

MESSAGE UTILIZATION BEHAVIOUR OF FARM WOMEN**Sonia Bhandal¹ and Sukhdeep Kaur Mann²**

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ABSTRACT

The role of mass media in disseminating valuable information to users through diverse sources and channels is crucial for introducing new technology and fostering awareness and changes in the attitudes of farmers and farm women. Although print media is the oldest form of media, it remains popular among rural populations as it educates and informs them about new technologies. Studies indicate that farm women are exposed to media to differing extents, but the frequency of their utilization of media sources varies. Therefore, the present study was conducted to analyze the utilization behaviour of farm women regarding various household and agriculture related messages in print media. A sample of 200 farm women from five agro-climatic zones of Punjab who were readers of selected newspapers and farm magazine were chosen for the research. Information was gathered using a carefully designed and pre-tested interview schedule. The findings revealed that the utilization of messages under the theme of clothing selection, construction, maintenance and storage was highest among all the theme-based categories in case of newspapers. Whereas, in farm magazine, messages regarding food, nutrition and health were most utilized and obtained first rank. Furthermore, the variables such as, age, educational level and land holding of respondents were positively correlated and contributing towards increasing the extent of utilization behaviour.

Keywords: message, utilization behaviour, farm women**INTRODUCTION**

Agricultural knowledge is a fundamental element for rural development, particularly in a country like India where the economy is predominantly dependent on agriculture (Ghanghas *et al.* 2020). Communication and access to information are consistently essential in the agricultural sector (Mishra *et al.* 2020). At regional, national, and international levels, a significant wealth of knowledge and information has been accumulated. However, the effective dissemination of this information to people remains crucial for its practical application (Joshi 2022). As, insufficient access to weather forecasts, agricultural inputs, best practices, and market information has a negative impact on crop yields, thereby affecting farm income adversely (Patel and Vinaya, 2021). It is imperative to provide timely and accessible information to farmers and farm women through various channels, considering that women not only contribute to household activities but also play a vital role in agricultural endeavours.

The role of women in modern society is vast and encompasses both agricultural work and household responsibilities. In order to excel in any profession, it is crucial to possess knowledge and information about the specific field. As the agricultural industry advances, it is increasingly reliant on knowledge and research to improve production and productivity. Researchers consistently generate a wealth of new information aimed at enhancing agricultural practices

and output. As, information on improved farming techniques can improve farm income and household sustainability (Sharma and Kashyap 2014). In this regard communication is an important factor for flow of new technology from extension scientists to formal extension officers / workers to the end-users i.e. farmers, farm women (Singh *et al.* 2020). According to Singh and Singh (2012), Communication behaviour is composite activity of individual as a result of extension and media exposures. Therefore, mass media plays a significant role in spreading information to women involved in farming. Improved communication and information access is related to social and economic development. Despite radio and television having the fastest rates of development in the mass media, print media provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between information rich and information poor (Fazely *et al.* 2023). A large population is still dependant on print media sources such as, newspapers and magazines (Chauhan and Kansal 2014). However, considering the extensive circulation of newspapers and magazines in rural areas, it is expected that in present era too rural masses make utilization of print media. Although, Accessing and utilizing advanced information and technologies are essential due to a beneficial correlation between the heightened dissemination of knowledge and information and the progress (Yeragorla *et al.*, 2021). Research suggests that women in farming communities encounter media to varying degrees, but their utilization frequency of media sources differs (Subhashrao

2014). Thus, a survey of utilization behaviour may give an indication of at what extent the farm women utilize the gathered information in their daily lives.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To analyze the utilization behaviour of farm women
- (2) To elicit the relationship between socio-personal variables and utilization behaviour

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in five agro-climatic zones of Punjab state. Two vernacular newspapers namely, '*Ajit*' and '*Jagbani*' and one farm magazine namely, '*Changi Kheti*' pursued by Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana was selected as print media for the present study. One district from each agro-climatic zone was selected with maximum subscribers of selected newspapers and magazine. In this way, Hoshiarpur from Sub- Mountain undulating zone I, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar from Undulating plain zone II, Ludhiana from Central plain zone III, Ferozepur from Western plain zone IV and Sri Muktsar Sahib from Western zone. From the selected districts, two blocks from each district were selected randomly. From each selected block twenty rural women who belonged to farming families and were subscribers of selected newspapers and farm magazine were selected. Thus, in total 200 farm women constituted the sample for the study. From the selected print media, a list of all the messages related to home science, general awareness and homebased agricultural activities that appeared in '*Ajit*', '*Jagbani*' and '*Changi Kheti*' during the time span of four months was compiled through scrutinizing each print media.

The list prepared for the messages published in the selected print media showed considerable variations. Consequently, it was necessary to group the messages under meaningful themes. For this purpose, the messages were categorized into following six themes:

Categories	Themes
I	Food, nutrition and health
II	Clothing selection, construction, maintenance and storage
III	Household management
IV	Mother and child care and family relationships
V	General awareness
VI	Homebased agricultural activities

In the present study, utilization behaviour refers to the extent of utilization of the message by the respondents in respect to selected messages published in the selected print media. The response was divided into three categories namely, 'utilization of all messages', 'utilization of some

messages' and 'no utilization of any message' with assigned scores 3, 2 and 1 orderly. On the basis of scores respondents were categorized into 'low', 'medium' and 'high' extent of utilization under each theme. Data were collected through personal interview using well-structured interview-schedule. The pre-testing of interview schedule was done on 20 non-sampled farm women outside the locale of the study. Necessary modifications were incorporated in the interview schedule on the basis of the testing. The collected data were then tabulated and statistically analyzed by using Frequencies, Percentages, Weighted Arithmetic Mean, Category Interval Method, Karl Pearson Coefficient of correlation (r) and Multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Message utilization behaviour

The message utilization behaviour of respondents included extent of utilization of messages of newspapers and magazine and category-wise ranking of utilization behaviour in each print media.

Extent of utilization of newspaper messages by the respondents

The data in Table 1 present the extent of utilization of messages of newspapers by the selected respondents. The utilization behaviour was categorized as low, medium and high. It was stated that more than half of the respondents (54.00 %) utilized messages based upon food, nutrition and health at medium level, followed by respondents with low utilization (42.00 %) and respondents with high utilization (4.00 %). Zone-wise data demonstrated that a large percentage (65.00 %) of respondents from agro-climatic zone V utilized food, nutrition and health messages at medium level followed by nearly half (55.00 %) of the respondents of agro-climatic zone II and IV and agro-climatic zone I with 52.5 per cent. Half of the respondents (50.00 %) of the agro-climatic zone III utilized messages at low level of the same category. Whereas, none of the respondent from agro-climatic zone II and V had high level of utilization of food, nutrition and health theme.

In case of clothing selection, construction, maintenance and storage category, majority of the respondents (72.50 %) of agro-climatic zone II had medium level of utilization followed by agro-climatic zone III and IV with similar percentage of respondents (67.50 %), agro-climatic zone I (65.00 %) and agro-climatic zone V (62.50 %). Additionally, same number of respondents (10.00 %) from agro-climatic zone III and IV had high level of utilization of this category. Whereas, not a single respondent of agro-climatic zone II and V had high level of utilization of same category.

(n=200)

Table 1: Extent of utilization of newspaper messages by the respondents

Agro-climatic zones	Theme																	
	Food, Nutrition and Health			Clothing selection, Construction, Maintenance and Storage			Household management			Mother and Child Care and Family Relationships			General Awareness			Homebased agricultural activities		
	Extent of utilization of message																	
	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
Zone I	16	21	3	12	26	2	16	22	2	20	20	-	28	12	-	27	12	1
f (%)	(40.0)	(52.5)	(7.5)	(30.0)	(65.0)	(5.0)	(40.0)	(55.0)	(5.0)	(50.0)	(50.0)		(70.0)	(30.0)		(67.5)	(30.0)	(2.5)
Zone II	18	22	-	11	29	-	16	24	-	22	18	-	33	7	-	33	7	-
f (%)	(45.0)	(55.0)		(27.5)	(72.5)		(40.0)	(60.0)		(55.0)	(45.0)		(82.5)	(17.5)		(82.5)	(17.5)	
Zone III	20	17	3	9	27	4	7	32	1	16	24	-	30	10	-	23	15	2
f (%)	(50.0)	(42.5)	(7.5)	(22.5)	(67.5)	(10.0)	(17.5)	(80.0)	(2.5)	(40.0)	(60.0)		(75.0)	(25.0)		(57.5)	(37.5)	(5.0)
Zone IV	16	22	2	9	27	4	11	27	2	14	26	-	32	8	-	27	12	1
f (%)	(40.0)	(55.0)	(5.0)	(22.5)	(67.5)	(10.0)	(27.5)	(67.5)	(5.0)	(35.0)	(65.0)		(80.0)	(20.0)		(67.5)	(30.0)	(2.5)
Zone V	14	26	-	15	25	-	14	26	-	21	19	-	31	9	-	31	9	-
f (%)	(35.0)	(65.0)		(37.5)	(62.5)		(35.0)	(65.0)		(52.5)	(47.5)		(77.5)	(22.5)		(77.5)	(22.5)	
Overall	84	108	8	56	134	10	64	131	5	93	107	-	154	46	-	141	55	4
f (%)	(42.0)	(54.0)	(4.0)	(28.0)	(67.0)	(5.0)	(32.0)	(65.5)	(2.5)	(46.5)	(53.5)		(77.0)	(23.0)		(70.5)	(27.5)	(2.0)

Score Range-

Theme	Low (L)	Medium (M)	High (H)
Food, Nutrition and Health	13- 21.66	21.67- 30.33	30.34- 39
Clothing selection, Construction, Maintenance and Storage	5- 8.33	8.34- 11.67	11.68- 15
Household management	9- 14	15- 20	21- 27
Mother and Child Care and Family Relationships	8- 13.33	13.34- 18.67	18.68- 24
General Awareness	4-6.66	6.67-9.33	9.34- 12
Homebased agricultural activities	5- 8.33	8.34- 11.67	11.68- 15

Same trend was followed in household management category that neither a single respondent from agro-climatic zone II and V had high level of utilization. Whereas, majority of the respondents of all the agro-climatic zones had medium level of utilization of household management category; agro-climatic zone III (80.00 %), agro-climatic zone IV (67.50 %), agro-climatic zone V (65.00 %) and agro-climatic zone II (60.00 %) and agro-climatic zone I (55.00 %), respectively. Only 2.50 per cent of respondents utilized high level of the messages of household management category.

The zone-wise data further revealed that majority of the respondents of agro-climatic zone V (53.50 %) had medium level of utilization of the messages of mother and child care and family relationships category viz. agro-climatic zone IV (65.00 %) agro-climatic zone III (60.00%), agro-climatic zone I (50.00 %), and agro-climatic zone V (47.50 %) and agro-climatic zone II (45.00%) followed by low utilization with 46.50 per cent. Whereas, not even a single respondent from five agro-climatic zones had high level of utilization of same category.

In the category of general awareness, large proportion of farm women (77.00 %) utilized messages at low level, followed by medium utilization (23.00 %). None of the respondent had high level of utilization. On zone-wise comparison, it was found that the majority (82.5 %) of the respondents of agro-climatic zone II had low level of utilization of this category followed by agro-climatic zone IV (80.00 %) and agro-climatic zone V (77.50 %).

Table 1 further depicts that large percentage of the respondents (70.50 %) utilized low level of messages based upon homebased agricultural activities followed by respondents with medium utilization (27.50 %). Only 2 per cent of the respondents across agro-climatic zones utilized messages regarding homebased agricultural activities at high level. While, comparing agro-climatic zones it was reported that majority of the respondents (82.50 %) from agro-climatic zone II utilized low level of messages of homebased agricultural activities followed by agro-climatic zone V (77.50 %), agro-climatic zone I and IV (67.50 %) and agro-climatic zone III (57.50 %), respectively. However, none of the respondent from agro-climatic zone II and V utilized messages of this category at high level.

Overall, there was least number of respondents from all the agro-climatic zones who had high level of utilization of respective theme category. None of the farm women from agro-climatic zone II and V had high level of utilization.

Extent of utilization of magazine messages by the respondents

The data in Table 2 present the extent of utilization of messages of magazine by the respondents. The utilization behaviour was categorized as low, medium and high. It was stated that 61.00 per cent of the respondents utilized medium level of messages based upon food, nutrition and health, followed by respondents who had low level of utilization (29.00 %) and respondents who had high utilization level (10.00 %). Zone-wise data demonstrated that a large percentage (72.50 %) of respondents from agro-climatic zone II utilized food, nutrition and health messages at medium level followed by agro-climatic zone V (67.50 %), agro-climatic zone IV (65.00 %) and agro-climatic zone I (57.5 %). Whereas, none of the respondent from agro-climatic zone II and V utilized the messages of food, nutrition and health category at high level. The zone-wise data further revealed that majority of the respondents (98.00 %) utilized the message of mother and child care and family relationships at low level viz. agro-climatic zone IV and V (100.0%), agro-climatic zone II and III (97.50 %) and agro-climatic zone I (95.00 %) followed by some messages with 2.00 per cent. Whereas, none of the respondent from any agro-climatic zone had high level of utilization.

In the category of general awareness, none of the respondent of any agro-climatic zone had medium or high level of utilization. However, cent per cent of the respondents had low level of utilization in regards to the messages of general awareness. Table 2 further depicts that majority of the farm women (97.50 %) had low level of utilization of messages based upon homebased agricultural activities. Only 2.50 per cent of the respondents across agro-climatic zones had medium level of utilization. Whereas, none of the respondents from any agro-climatic zone had high level of utilization. While, comparing agro-climatic zones it was reported that cent per cent of the respondents from agro-climatic zone II utilized messages of homebased agricultural activities at low level followed by agro-climatic zone I, agro-climatic zone IV and V with 97.50 per cent. Whereas, none of the respondent from any of the agro-climatic zone had high level of utilization.

It can be concluded that except food, nutrition and health category, none of the respondent from any agro-climatic zone had high level of utilization of messages categories such as mother and child care and family relationships, general awareness and homebased agricultural activities.

Table 2: Extent of utilization of magazine messages by the respondents

(n=200)

Agro-climatic zones	Theme-based categories of magazine											
	Food, Nutrition and Health			Mother and Child Care and Family Relationships			General Awareness			Homebased agricultural activities		
	Extent of utilization of message											
	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	M	H
Zone I f (%)	13 (32.5)	23 (57.5)	4 (10.0)	38 (95.0)	2 (5.0)	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	-
Zone II f (%)	11 (27.5)	29 (72.5)	-	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	40 (100.0)	-	-
Zone III f (%)	17 (42.5)	17 (42.5)	6 (15.0)	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	38 (95.0)	2 (5.0)	-
Zone IV f (%)	4 (10.0)	26 (65.0)	10 (25.0)	40 (100.0)	-	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	-
Zone V f (%)	13 (32.5)	27 (67.5)	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	40 (100.0)	-	-	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	-
Overall f (%)	58 (29.0)	122 (61.0)	20 (10.0)	196 (98.0)	4 (2.0)	-	200 (100.0)	-	-	195 (97.5)	5 (2.5)	-

Score Range-

Theme	Low (L)	Medium (M)	High (H)
Food, Nutrition and Health	4-6	7-9	10-12
Mother and Child Care and Family Relationships	1-1.66	1.67- 2.33	2.34- 3
General Awareness	5- 8.33	8.34- 11.67	11.68- 15
Homebased agricultural activities	2- 3.33	3.34- 4.67	4.68- 6

Category-wise ranking of message utilization in each print media**Table 3: Theme-wise ranking of utilization of messages in newspapers and magazine (n=200)**

Message Categories	Print Media			
	Newspaper		Changi Kheti	
	Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank
Food, Nutrition and Health	1.62	3	1.81	1
Clothing selection, Construction, Maintenance and Storage	1.77	1	-	-
Household management	1.70	2	-	-
Mother and Child Care and Family Relationships	1.53	4	1.02	2.5
General Awareness	1.23	6	1.00	4
Homebased agricultural activities	1.31	5	1.02	2.5

Score range: 1-3

Table 3 illustrates that in newspapers, the utilization of messages under the theme of clothing selection, construction, maintenance and storage was highest among all the theme-based categories as this theme secured first rank. This was followed by household management and food, nutrition and health. The utilization of messages related to homebased agricultural activities and general awareness were found to be low as these categories secured fifth and sixth rank respectively.

Furthermore, in farm magazine 'Changi Kheti', messages regarding food, nutrition and health were most utilized and obtained first rank followed by, mother and child care and family relationships, homebased agricultural activities and general awareness theme, respectively. On overall basis, messages regarding general awareness obtained last rank in both the selected print media.

Table 5: Relative contribution of socio-personal variables to utilization behaviour

(n=200)

Socio-personal variables	Regression coefficient	Standard error	Standard regression	't'-value	Significance
Age	0.139	0.012	0.82	11.283**	0.000
Educational Level	0.079	0.009	0.50	8.328**	0.000
Size of family	0.058	0.020	0.17	2.889**	0.004
Annual income of the family	0.206	0.039	0.30	5.258**	0.000
** Significant at the 0.01 level					

Relationship of socio-personal characteristics with utilization behaviour**Table 4: Relationship of socio-personal variables with utilization behaviour (n=200)**

Variables	Age	Educational Level	Land Holding
Utilization behaviour	0.309**	0.374**	0.149*
** Significant at the 0.01 level			
* Significant at the 0.05 level			

Table 4 specifies that socio-personal variables such as age, educational level and land holding were positively correlated with utilization behaviour. These relationships were also resulted as statistically significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. It can be concluded from the results that with the growth of in socio-personal variables i.e., age, educational level and land holding, the utilization behaviour of the respondents increases with respect to selected print media.

The findings partially supports the findings of Biam et al (2022), Panda et al (2022), Choudhary et al (2022).

Relative contribution of socio-personal variables to utilization behaviour

The data in Table 5 explain that variables such as age, educational level, family size and annual income of the family were found to be contributing towards utilization behaviour of the messages in the selected print media. The absolute per unit contribution of age, educational level, family size and annual income of the family were 0.82, 0.50, 0.17 and 0.30 respectively. However, total contribution is around 17 per cent which indicated that these were the major variables responsible for variation in utilizing the various types of household messages. The findings partially support the findings of Biam et al (2022) and Panda et al (2022).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the farm women exhibited keen interest in the messages pertaining to the household chores in contrast to messages related to homebased agricultural activities. Hence, it is imperative for the authors to present homebased agricultural messages which are authentic, relevant and interesting so that farm women may read and utilize them. The focus of farm magazine 'Changi Kheti' is on household messages in December issue every year. However, it was found that information related to 'Clothing selection, construction, maintenance and storage' and 'Household management' was completely missing in the selected issue and therefore, all the sub areas of home science should be incorporated in this issue. Additionally, the communication planners should provide the information in such a manner that the farm women continue to utilize the same equally.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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