass media was selected as the major dependent variable and was operationalised as the confidence reposed by the audience in the content of mass media in respect of their reliability. The credibility of the farm magazine was measured using a scale developed for the purpose. Media exposure, usefulness of media content and influence of media on the adoption of selected technology by farmers were the other dependent variables.

Findings and Discussion

1. Level of exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers

An attempt was made to know the exposure pattern of Farm Magazine among farmers by considering aspects like subscription/possession, frequency

of use, average time spent and areas of interest. Based on scoring as suggested in the methodology a composite score for exposure to Farm Magazine was worked out. Distribution of farmer respondents on the basis of their exposure level to Farm Magazine is depicted in Table - 1.

A perusal of Table - 1 reveals that majority of the farmers (72%) were grouped in medium category of exposure followed by 14.5 per cent and 13.5 per cent in high and low category of exposure respectively. From these findings it could be inferred that in spite of the information revolution and media expansion the actual penetration of Farm Magazine into rural areas in general and farm family in particular is yet to happen. This could possibly be due to low purchasing power and less accessibility of farmers in rural areas.

Table - 1: Level of exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers.

(N = 200)

Level of Exposure	Respondents	
	Frequency	Percentage
High (> Mean + SD)	29	14.5
Medium (Mean – SD to Mean + SD)	144	72.0
Low (< Mean – SD)	27	13.5

Mean = 51.205

SD = 14.60

2. Level of Usefulness of Farm Magazine content as perceived by farmers

Distribution of farmers based on level of usefulness of Farm Magazine depicted in Table -2 bears close resemblance to the level of exposure presented and discussed. Majority (70.5%) of farmers in the study belong to medium category of usefulness perception. There were sixteen per cent of the farmers with low level of usefulness perception with the rest 13.5 per cent with high usefulness perception of Farm Magazine. In summary majority of the farmers perceived the usefulness of mass media to a medium extent only.

Table-2: Level of usefulness of Farm Magazine content as perceived by farmers
(N-200)

Level of Usefulness Perception	Respondents Frequency	Percentage
High ($> \text{Mean} + \text{SD}$)	27	13.5
Medium ($\text{Mean} - \text{SD}$ to $\text{Mean} + \text{SD}$)	141	70.5
Low ($< \text{Mean} - \text{SD}$)	32	16

Mean = 136.575

SD = 19.92

3. Credibility of Farm Magazine

In the present study, credibility of Farm Magazine, was studied in terms of exposure, useful content and perceived credibility. Distribution of farmers based on credibility of Farm Magazine is presented in Table - 3.

The credibility level of Farm Magazine examined and analysed with respect to Farm Magazine indicates that the farmers belonging to middle level have maximum of 71% level of credibility perception, where as the farmers belonging to low credibility had perception level of 15.5% and farmers belonging to high credibility level had perception level of 13.5% respectively.

The findings hint at possibilities for harnessing the potential of other

Table - 3: Level of credibility of Farm Magazine as perceived by farmers.

(N-200)

Medium	Credibility perception level		
	Low	Medium	High
Farm Magazine	31(15.5)	142(71)	27(13.5)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage values.

Mean = 18.595

SD = 6.24

media as well. The growing popularity of farm magazines especially in local language offers lot of hope for the future.

4. Factors associated with Exposure of Farm Magazine

The results of Table - 4 reveal that among the independent variables considered for the study, education (0.377) followed by other independent variables such as annual income (0.468), land holding (0.341), extension participation (0.424) and social participation (0.409) were found to have positive (+ve) significant relationship at 5% level of probability.

It is obvious from the above nature of correlation that literate and educated farmers tend to have higher exposure than illiterate and less educated farmers. It is a natural tendency among educated farmers to acquire more information. It is observed that they mostly look for mass media not just as a source of information on farming but other information coupled with entertainment. It may be because of their higher education, higher extension participation and social participation, having higher interest and aspiration and greater zeal to acquire more knowledge about farming.

Literacy being the requisite for using media source like newspaper and farm magazine, higher education would naturally lead to higher exposure to

Table – 4: Factors associated with Exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers

(N-200)

Independent variable	Correlation value on Exposure
	Farm Magazine
Age	0.120*
Education	0.377*
Annual Income	0.468*
Land holding	0.341*
Extension Participation	0.424*
Social participation	0.409*

* Significant at 5% level of probability

Farm Magazine because of the higher urge to acquire information and knowledge to have the result/solutions. Similar trend enlisted with other independent variables namely annual income, land holding, extension and social participation and status of individual in the society were also positive (+ve) significantly co-related with dependent variables.

5. Effect of critical variables on exposure to Farm Magazine among farmers

After review of the contents on path coefficients, Table - 5 reveals that annual income (0.231) has the highest positive direct effect on the exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers, followed by social participation (0.192), education (0.184) and extension participation. Similarly, least direct effect is observed in case of land holding (0.038) and (0.031) in case of age variables among farmers.

Further, it can also be observed in Table - 5 that the variable land holding (0.303) exerted high positive indirect effect followed by extension participation,

Table 5: Path Co-efficient showing direct, indirect and substantial effects of independent variables on dependent variable perception on exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers

(N = 200)

Variable code	Variable	Direct effect	Total indirect effect	Substantial indirect effect		
				1	2	3
X1	Age	0.031	-0.151	-0.054 _{X2}	-0.032 _{X6}	-0.032 _{X3}
X2	Education	0.184	0.193	0.102 _{X3}	0.052 _{X5}	0.035 _{X6}
X3	Annual Income	0.231	0.237	0.082 _{X2}	0.077 _{X6}	0.061 _{X5}
X4	Land Holdings	0.038	0.303	0.126 _{X3}	0.069 _{X6}	0.062 _{X2}
X5	Extension participation	0.144	0.280	0.109 _{X6}	0.098 _{X3}	0.066 _{X2}
X6	Social participation	0.192	0.217	0.093 _{X3}	0.082 _{X5}	0.033 _{X2}

Total indirect effect = Correlation value – Direct effect.

annual income (0.237), social participation (0.217) and education (0.193), while age (-0.151) exerted highest negative total indirect effect on the exposure of farm magazine.

It could be inferred from detailed comprehensive examining of the contents of Table - 5, that education, social participation, annual income and extension participation were the most important and most decisive factors in influencing the exposure of farm magazines among farmers, because of total direct, indirect and substantial indirect effect of all these variables on the exposure of farm magazines among farming community.

Major findings

1. Medium level of farmers had maximum exposure (72 per cent) to Farm Magazine compared to high and low category of farmers respectively.
2. Medium category of farmers had a maximum of 70.5 per cent perception level of usefulness of Farm Magazine compared to high and low category of farmers.
3. Seventy-one per cent of medium level farmers were found having high credibility perception level of Farm Magazine followed by 15.5 per cent low credibility perception level of farmers and 13.5 per cent of farmers with high perception level of credibility respectively.
4. Major findings of path analysis revealed that in case of exposure of Farm Magazine among farmers, out of a total 18 substantial indirect effects 5 each pass through education (X2), annual income (X3), land holding (X4) and 3 pass through extension participation (X5).