FACTORS INFLUENCING FARMER PARTICIPATION INMASS MEDIA COVERAGE OF AGRICULTURE INKATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a study of farmer participation in Mass Media Coverage of Agriculture in Katsina State of Nigeria. Since independence, decades of over-emphases on individual and group extension approaches in Nigeria have not yielded the desired results. Hence, the renewed interest in emphasizing Mass extension approach is now seen as a challenge. In view of this, relying on the participatory extension model, some social and institutional characteristics of Mass Extension in Katsina State were investigated and ample data generated to determine the extent of farmer participation in Mass Media Coverage of Agriculture and identify the factors associated with level of farmer participation as well as to determine how the mass extension teaching programmes in the state could effectively involve the participation of farmers. Through an empirical research process, the respondents numbering 147 farmers and 69 media and extension agents were randomly and purposively drawn, respectively, across the study area. Accordingly, the statistical relationship between the socio-psychological and institutional variables in Mass Media Coverage, as they shape the identified key targets of participation, have been established, simple summary statistics, content analysis and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used in the analysis of the data. It was found that a number of the study variables were positively related to levels of farmer participation. For example, Agents' Background was found to be significantly positively related to farmer participation initiatives of the agents in the study area. Consequently, empirical recommendations with policy, professional and methodological implications were made.

Keywords: Farmer, Participation, Agriculture, Mass Media, Communication

Introduction

Today, barely thirteen years into the 21st century AD it is apparent that the global community is fashioning out new roles for media practitioners in development. For, apart from the challenges of new media technology, which overwhelms all societies, the clarion call for more horizontal (participatory) exchange of development news, views and ideas, has given rise to new tasks for local media (Medis, 1986; CTA, 2002; and Arokoyo, 2010). That is, a more liberal, patriotic and more participatory approaches that seek to enlist the active and more meaningful involvement of everyone in the development process (Gubbels, 1997).

It has been established everywhere that there would be no agricultural development without a sound agricultural education, research and extension (Wild, 1970; Shukla, 1982 and Swanson, 2001). It is therefore important for agricultural extension to acquire renewed communication competences/strategies to succeed in *sharing* vital information and practices with farmers (Ajieh, 1993).

Of the numerous agricultural extension strategies tried in Nigeria since the colonial era, three are distinctive: the creation of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs); the introduction of Farming Systems Research Movement; and the Training and Visit (T & V) system of extension. Of course, the National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services, (NAERLS) at ABU Zaria, has been serving as a bridge between the nation's 18 or more agricultural research centres and extension. The NAERLS, along with other smaller agricultural extension service (AERLS) units of research institutes, have constantly translated research findings into extension messages. They have also been feeding researchers with relevant research problems. Specifically, they have established direct links with research, ADPs, Policy Makers, Mass Media and farmers. Inputs into broadcast media, Newspapers and Specialized Magazines have been widely acknowledged all over the federation, although mass extension approach has generally been top-down, except of course for possible isolated cases of participatory bottom - up innovations, which are largely yet to be locally acknowledged.

This paper is therefore, concerned with the participatory elements of agricultural news gathering and reporting. It is essentially based on a scientific enquiry into the factors influencing the effectiveness of agricultural journalism in extension communication in Katsina State of Nigeria.

Of the three main methods of extension teaching (Individual, Group and Mass) practiced in Katsina State, mass extension teaching method (the systematic use of mass media in extension communication) appears to be the most neglected today. It is arguably the most under-researched aspect of extension services in Nigeria. Mass extension not only serves as means of strong, broad-based mass appeal, but also as complements to other extension teaching methods (Akinfeleye, 1990; Ajieh 1993; Okunade, 1999 and Bakori, 2002). Decades of emphasis on individual and group extension approaches in Katsina and in Nigeria at large have not yielded desired results (NAERLS, 2002 b).

For, it has been increasingly observed that without involving the participation of people in developmental activities meant for them, such activities can hardly achieve their desired

objectives. Where they do such achievements can hardly be sustained, no matter how lofty the objectives are (Bassette, 2001). In this case, effective farmer participation in agricultural news/views/ideas gathering and reporting is hereby considered a *sin-qua-non* for successful mass extension in development (FAO, 2004). Consequently, effective agricultural news/views/ideas gathering and reporting remain a big challenge in extension communication for most agricultural development programmes. This is therefore, an attempt to empirically understand the socio-psychological and institutional factors of farmer participation in mass extension in the context of rural/agricultural development of Katsina State of Nigeria.

The Problem

It is obvious that large volumes of agricultural research findings accumulated in Nigerian research centers across the years, could not gain wide and speedy adoption as desired. The result is wide scale disenchantment with decades of agricultural research and extension planning and programmes implementation. Among the most widely assumed limiting factors of adoption have been poor communication and poor resource base of farmers coupled with inadequate fanner participation in research and extension strategies (Williams, 1989; Olukosi, 1991; Aina, 1995 and Chessa, 2001). Of specific concern is the dearth of relevant research findings about farmer-participation in extension communication, mass extension in particular (CEC, 2005).

The task here therefore, is to determine in Katsina State, whether decades of agricultural mass extension [news (innovations) gathering, processing and dissemination] has been significantly carried out with the active participation of target audience or not. It is therefore, necessary to understand or pay more attention to those factors associated with farmer participation in rural news diffusion; involving more categories of farmers in stories/programmes production; finding out individual agents' (media extentionists and journalists) rate of agricultural coverage in terms of audience surveys, patriotic, consistent, and balanced representation.

The research questions therefore, are: To what extent are farmers in Katsina State participating in the media coverage of agricultural activities? How has the level of participation impacted on such messages and the overall agricultural development in Katsina State?

Objectives

The main objective of the study is to gain insight into farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State, Nigeria. The specific objectives therefore are to determine the extent of farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State; identify the factors associated with the current level of farmer participation in agricultural newspaper, radio and television activities in Katsina State and determine how the mass extension teaching programmes of Katsina State, can effectively involve the participation of farmers.

Significance

In any social situation where change must take place, the role of communication, both inter-personal and mediated, must be central (Dare, 1990; Ogunbameru, 2001; Moemeka, 2003 and Agbamu, 2006). This paper therefore, by its exploratory nature, poses to reveal greater insights into the nature of interaction and or, communicative behaviour among working agents, the farming communities as well as other stakeholders in Katsina State. It therefore, offers substantial implications on both theory and practice in mass extension methodology as they affect agricultural extension strategies, food security and rural socio-economic life in the state.

Theoretical Framework

This is a study in Participatory Extension. Participatory Extension connotes a kind of client-controlled and demand-driven extension. It is a decentralized and localized approach that utilizes the self-help potentials of farmers. In other words, Participatory Extension Approach involves closer contacts with clientele to jointly plan and execute problem oriented extension activities. The approach is centered on awareness creation, motivation, empowerment and self-help. Participatory Extension methods in use today evolve from several sources and traditions. These sources and traditions together with their major proponents include among others: Applied Anthropology Analysis led by Neil Roling (1988), Farmer First Analysis led by Robert Chambers (1997) and Pro-Poor Agric. Extension Analysis led by John Farrington (2002).

Farmer Participation in Mass Media Coverage of Agriculture

The participation of farmers in agricultural media programmes symbolises the relevance and seriousness of the programmes meant to inform, enlighten, educate and entertain the farmers. According to Rogers (1990) any development agency can narrow the degree of inequality resulting from mass extension through:

- The use of lower socio-economic focus
- Focus on late majority and laggards
- Use of personal element
- Use of participative planning

In addition to these, narrowing the degree of inequality between the advantaged few and the disadvantaged majority entails tailoring appropriate messages (innovations) to the farmers through the reliance on "high access media channels and selection/use of opinion leaders" (Rogers. 1990). In essence farmer participation in agricultural media programmes in the context of Katsina State demands any or a combination of: -

A. Farmers involvement in agricultural news/views/ideas planning.
B. Farmers involvement in agricultural news/views/ideas gathering.
C. Farmers involvement in agricultural news/views/ideas production and processing.
D. Farmers involvement in agricultural news/vJews/ideas monitoring.
E. Farmers involvement in agricultural news/views/ideas evaluation.

Participatory Agricultural Journalism

Agricultural journalism generally connotes the art and science of gathering, processing and reporting of agricultural news/views/ideas by the mass media. It is usually a teamwork of reporters, editors, photojournalists/cameramen, and subeditors, who may be working for general or specialized (agricultural) media. They work closely with agricultural managers, researchers, extension workers and farmers. Another name for it is rural journalism. What is important here for participation is the journalists' collective resolve to allow room for farmers to maintain an influence on agricultural media inputs. Equally important is journalists' orientation and level of interest/devotion to that kind of journalism. Also important are the barriers to such orientations and attractiveness to it.

WRITTEN	SPOKEN	VISUAL
Publications Bulletins Circulars Leaflets Magazines Personal letters News Stories and Articles in local Press	Farm and Visit Meetings of all kinds Discussion Groups Office Calls Telephone Calls Radio	Exhibits Agric Shows & Films Posters Slides Charts Flannel graphs
	Result demonstration meeting; method demonstration meeting; Any meeting using visual aids, cinema, Video, TV and Internet.	

Source: Ajieh, P. C. (1993) 'Extension Communication: An Effective Guide P. 65

Methodology

This paper is based on a recent study carried out in Katsina State of Nigeria. The state has been blessed with active farming communities and media presence of rural, semi - urban and urban backgrounds. This study covered the three major Agricultural Development Zones in the state namely *Ajiwa,* (Zone I) *Funtua* (Zone II) and *Dutsin-ma* (Zone III). The objects of sampling included places, projects, episodes, journalists, modes of journalism, mass media and programmes/columns. Sampling frames were obtained from the Katsina State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (KTARDA) and the State Chapel of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). Hence, there were a total of 147 farmers and 69 Agents (media extensionists and journalists) purposively selected, as well as content analysis of 112 programmes and print items on agricultural broadcast/print media contents.

Primary data were gathered by means of personal non-participant observation, focused group discussion, media content analysis and two sets of questionnaire administered to farmers on the one hand and to agents on the other. The secondary data were gathered by means of Library and Internet research mainly. The data were analysed using (a) Descriptive statistics (b) Content analysis (for documentary evidence of participatory elements) and (c) Correlation Matrix analysis (to determine critical attainment of the study objectives).

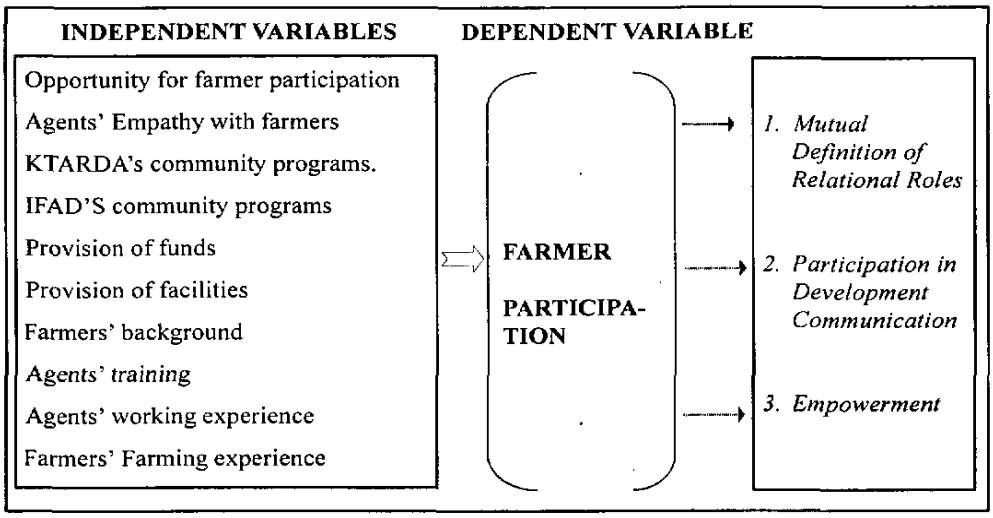


Figure 7: Conceptual Framework: Factors influencing farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture

Results and Discussion

The results of the findings are discussed below. The results are presented according to the specified objectives as follows: -

The Extent of Farmer Participation in the Mass Media Coverage of Agriculture in Katsina State

The findings in relation to specific objective one *(to determine the extent of farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State),* suggest that there was low level of farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State.

Figure 2: Frequency of Farmer Participation in the Mass Media Coverage of Agricultural News.

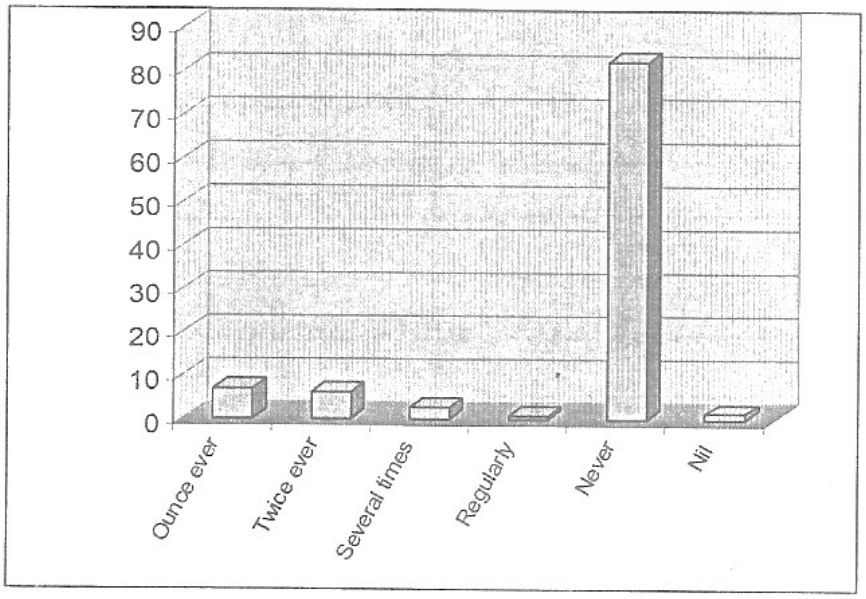


Figure 2 indicates that majority (82%) of the respondents among farmers interviewed had never participated in any mass media agricultural news coverage before. The highest number of respondents who participated in agricultural news coverage once ever was 7%, followed by those who participated twice ever (6%). Only 1 % of the respondents participated several and many times each. Another 1 % of the respondents had no (Nil) comments, which was a strong indication that they too had not participated in mass media news coverage of agriculture in the study area. Figure 2 clearly shows how majority of the respondents among farmers across the three ADP Zones of Katsina, have not been participating in agricultural mass media news coverage. There was no evidence that a significant number of farmers in Katsina State do take part in agricultural Mass Media news coverage. There is, however, insignificant number of farmers in Katsina State who actually partake in agricultural Mass Media news coverage as shown in Figure 2.

Factors associated with Farmer Participation in Agricultural Radio, Television and Newspaper Activities in Katsina State.

The findings in relation to specific objective two *(to identify the factors associated with the current level of farmer participation in agricultural newspaper, radio and television activities in Katsina State)* suggest that several factors are associated with the level of farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State. Chief among them is the over-centralization of the mass media activities in the state capital, The results indicate that nearly all media offices, productions and editors were virtually located in the state capital except for some L.Q Zonal Information and NOA offices and a few relay stations for radio and television. This is supported by other similar recent studies in some states (Umar, 2010).

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Nature and Degree of Relationship among Variables relative to Farmers.

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Farmer Participation	1						
2 Formal Education	-.024	1					
3 Years of Farming Experience	.057	.140*	1				
4 Opportunities for Participation	.516*	-.055	.080	1			
5 Competitiveness	.055	-.077	-.102	.215**	1		
6 ADP and NGO Influence	.035	.092	-.030	.084	-.144*	1	
7 Mass Media Influence	.055	-.016	-124*	.114*	-.046	.130*	1

* - Significant at 0.05 Level N - 147

* * = Significant at 0,10 Level

Table 2 shows a Pearson's correlation matrix of the degree of association among seven key socio-psychological and institutional variables, relative to respondents' views among farmers in the study area. The data show that there was negative and insignificant (-.024) correlation between farmer participation and formal educational attainment of the farmers. It means there was no evidence that the level of formal education and farmers' level of participation in agricultural media coverage is positively related. This could be very true as farmer participation initiatives in the study area have more to do with formal education than with their predominantly informal education at the *Qur'anic* level. So, there was a negative correlation of formal

education and farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture. Similarly, there was a positive but insignificant (.035) degree of association between ADP and NGO Influence and farmer participation in Mass Media coverage of agriculture in the state. It means the respondents' perception was that ADP and NGO have positive but insignificant role in their participation in agricultural media activities. This could be due to their ignorance of the programmes' funding pattern in the state. This view is, however, contrary to that of agents which showed a level of significance in terms of KTARDA, IFAD and EEC Influence on their farmer participatory initiatives in the state, generally.

Figures in Table 2, however, show that there was a positive and significant (.516) correlation, at 0.05 level of significance, between opportunities for participation and farmer participation in media coverage of agriculture. This means that the level of farmer participation is a direct result of opportunities provided for participation. Opportunities for participation generally include agents* visit to farmers, invitations for interview of the farmer, audience analysis of farmers' views about specific agricultural programmes and other related avenues of farmer participation initiated by media producers mainly.

There was a positive but insignificant, (0.57) correlation between years of farming experience and farmer participation. It means there was even distribution of farmers who were opportuned to participate in agricultural media coverage regardless of their years and farming experience. This is, however, not to say that big time farmers were not given priority attention over smallholder farmers. The fact is that years of farming experience are not proportionate to farm size or income level in the study area. This shows that in Katsina state, years of farming experience is not an important factor of influencing farmer participation in Mass media coverage of agriculture.

Figures in Table 2 also indicate that there was no significant (0.55) association between competitiveness of farmers and farmer participation in Agricultural media coverage. It means the level of competitiveness among farmers in the state has little or no bearing with the level of farmer participation in the state. This could be so because, given the level of opportunity for farmer participation in media coverage of agriculture, competition among farmers could be based mainly on productivity and increased hectrage rather than on participation in media coverage which is hardly readily available for them but for celebrities or officials.

Table 3 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient of relation between some socio-psychological and institutional variables and farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture as perceived by the respondents among agents. There was a negative and insignificant (-.02) correlation, between agents' working experience and farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture. It means there was no indication that more experienced agents had more inclination towards farmer participatory initiatives. Instead, negative correlation implies that working experience could have been negatively associated with farmer participatory initiatives of agents. This was made possible by the fact that in Katsina state, like in most Nigerian states, reporting is seldom done by the most experienced agents. Rural reporting assignments are usually assigned to freshers while those with many years of working experience occupy administrative or managerial positions with little or no direct touch to agricultural reporting. Although most specific agricultural coverage is assigned by them, it was observed that such assignments are rarely done with strict guidelines on actual mode of information gathering. So,

the findings specific to agents here suggest that there was no direct correlation between agents* working experience and farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of the Nature and Degree of Relationship among Variables relative to Agents.

VARIABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Farmer Participation	1						
2. Working Exoerience	-.02	1					
3. Availability of Facilities	-.097	025	1				
4. Availability of Funds	.053	-.162*	-.059	1			
5. Competitiveness	.054	-.155	061	-.081	1		
6. Background	.164*	-.002	.051	-.042	093	1	
7. Training	.080	.189*	-.061	-.225*	058	-.023	1

*Significant at 0.05 Level = 69

Results in Table 3 further show that there was negative but insignificant (-.097) association between availability of facilities and farmer participation in media coverage of agriculture. This implies that as far as the respondents among agents' views were concerned, facilities for mass extension such as transport, audio visuals, camera and so on, were fairly available to warrant a considerable level of farmer participatory initiatives in the study area. But available facilities were not put to adequate use for the purpose of farmer participation due to other factors generally.

Similarly, there was positive but insignificant (.053) association, between availability of funds for mass extension and farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture. This means that agents were generally of the view that availability of funds for mass extension was positive but not sufficient to warrant any impact on farmer participation in the mass media coverage on agriculture. There was equally a positive but insignificant (.054) correlation between competitiveness and farmer participation. Thus, the agents generally believed that competitiveness among them was for other things beside farmer participation. Experience has shown that most media practitioners in Nigeria tend to compete in reporting urban events rather than rural events (Olowu and Yahaya, 1993).

Results in Table 3 further show that there was a positive and significant (.164) correlation, at 0.05 levels, between agents' background and farmer participatory initiatives of the agents in the study area. It means that the agents' background is associated with the number of urban and/or semi-urban reportage. The majority of the respondents were of urban background yielding lower farmer participation in the coverage of agriculture in the rural study areas. It follows therefore, that the more the number of Agents with rural background, the more likely there would be a higher level of participatory coverage on rural agriculture.

In terms of level of agents' training as it relates to farmer participation in media coverage of agriculture, there was a positive but insignificant (.080) association between the two. This is to

say that level of agents' training has positive correlation with farmer participation. In essence, training level has not significantly correlated with increase in farmer participation in agricultural media coverage. This could be due to the high rate of formally trained agents with low rate of farmer participation in actualities and interviews. It could be said that formal training of agents has no positive correlation with farmer participation in agricultural media coverage in Katsina state. This does not mean that specific formal training cannot be positive and recommended for agents in Katsina State.

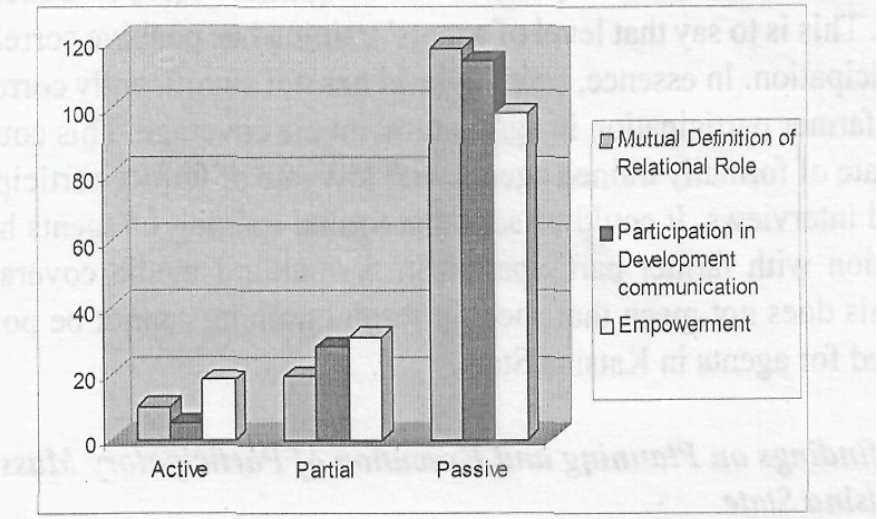
Implications of findings on Planning and Execution of Participatory Mass Extension in Katsina State.

Similarly, the study seeks to empirically determine the major and minor implications of the findings relative to the research problems, objectives and hypotheses as they affect theoretical and methodological orientations in agricultural extension and rural journalism in Katsina State. Content analysis result indicates that the frequency of official audience or readership analysis of contents determines the extent to which listeners, viewers, or readers participate in decision making about the contents, as well as in evaluating the performance of programmes and columns. There was gross under funding of media houses in the State. There were institutional factors that were found to be positively associated with participation.

Figure 3: Perceived mode of farmer engagement in the three common benefits or targets of the participatory process

Figure 3 presents farmers' views about their own engagement in the common benefits or targets of participation as influenced by their own prior levels of farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture and rural development in general. Majority (93%) of the farmers indicated that they were inactively involved in the mutual definition of relational roles about media coverage of agriculture in their areas. Only about 7% of them said they were actively involved.

As for participation in development communication, majority (97%) of the farmers indicated that they were inactively involved in development communication. Only three percent said they were actively involved in development communication. Similarly, majority of them (88%) said they were either passively (67%) or partially (31%) involved in-the farmer participatory benefit of empowerment. It means the farmers in Katsina state do not significantly partake in the three common benefits/ targets of farmer participation in Katsina state. This could be so due to the low level of farmer participation in decision making about media contents in producing/ processing/disseminating the contents.



Summary and Conclusion

A complete analysis of all the findings relative to objective two (factors associated with farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture) of the study, confirms that eight out of the ten specific hypotheses were confirmed and accepted while their null hypotheses were rejected. Thus, the low level of farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State is related to eight socio-psycho logical and institutional factors. Similarly, the low level of farmer participation in mass media coverage of agriculture in Katsina State is not related to two of the socio psychological and institutional factors.

The socio-psychological factors that were positively associated with participation are agents' level of empathy with farmers (57%), agents' rural background (0.164), agents' formal training (0.080) and years of farming experience (0.057). Agents' working experience was found to be negatively associated (-0.02) with farmer participation for some good reasons as specified above.

In this study, it has been established that in Katsina State of Nigeria, there is need for closer attention and focus on farmer participation in the mass media coverage of agriculture. Although, a higher proportion of farmers spent their leisure times in listening to, watching or reading agricultural print items, the level of their participation (through evaluation, decision taking, production, processing and dissemination) in such programmes has been very low. They consider the media contents as relevant and useful to their farming occupations, but the extent to which they could appreciate and utilize these important messages have been limited by their passivity in the way and manner such messages are arrived at. It follows therefore, that media use for agricultural development in Katsina State should consider increasing the level of opportunities for participation, agents' empathy with farmers, and provision of funds and facilities for the purpose of farmer participation in the study area. These also underscore the significance of agents' background and training in enabling farmer participation initiatives to a large extent.

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