

Effects of Television Agricultural Shows on Small-Scale Farmers' Information Need in Kenya: A Case Study of Kikuyu Sub-County

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Abstract

Television agricultural shows are important tool in dissemination of information to small-scale farmers. The study investigated the effect of TV agricultural shows on small-scale farmers in Kenya. Television shows have proved to have effect on small scale farmers in the dissemination and transfer of farming information and knowledge in Kenya. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the TV agricultural shows were among the major sources of agricultural information among small-scale farmers in the Kikuyu area. The target population for the study was the farmers in Kikuyu Sub-county The study population comprised the small-scale farmers in the area who owned a Television set. Questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions was used for collecting data in order to elicit perceptions of the respondents on the subject under study. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data by way of percentages, weighted mean and standard deviation. A statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) was also used to analyse data both the data after which the data was presented in descriptive form using frequency tables, percentages, graphs and pie charts among others.

Keywords: Small-scale farmers, Television Agricultural Show, innovation, mass media, Technology.

1.0 Introduction

Television shows have become a phenomenon in the dissemination of information to viewers globally (Teffeteller, 2009). In the agriculture sector, TV shows have gained popularity as one the most effective methods of diffusing innovation and technology due to the ability of the

medium to reach a large audience within a short time. This has facilitated the transfer of agricultural innovation contributes significantly to the development of the sector (Asenso-Okyere, 2009). Mass media in general offers effective channels for communicating agricultural messages, which can increase knowledge and influence behavior of the audience (Nazari1 M. & Hassan M., 2011).

Television is acknowledged as one of the most important medium for communicating with the rural populations of developing countries (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2001). Over the years TV has been used in the transfer and dissemination of information on modern technology for driving the growth and development of the agriculture sector. The medium has also been acclaimed to be one of the most effective media for diffusing the scientific knowledge to the masses (UNESCO Report, 1965). It is an invaluable medium for eliciting from this educated and economically well-off segment of the population with a proven effectiveness in the transfer of agricultural technology among the farming community (Muhammad et al., 2004).

The TV industry in Kenya has recorded a rapid growth in the last one decade (Open Society Foundations, 2013). The influence of the media has also grown and transcends various socio-economic issues (Ipsos-Synovate Kenya, 2011). The majority of Kenyans trust the media more than other public institutions including the judiciary, police and parliament (Githaiga, 2012). On the other hand, television viewership has increased in various parts of the rural areas as the government accelerates electricity connections in line with the (Ministry of Planning, 2012). This has given farmers access to timely information through various programs and shows aired by the TV stations.

The TV agricultural shows have been used in recent years as a medium of disseminating important information such as innovations and technology for improving farming methods and productivity (Teffeteller, 2009). In developing countries, where literacy levels are relatively low, the choice of communication media is of critical importance. In this regard the television is significant, as it can disseminate information on modern agricultural technology to both the literate and illiterate farmers alike since the content tends to “stick” and be applied. One of the latest strategies to improve the dissemination of information through television is the use of reality shows. In Kenya, shows such as the “Shamba Shape-Up” (Shamba is the Swahili word for 'small farm') which combines celebrity presenters and upbeat music with expert advice on soil fertility, disease prevention, solar energy and financing. Other programs have been transmitted across the local TV stations with the same goal of transferring knowledge to the farmers. The effectiveness of these measures are yet to be established although there are indications that farmers appear be positive (*The Guardian*, 2014).

Although the use of TV agricultural shows is a relatively new concept, television has remained a popular medium among most of the rural farming communities where there are no extension services (Mahmood and Sheikh, 2005). (Irfan, et al. 2006) elucidates further that the television has a capability to transmit information on agricultural technology to farmers. With this medium, one can provide timely information to large audience over wide geographical areas which would be impossible through personal contacts. As (Mahmood & Sheikh, 2005) assert, television, has been used for years in creating awareness and disseminating information about latest agriculture technologies among farmers. According

to (KARI, 2012), the television has a potentially broader role in raising the profile of agriculture amongst decision-makers as well as the wider public, and in communicating farmers' needs.

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1.1 Statement of the problem

Television shows have proved to be effective in the dissemination and transfer of knowledge in Kenya and other parts of the world. Television has also been proven effective in the transfer and dissemination of information on modern technology in agriculture to both the literate and semi-literate farmers (FAO, 2001). The agriculture sector on the other hand, plays an indispensable role in the Kenya's economic growth, and has the potential to reduce inequality and poverty as explained in a World Bank report (World Bank, 2013). While research in agriculture helps in the availability of new technologies and innovations, the successful transfer and sharing of the information between researchers and farmers can be improved by enhancing the effectiveness of the television medium in the country. Further, there has been no adequate attention to the small-scale farmers who constitute an important segment in many developing countries including Kenya. Indeed, most of the rural areas where agriculture is practiced, lack various infrastructure to facilitate access to agricultural technology transfer (TCARC, 2005)

Although the TV industry has recorded significant growth in the recent years, the medium has not been fully exploited as an important source of information by the small scale farmers who are an important pillar in the agriculture sector (OSF, 2013). As the country endeavors to achieve the Vision 2030 goals, there is need for information to be adequate and responsive to farmers' needs and overcome the various barriers hindering the access to information by farmers through the television medium. This consequently facilitated and accelerated the adoption of technology and innovations by farmers with a positive impact on productivity. There is therefore a critical need to assess the effects of television agricultural shows in the dissemination of agricultural information as well as for technology transfer.

1.2: Objectives of the study

1.2.1 General objective

The broad objective of the study was to assess the effects of television agricultural shows on small-scale farmers in Kikuyu Sub-County.

2. Literature Review

TV agricultural shows have gained popularity in many countries as a medium for educating and informing farmers on the latest farming innovations and techniques (Teffeteller, 2009). Television has also gained popularity among farmers due to its ability to combine both the audio and visual effects, effectively making it the preferred medium by both the private and public agencies in the dissemination and transfer of modern technology in agriculture. While effective transfer of technologies helps to boost agricultural productivity, must first have access, and learn how to utilize such technologies in their farming endeavors (Zia & Khan, 2012). However, several challenges such as poor communication infrastructure have hindered access to modern farming information media. Illiteracy further aggravates this problem as most mass media outlets use languages farmers do not understand (Open Society Foundations, 2013).

Small-scale farmers predominantly reside in rural areas and require information on supply of inputs, new technologies, early warning system (on drought, fresh, and diseases), credit, market price and their competition. Such information, knowledge, technology and services will contribute to expanding and energizing agriculture (Pur, J. & Gwary, M., 2008). Television shows have been acknowledged as some of the most effective medium for communicating with the rural populations of developing countries (FAO, 2001).

According to (Open Society Foundations, 2013), Kenya enjoys a vibrant media industry with over twenty local television channels and a host of international brands (Spurk C. et al., 2013). Despite this growth, the local content aired has remained low (Open Society, 2013). The number of TVASs is even lower, attracting only a fraction of time allocated to the popular programs such as news, soap opera, music, movies and drama (Ipsos-Synovate, 2011). Players in the sectors including farmers have not embraced television as a means of technology transfer and other information. In a report of a study project by (Spurk et al., 2013) on “Shortcomings of communication in agricultural knowledge transfer in Kenya – and ways to improve it”, only 13.7% of small scale farmers in Kenya preferred TV for information on agriculture. The majority the farmers (83%) preferred radio, while the rest mentioned other sources of information such as newspapers and magazines. Other observations show that applicable agricultural knowledge is available but hardly used by peasants and households.

One of the latest strategy to improve the dissemination of information through television in Kenya is the use of reality shows such as the “Shamba Shape-Up” (Shamba is the Swahili word for 'small farm') which combines celebrity presenters and up-beat music with expert advice on soil fertility, disease prevention, solar energy and financing. Other programs have been transmitted across the local TV stations with the same goal of stimulating knowledge transfer to the SSFs. The effectiveness of these measures are yet to be established although there are indications that farmers appear to have positively identified with the shows (*The Guardian*, 2014).

The extent of information obtained through agricultural shows telecasts may be considered as an indicator of effectiveness of television as an information source for the farmers. According to (Rehman et al., 2011), the major determinants of effectiveness of media in the dissemination of agricultural information among farmers include; the quality of information, novelties, farmers’ interest, and timeliness. All these factors need to be given due

consideration by the extension organizations while using any media as a tool of information dissemination. Various factors determine the audience selection of news platforms. Although access is one of the key determinants, there is an overarching view that the popularity of news content is determined by the issues covered.

2.1 Conceptual Framework



Fig.1 source (Author, 2015)

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

Multi-stage sampling was used since the study comprises a large and dispersed target population. This technique entailed three (3) stages. According to (Curwin & Slater, 2002), multi-stage sampling technique entails dividing the population into groups, then, one or more clusters were chosen at random and everyone within the chosen cluster is sampled. The process entailed 3 stages which include wards, sub-locations and villages as sampling units.

3.2 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data by way of percentages, weighted mean and standard deviation. Quantitative data was analyzed using the “Pearson’s product moment correlation” technique. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the isolated independent and dependent variables (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). A statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) was also used to analyze data both the qualitative and quantitative data.

4. Discussions

4.1 Effect of TVAS on SSFs

In order to gain an understanding of the farmer’s opinion on the effect of TVAS, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought the shows have effect. Accordingly, 68.2% (30) of the respondents said that the shows have effect, while 14(31.8) said that the shows have no effect.

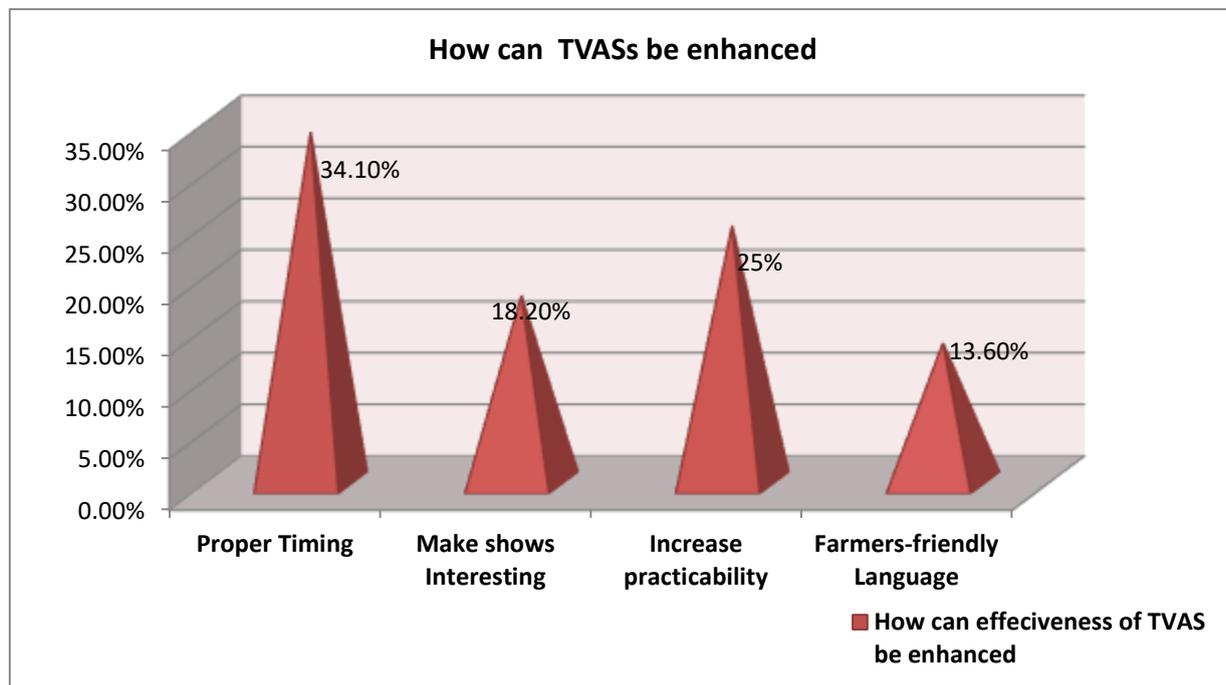
Table 4.3:
Effect of TVASs

Do TVAS have Effect	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	30	68.2
No	14	31.8
Total	44	100

4.2 Ways of Enhancing TVASs

The respondents were asked to suggest how TVAS can be improved. Proper timing of the shows was suggested by 15 (34.1%) while improvement on practicability of the ideas had 11(25%). Others (18.2%) said improvement of the shows to make them more interesting and

6 (13.6%) cited measures to reduce language barrier. Other suggestions improved reduced cases of power outages, and increasing versatility in terms of scope and focus.



4.3. Opinion on TVASs

In an attempt to rate the opinion of the respondents on the effectiveness of TVAS, a Likart scale with a construct of five levels was used. On a scale of 1-5, with “Strongly Agree”(1), “Agree”(2), “Neutral”(3), “Disagree”(4) and “Strongly disagree”(5) options respondents were asked to answer by ticking the appropriate box depending on their level of agreement. Pertaining to whether the TVAS have the right quality, 17 (38.6%) respondents did “Agree”, 7(15.9%) strongly agreed as 15 (34.1%) disagreed. As such, opinions seem to have been divided on this area. Only 3 had a “Strongly disagree” response. On the question of originality of the TVAS messages, some 40.9% of the respondents “agreed” while 25% strongly agreed. Although 5 remained “neutral”, another 20.5% “disagreed” while 1(2.3%) strongly disagreed. Another question related to whether the shows meet farmer’s interests. There was a 36.4% “disagree” and a further 20.5% for “strongly disagree”. It means that there were a higher number of disagreements on the question as respondents feel most of the shows don’t touch on areas of their interest. More respondents however agreed (45.5%) that the messages in most shows are timely with another 34.1% strongly agreeing to the same.

Table 4.5:
Opinion on TVASs

Opinion on Effectiveness of TVAS	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1 TVA shows have the right quality	7	15.9	17	38.6	2	4.5	15	34.1	3	6.8

2	The message is original	11	25	18	40.9	5	11.40	9	20.5	1	2.30
3	The shows meet my interests/needs	5	11.4	11	25	3	6.8	16	36.4	9	20.5
4	The message is timely	15	34.1	20	45.5	3	6.80	5	11.4	1	2.3
5	The message is comprehensible	3	6.8	15	34.1	2	4.5	16	36.4	8	18.2
6	TVAS are Effective	14	31.8	16	38.4	4	9.1	8	18.2	2	4.50

F=Frequency

Opinion was split on whether the messages were comprehensible with 36.4% disagreeing against 34.1% who disagreed. A further 18.2% strongly disagreed on the same area. As such, the majority of the respondents felt the TVASs are not comprehensible. On whether TVASs are effective, 38.4% (16) agreed as 31.8% (14) strongly agreed. 18.2% disagreed and 2 (4.5%) strongly disagreed.

5. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the TV agricultural shows were among the major sources of agricultural information among small-scale farmers in the Kikuyu area. Factors contributing to the effect of television and more so TVASs, should be given the necessary attention to increase effectiveness. On the other hand, although farmers in the area are in the ages of 40 years and above, access to television was established to be high. The popularity of TVASs was low compared as most farmers were either not aware of the existence of the shows or there were to other contributing factors. Reasons for farmers' preference of the different TVASs were listed as interactivity, proper timing of the show, language understanding, and show being interesting.

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