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Original Research Article

Farmers' proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Given the soap opera's potential to engender behaviour learning and meet the information needs of farmers, this paper sought to establish farmers' propensity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information in Southwest Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw representative samples (150 farmers) in this study. Using interview schedule, data were elicited on farmers' personal characteristics, awareness about the use of soap opera, perceived benefits of soap opera and proclivity to use it for sourcing agricultural information. Data were analysed using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential (Chi-square and PPMC) statistics at $P = 0.05$. Farmers' age, years of schooling and household size were 52.1 ± 11.4 years, 10.5 ± 4.6 years and 5.9 ± 2.4 persons, respectively. Majority of the farmers (86.0%) had heard about soap opera and 76.0% heard of different soaps in the last couple of years and more than half (53.3%) had heard of different soaps from both radio and television. However, 90.7% did not know any kind of soap opera that was used to promote agriculture. More than half of the farmers (56.7%) had high inclination for sourcing agricultural information using soap opera. There was a significant correlation between farmers' perceived benefits ($r = 0.36$; $P = 0.00$) and proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information. Farmers' positive proclivity to use soap implies that soap opera strategy has potentials to benefit farmers as a source of agricultural information; therefore, soap opera should be considered as veritable avenue for agricultural information dissemination in Southwest Nigeria.

Keywords: radio; television; soap opera awareness; perceived benefits.

INTRODUCTION

In the position of Familusi and Owoeye (2014), dissemination of adequate information to the grass root, especially to farmers will enhance productivity. Also, Milovanović (2014) submits that agriculture will be driven by information in the future rather than bid as seen in the past and demand of today, coupled with the fact that information-intensive are going to be lead factors of sustainable agricultural production. These positions underscore the relevance of information as key to various agricultural enterprises. This perhaps dictates agricultural information dissemination since ages and traditionally through agricultural extension agents as well as various radio and television programmes (Ashraf, 2008; Lucky and Achebe, 2013; Sam, 2011; Sam and Dzandu, 2015). Radio, television, documentary film and print media have also been used as media in transferring agricultural technologies or innovation to farmers, with the aim of boosting agricultural production (Nwankwo and Orji, 2013).

As the mass media method of messages delivery obliterates the individual methods as exemplified in the use of extension agents due to inherent challenges associated with deployment of extension agents, many formats also took centre stages even in the mass medium. One of the most effective programme formats used in mass media as represented by radio and television channels is the drama or play format. Ladele et al. (2014) observe that radio drama or play format enhances listenership of enlightenment programmes. Sheila and Cody (2013) confirm that the possible reason for effectiveness of drama format is that drama is a system approach to extension and it is able to combine complementary social, technical, and economic messages. These drama formats are popularly expressed in mass media production. This reinforces a shift from old radio and television format use (lecture) for agricultural and development-oriented information over the years as several innovative strategies emerge, especially in the field of development communication.

One of such emerging strategies is the Entertainment-Education (EE) and associated genre like soap opera and reality television shows. It is on record that these strategies have been deployed for various uses in health and environmental education as well as pre-school age education (Olajide and Ladigbolu, 2017). *Sesame Street* represents an EE intervention designed purposely to develop the cognitive learning skills of pre-school children, teaching them letters, numbers, geometric forms and such valued pro-social qualities as kindness and co-operation (Waisbord, 2014).

Soap opera as serial drama format is presented both on radio and television in continuous episodes. It is popularly known as *telenovela*. According to Allen (2014), soap opera originated in the United States in the early 1930s on radio, as short, domestic dramas sponsored by the manufacturers of soaps, medicines, foods and other household goods. The transition to television in the early 1950s eventually brought with it the expansion of the daily soap opera text to 30 minutes (in 1956). This came with soap opera introducing more characters and focused even more explicitly on the events in the daily lives of a core community and how decisions made by individual characters affected the community as a whole.

Soap opera has proven to be an effective dissemination format (Olajide and Ladigbolu, 2017) and its greatest attribute is that it can reach a large number of people in a short time at a reasonably low cost. It has the potential to spark discussion and innovation. Several authors (Sheila and Cody 2013; Semlali, 2013) have ascertained that soap opera is a good tool that can be employed in the transfer of intended message to the target audience due to its numerous benefits.

The theoretical underpinnings

The intended use of soap opera for agricultural information dissemination and investigation of possible positive inclination on the part of farmers is premised on two prominent postulations namely; the social learning/cognitive and the use and gratification theories. The social learning theories as hypothesised by Bandura (1976) state that behaviours and responses that are repeated, perceived as real, distinct, functional and salient are more likely to be attended to, thus more likely to be learned. This implies that when observing an event, an individual receives some kind of reward like social approval, pleasant experience and the observer feels confident to perform such task and its symbolic imitation is facilitated.

The social learning theory has been embraced as one of the most important theories to understand how individuals learn certain behaviours by observing others. It evolved from experimental studies in psychology, which demonstrated how modelled behaviours might be learned and imitated by children (Bandura, 1977). The social cognitive principle has been widely employed to explain the television effects on a variety of social issues such as aggression, ethnic stereotypes, alcohol, attitudes and behaviour. It also stresses the importance of viewer's cognitive activities when consuming television messages (Bandura, 1977). It postulates that positive rewards have a vicarious effect upon the observer and can motivate audience members to practice similar behaviour(s). This adoption is called modelling because it is based on the role model's conduct. Through modelling, it is possible to acquire new forms of behaviour and to strengthen or weaken certain behaviours.

Therefore in this study, it is hypothesised that if farmers are aware that they could learn new techniques by watching or listening to various characters repeatedly over time in soap opera, they will be willing and ready to source information on their enterprise from soap opera. In essence, according to this theory, soap opera can enhance behavioural change in knowledge, attitude and skill/practice of farmers. They can watch character on soap opera, observe how such character tackles a problem and easily adapt the same method to solve similar problem on their farm.

The uses and gratification theory is an outcome of Abraham Maslow's needs and motivation theory and other related theories propounded by Blumler and Katz (1974). It suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal-oriented in their media usage. The theory postulates that different people can use the same communication message for very different purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals. Succinctly, the theory hypothesises that there are more than one way people use media. It believes that there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users (Blumler and Katz, 1974). The theory also assumes that users have alternate choices to satisfy their needs (Griffiths, 2000). According to Brown (2000), the audience is proactive and seeks media that satisfy their needs.

Hence, in this study, because audience chose what they want to watch, listen to or read different media to satisfy their needs, it is then critical to be mindful of the target audience when packaging soap opera messages. This is hinged on the fact that audiences' reasons for such media message range from information, personal identity, integration and social interaction and all will go a long way in determining the usage of such message. This informs the focus of this study on the farmers who are the primary target in the promotion of soap opera for agricultural information dissemination and sourcing.

Previous studies on the possible use of entertainment-education and its variants for agricultural information management as found in other

development issues like health and safe environment had focused on stakeholders' perception of its usefulness and effectiveness, especially strictly from media practitioners' perspectives (Olajide, 2011). Little is known about the readiness of targets and farmers in this context to use the format for sourcing agricultural information. Hence, this study investigated farmers' proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information in Southwest Nigeria. It addressed the following objectives:

a) Identified personal characteristics of farmers
b) determined farmers' awareness of soap opera as source of agricultural information
c) identified farmers' perceived benefits to use soap opera for sourcing information
d) assessed farmers' proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information.

Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation between farmers' perceived benefits and proclivity to utilising soap opera for sourcing agricultural information.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in southwest Nigeria. It is one of the six agricultural zones in Nigeria. Southwest lies between latitude 5°8′ and 9°10′ which has an area of 76,283 sq.km representing 12% of Nigeria's total land area. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select farmers through the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) structure.

The structure is organised in such a way that it starts from zones, to blocks, cells and finally to registered farmers. In the first stage, three states (Oyo, Ogun and Lagos states) were purposively selected due to preponderance of radio and television stations. This represented 50% of the states in the region. The second stage involved selection of zones from the selected states. There are 11 zones in all the selected states (Lagos state – 3, Oyo – 4 and Ogun state 4 zones). Fifty percent of these zones was selected using simple random sampling technique to give an approximate of six zones (see Table 1). The six zones selected have a total of 39 blocks, from which 65% was randomly selected to give 25 blocks in the third stage. In the fourth stage, the selected blocks (25) have a total of 312 cells or circles in all from which 65% was selected to give approximately 203 (62.4 in Lagos; Oyo – 88.4 and Ogun, 52.0) cells. Finally, there are 1,014 registered farmers within the selected cells across the states. Hence, in the fifth and the last stage, farmers were selected using sampling proportionate to size to give 152 registered farmers that were interviewed but only 150 farmers returned usable questionnaire for data analysis. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential (chi-square and Pearson product-moment correlation) statistics.

Farmers' proclivity to use soap opera was measured with a set of 13 statements which were woven around prospects and constraints of soap opera usage adapted from summary report on developing a research agenda for entertainment education and multicultural audiences by Sheila and Cody (2013). Considering the response options' compatibility with questions, the items were divided into three domains with three different response options. For first domain items, response options were "not willing", "undecided", "willing still" (a minimum obtainable proclivity score was 0, while maximum obtainable score was 10). For the second domain items, options were "never", "occasionally", "always" (minimum obtainable proclivity score was 0 and maximum obtainable score was 6), while the last domain items have "no" and "yes" response options, with minimum obtainable proclivity score being 0 while maximum obtainable score was 5. Then Z score was used to standardise scores from various response options and thus, proclivity index and mean score were generated. The mean score was used to then categorise respondents into high and low proclivity. Farmers whose scores fell below the group mean were considered as lowly inclined (low proclivity), while those whose scores equalled to or above the mean were categorised as highly inclined (high proclivity).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Farmers' personal characteristics

Table 2 shows that farmers' mean age, years of schooling and household size were 52.1 ± 11.4 years, 10.5 ± 4.6 years and 5.9 ± 2.4 persons, respectively. Also, distribution of the farmers by sex shows that 70.7% were male, while 29.3% were female. Furthermore, 89.3% were married, while 3.3% were single. These findings are in line with the findings of Yekinni (2010) who reported 43.2 and 48.1 as mean ages of farmers, respectively, in earlier study. It is also in agreement with the report of the NEDS (2010) which puts the literacy rate in the southwest and southeast geopolitical zones of Nigeria at 74%. The inference is that farmers are still in their active or productive age for farming activities and they are averagely literate. Their household size has considerable implication for family labour availability for resource generation in some instances. Also, majority of agricultural entrepreneurs are male, small farm holders and farming is still male dominated, at least in southwest part of Nigeria. It also implies that farmers in the study area still operate fragmented farm holding wherein farmers have farmland in several locations in their communities.

Table 1. Sampling procedure and sample size details

Selected states	Available ADP zones in each state	Selected zone (50% per state)	Total number of available blocks	Selected blocks (65% of available blocks)	Total number of available cells or circles in the blocks	Selected cells (65% of available cell)	Registered farmers within the selected cells across the states	Selected registered farmers (15% of registered farmers)
Lagos	Imota	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Epe	1.5	6	3.9	48	31.2	156	23.4
	Ojo		6	3.9	48	31.2	156	23.4
Total	3	**1.5**	**12**	**7.8**	**96**	**62.4**	**312**	**46.8**
Oyo	Ibadan/ Ibarapa	1	9	5.85	72	46.8	234	35.1
	Ogbomosho	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Oyo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Saki	1	8	5.2	64	41.6	208	31.2
Total	4	**2**	**17**	**11.05**	**136**	**88.4**	**442**	**66.3**
Ogun	Abeokuta zone	1	6	3.9	48	31.2	156	23.4
	Ijebu-ode zone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Ilaro	1	4	2.6	32	20.8	104	15.6
	Ikene	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	4	**2**	**10**	**6.5**	**80**	**52.0**	**260**	**39.0**
Grand total	11	**5.5 Approx. 6**	**39**	**25.35 Approx. 25**	**312**	**202.8 Approx. 203**	**1,014**	**152.1 Approx. 152**
Grand total of selected items		**6 zones**		**25 blocks**		**203 cells**		**152 farmers**

Farmers' awareness of soap opera as source of agricultural information

Table 3 reveals that majority of the farmers (86.0%) had heard and watched or listened to Nigerian soap opera. A higher proportion (88.4%) heard about soap opera in the last 16 to 50 years, while 62.0% heard from both radio and television. This is in tandem with what had been in operation in the study area as reported by Olajide and Ladigbolu (2017) that soap opera like *Don Munama, Abule Olokemerin, One thing at a time, Story-story, Neighbour, my neighbour, Clinic matters and Tinsel* are regular features on local channels. However, 69.8% of the farmers indicated that truly they had watched soap opera in the last couple of years, a large proportion (90.7%) did not know any kind of soap operas that was used to promote agriculture. The inference here is that although farmers are aware of many Nigerian soap opera, they do not know any of such that was used to promote agriculture. The findings justify the position of Robinson (2008) when he reiterates that the inability of television station to pay for local production forced independent producers to look for alternative sponsors for agricultural based television series like *Village Headmaster, Cock Crow at Dawn, Samanja and Masquerade* and all had to go into oblivion.

Table 4 shows that distribution of farmers varies on the type of information soap opera they watched promoted. While 50.4% indicated general entertainment, 20.2% indicated health issue, 17.3% indicated social values and few (15.5%) prompted agricultural promotion. This result confirms earlier finding on little or no awareness on any soap opera that had promoted agriculture in the study area. However, the strong appeal for entertainment as revealed by these findings provides a leverage to exploit soap opera for information that address farm enterprise need. Result in Table 5 shows that almost all the farmers (97.3%) thought soap opera can be used to promote agriculture as it is done for other agenda like product promotion, health and politics. Considering these couple of results revealing the strong appeal for entertainment, it is imperative that when writing script for soap opera for agricultural information purposes, appropriate entertainment mix must be embedded for palatability purposes.

Table 2. Distribution of farmers by personal characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Farmers' age	0–30 years	0	0.0	52.1±11.4
	30–52 years	79	52.7	
	53–75 years	71	47.3	
Total		150	100	
Years of schooling	No formal education	12	8.0	10.5±4.6
	Elementary education	30	20.0	
	Secondary education	60	40.0	
	Tertiary education	48	32.0	
Total		150	100	
Sex	Male	106	70.7	
	Female	44	29.3	
Total		150	100	
Marital status	Single	5	3.3	
	Married	134	89.3	
	Divorced	3	2.0	
	Widowed	8	5.3	
Total		150	100	
Household size	1–5 persons	21	14.0	5.9±2.4
	6–14 persons	115	76.7	
	15–16 persons	14	9.3	
	Total	150	100	

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 3. Distribution of farmers based on awareness of soap opera as source of agricultural information

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Have you heard about soap opera?	Yes	129	86.0	
	No	21	14.0	
Total	Total	150	100	
Since when did you hear about soap opera	1–15.5 years ago	15	11.6	15.6
	16–50 years ago	114	88.4	
Total		129	100	
From where did you hear about soap opera?	Radio	19	14.7	
	Television	30	23.3	
	Both	80	62.0	
Total		129	100	
Have you ever watched any Nigerian soap opera?	Yes	129	86.0	
	No	21	14.0	
Total		150	100	
When last did you see/ watch or listen to one?	1–2.5years ago	90	69.8	2.6
	3–22 years ago	39	30.2	
Total		129	100	
Do you know any kind of Nigerian soap opera that was used to promote agriculture?	Yes	14	9.3	
	No	136	90.7	
Total		150	100	

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 4. Distribution of farmers based on type of information the soap opera they watched promoted

S/N	Kind of activities	Frequency***	Percentage
1	Civic education	2	1.6
2	Political agenda	6	4.7
3	Health issues	26	20.2
4	Agricultural promotion	20	15.5
5	General entertainment	65	50.4
6	Social values	22	17.1
7	Family matters	1	0.8

***Multiple response n = 129

Table 5. Table 5. Distribution of farmers on their thought about the use of soap opera for promotion of agriculture as it is done for other agenda like health and product promotion

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think soap opera can be used to promote agriculture as it is done for other agenda like health and politics?	Yes	125	97.0
	No	3	3.0
	Total	150	100

Table 6. Distribution of farmers based on perceived benefits of using soap opera for sourcing agricultural information

S/N	Perceived benefits	Not at all	To a lesser extent	To a large extent	Weighted score
1	Youth, adults, children (male and female) can be carried along with agricultural agenda	6	30	64	158.0
2	Getting available agricultural information through entertainment	2.0	40.0	58.0	156.0
3	Agricultural information gets more appealing to very large audience	1.3	44.0	54.7	153.4
4	Some episodes are entertaining while others are educating	2.0	43.3	54.7	152.7
5	Increase knowledge of agricultural practices	3.3	44.7	52	148.7
6	Message can be repeated easily in different ways for clearer understanding	6.7	38.7	54.7	148.1
7	Farm operation efficiency leading to better productivity	2	52.7	45.3	143.3
8	Soap opera is enriched by several characters from where audience can acclimatised as role model	6	48.7	45.3	139.3
9	Ability to have several kinds of agricultural information items within an episode	4.0	55.3	40.7	136.7
10	The strategy encourages and sustains group discussion information disseminated	12.7	45.3	42.0	129.3
11	Ability to serve as alternative for agricultural extension services	11.3	62.7	26.0	114.7
	Level of benefit	Mean/SD	Index	Frequency	Percentage
	Low benefits	15.8±3.2	5– 15.7	70	46.7
	High benefits		15.8-22	80	53.3
	Total			150	100

Table 7. Distribution of farmers by their proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information

S/N	Proclivity items	Not willing	Undecided	Willing still	
1	Will you be willing to use soap opera for agricultural information management even if your language of choice is not used?	20.7	13.3	66.0	
2	Despite dearth of required equipment will you still be willing to use soap opera for agricultural information management?	26.0	38.0	36.0	
3	If broadcasting hour is not convenient will you still be willing to consider the use of soap opera for agricultural information management?	34.7	26.0	39.3	
4	Will you still be willing to use soap opera for agricultural management if such soap cannot meet the required information for your enterprise?	14.7	18.7	66.7	
5	Will you consider using soap opera for agricultural information management if such soap opera aids group discussion?	0.0	58.7	41.3	
		Never	**Occasionally**	**Always**	
6	At what frequency will you be willing to use soap opera for agricultural management even if some episodes are to be repeated for clearer understanding?	1.3	38.7	60.0	
7	If cultural norms and values are embedded in every episode of soap opera, how frequently will you be willing to use such soap strategy for agricultural information management?	2.0	34.0	64.0	
8	How often will you be willing to use soap opera for agricultural information management if such soap promises to broadcast sufficient information about your agricultural activities?	3.3	26.7	70.0	
		Yes	**No**		
9	I will be willing to use soap opera even if the message will be broadcast only through radio?	86.0	14.0		
10	I will be willing to use soap opera even if the message will be broadcast only through television?	74.0	26.0		
11	I will be willing to use soap opera even if the message will be broadcast through either radio or television?	95.3	4.7		
12	Provided soap opera is interesting and informative even if it is long, will you be willing to use it for agricultural information management?	91.3	8.7		
13	I will be willing to use soap opera for agricultural management even if such soap has prolonged episodes?	84.6	15.4		
	Level of proclivity	**Mean/SD**	**Index**	**Frequency**	**Percent.**
	Low	10.2±2.0	2.5-10.1	65	43.3
	High		10.2-13.5	85	56.7
	Total			**150**	**100**

Farmers' perceived benefits of soap opera using for sourcing agricultural information

According to information in Table 6, the fact that youth, adults, children (male and female) can be mobilised for agricultural transformation agenda was ranked first among other possible benefits with a weighted score of 158. Other perceived benefits in order of importance based on farmers' ratings included access to available agricultural information through entertainment (156), appeal to very large audience (153.4) and entertainment and education mix (152.7) among others. Table 6 further reveals that more than half of farmers (53.3%) of the farmers had high level of perceived benefits. This implies that farmers believe that they could benefit maximally using soap opera for sourcing agricultural information. This is in tandem with a letter writing episode in *Twende na Wakati* in response to a radio drama in Tanzania where listeners expressly stated benefits accruing to them from being regular listeners to the radio soap opera. One of the letter writers stated that:

'Indeed, me and my husband are now actively participating in the use of family planning methods, and we see its advantages' (de Fossard and Lande, 2008).

Farmers' proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information

Table 7 reveals that general inclination and enthusiasm to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information was positive for more than half (56.7%) of the farmers. In specific terms, they were positively inclined to source agricultural information from soap opera on radio (86.0%) and television (74.0). To reinforce this position, farmers expressed greater positivity to source agricultural information irrespective of whether such soaps use radio or television (95.3%). Also, irrespective of the length of the Soaps, as long as it is informative and entertaining, farmers were positively persuaded to hook on to such avenue for agricultural information. The strong appeal for entertainment as previously reported in this study came out strongly again in these findings, thus confirming general positive disposition to entertainment-based programmes on radio and television in the study area. Other positives recorded included the fact that 70.0% of the farmers were willing to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information if such Soap promises to broadcast sufficient information about agricultural activities and if cultural norms and values are embedded in episodes of soap opera (64.0%).

The results on keeping to the promise of disseminating accurate and factual information forms the basis of this study and the proposed Soaps cannot afford to downplay this at the expenses of the tendency of entertainment tyranny. The result on cultural sensitivity of the Soaps is in line with the position of Sheila and Cody (2013) who assert that script writer should embed local names (for local identification) in the play in order to get and keep the audience's attention as use of alien names in cast and characters may amount to relegation of the target audiences' cultural affiliations. The overall implication of this set of results revolve around the fact that farmers are inclined to use soap from radio and television for sourcing agricultural information, as long as such Soaps that promote agriculture are interesting, informative and have cultural appeal.

Correlation between farmers' perceived benefit and proclivity to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information

Data in Table 8 reveal that there was a significant relationship between farmers' perceived benefits ($r = 0.36$; $P = 0.00$) and their proclivity to use soap for sourcing agricultural information. This means that farmers are inclined to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information with expectation of huge benefits to their various enterprises. This position is evident in earlier results reported even in this study where farmers envisaged possible benefits that could accrue to them if they subscribe to sourcing information from soaps-based agricultural development programme.

CONCLUSION

Based on findings reported in this study, it is apparent that farmers are aware of many Nigerian soap operas, though they do not know any of such that was used to promote agriculture. Also, appropriate entertainment and education mix in the proposed Soap for agricultural information dissemination will provoke farmers' patronage for such soap opera for sourcing agricultural information. Farmers believe that they could benefit maximally in using soap opera for sourcing agricultural information. General inclination and enthusiasm to use soap opera for sourcing agricultural information was positive. This however hinges on the fact that the Soap promotes farmers' agricultural enterprises, be interesting, informative with sufficient cultural appeal.

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