



Utility Perception of Agricultural Information by Farmers

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural domain is one of the knowledge intensive sectors in which accurate, correct, and timely information is necessary. The development of rural areas cannot be imagined without the advancement of agriculture. For this, useful agricultural information should reach the farmers in time and in the form most suitable to them. Also, in order to meet the agricultural development, customized agricultural information is highly essential for reducing uncertainties from production to consumption. Newspapers in India are considered as one of the important sources of communication and information dissemination. The current study was undertaken in order to identify the percentage cover of agricultural information in a local daily and the utility perception of the agricultural information published by the farmer readers. Study revealed that only 2.39 per cent area was given to agricultural information in newspaper and majority of the respondents (74.17%) had medium utility perception of agricultural information. Weighted mean score was found to be maximum (2.45) for terminology of the newspaper, indicating its language is easy to read and understand, followed by enjoyment in reading (2.39) and lowest for the motivation (1.70) for adoption of new technologies. Also, utility perception index value was maximum for terminology (81.94) and lowest for motivation (56.94), whereas credibility and understandability had index value of 77.5 and 75.55 respectively.

Key words : Agricultural information; Utility perception; Newspaper; Farmer readers.

The agricultural domain field is a knowledge intensive sector in which accurate, correct, and timely information is necessary. Farmers, in general, require information on seeds, varieties, finance, climate, technical knowledge, marketing, crop production technologies, etc which helps them in decision making regarding labour, land, cropping system, capital, and management to better practice the farming and obtain positive outputs. Information on agriculture is provided by several agencies including government and the non-government agencies like KVKs, SAUs, private extension, etc to make better farming decisions. Tadesse (2008) defined agricultural information as various sets of information and messages that are relevant to agricultural production

activities of farmers such as crop production and protection, animal production and management, and natural resource production and conservation. Maningas *et al.* (2000) reported that information directly empowers farmers in decision-making and managing their resources. Agricultural information along with other factors of production acts as a potent source for improving agriculture. Information in agriculture helps farmers in properly addressing their needs.

Agricultural journalism viz; writing and reporting in agriculture was evolved for the same purpose. Newspaper is arguably one of the most cost-effective and appropriate media to transfer agricultural information. Newspaper is a very important medium of

development communication. Nowadays, special pages containing information on different aspects of agriculture and allied fields are incorporated in all language newspapers. *Modi and Gopinath, (2 020)* reported that farmers use newspaper as a source to get information about drip irrigation. However, to the utter surprise, the efficiency and impact of this information have not been measured through systematic analytical procedures (*Horakeri, 2015*). Thus the current study was undertaken in order to identify the percentage cover of agricultural information in a local daily and the utility perception of the information by the farmer readers.

METHODOLOGY

The current study was undertaken in Kumaon division of Uttarakhand and Amar Ujala, a local daily was chosen since it had highest circulation in Uttarakhand. Udham Singh Nagar district of the division was chosen purposively as it had highest circulation of the chosen newspaper. For knowing the percentage cover of agricultural information, 45 days continuous newspapers were selected from 10th February 2020 to 26th March 2020 and to determine the utility perception of agricultural information, 120 Amar Ujala reading farmers were personally interviewed with the help of a structured interview schedule and a scale developed by *Lad (2014)* was used. The statistical operations like percentage, frequency, standard deviation, arithmetic mean, weighted mean score, and utility perception index were used.

$$PUI = \frac{\sum SO \times SV}{\sum MaxS \times SV} \times 100$$

Where,

- $\sum SO$ = Score obtained for the component
- $\sum SV$ = Scale Value of the component
- $\sum MaxS$ = Maximum Score for the component
- $\sum SV$ = Scale value of the component

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of coverage of agricultural information in Amar Ujala : The percentage of space covered by agricultural information in newspaper is very important for the rural people as majority of them are involved in farming. It's easily observable that in newspapers along with non-agricultural information, information pertaining to agriculture and rural development appears. The percentage cover of agricultural information in the newspaper was measured in column centimetre square

and it was observed that agricultural information in newspaper had an area of 28428.43 cm² out of total space coverage (1193934 cm².) by different information. Thus, it depicts that 2.39 per cent area was given for agricultural information. The results were found to be in line with *Ban et al. (2012)* and *Sameer (2012)*. Also it was found during the investigation that the ratio of information to advertisements appeared in the paper was 60:40, owing to the fact that advertisements help in reducing the price of the newspaper, so that it can be provided to the people at a very minimal cost.

Utility perception of agricultural information by farmer readers : A newspaper's objective with respect to agriculture is to present agricultural information for its farmer readers so that they may get detailed information about specific things going within states or different regions in time and can adopt or work on it. Thus, it is important to know how the farmers perceive the utility of the information supplied through newspapers. Table 1 depicts that majority of the farmers (74.17%) respondents had medium level of perceived utility for the agricultural information, whereas 16.66 per cent of the farmers had high level of perceived utility and 9.17 per cent of the farmers had low level of perceived utility for agricultural information. The findings of the study were in line with that of *Shiraskar (2011)* and *Shinde (2016)*.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to utility perception (N=120)

Categories	No.	%
Low (<29)	11	9.17
Medium (29 to 34)	89	74.17
High (>34)	20	16.66

Components of the perceived utility : The scale developed by *Lad (2014)* was used to measure the perceived utility of the farmer readers and it comprised of fifteen components. Data for each component was collected from the respondents, which is depicted in Table 2.

The different components of the scale gave a detailed analysis of different aspects of the newspaper with respect to farmer readers. It is evident from the above data that terminology had rank I indicating newspaper Amar Ujala is easy to read and understand, also being a Hindi newspaper its preferred more in rural areas since farmers connect more with it thus enjoyment in reading had rank II. Motivation for adoption of new agricultural practices had lowest rank XIII, which

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to different component of Utility Perception (N=120)

Components	No.	%	WMS	Rank
<i>Understandability</i>			2.27	IV
Fully understand	48	40		
Partially understandable	56	46.67		
Not understandable	16	13.33		
<i>Credibility</i>			2.32	III
Credible	50	41.67		
Somewhat accurate	59	49.17		
Not credible	11	9.16		
<i>Accuracy</i>			2.24	V
Fully accurate	49	40.83		
Somewhat accurate	51	42.5		
Inaccurate	20	16.67		
<i>Brevity</i>			2.14	VII
Concise	25	20.83		
Partially concise	87	72.5		
Lengthy	8	6.67		
<i>Clarity</i>			2.05	X
Clear	35	29.17		
Partially clear	57	47.5		
Not clear	28	23.33		
<i>Directness</i>			2.06	IX
Direct	31	25.84		
Direct to some extent	66	55		
Not at all direct	23	19.16		
<i>Timeliness</i>			1.85	XI
Very timely	18	15		
Reasonably timely	67	55.84		
Not timely	35	29.16		
<i>Practicability</i>			2.12	VIII
Practicable	27	22.5		
Quite practicable	81	67.5		
Not practicable	12	10		
<i>Coverage of subject matter</i>			1.85	XI
Fully covered	13	10.84		
Partially covered	76	63.33		
Mostly covered	31	25.83		
<i>Information newness</i>			2.14	VII
New	23	19.17		
Somewhat new	91	75.83		
Old	6	5		
<i>Terminology</i>			2.45	I
Simple	56	46.67		
Somewhat simple	62	51.66		
Difficult	2	1.67		
<i>Motivation</i>			1.70	XIII
Motivating	7	5.84		

Somewhat motivating	71	59.16		
Not motivating	42	35		
<i>Illustrativeness</i>			1.84	XII
Adequately illustrative	10	8.33		
Somewhat illustrative	80	66.67		
Not illustrative	30	25		
<i>Imaginativeness</i>			2.15	VI
Highly imaginative	29	24.16		
Partially imaginative	81	67.5		
Not imaginative	10	8.34		
<i>Enjoyment in reading</i>			2.39	II
Delightful	52	43.34		
Partially delightful	63	52.5		
Boring	5	4.16		

indicates the information provided in newspaper is not exactly based on the need of farmers, thus not motivating them to adopt new technology. Data was also analysed to determine the utility perception index of the fifteen components, so that important components affecting the farmers could be identified. Index values are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to extent of perceived utility of different components of agricultural information (N=120)

Components of perceived	Utility perceived utility index
Understandability	75.55
Credibility	77.5
Accuracy	74.72
Brevity	71.38
Clarity	68.61
Directness	68.88
Timeliness	61.94
Practicability	70.83
Coverage of subject matter	61.94
Information newness	71.38
Terminology	81.94
Motivation	56.94
Illustrativeness	61.11
Imaginativeness	71.94
Enjoyment in reading	79.72

The overall perceived utility index of the farmer readers of 'Amar Ujala' newspaper was computed as 70.26 per cent. This finding was in line with Shiraskar (2011) who found index value as 70.48 per cent.

With respect to the different dimensions of the perceived utility it was observed that terminology used in the newspapers had maximum mean score of 81.94 per cent that signifies information was easily read by

the farmers and it was followed by enjoyment in reading with a mean score of 79.72 per cent. Credibility was found to have a mean score of 77.5 per cent, understandability had a score of 75.55 per cent, followed by accuracy with 74.72 per cent, Imaginativeness with 71.94 per cent, brevity with 71.38 per cent. Practicability of the information had a mean score of 70.83 per cent, directness of the information was 68.88 per cent, clarity 68.61, timeliness and coverage of subject matter was 61.94 per cent each. Less index value of coverage of subject matter is justifiable since newspapers have less percentage cover agricultural information, which should be increased as to meet the demand of needy farmers. Illustrativeness was 61.11 per cent. With regards to motivation the index value was least 56.94 per cent as agricultural information present in newspaper didn't motivated farmers to adopt new technology.

CONCLUSION

In spite of being a potent source of information dissemination newspaper is not being fully utilised for communicating agricultural information as a very less percentage cover is given to it. Apart from this, it could be inferred from the index values for the different

components that respondents considered information in newspaper as simple to read and understand, also they considered it as a credible source for the information. It was also observed index value of timeliness is comparatively less with respect to other components owing to the fact that electronic media is fast compared to them but still newspaper as a source of information is irreplaceable because people tend to read the newspaper and enjoy reading them and it has become a part and parcel of their lives. Also, if some event or major things are to be communicated, a person once can miss it in television channels or mobiles but when a person reads newspaper important information are always either present in front pages or special columns to attract the interest of the readers. Coverage of subject matter with respect to need of farmers could be increased by proper collaboration with agricultural experts, who can regularly bring detailed information for farmers. Motivation was seen to have the minimum index score which signifies less customisation of desired information in details which farmers seek. Thus, to improve the motivation for adoption of the new technologies, in-depth success stories or new agricultural technologies should be published.

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