

## Farmers' Information Needs in Soap Opera Utilisation for Agricultural Enterprise Promotion in Southwestern Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study examined farmers' information needs in soap opera utilisation for agricultural enterprise promotion in Southwestern Nigeria. Using a multistage sampling procedure, 150 farmers were randomly selected across selected states in the study area. Data were collected with the use of interview schedule on farmers' enterprise characteristics, information needs and perceived constraints to the use of soap opera for agricultural based enterprise promotion. Data were analysed using descriptive (means and percentages) and inferential (Chi-square) statistics at  $p=0.05$ . Almost half of the respondents (49.3%) were involved in crop production. Among livestock farmers, mean fish stock was  $154.8 \pm 611.6$ , while among agro-processors, 2.7% processed garri. Crop produced by farmers varied from maize (90.5%), cassava (85.3%) and leafy vegetables (43.2%). Higher proportion (95.3%) of farmers would like the soap opera to cover crop planting procedure (95.3%), marketing strategies (91.3%), rural health (86.0%) and seasonal rainfall prediction (84.0%). Unstable power supply (275.8), unfavourable broadcasting hour (246.2) and language barrier (239.3) were identified as constraints to the use of soap operas for agricultural enterprise promotion. Farming type was significantly related with farmers' information needs ( $\chi^2 = 11.29$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ). It is recommended that soap opera for agricultural enterprise promotion should focus on crop and livestock production with emphasis on preferred agricultural information types.*

**Keywords:** Soap Opera, Agricultural Enterprise, Agricultural Information Dissemination, Agro-processors

## Introduction

Soap opera for development is an offshoot of Entertainment-Education (EE) being a strategy for development communication that shares behaviour-change premises with other development communication theories and strategies (Buenting and Brown, 2013; Brown and Singhal, 1993). Soap opera, a variant of EE strategy is a potent communication tool in information dissemination through media such as radio and television. Evidence from literature had established the widespread use of Soaps in countries in Latin America like Mexico, Peru and Brazil in the mid-1970s (Waisbord, 1999). Beyond the Latin Americans, soap opera has also gained popularity in pushing development agenda in 75 countries, including India, Nigeria, USA, South Africa, the Philippines, Turkey, Gambia, and Pakistan. Paradigmatic examples of this approach have been soap opera in Latin America (*telenovela*) that were intended to provide information about family planning, sexual behaviour, and health issues (Waisbord, 2014). Literacy and agricultural development have also been central themes of several soap opera efforts.

Like diffusion theory, soap opera uses a typical EE model to have appropriate entertainment and education plot with the overall goal being behaviour change. It is based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory that premises on the idea that individuals learn behaviour by observing role models, particularly in the mass media, thus through imitation and influence; behaviour change is targeted as the expected outcomes of such interventions. Moreover, soap opera is enduringly successful and continues to attract mass audiences as it has demonstrated to be highly effective and efficient in communicating relatively complex ideas and concepts, and in changing behaviour (Williams, 1992). Soap opera is of two basic narrative types: "open" soap opera, in which there is no end point toward which the action of the narrative moves; and "closed" soap opera, in which, no matter how attenuated the process, the narrative does eventually close (Allen, 2014). Examples of the open soap opera would include all U.S. daytime serials (*General Hospital, All My Children, The Guiding Light and many others*), the wave of primetime U.S. soaps in the 1980s (*Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest*), such British serials as *Coronation Street, EastEnders, and Brookside*), and most Australian serials (*Neighbours, Home and Away, A Country Practice*), (Seiter and Warth (2013); McAnany and Wilkinson (2010). In Nigeria, soap opera includes all the daily and weekly radio and television drama either on local channels or the cable. Such are; *Don Munama, Abule olokemerin, One thing at a time, Story-story, Neighbour, my neighbour, Clinic matters and Tinsel*. However, closed soap opera is more common in Latin America, where it dominates primetime programming from Mexico to Chile.

Information is crucial in agricultural enterprise development. Little wonder that there had been calls for strong support for formats (lecture, interviews and vox pop) use in traditional agricultural enterprise development information sources like radio and television (Tufté, 2001). Yahaya and Olajide (2004) assert that agricultural development news is flexible to various forms and format and it could enjoy the use of many media outlets and strategies for its information dissemination. Besides, recent studies (Olajide & Oresanya, 2016; Ladigbolu, 2016; Olajide, 2012; Olajide & Thomas, 2011 and Fadairo, Olajide & Yahaya 2011) have variously established the workability and acceptance of the use of EE and its variants like soap opera and reality radio and television shows for disseminating agricultural and other

development related information. These perspectives were held by various stakeholders ranging from farmers, script writers and potential sponsors (Ladigbolu, 2016) media practitioners (Olajide, 2002) and farmers (Olajide, 2012).

However, little evidence exists on the information needs of farmers in respect to soap opera utilisation for agricultural enterprise promotion and development. It is against this background and in fulfilment of one of the fundamentals of communication intervention's extant rules, that the information need and media use pattern of beneficiaries be established before communication products are launched on the targets. In modern sociological postulation, this represents ascertaining the need of beneficiaries prior to intervention. The specific objectives were:

1. describe selected enterprise characteristics of farmers
2. identify types of agricultural information farmers would like soap opera to cover
3. ascertain farmers' perceived constraints to use soap opera

### **Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant relationship between selected farmers' enterprise characteristics and their information need.

### **Methodology**

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of respondents for this study. In the first stage, Ogun, Lagos and Oyo states were selected from the six states in southwestern part of Nigeria (that represented 50% of the states), using simple random sampling technique. In order to select farmers, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) structure was used therefore zones, blocks, cells and finally registered farmers were sampled in subsequent stages. Therefore, 50% of zones in each state was selected using simple random sampling technique. This resulted in the selection of six zones in the second stage. In the third stage, 15% of blocks (1 block) each in the selected zones was then randomly sampled. Thereafter, 20% of cells within each selected blocks were randomly sampled in the fourth stage amounting 68 cells (20, 20 and 28 cells from Lagos, Oyo and Ogun states, respectively). In the last stage, 150 registered farmers were selected from the cells using sampling proportionate to size.

With the use of interview schedule, data were collected from farmers on their enterprise characteristics, types of agricultural information they would like soap opera to cover and perceived constraints to the use of soaps. Type of information was operationalised by providing farmers with a set of 41 items on agricultural information in five main domains (technical, social, legal, climatic and marketing information). Dichotomized response options of "yes" and "no" were provided for farmers and were scored as 1 and 0, respectively. Information need index was computed and farmers were categorised into high and low information need using mean as bench mark. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square at  $\alpha_{0.05}$ .

## Results and Discussion

### Farmers' Enterprise Characteristics

Information on farmers' enterprise characteristics are as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows that 49.3% were into crop production, 32.0% were into livestock production, while 14.0% were into both crop and livestock production. This implies that crop production dominates enterprises that farmers are engaged in the study area. Among livestock farmers, more than one-third (41.5%) were into poultry production (Table 2), while mean size of flock or fish stocked was  $154.8 \pm 611.6$  fish (Table 1). Meanwhile, among farmers that were into agro-processing, only 2.7% processed *garri*, 2.0% processed cassava flour and 1.3% were into *fufu* processing (Table 1). The inference is that majority of the crop farmers are small scale farmers while livestock farmers are medium scale farmers.

Table 2 further shows that distribution of farmers varies in crop produced, 90.5% were into maize cultivation, 85.3% into cassava, 43.2% into leafy vegetable (such as *Amaranthus*, *Okro*, *Celosia* and *Spinach*), while few (11.6%) were into plantain cultivation. This shows that most of the farmers are involved in more than one enterprise in order to diversify their means of livelihood. Therefore, this implies that the intended soap opera for agricultural information management would have a lot of farm enterprises to promote.

**Table 1: Distribution of farmers by selected enterprise characteristics**

Characteristics	Category	Percentage	Mean
Type of farming activities	Crop production	49.3	
	Livestock production	32.0	
	Agro-processing	4.7	
	Crop and livestock production	14.0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
Food processing	Not applicable	94.0	
	Garri	2.7	
	Cassava flour	2.0	
	Fufu	1.3	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	
Size of flocks or herds or fish	Not applicable	51.3	154.8±611.6
	1 - 50 animals	20.7	6
	51-100 animals	0.0	
	101 and above animals	14.7	
	157-7500 fish	13.3	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Table 2: Distribution of farmers by crop and animal/ fish produced**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Crop produced (n =95)</b>	
Pepper (Chilli, Tatase and Red pepper)	20.0
Leafy vegetable (Amaranthus, Okro, Celosia and Spinach)	43.2
Fruit vegetable	16.8
Tuber crops (Yam, Sweet potato and Cocoyam)	41.1
Legumes (Beans, Soya beans and Groundnut)	2.1
Orange	1.1
Cassava	85.3
Maize	90.5
Plantain	11.6
<b>Animal or fish produced (n =77)</b>	
Poultry (Chicken, duck and geese)	41.5
Piggery	9.1
Small ruminants (Goat and sheep)	23.4
Catfish (Brooding stock and fingerlings)	26.0

**Source: Field survey, 2016. \*\*\*Multiple response**

### **Farmers' Agricultural Information Need for Soap Opera Utilisation**

Table 3 indicates a general enthusiasm for the use of soap opera to cover wide range of agricultural information. For crop based information need, about 95.0% of farmers expressed need for crop planting procedure, 93.3% for fertiliser application techniques and 92.7%, for produce processing techniques. In the same vein, data on livestock information need indicates that higher proportion of farmers would like the Soaps to cover information ranging from livestock rearing (72.7%), livestock pest and diseases management (66.0%), application of vaccine (65.3%) and feed composition (61.3%).

On social information items, a similar picture as found in crop and livestock information need items are presented in the Table 3. The majority of farmers averred that the envisaged soap opera should cover social information items like rural health (92.0%), cooperative societies 86.0%), access to credit facilities (85.3%) and livelihood diversification (74.7%). Furthermore, on climatic information items, 84.0% indicated that they would like soap opera to cover rainfall prediction and daily weather forecast while 80.0% also wanted to see early warning messages. Meanwhile, on marketing information, majority prompted marketing strategies (91.3%), future market price (86.7%), current market price (82.0%), information on marketing research (79.3%) and measurement of farm produce and farm input survey/ and prices (76.0%).

Finally, on legal information items, 70.7%, of farmers indicated that they would like the soap opera to cover conflict resolution, land and boundary disputes (70.0%) and ethnic dispute resolution (58.7%). The enthusiasm expressed by farmers across the information types is in tandem with the position of Olajide (2016) who reported assortment of agricultural information farmers envisaged that toll free platform will afford them access to. It also resonates with positions of Tufte (2001) and Sigal and

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Rogers (2004) that had previously extolled the virtue of EE and associated genre like soap opera. In the overall, the enthusiasm in the expression of majority of the farmers is an indication that the envisaged soap opera has quantum of issues to deal with if it eventually manifests. This is in tandem with uses and gratifications theories propounded by Blumler and Katz, 1974. 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. There are several ways and uses that people can put media to. To this end, Table 3 reveals that generally farmers had high (53.3%) level of information need for agricultural-centred soap opera for promotion of agricultural enterprises.

**Table 3: Distribution of farmers based on agricultural information need for soap opera utilisation for enterprise promotion**

<b>Information Items</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Crop based technical information</b>	<b>%</b>
Crop planting procedure	95.3
Compost making techniques	92.7
Fertiliser application techniques	93.3
Pest and diseases management techniques	92.7
Weeding techniques	87.3
Agro technology	87.3
Machine operation techniques	80.7
Harvesting techniques	78.7
Techniques of processing produce	93.3
Storage techniques	93.3
<b>Livestock based technical information</b>	
Livestock rearing techniques	72.7
Fish production techniques	46.0
Feed composition techniques	61.3
Livestock pest and diseases management techniques	66.0
Application of vaccine techniques	65.3
Fish cropping techniques	53.3
Livestock processing techniques	52.7
<b>Social information</b>	
Rural health	92.0
Cooperative societies	86.0
Livelihood diversification activities	74.7
Religious institutions	46.7
Access to credit facilities	85.3
<b>Climatic information</b>	
Daily weather forecast	80.0
Climatic condition	80.0
Seasonal rainfall prediction	84.0
Drought prediction	75.3
Potential flood prediction	78.7
Early warning messages	80.7
<b>Marketing information</b>	
Market outlet survey/location	70.0
Measurement of farm produce	76.0
Current market price	82.0
Future market price	86.7
Marketing strategies	91.3
Farm input survey/prices	76.7
Produce transportation facilitation	73.3
Information on marketing research	79.3
<b>Legal information</b>	
Conflicts resolution	70.7
Land and boundary dispute	70.0
Migration issue	31.3
Ethnic dispute resolution	58.7
<b>Level of information needs</b>	
High (16.0 – 30.7)	46.7
Low (30.8 – 41.0)	53.3

\*\*\*Multiple responses

### **Perceived Constraints to Soap Opera Utilisation for Agricultural Information Management by Farmers**

Constraints to utilisation of soap were unstable power supply (275.8), poor network reception (257.8), unfavourable broadcasting hour (246.2), irrelevant information items (240.0) and language barrier (239.3) (Table 4). The implication is that unstable power supply, poor network reception, unfavourable broadcasting hours, irrelevant information items and language barriers are likely to impede farmers' use of soap opera for sourcing of agricultural information and for the development of their enterprises. This corroborates the findings of Yahaya and Olajide (2003), Ladele, Ladigbolu and Badiru (2014) and Olajide and Meroyi (2014) that implicated in various dimension these constraints.

**Table 4: Distribution of farmers based on perceived constraints to utilizing soap for agricultural information management**

<b>Perceived constraints</b>	<b>Weighted score</b>
Unstable power supply	275.8
Poor network reception	257.8
Unfavourable broadcasting hour	246.2
Irrelevant information items	240.0
Language barrier	239.3
Inability to comprehend soap opera messages	227.3
Un-interesting story line	222.0
Untimely agricultural information	220.0
Unfriendly characters/actors in the programme	209.3
Interruption during broadcast of soap opera	201.3
Unnecessary repetition of soap opera episodes	189.8

**Source: Field survey, 2016**

### **Relationships between selected Farmers' Enterprise Characteristics and Information Need for Agricultural-Centred Soap Opera**

Results in Tables 5 show that among selected farmers' enterprise characteristics, there was significant relationship between farming type ( $\chi^2 = 11.29$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and their information need for agricultural-centred soap opera for promotion of agricultural enterprises.

**Table 5 Relationships between selected farmers' enterprise and information need for agricultural-centred soap opera**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Chi-square value (<math>\chi^2</math>)</b>	<b>Df</b>
Farming type	11.29*	4
Process crops	2.25	3

**\*P $\leq$ 0.05**

**Source: Field survey, 2016**

The implication is that the type of farming of the respondents determines the type of information they need for their various enterprises. Therefore when packaging agricultural-centred soap opera, farmers' farming type should be considered in such a way that one information on farming enterprise does not dominate others.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Farmers' information need in soap opera utilisation for agricultural enterprise promotion included crop planting procedure, rural health, rainfall prediction pattern and weather forecast, marketing strategies and conflict resolution. The use of soap opera for enterprise promotion may be constrained by unstable power supply, unfavourable broadcasting hour, and language barrier. Soap opera for agricultural enterprise promotion should focus on crop and livestock production with emphasis on preferred agricultural information types.

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