

Study on Credibility of Sources of Information in Rural Communities

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ABSTRACT

In the year 1979-80, a study was undertaken in Panchayat Samiti, Sambhar Lake, District Jaipur to find out the differential credibility of certain sources of information in three different village communities. It was found that the interpersonal locality sources were more credible and important to the farming communities, while mass media were the least credible. The television was an important and a credible source of information among the mass media.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main hurdles in communicating new ideas to farmers in India is that most of them are illiterate. Studies in the past recognised television as a potential device which communicates through the two sense organs (eyes or ears) simultaneously and reaches a large section of population. The role of communicator is said to be the most important amongst all the elements of communication process and his effectiveness is largely determined by his importance and credibility as perceived by the audience. The knowledge of credibility of television as a source of information will be of immense value to the administrative authorities of the television centre for sharpening of the programme production so that the farmers could accept the agricultural innovations at a quicker rate.

It was, therefore, attempted in the present study to find out the differential credibility of certain sources of information in three different village communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken in Panchayat Samiti, Sambhar lake, District Jaipur (Rajasthan State) during the year 1979-80, where the "SITE Continuity Project" was under operation.

Out of 54 community T.V. Centres in the Samiti three were selected on the basis of farming characteristics observed in the villages. They were classified as under:

1. Predominantly non-farming lower class village community (V_1).
2. Predominantly non-farming higher class village community (V_2).
3. Predominantly cultivating class village community (V_3).

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An attempt was made to contact at least 30 farmers from each selected village, who watched the agricultural programmes on television. As a result, 40 from village V_1 , 33 from village V_2 and 30 farmers from village V_3 were selected. Thus, the total sample comprised of 130 respondents.

A total of the following nine sources of information were identified for studying their credibility:

(A) Interpersonal localite sources:

- (1) Neighbour,
- (2) Progressive farmer,
- (3) Village leader

(B) Interpersonal cosmopolite sources:

- (4) Sarpanch,
- (5) Village Level Worker,
- (6) Agriculture Extension Officer,

(C) Mass media:

- (7) Radio,
- (8) Television,
- (9) Agricultural magazine.

The data were collected with the help of a schedule, specially designed for the study, by interviewing the respondents personally. The respondents were asked to give their preference in order of importance and credibility of different sources as perceived by them. They were asked to categorize their opinion on the scale indicating 'highly preferred', 'preferred' and 'least preferred'. The mean score values were then calculated and on the basis of which the rank orders were assigned to the sources for all the three villages individually.

In order to find out the significance of difference between the credibility ranks of different villages, the coefficient of concordance test was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The opinion of the respondents with regard to the importance of different sources of communication is presented in Table 1. The non-significant value of concordance test ($W=0.47$) proved that there was no difference in the responses of the viewer categories and the various sources of information as regards their relative importance. The overall order of importance of the various sources of information in communication of agricultural information was as under:

Sources of information	Mean score
1. Neighbour	2.72
2. Village Level Worker	2.52
3. Progressive farmer	2.47
4. Village leader	2.29
5. Television	1.76
6. Sarpanch	1.64
7. A.E.O.	1.36
8. Radio	1.32
9. Agricultural magazines	1.11

Table 2 relates to the credibility in utilization of message of the various sources of information by three respondent groups. The calculated value of concordance coefficient ($W=0.712$) was not significant at 0.05 level showing that there was no difference between different respondent groups and the source of information as far as their credibility in utilization is concerned. The sources can be ordered in the following rank on an overall basis.

1. Neighbour	2.25
2. V.L.W.	2.05
3. Progressive farmer	1.99
4. Village leader	1.86
5. Sarpanch	1.53
6. Radio	1.34
7. Television	1.31
8. Agricultural magazine	1.27
9. A.E.O.	1.24

The rank order correlation between perceived importance and credibility in utilization of the message by the various sources of information gave different values of spearman rank correlation for all the three villages individually as well as in totality as shown in Table 3. The γ_s values in villages V_1 , V_2 and V_3 were 0.939, 0.884 and 0.842, respectively. The differences

were significant at 0.01 level of probability. Similar results were found in the case of overall opinion of all the respondents ($\gamma_s=0.892$). These results indicate that the importance and credibility of the sources does vary significantly in the case of individual villages as well as according to all the respondents in totality.

TABLE 1

Relative importance of various sources of information with respect to T.V. in different respondent groups.

Sources of information	Villages					
	V_1		V_2		V_3	
	Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank
A. Interpersonal localite						
1. Neighbour	2.65	I	2.70	II	2.80	I
2. Progressive farmer	2.43	III	2.36	III	2.60	II
3. Village leader	2.18	IV	2.21	IV	2.53	III
B. Interpersonal cosmopolite						
1. Sarpanch	1.80	VI	1.82	V	1.83	V
2. V.L.W.	2.55	II	2.73	I	2.27	IV
3. A.E.O.	1.35	VII	1.48	VIII	1.23	VII
C. Mass Media						
1. Radio	1.18	VIII	1.64	VII	1.17	VIII
2. T.V.	1.83	V	1.73	VI	1.70	VI
3. Agril. magazine	1.05	IX	1.27	IX	1.00	IX

$W=0.47$ NS

NS=Non-significant

TABLE 2

Relative importance of T.V. in relation to other sources of information with respect to credibility in utilisation of the message by different respondent groups.

Sources of information	Villages					
	V ₁		V ₂		V ₃	
	Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank
A. Interpersonal localite						
1. Neighbour	2.35	I	2.30	I	2.07	I
2. Progressive farmer	1.85	III	1.94	IV	2.00	III
3. Village leader	1.75	IV	2.06	III	1.00	IV
B. Interpersonal cosmopolite						
4. Sarpanch	1.40	V	1.88	V	1.33	VI
5. V.L.W.	1.98	II	2.15	II	2.03	II
6. A.E.O.	1.20	VI	1.42	VII	1.10	VIII
C. Mass Media						
7. Radio	1.10	VII	1.42	VII	1.47	V
8. T.V.	1.10	VII	1.76	VI	1.20	VII
9. Agril. magazine	1.00	VIII	1.76	VI	1.10	VIII

W=0.712 NS

NS=Non-significant

TABLE 3

Rank order correlation between the importance and credibility of sources of information by farm viewers of three different village community.

Sources of information	Villages						Total	
	V ₁		V ₂		V ₃			
	Importance	Credibility	Importance	Credibility	Importance	Credibility	Importance	Credibility
A. Interpersonal localite								
1. Neighbour	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
2. Progressive farmer	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3
3. Village leader	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
B. Interpersonal cosmopolite								
4. Sarpanch	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	5
5. V.L.W.	2	2	1	2	4	2	2	2
6. A.E.O.	7	6	8	7	7	8	7	9
C. Mass media								
7. Radio	8	7	7	7	8	5	8	7
8. T.V.	5	7	6	6	6	7	5	6
9. Agricultural magazines	9	8	9	6	9	8	9	8
$\gamma_s=0.934^{**}$		$\gamma_s=0.884^{**}$		$\gamma_s=0.842^{**}$		$\gamma_s=0.892^{**}$		

**=Significant at 0.01 level of probability.

It was also noted that the neighbours followed by the V.L.W.s were the prime and credible sources of information. while the television was placed at the sixth rank. These results are in agreement with those reported by Roy *et. al.* (1968) and Indian Institute of Mass Communication (1968). Singh (1971) also reported the V.L.W.s as the higher credible source in progressive and non-progressive villages. However, according to Singh and Singh (1972), progressive farmers were at higher cader in both types of villages. It is a proven fact that the individual, group and mass media of communication have their own roles and importance in dissemination of the message. In this study it was found that the interpersonal localite sources were more credible and important to the farming communities, while the mass media were less credible sources for the farmers. The study of Chole and Rahudkar also supporting these results found that the mass media sources were the least credible in relation to small as well as big farmers. Moreover, among the mass media sources, the television was found

to be important and a credible source of information.

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