

Role of Mass Media in Agriculture

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Introduction

Mass media – written, spoken and visual carry information from its source to receivers – readers, listeners, viewers. The media may be used effectively in dealing with all sections of society everywhere, but they are especially important for taking science and technology to Indian agriculture. Mass media can be further divided into four types – printed, spoken, visual, a combination of those three. The term mass media implies a large audience. Mass media materials are needed whenever large number of people must be reached and motivated to action, which is an important advantage. Radio, television, cinema and newspapers are examples of mass media which have large audiences with very low cost per person contacted. Where mass media material influence people to adopt new practices, the cost per adoption is low. These materials may be used to supplement nearly any other teaching and information method.



Role of mass media in Agriculture:

- 1. Social integration & communication network:** Through the mass media, social integration has been sought to be achieved in our rural areas and rightly so. At the same time, our society is hierarchical and stratified and the lack of vertical mobility among



the various classes, particularly the rich and the poor who are separated by varying degrees of social distances that have tended to widen over the years, particularly after the onset of the Green Revolution. The various religious groups are also separated by emotional and psychological distances. In this context, the tremendous expansion in the communication infrastructure in the countryside has been a welcome development. Printed text with words and figures communicates the message through the sense of sight only. Radio is a mass medium, which communicates message through sense of sound, but films and television combine both visual and auditory characteristics.

2. **Impact of TV:** TV is instrumental in imparting knowledge on agriculture. The audio and visual impact of TV plays a great role in the life of illiterate persons also. In fact, illiterates gained more than the literates. While content analysis of other TV programmes for the rural masses is still an unexplored field, very few studies have been made on farmwomen. India is the first country in the world to use satellite for direct telecasting to the remote villages. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) project was in operation for a year during 1975-76 and was carried out in the backward districts of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Initially, the poor had no access to the media and hence there was community listening/viewing.
3. **Media and motivation:** Development communication media originated primarily to carry information on agriculture, health, population control, etc the rural masses. However, soon it was realized that information alone is not sufficient. Audience should be motivated to take to new practices. The media was thus given the additional role of motivating the audience. It was also found that unless infrastructural support was available from the development agencies, new ideas could not be practiced. For example, marketing a particular variety of seed available was not possible in the given constraint. Hence, close co-ordination between the media and development agencies was found to be very necessary.
4. **Need for a balanced blend:** With more than five lakh villages and about 5.028 blocks, the information needs of the rural masses are tremendous. We must make the best use of all media sources like the radio, TV, films, exhibitions, traditional media, like the folk dances, folk songs, folk dramas, etc as also talks, discussions on topics and the



like. It has been found that the audio-visual medium is very effective, though it cannot replace classroom teaching altogether or take the place of a textbook. Rural newspapers have been utterly lacking in India. Whatever papers are available from within the rural areas; there is need for professionalism in them. There is also need for full-fledged morning newspapers in many of the rural areas. There is no gainsaying the fact that the mass media is enormously instrumental in accelerating development in many areas of human endeavor, but its potential has been realized late in rural India.

5. **Media is a facilitator:** There is also a great need to use extensive interviews as research tool, to make people 'speak up' on various issues. For instance, for health services to children in the rural areas, the endeavour should be to generate awareness among the masses on the relevance of education should be to generate awareness among the masses on the relevance of education to their daily lives and living. The media can play the role of a facilitator to create an environment congenial to literacy promotion and make people more receptive to the efforts being made by the government for educating the children in remote and backward rural areas. The effort should be to bring the rural communities to the state of preparedness, where they would pressurize the government to provide the infrastructure and facilities for basic elementary education as a right of each and every rural child. The media should explain that education is very important and relevant in the lives of all rural people. Mass media must bring about policy changes, when and if necessary, so that there is effective use of the communication channel.
6. **Blending technology and tradition:** If modern communication technology becomes an aid for the dialogue between the classes and the masses, between the thinking sections of society and the working, it will serve as a liberating force, as a support to emancipation and mass creativity. But if sophisticated technology turns into a substitute for a dialogue, into a destroyer of traditional communication among the people and between the people and the governing and intellectual elite, it will turn into an engine of structural oppressions of the masses. It would certainly be tragic if the communication revolution, which has vast potential of promoting the realization and renewal of folk and peasant art and culture, in its actual impact promotes their disintegration and destruction. We have to see that the mass media becomes a beneficial



tool for overall rural development. Through the media, people's lives could be enriched in various ways. And for this, variable relationship studies need to be conducted to know which factors are related and influence each other. Rural knowledge management needs to be promoted tremendously if the various ills of rural life and rural environment are to be removed.

7. **The message and the medium:** If one were to survey the rural scene in the country, one may hear a loud uproar about the pressing need for rural marketing, which is described as fascinating, challenging, exciting and highly profitable, but a cursory look at the number of organizations engaged in rural marketing would prove the hollowness of such claims. Though the rural market is sufficiently large and has a lot of potential for the marketers interested in tapping it, it poses numerous problems. Rural markets are highly dispersed, thinly populated and scattered. They are subject to varying religious, cultural and social pressures. This poses special problems for the marketing communicator while there is no one best way of communicating with the rural masses. Therefore, selection of an appropriate medium or media for carrying the well-designed messages to the target audience is equally important. In rural India, there are age-old techniques such as word of mouth, signs, town cries, etc., having co-existed with the numerous media developed during the last two decades or so. No doubt, if proper types of communication channels are developed and effectively used in rural areas, they can become a very important source of disseminating knowledge and information to the vast number of people and to far-off places in the country.
8. **Creating awareness:** The first thing it can do is to make the people aware about the very existence of the programmes chalked out for them. Most of the rural folk, particularly in the remote areas are ignorant of them. In the process, those who are well off manage to avail themselves of the benefits, defeating the very purpose of the programmes. Apart from the electronic media and the press, field publicity men can motivate the people through films and the traditional media.
9. **Deciding priorities:** The media can also send a helping hand in the identification of priority areas. The gramsabha will draw up plans for the development of its area based on the needs of the people. The rural reporters who make on the spot study of the village concerned can serve as a guide to the gramsabha.



10. Exposing lapses: Face to face talks with the beneficiaries of the programmes and representatives of Panchayat Raj institutions at various levels will bring to light the drawbacks in the implementation. Media reports will help initiate remedial measures. While projecting the positive side, the radio and TV should not get shy to expose the lapses.

Conclusion:

Mass media can help encourage innovation in agriculture. Mass media can help advocate for policy changes that benefit agriculture. Mass media can be used to create awareness about agricultural topics.

