



Dynamics of Marketing Communication Platforms Used by Farmers to Access Information on Agriculture in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is fundamental to Kenya's development as anchored in the Bottom-Up Economic blue print and Vision 2030. Despite the increasing promotional attempts by marketers, manufacturers and even government agencies, agricultural production is marred by low outputs, low uptake of farm inputs such as fertilizer, quality seeds, equipment, chemicals, and reluctance in adopting new agricultural innovations. The presence of various marketing communication approaches, several information platforms, and financial incentives to the clientele notwithstanding, the uptake of farm inputs is still very low. The objective of this study was to describe the dynamics of integrated marketing communication platforms that are used by farmers in accessing information on agriculture. The Uses and Gratifications Theory by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch was adopted because of its ability to examine diverse media and communication channel preferences among audiences. The theory advances the use of alternative media platforms where traditional ones are not effective. The researcher relied on Mixed-methods in actualizing the study. Simple random sampling was used to get 259 farmers, while purposive sampling was used to select Agricultural Society of Kenya officials and agricultural extension officers. Six agro-dealers were randomly selected while quota sampling was used to get media personnel. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in analysis and organization of results. Findings were presented descriptively and complemented by graphs, tables, percentages, and charts. This enabled the researcher to draw inferences that later informed the conclusions of the study which indicate that participants had access to multiple marketing communication platforms that they relied upon to access information on agriculture. The channels included both traditional and new media platforms such as radio, TV, SMS, interpersonal communication, and public barazas, which were effective in sharing information on agriculture. The study recommended the following; embracement of targeted marketing; empowerment of Agricultural field officers and increase collaborations with vibrant agricultural organizations; make use of integrated communication platforms that meet regional needs; utilization of social media to advertise; and finally, embrace continuous provision of agricultural information at all times.

Keywords: Access to Information, Agricultural Information, Communication Platforms, Farm Inputs, Marketing Communication

I. INTRODUCTION

The agriculture sector in Kenya continues to suffer low uptake of farm inputs, especially emerging brands despite increasing attempts by marketers, manufacturers, and even government agencies in the agricultural sector to boost the performance of various nodes in the industry. Smallholder farming in Kenya is characterised by limited knowledge on the advances in agriculture. This is despite the availability of technological changes for the sector, which has shown a slow rate in their adoption. Lukungu (2020) attributes this situation to limited access to appropriate information due to ineffective methods of marketing the various innovative ideas in agriculture. Using appropriate marketing strategies builds public opinion about a product, customer-to-customer referrals which over time, cements the brand in the public domain.

In the agricultural sector, the focus of all marketing communication is to realize increased uptake of agricultural technologies by farmers for increased agricultural production. Effective communication of agricultural products is one of the most important factors of agricultural development (Mittal et al., 2020). However, the problem remains of reaching the more active segments with a message that is designed to encourage more extensive purchasing or use of available



products. Even where involvement has emerged as the main explanatory factor in consumer behaviors, high and relatively low levels of involvement make a multiple marketing mix strategy inevitable.

Marketing communication in the new millennium is fast changing which then compels marketers and communication persons to customize information for each set of audiences with precision (Sedik, 2018). Failure to adhere to this requirement becomes detrimental especially when there are new products that are trying to cut a niche in the market. In a society where there are young, middle-aged and older generations the promotion messages being passed across have to automatically be specified. For instance, it is possible that marketing can provide some of what Generation X might be looking for greater interactivity and participation in marketing communications (Sedik, 2018).

The target markets have to be made aware of the products or services and if possible, involved through advertisements and related promotional activities. Failing at these critical stages that in some instances are accompanied by lack of information on the part of the farmers might be the major cause of non-adoption. Stakeholders and field personnel, when overlooking crucial stages in communication, as highlighted by Lasswell (2012), often attribute these lapses to ineffective communication strategies. Even though there have been several studies touching on agriculture, communications, and other aspects of communication such as marketing communications and strategies thereof, there is still much more that needs to be done while adding to the wealth of knowledge available.

According to Uwe et al. (2016) agricultural productivity around the globe is dramatically affected by challenging situations such as credit constraints, missing insurance markets, poor infrastructure, and more extensively, the suboptimal agricultural practices as well as ineffective marketing and communication frameworks. Distorted communication practices in the sector are preventing farmers from accessing new production technologies (Suri, 2011); including the great potential that is in modern marketing communication that is aided by information communication technology (ICT). Africa's economic power is experiencing a comparatively slower growth rate as compared to western countries due to a poor convergence between the actors in the sector, thus elevating the situation.

Banerjee and Munshi (2004) observed that agricultural product markets in many developing countries are often poorly integrated. On the other hand, Osman and Ansah (2020) added that the sector also experiencing slow growth which is not only seen in production, but also in other process along various value chain such as marketing, distribution and access to inputs. According to a World Bank (2015) report, agriculture is the mainstay of the Kenyan economy, contributing to 24% of national GDP directly and another 27% indirectly. The agriculture sector is not only the driver of Kenya's economy, but also the means of livelihood for the majority of Kenyan people. The sector provides income to more than 80% of the population, employing over 40% of the total population and over 70% of the rural population. The sector is facing major challenges including stagnant or declining productivity levels, under-exploitation of land, inefficiencies in the supply chain due to limited storage capacity, lack of post-harvest services, poor access to input markets and low value addition of most agriculture exports (Osman & Ansah, 2020).

The growth and development of Kenya largely depends on the rural population, which form the largest percentage of Kenya's population (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2019). With favourable climatic conditions, this growth can be realized easily if Kenyans adopt and practice modern farming techniques, backed up with the rightful farm implements. These techniques comprise of agricultural innovations whose adoption rate is directly proportional to growth. Nevertheless, the adoption of these innovations cannot be successful without the involvement of appropriate marketing communications strategies. However, the readily available technologies of communication for passing the messages are yet to be known and comprehended by many players (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2019).

Agriculture is one of the key sectors to deliver a 10% annual economic growth rate (Kenyan Vision 2030, 2007). The government considers that a critical factor in achieving this target is the transformation of smallholder subsistence agriculture into an innovative, commercially oriented modern agricultural sector. Given the high correlation of economic growth to the development in agriculture and the importance of the sector in absorbing the labour force, the adoption of modern farming techniques is essential. Initiatives in agriculture require effective marketing communication strategies. Although past studies indicate that, marketing communications strategies have the potential to bring about positive change, their application by governments (national and county) is yet to be maximised (Simkin & Dibb, 2018). With the changing times, the choice of marketing communication strategy also needs to change in order to capture the interest to of driftnet segments of clientele. Agriculture has been practiced from the ancient times that cover the medieval times, through the agrarian revolution, came to benefit in the industrial revolution and now the digital revolution (Osman & Ansah, 2020). Each of the stages has had their contribution to the sector especially on issues around farm inputs, farming technologies and of course rethinking the modes of passing agriculture related information to the parties. There have been

attempts by both government institutions and private agencies to market innovations that support agricultural production in rural Kenya which have not yielded much fruit. For instance, maize production in Kakamega has not really benefited from the advancement in technology hence bringing in about the low uptake of new maize farming methods. This situation exists amidst the presence of both local and national media in the region.

Locally, there is a question as to whether or not farmers in Kakamega County are informed of new farming methods that could improve production. The recent introduction of *Mavuno* fertilizer to farmers by the county government of Kakamega has experienced an upsurge in its uptake. As a result, distribution outlets have been running out of stock at short intervals due to high demand from maize farmers. In a bid to address some of the aforementioned challenges, Reid and Reid (2015) advocates for integrated marketing communication practices. The *Mavuno* fertiliser is considered an innovation that came about out of the partnership between the County Government of Kakamega and the Athi River Mining (ARM). This fertilizer is what is regarded as a compound fertilizer, which contains eleven essential plant nutrients, that is, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, zinc, boron, copper, manganese and molybdenum (Muyanga & Jayine, 2016). When all these are combined in specific blends, the fertilizer produced has resulted in superior crop yields besides improving soil fertility. It reduces soil acidity and improves nutrient uptake by plants.

According to 2016 data at the Malava sub-county Agricultural office, there is high demand for *Mavuno* fertilizer. Records in the Agricultural offices at the sub county indicate that at the time of its introduction (2016), 11,800 bags of 25kg *Mavuno* fertilizer were distributed as compared 2015 uptake which closed at 5,400 bags. Further data at the Kakamega county agricultural office indicate that Malava Sub-County is second to Likuyani in the uptake of the fertilizer. Due to the introduction of *Mavuno* Fertilizer, other supply outlets such as the National Cereals Produce Board and other enterprises in the agro-distribution value chain faced stiff competition because of *Mavuno* Fertiliser's competitive pricing. According to NCPB, it is estimated that the sub-county has an annual production of 120,000 bags of maize against a demand of 300,000 bags. This means there is more that needs to be done to upscale the production to meet the demand.

Muhammad et al. (2011), in a related study, observed that there is a low awareness of emerging products and innovations in the agricultural among rural farmers. They attributed it to ineffective communication strategies by field staff, a fact that calls for more researches to be done on why the field staff remain rigid despite the availability of alternative strategies of communication. From the foregoing highlights therefore, it is evident that there have been previous studies touching on the matter. Nevertheless, the current study was quite broad and hybrid as it employed relatively more aspects of marketing and communication that previous scholars may have not taken keen consideration. This study was justified in that, whilst most of the previous studies were mono-dimensional in methodology, this study uses a mixed method research design which allows the researcher to test a number of variables, compare various data, and also increase the scope of the study in terms of content. This approach was aimed at contributing multifaceted data and research findings to the faculty of knowledge in this area. The research studied several marketing strategies that are employed by marketers in disseminating messages about farming and farm inputs to their target audiences.

1.1 Research Objective

Describe the dynamics of marketing communication platforms used by farmers to access information on agriculture in Kakamega County, Kenya

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided the Uses & Gratification Theory (UGT) by Katz et al. (1974). It fronts the thoughts that, those who consume media content have diverse needs and aims, for which they constantly seek to satisfy by participating in varied media activities (Susanno et al. 2019). The theory was deemed appropriate for this research because it helps in understanding the effectiveness of the various marketing communication strategies that are employed by marketers using media outlets to influence purchasing power of the farmers.

The UGT focuses on “*what do people do with the media*” more than what the media does for the people. This communication theory is positivistic in its approach based on the socio-psychological communication tradition, and focuses on communication at the mass media scale (Ayten, 2019). The driving question of UGT is, ‘why do people use media and what do they use them for?’ UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy the given needs and allow them to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape. UGT



holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for viewers' gratification (Ayten, 2019).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Malava Sub County in Kakamega County of Western Kenya. Malava Sub County borders Lurambi Sub County to the south, Lugari Sub County to the North, Navakholo Sub County to the West and Nandi County to the East. Malava Sub County lies between longitudes 34⁰32 and 35⁰30 west of Meridian and latitudes 00 07 30 off the equator. The area is a fertile region with ample rainfall of 1500mm throughout the year. Mixed farming is practiced in the study area where residents engage in growing food crops such as maize, beans for subsistence and sugarcane as the main cash crop. Livestock rearing is widely practiced in small scale. Malava Sub County is endowed with good infrastructure including road transport and learning institutions spread across the region.

3.2 Study Population

The study population comprised of participants from the seven wards in Malava Sub in Kakamega County. The researcher targeted to reach about 300 participants that included farmers, extension officers, agro dealers, members of the press and the agricultural staff.

3.3 Research Design & Procedures

The methodology used for the research was the Mixed-method, which blended well with the descriptive research design. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select participants for the study. A purposive sample, which is also referred to as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that bases on the characteristics of a population and is normally used in situations where proportionality of the selected participants is not the main concern (Taherdoost, 2016). Mugenda & Mugenda (2013) adds that simple random sampling gives equal chances to cases in each stratum to be selected.

The data collection tools included questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussion schedules. Data was collected through; questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative approaches for data analysis and organised according to the research objective in themes of the tools. Findings were presented descriptively and complemented by graphs, tables, percentages, and charts. This enabled the researcher to draw inferences that later informed the conclusions of the study.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Modes of Accessing Information on Agriculture

The study commenced by investigating the primary channels through which farmers receive information on farm inputs. The data is summarized in Figure 1.

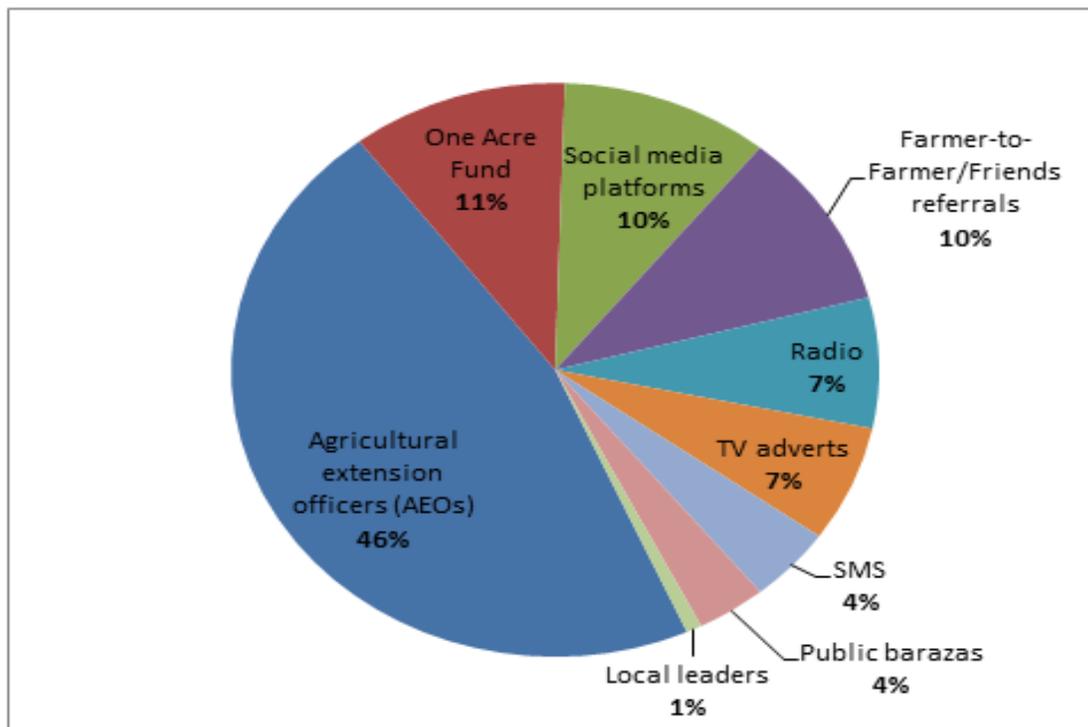


Figure 1
Modes of Accessing Information on Agriculture

The analysis of gathered data revealed that a significant portion, accounting for 46% of the participants, predominantly relies on Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) for accessing agricultural information. Agriculture-based organizations, such as the One Acre Fund, played a notable role, with 11% of responses indicating reliance on these entities for disseminating agricultural information within the area. New media outlets, including social media platforms, secured the third position, sharing a percentage of 10%, which was identical to the reliance on Farmer-to-Farmer/Friends referrals. Traditional media platforms, particularly radio, emerged as powerful information tools, particularly in the context of fertilizer marketing, garnering a representation of 7%. Television adverts held an equivalent percentage of 7% for informing participants about agricultural matters. The utilization of SMS for information dissemination was reported at 4%. Interestingly, the strategy involving local leaders for communicating and marketing fertilizers among farmers was the least popular, accounting for only 1%. Therefore, the most convenient method of accessing information by farmers is interpersonal communication that includes use of field officers as well as leveraging on the platforms of agricultural organization (mostly NGOs on agriculture) in their jurisdictions. The above notwithstanding, SMS platforms are greatly used in rural areas (Bartosik-Purgat, 2019; Kemp, 2018; Wang et al, 2016; Ludwig & De Ruyter, 2016; Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). This is so because majority of the rural areas in many parts of Africa including Kakamega County in Kenya are still facing internet and electricity connectivity challenges.

4.2 Determinants of Effective Marketing Communication and Access to Information

The research also sought to understand issues that determine how the participants access agricultural information including the underlying challenges. From the analysis, it is evident that 97.3% of those who took part in the study had faced challenges while accessing information. This accounted for 252 respondents out of the total 259 who took part in the research. An insignificant 2.7% of the responses showed that accessing marketing information on agricultural innovations was not an uphill task to them. It therefore implies that marketers need to put in place appropriate strategies that would decipher the challenges that impede the farmers in the area in accessing the much-needed communiqué about innovations. Research findings revealed the following specific challenges that affect the participants' access to information.



4.2.1 Financial Abilities

This study noted that the purchasing power and choice of farm inputs is based on several factors including; quality of the product, peer influence, availability of product on the market, mode of payment for the product, and strategy used to market the product. Analysed data indicate that majority of the participants were greatly influenced by the price of the fertilizer (44%). At 40%, findings indicated that the use of local administration and agricultural extension officers equally play a big role in inducing farmers towards certain products. According to some respondents, their low incomes was an impediment to acquisition of information dissemination devices and even pay for premium-based services like SMS, social media outlets and even TV (pay TV). Analysis of the Likert tool further revealed that finance is an overriding challenge affecting the access to information on agricultural information.

4.2.2 Language Barrier

The language used in marketing was found to be locking out the elderly and illiterate farmers from understanding advertisements and new products. In their study titled, "Closing the gender gap in agriculture under climate change," Huyer and Partey (2020) concur that farmers' access to information is highly hindered by the use of language that they do not understand in delivering messages.

4.2.3 Technical Terminologies

With respect to technical terms used by AEOs, participants in the study observed that they find it challenging to understand concepts especially when agricultural jargon is used. Experts in the agriculture sector especially those at the grassroots need to pass information using simplistic language and where technical terms are involved, they should try as much as possible to explain and if need be, interpret them for the understanding of the target consumers of marketing content.

4.2.4 Choice of Medium of Information about the Available Products

The study exposed that poor choice of the medium of communication is a challenge to the participants in accessing information on agriculture. Study findings indicated that 46.8% of the participants considered the inappropriateness of the medium of communication as a significant challenge affecting access of information. Responses also pointed out that some marketers present adverts on TV while most people are listening to radio. This move leaves out the target audience from being informed. Marketers and distributors need to relook at the strategies that they employ in order to take care of this finding

4.2.5 Weather Changes

Responses posted that weather changes interfere and hinder delivery of information that is channeled through electronic media such as radio and television. Being a rural county, Kakamega and more particularly Malava Sub County has majority of its population relying on radio and terrestrial television transmission of communication signals. As such, stormy weather and more so, in which there are thunderstorms and lightening hamper smooth transmission and reception of waves. Majority of the locals therefore resort to switching off their electronic devices to avert any damages that may occur as a result of such weather.

4.2.6 Language of Transmission

Some radio stations use language that is not well understood especially the vernacular radio stations that transmit in dialects that cannot be understood by other tribes in the area. Even though the proliferation of frequency modulation (FM) radio stations in the region has been associated with positivity in the growth of the broadcasting sector, the presence of vernacular radio in the western region is more of a divider than a unifier. For instance, Western region that is host to over sixteen dialects of the Luhya tribe, Kakamega County on the other hand hosts close to more than half of the various Luhya sub-tribes in addition to other languages which have routes from other counties of Kenya. It is therefore ineffective to broadcast agricultural information while relying on FM radio stations such as Radio Ingo, Mumbo FM, Mulembe FM and Sulwe FM alone. Taking this trajectory means that residents of the study area (Malava Sub County) whose population include; the Nandi, Luhya, Kikuyu among others, are locked out from receiving agricultural marketing information.



4.2.7 Distance Covered to Access Information

There were a number of participants, especially from far flung Wards who complained of the long distance in accessing agricultural offices in search of professional opinion and clarification on available products, services and even innovations in agriculture. As for the print media, respondents who took part in the study were of the view that, the information in newspapers does not reach remote areas easily and at times only consumed by small sections of the market that in turn don't share or divulge to the bigger population. This is followed by the challenge of being connected to the national grid for the rural farmers hence locking them out of the ability to get information that packaged and disseminated through electronic media.

4.2.8 Short Broadcasting Airtime

Due to the limited airtime for broadcasted adverts, which is usually in a couple of seconds and barely minutes; farmers find this as incomplete information especially for radio and TV commercials which tells the audience to go out to the nearby vendors for more information.

4.2.9 Public Participation in Design of Marketing Communication Messages

As a strategy to increase acceptance of products and marketing communication messaging, the study also asked the respondents to share their views on the need to involve farmers and the media in designing marketing messages about farm inputs. Majority of the respondents indicated that companies and marketing agencies should involve information consumers (farmers) and disseminators (media) in the content development process. For instance, key informant in the FGD held the opinion that:

"...media and farmers involvement before designing marketing g messages helps in creating an effective message. It gives the designer an opportunity to edit out clutter and only release an advert that resonates well with the target audience" (Key Responded 1, FGD).

Another participant added that:

"Such involvement enhances confidence in the marketing message, even though at times, the marketer sets the agenda and so, media or farmer involvement may not have a significant impact on the outcome of the advertisement" (Key Responded 2, FGD).

The study through the FGD sought to understand whether at any point, they had ever participated in the design of agricultural Information Communication and Learning (ICL) material. Majority of the participants reported that they had never been involved or participated in such as process. They however explained that marketing departments of media houses are the ones that normally handle such undertakings.

When asked what aspects that they (respondents) would change in so far as marketing communication of agriculture issues is concerned, their responses were as follows. One respondent mentioned that changing the design and language of the messaging is important. According to the respondent, marketers bring out messages and advertisements that are only one-way and not considerate of the feeling of the audience. The respondent further explained that most marketing messaging is not inclusive of the target customers' needs (tastes and preferences) and at times, the language used does not take into consideration the audience's preference for their vernacular language.

Another participant opined that:

"...the time and frequency of airing TV and radio adverts has to consider planting seasons and should run for some weeks before, during, and up to the end of the season" (Key Responded 3, FGD).

According to a member of the focus group discussion:

"Repetition of an advertisement has the ability to convince the undecided customers and also cement the message into the minds of the farmers who are used to other products, hence giving them a chance to try out new ideas from what they may be used to..." (Key Responded 4, FGD).

4.3 Effectiveness of Various Marketing Communication Strategies

The participants were asked to give their views on how they thought various communication media were effective in their area. They were asked to give their rankings on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very effective and 1 being least effective. The statistical tabulation of the responses was computed with a view of getting the central tendency for each communication strategy.

Analysed data indicated that radio is the most effective marketing platform, which commanded about 30% of the responses. Radio comes out to be one of the most effective medium (in terms of mass coverage and accesses) of communication amongst the farmers. It has a way of captivating the audience through the enacted skits and dramatized advertisements. While new media is less interactive and little ineffective to those that cannot access new media platforms such as Twitter and marketing social media pages on Facebook. An FGD participant claimed that:

“Listenership behaviours studies by one of the leading media houses in Kenya reveals that most farmers have access to radio and have listening timetables for listening to talk-shows on agriculture” Key Responded 5, FGD.

For this respondent, radio comes out to be more effective as compared to social media. FGD responses further noted that radio has a wider coverage especially with the liberalization of the airwaves. Radio has the ability to reach almost all ages, educational background, social economic status and residence.

Interpersonal communication (including Government officers/Opinion leaders/AEOs) ranked highest at 25%. The use of SMS was second at 23%. In a related study dubbed, “Digital Marketing Communication from the Perspective of Individual Consumers: A Cross-Country Comparison” by Bartosik-Purgat, (2019) brought about findings that coincide with those of the current study.

Even though it was an explorative study targeting quite a higher number of cases conducted in China, Poland, Turkey, the United States; the results agree with this research that there is a higher number of farmers who prefer the use of SMS for accessing agricultural content. Bartosik-Purgat’s study also established that discounts and information about farm inputs, adverts presented by companies on SMS, as well as information about company events contributed to the high liking for SMS as a communication platform (Bartosik-Purgat, 2019).

Other communication media including TV at 7%, WhatsApp (5%), Facebook (4%), newspapers (3.6%), twitter (2%) and emailing (0.4%) all scored below 20 responses in their favour. From the outcomes, it emerged that radio was the most effective medium of marketing communication with 78 (30%) responses. This was supported by the sentiments of a key informant who was in support of the critical role played by radio in disseminating information on agricultural innovation. The respondent stated as follows:

“...in my opinion, I think that local radio stations are the most impactful platforms for the rural farmers when it comes to sensitization about new products and agricultural information. The rural farmers greatly consume radio content as compared to television, newspapers, and even social media. You are likely to get them listening to radio shows especially talk shows in the morning and evening before work even during working time on the farm. Some farmers have set dates and timetables for listening to radio talk shows on agriculture” (Key Respondent 6, FGD).

Another key informant said:

“Social media on the other hand, is somewhat useful when the marketer wants to reach out to those who act as opinion-makers as well as those who are the opinion shapers on matters agriculture in a given area. “...in my opinion, radio listeners are many and are very intentional in their choices of the radio station and programming and in most cases, they consume that which they want. If they don’t want, they will immediately change the station in search of a programme that they want” (Key Respondent 7, FGD).

Discussing radio talk shows, Armstrong and Rubin (1989) as well as Ruggiero (2000) note that individuals who actively participated by calling in perceived talk radio are more significant to them. Moreover, these participants tended to listen for more hours each day compared to those who did not engage through calls. In the context of the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) proposed by Katz et al. (1973), which suggests that audiences use media to fulfill specific needs, it is observed that if individuals find that a particular media platform, such as radio, does not meet their needs, they are likely to switch off or change stations. This underscores the importance of tailoring media content to audience preferences and needs.

Interestingly, some participants expressed a preference for print media, stating that newsprint outlets like magazines and newspaper pull-outs, such as *Seeds of Gold*, are highly educative and cover a wide range of topics in an



informative manner. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Farooq et al. (2020) who argue that print media is the main source of agricultural information of farmers.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that all participants are aware of and utilize several platforms for information on agriculture that include; AEOs, agriculture-based organizations, radio, television, short message services, social media, and public barazas (civic meetings). The findings indicate that marketing communication platforms that are most relied upon by farmers to access information on agriculture include both traditional and new media platforms. Whilst social media stands out among elite audiences, the use of radio, TV, SMS, interpersonal communication, and public *barazas* were still effective communication channels of sharing information on agriculture.

Finally, this study established that the participants have access to multiple channels through which they are informed on issues about agriculture. The synergy in integrated marketing communication strategies is working well which is increasingly in the promotional tools of the modern channels that have the ability to disseminate messages quickly, effectively and cover a wider geographical area (Porcu et al., 2012).

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, this study makes the following recommendations:

The County Government of Kakamega and marketers of farm inputs should adopt communication media that resonate well with the locals/residents especially on popular Radio and Television channels so as to increase accessibility of agricultural information.

The County Government as well as marketers should make use of integrated communication platforms that meet regional needs. The study advocates for platforms that address specific needs of every region depending on the prevailing environmental conditions such as type of farming activities, demographics and other social economic considerations. This will encourage development and dissemination of content that targets farmers with specificity and accurately address the farmers' needs.

Enhance collaborations among Agricultural Extension Officers, Administrators, other field officers, and vibrant agricultural organizations such as One-Acre Fund to boost uptake of farm inputs.

From the study, it is evident that most of the population in Kakamega County (74%) is literate. With this in mind, the government should make good use of social media, which is less costly in addition to the widely acceptable platforms such as the use of AEOs, Radio and Television that are mostly relied upon by farmers to access agricultural information.

It is notable that most farmers received information on farm inputs before the planting season, which greatly contributed to the high uptake of farm inputs and an affirmation that timing is key in marketing. The study recommends continuous provision of agriculture information to the residents with more emphasis on the period preceding the planting season.

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