

Space covered, Type and Forms of Agricultural Information in 'Lokmat'

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Abstract

Print media has an important role in disseminating agricultural knowledge to farmers. This paper focuses on the coverage of agricultural information in a leading Newspaper from Western Maharashtra. The objectives are to study the space covered by agricultural information and identify the different types and forms of presentation of agricultural information in the Marathi daily. It was observed that agricultural information occupied a mere (3.22%) space in the newspaper while non agricultural information occupied more space (68.66 %). The role of print media in disseminating useful and scientific knowledge to farmers would continue to grow in future with the increasing literacy level in rural India and hence agricultural information needs to be given more coverage.

Introduction

Agriculture has an important role in the Indian economy. Though the share of Agriculture in National income has come down since the planning era in the economy, it still has a substantial share in GDP. However, still about 26.1 percent of the population especially rural population of the country lives in very poor socio-economic conditions (Anonymous 2004).

Socio-economic condition can be improved by educating rural people and farmers. This is possible by communicating farm technology through various media. Within mass media, print media has a unique role in informing literate farmers. Farm literature like books, folders, bulletins, booklets, farm magazines and newspapers have credibility among the readers. Role of print media in disseminating useful and scientific knowledge on farming aspects down to farmers would continue to grow in future with the increasing literacy level in rural India which is presently 65.83 percent (Anonymous 2004).

In Marathi language there were about 2,943 newspapers and periodicals of which 395 were daily newspapers (Anonymous 2004). The popular Marathi dailies in Maharashtra are Lokmat (824,352), Sakal (5,34,635), Loksatta (3,69,429), Navakal (2,95,634) and Maharashtra Times (1,885,867) (ABC 2001). (Figures in brackets show average daily number of copies sold). Daily Newspapers are dominated by politics, entertainment, advertisements and other fields of interest (Jain 1980).

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Most of the newspapers are urban oriented and serve the urban readers. It is important to give due coverage to agriculture, farming and problems of national importance (Mathur 1984). According to a study conducted by Shendre (1985) only 2.32 per cent of the total newspaper space is given to agricultural content. Majority of the farmers reading newspaper were interested in content relating to farming. It is a matter of surprise that rural people and farming community have no adequate space in our daily newspaper whereas industry, trade and commerce are given priority in newspapers and found extensively in columns of newspapers.

It was therefore felt necessary to study the coverage of agricultural information in a leading Marathi Newspaper from Western Maharashtra .

A study was carried out with following specific objectives:

1. To study the space covered by Agricultural information in the leading Marathi daily Lokmat
2. To identify the different types and forms of presentation of Agricultural information in the leading Marathi daily Lokmat.

Methodology

For selection of the leading Marathi Newspaper in Western Maharashtra criteria suggested by Maslog(1983) was used. On the basis of those criteria Lokmat, a daily Newspaper was identified as a leading paper in Western Maharashtra. Random method of sampling was followed for selection of Newspaper issues. For identification and counting of Agricultural information, the definition given by Fett (1972) was used. The content analysis of the Agricultural information was done as per the criteria by Sinnarkar (1966). Size, hardness and length of the Agricultural information was noted. Hardness of the text material is the degree of understanding as perceived by the respondents concerned with it. It is one of the instruments to measure the level of perception, simplicity etc. of the literature.

The data was collected with the help of a proforma. Simple statistical techniques like frequencies and percentages were used.

Results and Discussion

1. Space covered by Agricultural Information, Non Agricultural Information and Advertisements

The space covered by the news items indicates the importance of the News, therefore the space was considered as a parameter to evaluate the importance of agricultural information from the point of view of the readers and the editor of a particular newspaper. The data regarding space covered by agricultural

information, non-agricultural information and advertisements (Agriculture and Non agriculture) is given in Table 1.

Table 1.Space covered by Agricultural Information, Non Agricultural Information and Advertisements (Agriculture and Non Agriculture) in Lokmat

S.No.	Newspaper Content	Space covered in the aggregate column
A	Information	
	1.Agricultural	2975.28 (3.22%)
	2.Non Agricultural	63441.84 (68.66%)
	Total	66417.12 (71.88%)
B	Advertisement	
	1.Agricultural	766.92 (0.83 %)
	2.Non Agricultural	25215.96 (27.29 %)
	Total	25982.88 (28.12 %)

Table 1 indicates that News and Advertisement ratio of 70:30 was maintained in the newspaper under study. It was observed that maximum (68.66 %) newspaper space was allotted to non agricultural information. This is due to the nature of readership of Lokmat. It has more urban readers than the rural ones. Of the Newspaper advertisements, the farm advertisements occupied less than one percent of total space and 27.29 per cent of the total space was occupied by agricultural advertisements. This shows that Newspaper content under study was urban oriented and for the use of urban readers who were interested in reading mostly about non agriculture matters.

2. Space covered by Agricultural Information

The aggregate column length in centimeters occupied by the different forms of agricultural information was calculated and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Space covered by Agricultural Information in Lokmat

S.No.	Forms of presentation of Agricultural Information	Total Space covered in column (cm.)	Percent of space covered of the total Newspaper space	Percent space covered out of space allotted to Agricultural Information
1	News story	1214.28	1.31	40.81
2.	Regular Agricultural features	11.27	1.22	37.88
	a. Havaman (Daily)	40	0.05	01.34
	b. Bajarbhav(Daily)	502	0.54	16.88
	c. Farm Article (weekly)	585	0.63	19.66
3.	Letters to the editors on farming information	192	0.21	06.45
4.	Editorial on farming	298	0.32	10.02
5.	Photo news on farming	144	0.16	04.84
	Total	634	0.69	21.31
6.	Any other	-	-	-
	Total	2975.28	3.22	100.00

Table 2 indicates that only three per cent (3.22 %) newspaper space was allotted to agricultural information as against about 68.66 per cent for non agricultural information. It is clear that the Newspaper under reference covers mostly urban matters. The information need of rural people is ignored by editors. Rural based newspaper for rural readers and farmers is a need of the day as pointed by Mohanty (1983). Of the space provided for agricultural information, a major part (40.81 %) was covered by news stories on farming related matters. Farm articles on topics like crop fertilizers, farm implements cover enough space (19.66 %) .

Letters to the editor on farm information, editorials on agriculture, photo news on farming occupied about one fifth (21.31 %) space.

3. Types of Agricultural Information

There were different types of agricultural information on the basis of the subject. The frequencies of respective types were worked out which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of Agricultural Information in Lokmat

S. No.	Types of Agricultural Information	No. and Frequency of Agricultural information (N= 153)	Rank
A	Agricultural Outlook 1. Agricultural Climate and Damage 2. Agricultural Situation 3. Agricultural Operations	21 (13.73 %) 10 (06.54 %) 05 (03.27 %) 06 (03.92 %)	II
B	Agricultural Domestic Marketing	05 (03.27 %)	IX
C	Agricultural Planning and Process	11 (7.19 %)	VI
D	Agricultural crops, farm operation & other topics 1. Crops 2. Irrigation 3. Plant Protection 4. Manuring 5. Harvesting and Post Harvest technology 6. Marketing and availability of inputs	47 (30.75 %) 15 (09.80 %) 05 (03.27 %) 12 (07.86 %) 07 (04.57 %) 04 (02.61 %) 04 (02.61 %)	I
E	Dairy and animal Husbandry 1. Marketing 2. Management 3. Insurance 4. Bank Loan facilities and legislation	17 (11.11 %) 04 (02.61 %) 05 (03.27 %) 03 (01.96 %) 05 (03.27 %)	IV
F	Agricultural Welfare and approach	08 (05.23 %)	VIII
G	Agricultural Policy 1. Agricultural finance & insurance 2. Agricultural Price Policy 3. Agricultural law and legislation	15 (09.80 %) 03 (01.96 %) 07 (04.57 %) 05 (03.27 %)	V
H	Agricultural Research and Education 1. Agricultural Technology, Science & Rewards 2. Agricultural Education	10 (06.54 %) 05 (03.27 %) 05 (03.27 %)	VII
I	General Agriculture 1. Agricultural Demands, agitation and calls 2. Agricultural Social life tension	18 (11.76 %) 10 (06.54 %) 08 (05.22 %)	III

The data shows the various types of agricultural information which appeared in Lokmat. Farm information grouped under agricultural crops, farm operation and other topics topped in terms of frequency (30.75 %). It had subtypes like crops (09.80 %), irrigation (03.27 %), plant protection (07.86 %), manuring (04.57%), Harvesting & Post Harvest technology (02.61 %), Marketing and availability of inputs (02.61 %).

Therefore topics like marketing, management, insurance and bank loan facilities and health care of dairy animals need to be given more coverage. The Newspaper gives publicity and informs the readers about recent farm developments.

4. Forms of Presentation of Agricultural Information

The data regarding the forms of presentation of the Agricultural information is presented in Table 4. This is important from the reader's point of view because it decides and persuades the reader to read it. Therefore such information was presented in the form of regular agricultural features.

Table 4. Forms of Presentation of Agricultural information appearing in Lokmat

S.No.	Forms of presentation	Frequency of the Agricultural information (N= 153)	Percentage
1	News story	83	54.25
2	Regular Agricultural features		
	a. Havaman (Daily)	08	05.23
	b.Bajarbhav(Daily)	25	16.34
	c.Farm Article (Every Tuesday)	18	11.76
	Total	51	33.33
3	Letters to the editor on farm information	12	07.84
4	Editorial on farming	02	01.31
5	Photo news on farming	05	03.27
	Total	153	100.00
6		-	
	Total	153	100.00

It is clear that farmer readers read such information and use it in their farm business. Letters to the editor on farm matters were less than eight percent. Editorials on farming were less than two percent. Editorials are mostly read by readers and therefore the editors mostly select topics of importance, which have greater news value and relevance for writing the editorial.

Summary and Conclusion

Newspaper is regarded as one of the important sources of information for a variety of people on various subjects. Along with non agricultural information, agricultural information is also published and read by the farmers and rural population. Considering the literacy level and consumption of newspaper as a source of information by the farmer, it was felt necessary to study the qualitative and quantitative aspects of farm information published in a Marathi newspaper, to make it more useful.

It was observed that agricultural information occupied a mere (3.22 %) space in a leading Marathi newspaper while non agricultural information occupied more than two third space (68.66 %). It was also found that types of agricultural information like agricultural crops, farm operation and other topics ranked first while information on agricultural outlook was at second rank. It was also observed that more than half of the farm information was presented in the form of news stories. The information on weather forecast, marketing of farm commodities and articles on crops etc. were regular agricultural features of the news paper, and ranked first.

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