A case study of Agricultural Information Seeking Behaviour among Farmers of Belagavi District: Focus on Radio and Mass Media Communication

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Abstract

This study made an attempt to examine the agricultural information-seeking behaviour among farmers in the Belagavi district, with a specific focus on the role of radio and mass media communication. The study aims to understand how farmers access, evaluate, and utilise agricultural information to improve their farming practices and decision-making. Using a sample of 500 farmers from 10 Raita Samparka Kendras, the research explores the frequency, preference, and effectiveness of various mass media channels—particularly radio—as sources of agricultural knowledge. Findings indicate that while traditional mass media like radio continue to play a vital role in disseminating timely and region-specific information, there is a growing inclination toward television and mobile-based platforms. The study underscores the need for strengthening agricultural communication through mass media to ensure reliable, accessible, and farmer-centric information services.)

Keywords
Agricultural information; farmers; mass media communication information-seeking behaviour,

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1. Introduction

The crucial role that information plays can be measured from the vast areas of agricultural activities in which it finds applications that include: growth of knowledge and wisdom, decision making and management, including applications of Information Technology. The progress has become possible because of the existence and awareness of knowledge created by the past generations, cultures and societies. The base of knowledge is information. Information, which is the result of a meaningful response to a stimulus, when correlated, synthesised and stratified during the course of time, becomes knowledge. Knowledge applied and tested over a long period of time by a continuous stream of minds resulting in its acceptance as truth becomes wisdom. Thus wisdom is a part of human heritage. Information sources which are accurate, useful and timely regarding new productions, new yields, new processes, new patents, standards and research in progress are significant sources for today's competitions and survival for farmers. Information makes a farmer capable of performing his day-to-day functions. Hence, the information society is born out of information as well as applied to agricultural disciplines and farmers in particular, as India is dependent on the agricultural economy.

Farmers are information-dependent, but they have to be trained to use information. The Information Literacy programs are essential. Hence, the need for the right information at the right time in the right context becomes a vital communication. Information dissemination has become a major focus on emerging aspects of agriculture by using various channels like Telecommunication, Television, Telemetric, Computers, Publishing firms, Radio, Satellite Communication and Libraries etc. Industry, Research and Development, Bureaucracy, Journalism and Entertainment also serve as secondary sources of Information for farmers. Libraries, on the other hand, gather, process, store and disseminate information useful to farmers.

2. Review of Literature

Bachav (2013) conducted a study on “Information needs of the farmers' Community in rural areas”, which was conducted by a survey method, dealing with the Farmers’ requirement for daily information for various agricultural work. They used to get the required information through newspapers, Government information documents about developed

agricultural practices and actions to mitigate crop losses.Kumar and Kuriya (2013) conducted a research study on "The Information seeking Behaviour of the Farmers of Khorjapur and Mavaiya village of Raibhareli District". The study has shown that most of the farmers are less educated. They seek the required information from their friends and relatives, as they don't have libraries in their villages. Further, the study has shown that they are facing problems like illiteracy, unawareness, and a lack of information centres and the non-availability of extension officers. Most of the farmers are not aware of new tools and techniques of farming.

Meena et al (2013), in their research study on "Information seeking Behaviour of Farmers about Guava production Technology", conducted in one of the Panchayat samithis of Sawaimadhopur district of Rajasthan on the basis of maximum area under guava cultivation. At the rate of 20 guava growers from each village, the total number of villages selected was six by the simple random method for the study purpose. The study has exposed that progressive farmers and agriculture supervisors were the most preferred sources, whereas demonstration and radio were the most liked, providing much information for the guava growers in the study area. Sonar (2013) conducted a study, "Micro Planning techniques: A key for rural development", explained the role of Micro Planning as a technique of development planning and programming of rural communities. Failures of rural development initiatives have been examined critically. Ahmed (2016) conducted a study on "Information seeking behaviour and their needs in rural population of Barak Valley: A survey", which aimed to understand the essential information requirements and position of information in Barak Valley, which comprised students, teachers, farmers, businessmen, etc. The required respondents for this research are essentially drawn from the rural area of Barak Valley; most of the individuals are less educated. Hence, the study strategy has been received by the specialists; the information has been gathered by utilising a survey schedule, perception and meeting strategies. These examination findings have appeared, provincial individuals know about their data needs, and their capacity to express these necessities has been surveyed and assessed. This exploration has additionally recognised the local of data sources and data suppliers utilised by rural individuals in their quest for data and the level of satisfaction with the data sources. Further, this research has identified some of the factors as barriers to meeting the information needs of the rural populations. These hindrances are – 1) High rate of absence of education 2) Inability to get to formal channels of data because of destitution 3) Lack of satisfactory and proficient data conveyance components 4) Ignorance of government duties to its resident living in country zones: 5) Lack of mindfulness with respect to provincial publics to know the significance of Libraries.

3. The Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope and limitation of the present study is confined to the information needs and information seeking behavior of around 500 farmers of 10 Raita Samparka Kendras of Belagavi district, with special emphasis on their information needs and seeking patterns. The scope in the present study is further limited to the farmers of rural Belagavi district and does not cover the farmers' information needs of other districts in Karnataka.

4. Need and significance of the study

Despite the development in science and technology for disseminating information and its use, the level of progress in the receptivity of information and its use has not been attained by the farmers as expected. It is happening due to the reasons called the determining factors, which act as barriers to information-seeking behaviours. Some of the factors like poor knowledge of sharing culture due to selfishness of users, personal barriers such as age, gender, resistance to change attitude and external or environmental factors such as illiteracy, costly information providing materials, poverty and simplicity of local languages, all these influence on the information seeking behaviour of stakeholders. This fact is supported by the study of Islan (2014) on "Information seeking Behaviour of the rural farmers in Bangladesh the study of Chatterjee and Dasgupta (2016), and Kumar. G and Sankara kumar R.R. (2012) on "The attitudes of the farmers on Using ICT application is Agriculture"

5. Methodology

The present research study is an empirical survey of farmers who seek information for their farming or agricultural development. This study aims to understand the reasons, called the determining factors, which act as barriers to the information-seeking behaviours of farmers leading towards progress or lagging behind progress

5.1 Methods of Study

The present study being taken is of an explorative one on "A case study of Agricultural Information Seeking Behaviour among Farmers of Belagavi District: Focus on Radio and Mass Media Communication", keeping in view, it is an explorative study, the required data has been collected by using survey and field study method in the study area. The study area consists of 10 Raitha Samparka Kendras of 10 Talukas of Belagavi district, which have been chosen as the study area. Before selecting these areas as the study areas, a survey was conducted to observe the available number of farmers, their farming practices and the feasibility of investigating them.

6. Objectives of the Study

The present study is concerned with both exploratory as well as analytical goals. It is chiefly concerned with investigating different factors that act as barriers to the information-seeking behaviour in view of having improved means of ICT. The main objectives of the present study are the following:

1. To understand the information needs of rural farmers.
2. To find out the sources of information
3. To examine the information-seeking behaviour of the farmers.
4. To know the accessibility of various communication channels to the farmers.
5. To examine the impact of different factors that act as barriers on the information-seeking behaviours of stakeholders.

7. Universe and Sample

The present study was carried out in 10 Raitha Samparka Kendras of 10 Talukas of Belagavi district, which is the universe. A total of 500 farmers were selected as samples from the ten blocks of the study area (universe) at the rate of 50 samples from each block, overall totalling 500. The block used to be the one Raitha Samparka Kendra from each taluka of the Belagavi district. The selected samples as respondents were regular visitors to Raitha Samparka Kendra, and those respondents were selected randomly. The choice of these ten Raitha Samparka Kendras has been made on the basis of agro-climatic conditions in the district.

8. Tools and Methods of Data Collection

The present research study is an empirical survey of farmers who seek information for their farming or agricultural development. The primary data was collected by interviewing the respondents in the field with an interview schedule. The interview schedules consisted of questions pertaining to basic information of farmers, their information needs, sources of information, information seeking behaviour and barriers to accessibility to information and its use. The secondary data has been obtained from the publication reports of the conceived Government Departments like the Agricultural Department, the Irrigation Department and the Department of Economic and Statistics and other related government and semi-government offices like Agricultural Production Marketing Centres and the Agricultural Department. Other sources of secondary data included Journals and Periodicals, Books and Research Publications.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The collected data pertaining to objectives envisaged earlier were classified and tabulated for the purpose of analysis. Suitable statistical methods, like averages and percentages, and non-statistical methods of data analysis were used to draw meaningful inferences and to arrive at generalisations.

9.1. Data analysis based on the Primary Characteristics of Farmers

Primary information of every farmer is collected to understand different factors like age, gender, educational level and languages known by respondent farmers.

I. Primary Information:

Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	Respondents	(%)
1	Male	378	76
2	Female	122	24
	Total	**500**	**100**

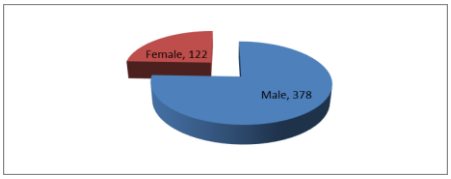


Figure 1 *shows the gender wise distribution of Respondents.*

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that out of the total 500 respondents selected for the study, 378, i.e., 76% are male Farmers and the remaining 122, i.e., 24% are Female farmers. The selected difference in the number of respondents implies that even today, agriculture is a male-dominated job in this study area.

Table 2: Educational Status of Respondents

Sl No	Education Level	Respondents	(%)
1	Illiterate	24	4.8
2	Primary (1-4)	45	9
3	Middle School (5-7)	36	7.2
4	High School	185	37
5	PUC	118	23.6
6	Degree	86	17.2
7	Post Graduate	6	1.2
	Total	**500**	**100**

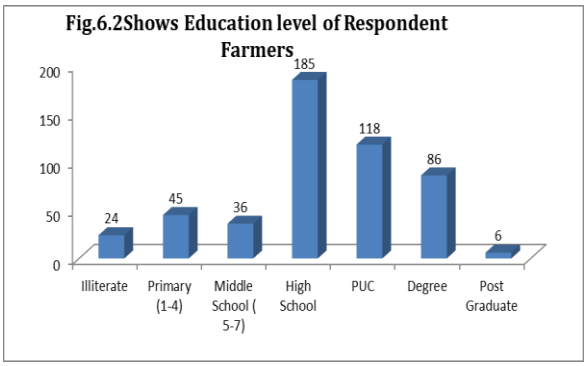


Fig.2 *shows the Education level of Respondent Farmers*

Table No. 2 and Figure No.2 give information about the education level of respondents. Out of 500 respondents 185 (37%) are educated up to High school Level, 118 (23.6.%) of respondents are educated up to PUC level, 86 (17.2%) respondents are studied up to Degree,45(9%) are studied only Primary school, 36(7.2%) respondents are educated up to Middle School, and only 6 (1.2%) farmer respondents are studied Post Graduation.

Table 3: Languages Known by Respondents

Languages	Respondents	%
Kannada	419	84
Marathi	81	16
Total	500	100

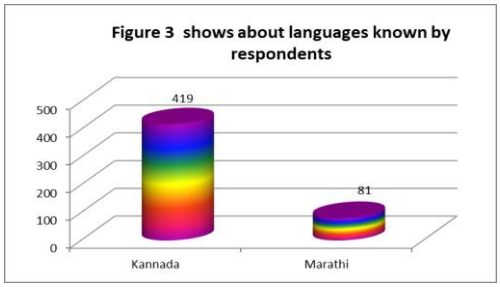


Figure 3 *shows about languages known by respondents*

The above table and figure no.3 reveal that 84% of farmers knew Kannada, and 16% of farmers knew Marathi.

II. LIBRARY INFORMATION

Data Analysis on the basis of Library Information

To avail of the book borrowing facility, every person has to enrol as a library member. To get library information from responding farmers, questions were asked whether they had enrolled as library members, the frequency of visiting the library and about the reasons for visiting the library. Response from the responding farmers is given in the tables below.

Table 4: Membership availed in the library to avail borrowing facility

Sl. No.	Response	Total	(%)
1	Yes	321	64
2	No	179	36
	Total	500	100

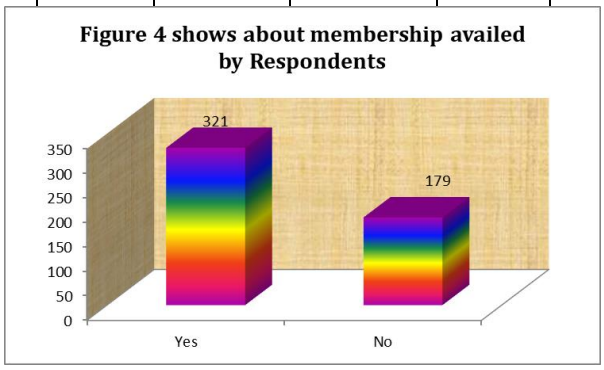


Figure 4 *shows about membership availed by Respondents.*

Table and figure.4 reflect that 64% of respondents are farmers enrolled as members of the Library, whereas 36% of farmers are not enrolled as Library members.

Table 5: Reasons for visiting the library

Sl. No.	Reasons	Respondents	%
1	To get the latest agricultural information	114	22.8
2	To get help in farming	123	24.6
3	To read newspapers	324	64.8
4	To read magazines	185	37
5	To read books	274	54.8
6	To borrow books	286	57.2

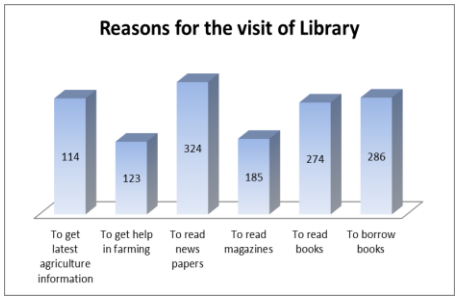


Figure 5. *Shows reasons for visiting the library*

The analysis of the data reveals that the majority of respondents, 324 (64.8%), visit the library to read newspapers, followed by borrowing books (57.2%) and reading books (54.8%), indicating a strong preference for general reading materials. A moderate number of users (37%) read magazines, while fewer respondents use the library for agriculture-related purposes, such as getting help in farming (24.6%) and accessing the latest agricultural information (22.8%). This suggests that although the library serves as an important source for news and reading, its role in supporting agricultural needs is relatively limited and could be strengthened.

Table 6: Frequency of visits to the library.

Sl. No.	Frequency	Respondents	(%)
1	Daily	93	18.6
2	Weekly	175	35
3	Fortnightly	81	16.2
4	Occasionally	38	7.6
5	Never	113	22.6
	Total	**500**	**100**

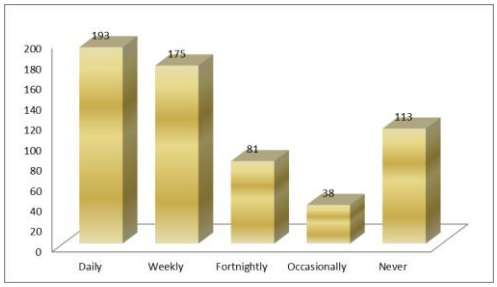


Figure 6 *shows the Frequency of visits to the Library by Respondents*

The above table and figure show that the highest percentage of respondents (35%) visit the library *weekly*, showing a significant preference for regular but not daily use. Only 18.6% of respondents visit the library *daily*, indicating that while some individuals rely on the library frequently, it is not the primary trend. 16.2% visit *fortnightly*, and 7.6% visit *occasionally*. This suggests that nearly a quarter of respondents use the library irregularly. A significant 22.6% of respondents *never* visit the library. This is a concern, as it indicates potential barriers to access or lack of perceived relevance

Table 7: Programs are normally listened to on the Radio by Respondents.

Sl.No.	Programs	Respondents	(%)
1	General News	334	66.8
2	Krishiranga	415	83
3	Market Prices	385	77
4	Climatic Conditions	273	54.6
5	Farmer's programs	314	62.8
6	Music, Drama, Political event	450	90

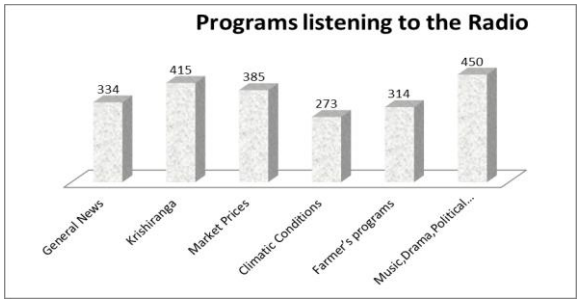


Figure 7. Shows about respondents listening to the programs in the Radio

The data reveals that the most viewed programs among respondents are Music, Drama, and Political Events (90%), followed by Krishiranga (83%) and Market Prices (77%), indicating a high interest in both entertainment and agriculture-related content. General News (66.8%) and Farmers' Programs (62.8%) also attract significant viewership, while information on Climatic Conditions, though important, is accessed by a comparatively lower percentage (54.6%). This suggests a balanced interest in both informative and recreational programs, with a slightly stronger inclination towards entertainment and practical agricultural updates.

10. Mass Media Communication

The Mass Media are very important tools for the dissemination of Information to the farmers. Some questions were asked, and the response given by farmers is shown in the following table.

Table 8. Usage of Mass Media Communication

Sl.No.	Media	Response T=500	Percentage (%)
1	Radio	214	42.8
2	Television	474	94.8
3	News Paper	353	70.6
4	Magazine	72	14.4
5	Mobile Phone	15	3
6	Internet	6	1.2

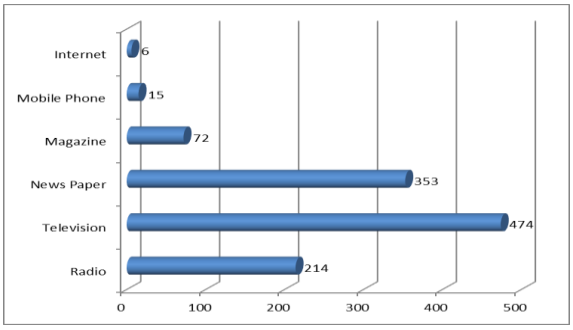


Figure 8 *shows the Usage of Mass media communication by Respondents.*

The data indicates that television is the most widely used medium among respondents, with 94.8% relying on it, followed by newspapers (70.6%) and radio (42.8%), reflecting a strong preference for traditional media. Magazines are used by 14.4%, while the use of modern digital platforms like mobile phones (3%) and the internet (1.2%) remains very low. This highlights a significant digital divide and suggests the continued dominance of conventional media in information dissemination, especially in rural or semi-urban settings.

11. Findings

- The study reveals that the majority of respondent farmers (76%) are male.
- It is observed that a significant portion of the respondents (37%) have an education level up to high school.
- Most of the farmers surveyed (86.2%) are proficient in Kannada, while 13.8% know Marathi.
- Around 64.2% of farmers have become library members to avail of borrowing facilities.
- The study indicates that many farmers visit libraries to gather information on sources of finance, soil testing, and fertiliser usage.
- Additionally, 18.57% of farmers visit the library to access the latest agricultural information.
- About 21.6% of farmers frequent the library primarily to read newspapers.
- Among various mass media, television emerged as the most preferred medium for agricultural information, with 94.8% of respondents using it regularly.
- Although radio was once a dominant medium, only 42.8% of farmers currently rely on it for agricultural updates, showing a decline in usage.
- Newspapers remain an important source of information, with 70.6% of farmers depending on them for agricultural news and updates.
- Only 3% of farmers used mobile phones and a mere 1.2% accessed the internet for agricultural information, indicating a significant digital divide in the region.
- Programs such as *Krishiranga* (83%) and *Market Prices* (77%) were highly popular, reflecting a strong interest in practical and market-related content.
- Despite the agricultural focus, 90% of respondents preferred music, drama, and political events, highlighting the mixed use of media for both entertainment and information.
- While 35% of farmers sought information weekly, 22.6% never engaged with any media for

agricultural updates, indicating inconsistent behaviour.

- Only 54.6% of respondents accessed information related to climatic conditions, despite its critical importance for farming.

12. Suggestions

This study reveals some important suggestions and recommendations to all the farmers and the Government.

- Awareness should be given among the farmers about the role of the library and its utilities.
- Agriculture, farming-related books, magazines and other farming-related material should be procured in rural libraries.
- The library may be facilitating the demonstration of audio and video facilities about farming and agriculture.
- Rural Libraries should exhibit the latest agricultural information to users.
- Rural Libraries should promote users by conducting Cultural programmes, music and other local programmes.
  - Rural libraries should conduct seasonally occupation-based lecture series to users
- Revive and promote interactive, region-specific agricultural programs on radio in local languages to increase listenership and relevance.
- Improve rural internet infrastructure and conduct digital literacy programs to encourage the use of mobile and internet-based agricultural services.
- Since TV is the most popular medium, more structured, time-bound, and farmer-centric programs should be aired regularly.
- Agricultural supplements and local farming success stories should be included in widely read newspapers to enhance reach.
- Provide accurate, localised weather forecasts and real-time market prices via multiple platforms to support decision-making.
- Conduct training and awareness programs to help farmers understand how to access and interpret agricultural information from different media.
- Use a combination of media—radio, TV, print, and mobile—to deliver customized messages based on seasonal farming needs.
- Collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and local universities can improve the quality and trustworthiness of the content.

13. Conclusion

Considering the focus of the study titled *"A Case Study of Agricultural Information Seeking Behaviour among Farmers of Belagavi District: Focus on Radio and Mass Media Communication"*, the research has been systematically designed with well-defined objectives and suitable methodological approaches.

Information-seeking behaviour refers to the strategies and approaches individuals use to find specific information. Over time, studies have aimed to explore this behaviour to better understand how people seek and use information, and to enhance its effectiveness by identifying the influencing factors.

This behaviour typically stems from the recognition of an information need. In recent years, research has increasingly highlighted its psychological dimensions. A user's interaction with information systems, such as libraries and their services, often reflects their overall information behaviour.

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