



RESEARCH PAPER

OPEN ACCESS

Reading preference of Filipino farm magazine readers

Johny P. Alvarez*

Cagayan State University at Piat, Piat, Cagayan, Philippines

Key words: Legumes, Cereals, Intercropping, Monoculture, Biological nitrogen fixation, Yield advantage.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12692/ijb/14.1.570-577>

Article published on January 31, 2019

Abstract

Communication is an important element in influencing the people for innovation and modernization of society. Farm magazines serve as a conduit of communication particular among farming communities since it is essential for the success of agricultural information to create interest and motivation among farming communities to increase agricultural information and adoption level of technologies for productivity. This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the quality reading preference of agricultural magazines. A total of 50 farmers was sampled as research participants. Results of the study showed that most of the Filipino farmer-respondents prefer magazines with topics on organic agriculture. They have a very high preference for farm magazines written in their local languages, with relevant and timely scientific data, presented with useful information. Most of the respondents spent 30-60 minutes reading farm magazines every day. A majority expressed the problem on the use of scientific terms and difficult terms among farm magazines. Further, the majority suggested publishing information in vernacular basis as it would facilitate better understanding and would create interest and attract to capture their attention and respondents can get the needed information appropriate to them. Findings of this study will be the basis for farm magazines for improvement with respect to various quality dimensions and effectiveness intended for local farmer-readers.

* **Corresponding Author:** Patrick A. Ndakidemi ✉ ndakidemipa@gmail.com

Introduction

Social scientists unanimously consider that communication is an important element in influencing the people for innovation and modernization of society. Journalists working in different media organizations- the print media, the electronic media, and the internet, can create a favorable environment for modernizing the instrument and institutions for social change and upliftment. Information is a social resource of a special kind rather than a produced commodity. It is a resource which enables other resources to function productively for the benefit of society. It is therefore imperative that information should be channeled effectively so that it can reach those who are engaged in the management of social resources.

Effectiveness of any media depends on its ability to disseminate the message properly so that it is understood, readily accepted and thus facilitated in adoption of the practices. The farm magazines could be made more effective through need-based content, proper writing and appropriate usage of cover page, illustrations and contents of format. Timely dissemination of technologies in the right form to right farmers is necessary to get the derived benefit. Print media provide an excellent opportunity for a communicator to convey precise and timely information to a larger section of their clientele (Shirke and Sawant, 2006). The printed information remains more permanent, ensure greater accuracy, and serves as ready reckoner for farmers further and future reference. There are several farm magazines being published from various organizations. Only very few attempts are directed towards assessment of content coverage extent, trend analysis, information percent index and direction of content (Srinivas, Manasa, Rani and Archana, 2013). The desire to make the best utilization of magazine in the dissemination of agricultural information to the farmers for better understanding and to cater diversified information needs to be ignited to conduct this study.

Farm magazines have been the vital source of providing detailed complete information in understandable form by the use of a variety of graphic aids. Looking into the present situation there is a

growing realization to improve the content and format of farm magazines. From a communicator point of view, it is essential to find out the effective methods of improving magazine, content, which could be used as effective media in transferring farm technology. The effectiveness of any media depends on its ability to disseminate the message properly and resulting in a desirable gain in knowledge for the adoption of the agricultural practices in the future.

The ultimate purpose of any agricultural magazine is to convey ideas and make the farmers adopt the recommendations in their field practices (Archana and Sailaja, 2013). They play an important role to increase the agricultural information and adoption level among the literate farming community (Nain, 2003). The timeliness of the farm message coincide with cultural operations coupled with the completeness of message is a major requirement for farm periodical. The readers' perceptions are countable for the effectiveness of any publication. The extent of satisfaction of readers from various parts of publication, content, and style of presentation, cover page, format, and readability greatly account for preference and choice of publication in order to serve the basic purpose of information tailored to needs.

From a communicator point of view, it is essential to find out the effective methods of improving magazine, content, which could be used as effective media in transferring farm technology. The effectiveness of any media depends on its ability to disseminate the message properly and resulting in a desirable gain in knowledge for the adoption of the agricultural practices in the future.

This study aimed to analyze the readers' perceptions and preferences had been undertaken with the following specific objectives: (1) identify the topic preference of the farmer-respondents; (2) assess the perceptions of the farmers on the quality of agricultural magazines; (3) determine the amount of Time Spent in reading farm magazines by the farmers; (4) determine the problems encountered by Farm magazine readers; and (5) offer suggestions to improve farm magazines.

Materials and methods

Research Design

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A descriptive study is a sort of fact-finding operation with adequate interpretation.

It states clearly the characteristics of a particular situation or group or individuals in descriptive design and the variables are assumed to be known. Calmorin (2007) describes the usefulness of such survey to provide the value of facts and focusing attention on the most important things to be reported.

Participants

The respondents of the study were the 50 farmers selected through simple random sampling who have subscription of selected farm magazines in the Philippines. The respondents were through purposive sampling technique.

Research Study Areas

The study was conducted in the five municipalities of the Province of Cagayan, Philippines namely: Gattaran, Lasam, Allacapan, Amulung and Buguey.



Fig. 1. Map of the Province of Cagayan showing the 5 municipalities as sites of the study.

Research Instrument

Using a structured pre-tested questionnaire data of the study were gathered. Part I elicited the topic preference of the farmer-respondents. Part II assessed the quality preference. Part III surveyed the amount of time spent on reading farm magazines. Part IV. Ascertain the problems encountered in farm magazines, and lastly, Part V. Identifies the suggestions offered to improve farm magazines.

Data Gathering Procedure

Seeking approval through formal communication letter from the authorities concerned to float the questionnaire started the data gathering stage. Upon informed consent, the researcher ensured proper consultation for the schedule of the administration of the questionnaire. Distribution and retrieval were personally executed by the researcher. As agreed upon by the concerned authorities and the researcher, data gathered was properly kept to ensure confidentiality and were strictly used for research purposes only. The elicited quantitative data had undergone checking, scoring, analysis and interpretation with the help of the statistician. Every item in the questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted.

Data Analysis

To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher utilized Weighted Mean, standard deviation, frequency count and percentage distribution in order to analyze and interpret the data that provided an answer to the specific problems posed in this study. Through this procedure, the perceptions of farmers on the quality of farm magazines were gathered.

This study is only limited to the responses made by the respondents in the administered adapted questionnaire. Moreover, it did not determine and correlate the profile variables of the farmers to their reading preferences, time spent in reading, and quality of the reading material. To interpret the results of the data, the following scale was adopted: 4.20-5.00: Very High Preference; 3.40-4.19: High Preference; 2.60-3.39: Moderate Preference; 1.80-2.59: Low Preference; 1.79: Very Low Preference.

Results and discussion

This section presents discussions which were focused on the following: (a) topic preference of the farmer-respondents; (b) perceptions of the farmers on the quality of agricultural magazines; (c) amount of Time Spent in reading farm magazines; (d) problems encountered by Farm magazine readers; and (d) suggestions to improve farm magazines.

Table 1. Topic preference of the farmer-respondents.

	f	Percentage	Rank
1. Crop protection	9	18	3
2. Soil management	10	20	2
3. Organic agriculture	11	22	1
4. Farm mechanization	4	8	6
5. Success stories	3	6	7
6. Animal science	5	10	5
7. Post-harvest management	2	4	8
8. Horticulture	6	12	4
Total	50	100	

All the articles in farm magazines were grouped into different aspects of farmers' interests and presented in Table 1. It is evident from Table 1 that majority of them belong to organic agriculture (22%) followed by soil management (20%), crop protection (18%), horticulture (12%), animal science (10%), farm mechanization (6%), success stories (7%), and post-harvest management (4%).

This indicates that most of the farmers prefer topics relating to organic agriculture. Organic agriculture is defined as all agricultural systems that promote environmentally, socially and economically sound production of food and fibers (IFOAM, 2002). Organic agriculture also reduces the use of chemically-based external inputs, instead, it promotes the law of nature to increase the agricultural yields

and disease resistance (Landicho *et al* 2014). In like manner, Lirag & Boradado (2016) confirm that organic crops are one of the most important needs for Filipino farmers. They provide the needed nutritive value as well as food security not only to farmers but to consumers as well. Scientific studies also indicate the need for more organically grown crops in the diet to help suppress heart disease, cancer, and other diseases.

The biodiversity has the fundamental value of human survival. However, at present, it is being assaulted due to rapid and accelerating anthropogenic activities causing the persistent decline in species diversity. Conservation of biodiversity has become one of the dilemmas being faced by countries around the world. (Magulod, 2018), hence, the signing of Republic Act No. 10068 known as the Philippine Organic Agriculture Act, on June 16, 2012, was considered by many as a landmark legislation which provided for the development and promotion of Organic Agriculture in the Philippines.

It is a culmination of long years of development efforts mostly by non-government, community-based organizations and private groups pushing for agriculture sector reforms around ecologically sustainable, environmentally friendly and safer production systems, availability of safer and more nutritious staples and food and increased farm productivity and income opportunities for Filipino farmers. The role of print media is disseminating useful and scientific knowledge to farmers would continue to grow in the future with the increasing literacy level in the Philippines and hence agriculture information needs to be given more coverage by all the farm magazines.

Table 2. Quality Preference of the Reading Materials.

	Mean	Std.Dev.	Interpretation
1. Relevant and timely	4.12	.84	High
2. Good Writing qualities	3.54	.78	High
3. Used Vernacular Language	4.78	.41	Very High
4. Presented Usefulness of Information Presented	4.08	.77	High
5. Data Presented with pictures and Fig.s	4.18	.77	High
Over-all Mean	4.14		High

Legend: 4.20-5.00: Very High Preference; 3.40-4.19: High Preference; 2.60-3.39: Moderate Preference; 1.80-2.59: Low Preference; 1.79: Very Low Preference.

There are different modes of presentation of agricultural information to farmers. Selection of mode depends on the information to be disseminated, objective and nature of clientele. Data on the quality of the quality preference of reading materials is presented in Table 3. Data reveal that the farmer-respondents have a high preference for different farming magazines with the grand mean of 4.14. Closer inspection of the table, it shows that they have a very high preference to farming magazines written in their vernacular languages obtained the highest mean of 4.78 (SD=0.41) indicating that the farmers prefer information written in their local languages making the information presented in the magazine easily understood.

Consequently, they also have a high preference for relevant and timely magazines as evidenced by the mean of 4.12 (SD=.84). This shows that the farmers have an interest in reading farming magazines with the latest scientific contents. Further, the data also show that the farmers' high preference for magazines with data presented with pictures and Fig.s obtained the mean of 4.18 (SD=.77). A high level of preference is also seen to magazines presented usefulness of information with the mean of 4.08 (SD=.77). likewise, they also manifest a high preference for magazines with good writing qualities as assessed with the mean of 3.54 (SD=.78).

The possibility to inform farmers through farm magazine increases rapidly due to the steady increase in literacy rate. Natikar (2001) noted that on the usefulness of message published through printed media like books, booklets, leaflets/folders, newspapers, and farm magazines revealed that the articles published through print media were useful to

the farming community. According to Jana (2004), a farm book or farm journals must be attractive to the eye before reading. It will attract the reader and generate a desire within him to read and possess it. Hence, well production of farm journals or agricultural books should present an appearance of pattern and purpose. The typography should be so designed as to read with ease, speed, and accuracy. The text and illustrations with their headings, subheadings should be such so as to allow it to lie when open.

Table 3. Amount of Time Spent in reading farm magazines by the farmers.

	f	Percentage	Rank
More than 60 minutes	8	16	2
30-60 minutes	38	78	1
Less than 30 minutes	4	8	3
Total	50	100	

A glance at Table 4, it shows the amount of time spent in reading farm magazines by the farmer-respondents. Most of the respondents spent 30-60 minutes reading farm magazines (78%), followed by more than 60 minutes (16%), and the least is less than 30 minutes (8%). It can be inferred from the data that most farmers have average time spent in reading indicating that they have a positive reading habit. Likewise, the reason could be that the duration of time spent was varied according to their interest in acquiring and understanding the agriculture information. Education level, institutional participation and degree of progressiveness also have an influence on time spent to read magazines. In the previous study of Amareshkumar (2000), time spent in reading farm magazines was independent to farm magazine readers.

Table 4. Problems encountered by Farm magazine readers.

	f	Percentage	Rank
1. Non-availability of the magazine in the area	3	6	5.5
2. Irregularity of distribution	2	4	7
3. Lack of comprehensive information	12	24	2
4. Use of scientific terms and difficult terms	13	26	1
5. Poor quality printing	8	16	4
6. The absence of Fig.s and illustrations	9	18	3
7. Lack of an author's information	3	6	5.5
Total	50	100	

The information presented in Table 4 shows the problems encountered by readers on farm magazines. Majority of them (26%) expressed the problem on the use of scientific terms and difficult terms, followed by 24% of them expressed problem on the lack of comprehensive information. The possible reason for this is that most of the farmers did not attain a high level of education hence they could not understand scientific and difficult terms. The 18% of the respondents expressed that absence of Fig.s and illustrations is a problem. Likewise, 16% of them expressed that poor quality printing is a problem. Only 6% of them expressed that non-availability of the magazine in the area and lack of author's information were also a problem. The least of 4% expressed that irregularity of distribution is a problem.

A breakthrough in any field of agriculture is not possible without an effective communication support to disseminate the research findings. Speedy dissemination of agricultural information and technological know-how to the farmers is essential for bridging the gap between the agricultural scientists and thus, farming community. Hanumanaikar (2009) confirms that farm magazines have been the vital source of providing detailed complete information in understandable form by the use of a variety of graphic aids. Looking into the present situation there is a growing realization to improve the content and format of farm magazines.

Table 5. Suggestions offered to improve magazines.

	f	Percentage	Rank
1. Publish information on the vernacular basis	18	36	1
2. Publish information on question and answer	8	16	2
3. Publish on time with high-quality printing and pictures	4	8	6
4. Writing should be based on the farmers' experience	7	14	3.5
5. Publish information on short pages	7	14	3.5
6. Make the publication available online	6	12	5
Total	50	100	

The information presented in Table 5 depicts the suggestions offered by the respondents for the improvement of farm magazines. Majority of them (36%) suggested publishing information in vernacular

basis as it would facilitate better understanding and would create interest and attract to capture their attention and respondents can get the needed information appropriate to them. 16% of the respondents suggested publishing information in the magazine on question and answer type. It is also interesting to note that a considerable percentage of the respondents (14%) wanted writings, which were based on the farmer's experience and publish information on short pages. This would help them to contact progressive farmers and adopt the technologies. Twelve percent (12%) of the respondents suggested making the publication available online. And only eight % suggested publishing on time with high-quality printing and pictures.

Conclusion

Communication is an important element in influencing the people for innovation and modernization of society. The farm magazine is one of the important mass media to disseminate the information to farming community on agriculture and other related aspects. This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the quality reading preference of agricultural magazines. A total of 50 farmers was sampled as research participants. Results of the revealed that: (1) most of the Filipino farmer-respondents prefer magazines with topics on organic agriculture; (2) farmer-respondents have the very high preference to farm magazines written in their local languages, with relevant and timely scientific data, presented with useful information. (3) Most of the respondents spent 30-60 minutes reading farm magazines every day. (4) The majority expressed the problem on the use of scientific terms and difficult terms among farm magazines. Further, (5) the majority suggested publishing information in vernacular basis as it would facilitate better understanding and would create interest and attract to capture their attention and respondents can get the needed information appropriate to them. Findings of this study will be the basis for farm magazines for improvement with respect to various quality dimensions and effectiveness intended for local farmer-readers.

Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness and quality of farm magazines to farming communities, on the basis of the conclusion, the following recommendations are offered: first, university extension practitioners and planners who design or disseminate agricultural information should recognize the apparent reading preferences of farmers in their respective communities with emphasis on the following qualities of farm magazines incorporating: (a) latest scientific findings on organic agriculture; (b) written in local languages with appropriate Fig.s and pictures; (c) within the farmers' level of experience; Secondly, as an implication to the University, in order for Extension practitioners and planners to effectively utilize the mass media methods for dissemination of agricultural information, more attention will have to be given to educating farmers and other agriculturists to become more competent and confident in using the new information sources to solve specific problems using general information.

Since the study is only limited to a group of farmers in the farming municipalities in the Philippines utilizing the descriptive method of research, therefore, a comprehensive study can be attempted focusing on all the aspects of the farm magazine such as content analysis, readability, utility of the message and its impact on farming with more sample size and including more number of magazines.

Another study should be conducted on the progressive farmers who are regular readers of various farm magazines to assess the impact of farm magazines in the Philippine setting.

Finally, comparative studies can also be planned to measure the knowledge level and extent of adoption of improved agricultural technologies among readers and nonreaders of farm magazines so that actual usefulness and quantum of profit gained as a result of utilization of farm magazines can be made known to other farmers through educational activities of extension workers thereby nonreaders can also be motivated to subscribe and or read farm magazines.

References

- Amareshkumar K.** 2000. Content analysis of agriculture information in Kannada dailies and to know the reading habits of farmers. M. Sc. (Agri). Thesis, Uni. Agric. Sci., Bangalore (India).
- Archana T, Sailaja A.** 2013. A Study on Quantitative Content Analysis of Farm Magazines in Andhra Pradesh. *Global Journal for Research Analysis* 2(10), 5-8. Retrieved form.
- Humanaikar R.** 2009. A study on reading habits, preference pattern and satisfaction level of Kannada farm magazines readers.
- Jana BL.** 2004. Layout in Farm Journal. Workshop on "Farm Journalism of Animal husbandry Technology, WBUAFS, Kolkata-700037, pp.9-20.
- Landicho L, Paelmo R, Cabahug R, Visco R, Abadillos M.** 2014. Prospects and Challenges in Promoting Organic Agriculture in the Upland Communities in the Philippines: Implications for Food Security and Nutrition. 2014 International Conference on Food Security and Nutrition IPCBEE vol. 67 (2014) © (2014) IACSIT Press, Singapore DOI: 10.7763/PCBEE. 2014. V67. 12
- Lirag M, Bordado G.** 2016. Status of Organic Agriculture Research and Development Programs in the Bicol Region, Philippines. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Agriculture and Forestry*, Vol. 2, 2016, pp. 108-115 Copyright © TIIKM ISSN: 2362-1036.
- Magulod G, Jr C.** 2018. Conservation beliefs and practices of indigenous people in Northwestern Cagayan, Philippines: Implications for environmental promotion and education. *Journal of Biodiversity and Environmental Sciences (JBES)*, 12(6), 2018th ser., 186-194. Retrieved February 8, 2017.
- Nain MS.** 2003. The effectiveness of Farm Magazine: A Comparative Analysis of Various Components As Viewed By Readers. *Rajasthan Journal of Extension Education* 9-15.

Natikar KV. 2001. Attitude and use of farm journals by the subscriber farmers and their profile – A critical analysis. Ph.D. Thesis, Uni. Agric. Sci., Dharwad. (India).

Shirke VS, Tarde VJ, Babar MS, Nimbalkar CA. 2007. Measuring Readability of Shetkari Magazine. Asian Journal of Extension Education. Maharashtra **27**, 82-85.