

Review

Channels of information acquisition and dissemination among rural dwellers

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Accepted 20 May, 2013

The paper highlighted the channels of information acquisition and dissemination among the rural dwellers. The descriptive research was employed for the study. It discovered that: Town-criers, marketplaces, socio-political meetings, traditional festival, role play, songs and dance, demonstration, lecture and exhibition, GSM handsets, television, radio, and newspapers are channels of information that are used to acquire and disseminate information among rural dwellers. The study recommends among other that the indigenous languages should be used for radio and television news to enable rural dwellers understand the message better since study has shown that many rural people cannot read or write; that modern and traditional information acquisition and dissemination channels should be used by information agent working in the rural areas; that further study should be carried out to discover the best acceptable channels to each categories of rural people.

Key words: Knowledge, office, Africa, tradition, rural dwellers, information acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

The rural dwellers are the producers of agricultural resources of the nations. Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropedia Knowledge (2007) defined rural society as a place where there is low population, high level of illiteracy and lack of commercial institutions. Information is any message or news, viewed or read or told verbally which add to knowledge, awareness or understanding of some topics, or events problems that prepares you for uncertainty of life. Information means many things to many people, depending on the context of usage. Scientifically information is processed data. It can be loosely defined as that which aids decision making. Information could also be visualized as a commodity, which could be bought or sold. Gilbert and deWatteville (2000) opined that information is whatever is capable of causing a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world. Channels of information acquisition and dissemination refer to the transfer or

exchange of information from person to person or from one place to another. It is an action that produces a reaction, whether positive or negative, communication has taken place. James et al., (2004) said that information delivery is not a one way affair. There must be a sender to transmit the message, and a receiver to make appropriate decisions on how the rest of the exchange should continue. These involved the exchange of ideas, facts, opinion, attitudes and beliefs between people. The ability to communicate and pass on information is a key factor in all cultures whether literate or not. Fayose (2002) stated that many cultures survived without the written word and effective communication can take place without reading or writing. The apparent influence and resilience of African oral tradition is impressive, but it is of greater importance to the new generation of development practitioners for its theatrical and dramatic form. It encourages audience participation

rather than restrict interactions to the key players. Awa (1988) and Fayose (2002) noted that information dissemination in the rural society takes place in the home through the extended family members who participate in various ceremonies; that three main genres make up oral literature, the spoken, the sung and the dramatized. Each of these conveys information vital to the existence of a community. Cannary and Codys (1994), and Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) viewed communication as a metaphoric pipeline through which messages and information are transferred from the source to the receiver. Knowledge and information now rival natural resources namely, capital, land and labour as key factors of production (Nwalo, 2002).

Objectives

1. To find out channels of information acquisition and dissemination among rural people.
2. To discover the constraints to information dissemination and acquisition among rural people and proffer solution.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive research. Data were collected from documents. These are books, journals, magazines, newspapers and internet.

CHANNELS OF INFORMATION ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION

Inter-personal channels of information communication

This is simply referred to as face-to-face communication. It is the exchange of ideas and information between sender and receiver. The mode of interaction is usually of a conversational nature and involves the exchange of either verbal or non-verbal information between two or more people in a face-to-face or voice-to-voice setting. Interpersonal communication dominates our activities at home, office, market and elsewhere. It helps to break the barrier of formal relationships, generates warmth and creates harmony that is necessary for socio-economic development. In this kind of communication, it is necessary for the participants to be close enough to enable them to conversationally interact. The personal mannerism of either the sender or the receiver should be apparently clear enough for effective communication. The parties involved in interpersonal communication are all active. The major advantage is immediate response, which may provide signal for the encoder to modify his subsequent message to achieve a determined objective.

The goals of interpersonal communication are inter-

connected because of the multiple nature of human interaction. Aderibigbe (1990) believed that interpersonal communication is the major means of linking the rural farmers since a majority of them are illiterate.

Town crier

Traditional mass media serve both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes. They form the vehicle for acquisition and dissemination of information to rural people. Ngwaimbi (1995) noted that the traditional media is the live theatre of rural people. Town criers, marketplace and word of mouth are popular among African rural people in terms of their longevity of use and their effectiveness in transmitting messages. He explained that in many rural areas town criers are village messengers who go from street to street delivering messages. Occasional striking a bell or drum, they report the news to attendant villagers. He gives the news headlines thereby arousing the villagers' interest. Ithiel (1983) opined that in the traditional societies, traditional forms of communication like folk songs, plays and sermon have credibility and meaningfulness which cannot be equalled with imported technologies.

Social-political meetings as channels of information

Social political meetings are part of life of the rural people. Yazidu (1973) identified social meetings, traditional meetings such as weddings, naming and funeral ceremonies and harvest festivals as occasions for interpersonal communication. Similarly Aboyade (1987) said that town criers talking drums, village squares meeting, churches and mosques are sources and channels of information acquisition and dissemination among rural dwellers. There are different methods used by town criers to communicate information. The choice of method depends on the type of message he has to deliver. For example if there is danger signal to the community the town crier will use password that only the elders in the community will understand to convey the information. The town crier may decide to ring bell round the community without saying a word.

Marketplaces as channels of information acquisition and dissemination

There are various societal activities that take place in the rural environment and the rural people go to the market to share information from one society to another. Awa (1988) observed that many issues, persons and village events are discussed in market places more than elsewhere. He suggested that market sites could be used to disseminate rural development information to women

faster and effectively since most village women go there. He reported that African markets have been successfully used for advertising new food products and drugs. For example, pseudo-pharmacists sell non-prescribed and prescribed medicines to hundreds of people in the market places. Moreover, information on better nutrition and inter-village relationship can be spread by local agents trained by Africentric technicians. Bame (1990) noted that this mode of communication is development oriented and messages are self-evident.

Role play, song, dance and drama as channels of information

Songs and poems are useful channels of information acquisition and dissemination among people. Fayose (1998) opined that singing is usually associated with work, hunting, warfare, funeral, title taking, birth and nursing, moonlight plays and many forms of ceremonies. Songs deal with all types of social events and life in the community at large. Some songs ridicule undutiful fathers, lazy mothers, wayward children and some encourage the well behaved to keep it up. Fiofori (1975) stated that the traditional networks exist as speech surrogates: these are talking drums, gongs, oral narratives, stories, songs, incantations, drama, body movement- dances, games and expressive play activities. Festivals are integral parts of life in the rural communities. During such festivals, drama and role-play are used not only as a means of entertainment but also as a means of imparting socially accepted norms and values. In the same vein Fayose and Dike (2002) included poetry as one of the rural information dissemination channels. Role-play is an impromptu dramatization. It is an excellent way of inculcating health habit to groups. World Health Organisation and United Nation International Children Education Fund (1989) reported that role-playing helps people understand how others feel and that it is a good teaching and learning method for children. They emphasized that it is very useful to influence people's health habit and agricultural practices. Babalola (1993) observed that the Ministry of Health in Nigeria adopted the mobile van as a means of increasing the use of family planning. After the drama presentation, 97.3 percent of the people indicated interest in seeking more information on family planning while the number of new clients rose by nearly two-thirds. Thus, both drama and role play can be used as channels for the dissemination of sensitive health topics. Local songs accompanied with dancing are often employed in health education. Aboyade (1990) observed that health instructors on clinic days use group singing to express essential health precaution to their audience while Lapido (1990) added that songs and dance have been successfully used in the training of community health workers.

Lecture demonstration and shows

Lectures, demonstrations, and shows, are also methods of information dissemination to both the elites and rural people. To support this, Lapido (1990) emphasized that lectures and demonstrations are effective means of passing new information to a group. For example, a lecture on oral rehydration therapy (ORT) may be combined with the demonstration of how to prepare the sugar/salt solution for the treatment of diarrhoea. Ajakaiye (1978) suggested that agricultural shows and exhibitions should be used to educate farmers on improved methods of farming. It offers opportunity to farmers to see and consider for adoption, results of materials used in research institutes and agro-allied concerns; and it helps farmers in assessing the success of previous efforts and in formulating policies that would help farming population of rapid agricultural development, Aina (1986) opined that it is an excellent technique for reaching a larger number of farmers with convincing evidence of the efficiency of improved farm practice.

Modern channels

Communication, entertainment and information are important for rural living, as they are for urban. Bame (1990) noted that access to modern communication media, makes rural lives more productive and comfortable. Today, rural projects, businesses, schools and growing number of households make daily use of audio-visual equipments like radio, television, video, mobile phone and so on. The services are wide, and they could be as crucial as a 2-way radio link between a remote clinic and an urban hospital or a computer for a rural NGO office or a radio cassette player used in a household for entertainment. The modern communication equipment for rural people such as radio, telephone, video and video-player and public address system GSM are very important channels of information acquisition and dissemination to rural people. The use of GSM by the rural dwellers enables them to communicate timely and accurately with people outside their environment. Furthermore, households' demands for television, video and radio may increase in the rural areas if indigenous language is used for transmission.

Audio visual channels

Radio cassette players can be operated with batteries if the community can afford it. A battery television set will be very useful in the teaching of new skills. Films, slides or videotapes presented on any subject-matter relating to health, income generation and the general environment will be useful in educating the rural people. Audio-visual technologies offer rich opportunities for skills acquisition

and in solving meaningful problems. Munyua (2000) observed that traditional and modern Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) could be used concurrently to speed up the circulation of information. In many African countries, ICTs are used in drama, dance, folklore, group discussion, meetings, exhibitions, demonstrations, visits, farmers' fields, schools, agricultural shows, radio, television, telephone calls and many others. Audio-visual media are popular with illiterate rural people. It gives them opportunity to see and discuss complete agricultural techniques before using them. Audiovisual technology also improves mental retention, and for these reasons educators are making use of videos, television programmes, films, slides and pictures in training sessions. The radio also plays a major role in delivering health messages to rural people. The media can do more to circulate information to rural farmers. Morgan (1995) discovered in his study that rural radio listening in the Meru, Nithi and Tharaka Districts of Kenya indicated a penetration of 69% among rural households. But men owned 80% of the radio listening patterns. Women preferred programmes containing easily understood, interesting and relevant information. The possession of radio sets, access to newspapers, and television sets in the rural area are positive indicators of information development. The media programmes are meant for demonstration and to educate the communities on modern agricultural and health practices. In Gambia and Ghana, the radio soap operas, according to Babalola (1993) have motivated men and women to seek and use family planning services. And in Nigeria the Anambra State Ministry of Health used radio programmes such as "Dibi ezi na ulo" (Family Doctor) and "Ezina ulo" (our family) to influence the health habits of the people. However, Odejide (1996) lamented that women have proved too difficult an audience for the mass media to address, while prints appears ineffective because of high level of illiteracy. Radio and the television are not appropriate for rural women who work long hours and consequently have little free time for such leisure activities. On the other hand, men who usually have control over radio and television are often reluctant to tune into programmes designed for women. She suggested the need for alternative channels of reaching women to be exploited and utilized to ensure that information gets to them. Olatunji (1990) suggested that the quality of media fare in indigenous languages have to be improved; indigenous language newspapers have to be subsidized to reach the grassroots; radio programmes on agriculture must not proceed on the assumption that the rural populace have enough radio sets and listen in great number. Opeke and Ifukor (2000) asserted that information for rural development should not be dissemination through indigenous channels alone; but government and none governmental agencies working in the rural areas must make available external information in formats which can easily be understood by the rural

women. They emphasized that community television viewing, mobile library and rural press be introduced in the rural areas.

Rural library

The rural library provides a permanent house for all information bearing materials produced in the area or brought to it by government and non-governmental information agents. Aboyade (1985) did not consider the library a luxury in any community. She sees it as an essential organ in provision of information for developmental programmes. She explained that the library is often seen in the light of educated elitist users and not associated with rural non-reading people. She suggested that the ideal situation would be that every village or community should have a library in form of "A General Information Centre" (GIC) under the care of a supervisor. Each community should be able to develop the type of library services that suit and enhance its social goals and development objectives. Hansan (1991) stated that each community has to collect and keep information about the community life so that future generations will have something to build upon. A rural library is also needed so that information from the government and other Better Life Programmes will reach the rural dwellers in written form. If information gets to them by words of mouth they may not understand the correct content since people tend to add or subtract from the content when information is communicated with word of mouth. Information on new methods of farming, child rearing, and on general well-being of citizens will be provided by libraries. It is the responsibility of government in developing women's activities to create the awareness at the local government and community levels. These will help to improve the lot of our mothers, sisters and children in the rural areas. She outlined the important books to be provided in rural libraries. They include books on health, cookery, good housekeeping, child-care, farming methods, arts and craft, Nigeria history, and daily newspapers, including those in local languages. Translation of basic government policy documents into simple English and local languages, light reading or entertaining magazines and educative posters and charts are also required. Ochogwu (1998) opined that the current practices in building public library collections and rendering information services are based on the experiences of professionals. The users of the information are hardly consulted before acquisition. Aboyade (1990) lamented that the library has not yet been involved in information transfer activities to rural areas and encouraged speedy rectification of the omission by policy makers and the librarians themselves. Mchombu (1991) stated that at independence, there was hope that libraries would help to spread information and advance the pace of development. It was also believed

that libraries would help to achieve the best education, as it was the only hope for Africa. He lamented the influence of politics on library development in Africa, despite its importance in education, social, political and economic decisions.

Information service to rural people

Information services according to Okilagwe (1996) are the provision of information to meet the needs of library patrons. Thus, the first duty of the reference librarian is to answer questions, and to decode queries into terms that can be met by a given reference source. Information service therefore entails giving personal assistance to users, with the aim of meeting their information needs. The service rendered depends on the type of library and the nature of users being served. The services provided range from the usual lending services; reference service to selective information services, provision of current awareness services, and searching of CD-ROM-based databases for output to researchers and students. At least one library in each SADC member country has access to a computer and CD-ROM readers and international agricultural databases through collaborative arrangements. Azubuike (1992) observed that database serve four main functions: they alert users about new information and conditions, like newly generated knowledge, environmental conditions or market disposition which are critical in decision making such as research development, production and marketing; they serve as pointers to information and knowledge such as regulations for recommended practices, systems descriptions as repositories databases ensure that information and knowledge are preserved. He noted that Malawi has been able to reorganize its agricultural information services into the countrywide network that provides agricultural information nation wide. According to Aitchson (1991), the library needs to structure its operations around three basic functions. These are identifying information needs, locating information in databases and helping user in traditional collection development through the creation of databases of carefully selected electronic publications. The task requires subject knowledge since it is necessary to understand the content and the importance of the constantly changing network from which the publications are selected; and the first two functions can be described as downloading and they have their counterpart in traditional library work (that is, reference work, cataloguing and collection development); and the third is secondary record definition. The library incorporates into its databases paper from researchers and makes them available to the research community and thus promotes both education and scientific exchange.

Factors that have accelerated development towards new forms of information and knowledge distribution are

the rapid advances in computer and telecommunication technology. One effect of this development is that researchers potentially can access information resources from all over the world without even entering the library. This could be devastating for the library in its role as information provider unless communication can take place in networks outside the library and the increased offerings of databases can make the library a small and marginal part of the whole network. Perryman (1991) gave some guidelines on how libraries can work to prevent this from happening: strengthen and expand the traditional library values of cooperation and resource sharing; offer flexible, multi-faceted services, provide access to new and developing formats, foster new approaches to information access, tap into the developing telecommunication infrastructure; pursue and develop new funding services, and develop a common vision for the future of information technology. Kabamba (2002) said that the librarian serves as a mediator advocate in the information age. Advocacy is a verbal support for a given cause. Any activity that seeks to influence others be it at the level of electing office bearers, or drumming up national support for the advancement of a particular legislation, can be described as an act of advocacy. Middleton (1996) opined that these are brokers, matching information with the people who needed them. They act as a safety nets providing information to those people who cannot afford to buy it. Kabamba (2002) explained that advocacy is not about speaking with a single voice or even needs, the voice of all to sing the same tune" but making sure the voices are clear, well trained and capable of reaching many people in the back row." She emphasized that there are important development projects in our institutions or community that the librarians can identify, to promote greater awareness of their actions and increase the profit of the library. Extension services according to Edoke, (1992) cater for the information needs of all members of the community, not just the citizens who are able to go to the libraries. He noted that many forms of library extension services have been practised in different public libraries. These include branch libraries, mobile library service to schools as well as to hospitals, prisons and her disadvantaged groups.

Factors militating against information acquisition and dissemination among rural dwellers

All the factors that interfere with the intended message and or prevent it from either being received or from being correctly interpreted by users, can be regarded as barriers to effective communication. In discussing the role of libraries in the transfer of knowledge, Aboyade (1990) recognised the capacity of information to bring about significant changes within the society. However, she enumerated communication channel, illiteracy and the

use of indigenous languages as impeding factors to information flow. She lamented that many less developing countries (LDCs) have long been "oral" societies and depended little on printed communication. But the teaching and learning language of many LDC readers is a foreign language, which may even be an anti-stimulant to the acquisition of new knowledge. Moreover, the understanding of the role of information in the development of countries is poor even in the developed world. In the modern technological world, the establishment of a literate society and a system for the continuous exchange of ideas is very necessary. Olayide (1990), observed that rural people lack infrastructural facilities such as roads, good water supply, schools, health centres and markets. He asserted that lack of indigenous capabilities for the collection and dissemination of information have been creating great barriers in many LDCs. They also have difficulties in building sound information systems the reason is not ignorance of what should be done but insufficient ability to translate good intention into operational activities. Lack of knowledge of how to use appropriate instructional materials such as books, radio sets, films, slides, television, records and cassette players to mention only a few, This can hinder effective communication and acquisition of new skills. Ochogwu (1998) opined that Nigerian information service is based on the experience of professionals the users of the information are hardly consulted before acquisition.

1. Lack of knowledge of the information needs of users constitutes formidable barriers to information communication. Information agents seem to be ignorant of users' information needs.
2. Lack of cooperation among related information systems create barriers to information flow.

Adeniyi (2007) observed that information needed for development has become highly segmented, divisive and uncoordinated. For information to achieve the desired results in the rural communities, the sources that provide for the flow of information should not be monopolized and politicized. Availability as well as accuracy and currency of information is a must to the rural dwellers.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious from contributions of various authors that there are different methods of information acquisition and dissemination for rural dwellers. The evidence of various developmental programmes is not shown in the lives of rural people despite many programmes. There is lack of successful transfer of developmental information to rural areas. The channels of information communication that are currently used by various agents to disseminate information to rural dwellers are elitist and urban-centred

therefore tend to further widen the information gap between the agents and the users.. There is need for proper classification of information and assessment of information acquisition and dissemination channels to bridge the gap between information providers and information agents and rural dwellers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following are the recommendations:

1. Information agents should study the users in order to discover and use the best acceptable method to disseminate information to their audience.
2. Functional literacy should be encouraged among rural people. This will enable them learn how to read, write and acquire information through the use of multi channels
3. The National library should encourage State Library Board to build libraries in the villages and Mobile Library should be introduced to serve rural areas in Nigeria. This will encourage adults and school children to form good reading habits to minimize the rate of illiteracy and school dropouts.
4. Information providers should recognize the services of libraries and Librarians, and engage them in the dissemination of information to rural area. Rural library should be furnished with radios, televisions and standby generators for the use of electronics. This will enable the librarian to acquire and disseminate current information for rural people.

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