Original Research Article

STUDY ON INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF AMONG THE FARMERS OF DIFFERENT CROPPING SYSTEM OF TAMIL NADU

Abstract

Information seeking behaviour refers to the orientation of individuals in finding the different information sources and using the availed information in various circumstances. It also includes information retrieval, with its main focus is on understanding the need to seek information and process of using it. The present study deals with the information seeking behaviour of farmers of different cropping systems. The study used an ex-post facto research design. Ex-post facto research is an organised empirical study in which the researcher has no direct influence over the independent variables. A sample size of 300 was selected for the study. Information seeking behaviour was calculated by using a scale consisting of three subheads i.e., personal localite sources, personal cosmopolite sources and impersonal cosmopolite sources. It could be concluded from the findings that slightly above two-third of the farmers (67.00 per cent) had medium level of information seeking behaviour, less than one-fifth of the farmers (17.33 per cent) and only little amount of the farmers (15.67 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour. The study helps the various development departments related to agriculture and rural development to make relevant policies in suitable communication models.

Keywords: *Information Seeking Behaviour, Cropping System, Personal Localite, Personal Cosmopolite, Impersonal Cosmopolite*

Introduction

The cropping system may be defined as the type and order of crops cultivated over time on a certain area of land. It could involve cultivating a single crop on the same land each year or rotating various crops in a regular sequence. In Tamil Nadu majorly three types of cropping systems were found. They were Dry land cropping system, Garden land cropping system and Wet land cropping system. Dry land cropping system was characterized by rainfed areas where sufficient water resources were not available and majorly rainfed crops like millets were grown. Garden land cropping system was characterized by areas irrigated by canals and wells. Plantation crops were majorly grown here. Wet land cropping system incudes areas characterized by ample rainfall and sufficient irrigation sources throughout the

year. The crops that require larger quantities of water will be grown here. The present study deals with the information seeking behaviour of farmers of different cropping systems. Information seeking behaviour refers to how individuals find and use information in various circumstances. It may also cover information retrieval, but its main focus is on understanding why individuals look for information and how they use it. Thomas D. Wilson first used the term "information behaviour" in 1981. Wilson's model of information behaviour is frequently used in information behaviour literature, and the phrase has since become widely accepted. Information behaviour, according to Wilson's definition from 2000, is "the entirety of human behaviour in respect to sources and channels of information." In this study information seeking behaviour of farmers belonging to different cropping system identified.

Materials and methods

The study used an ex-post facto research design. Ex-post facto research is an organised empirical study in which the researcher has no direct influence over the independent variables. There are three major cropping systems in Tamil Nadu, Viz., wetland, garden land and dry land cropping systems. From each cropping system, one major district will be identified based on the criteria of maximum area under major crops. Accordingly, the districts Viz., Villupuram (wetland system), Dharmapuri (dry land system) and Krishnagiri (garden land system) was purposively selected as per the major crops Rice, Sorghum and Mango respectively for the study. Based on the same criteria, Gingee block from Villupuram, Dharmapuri Block from Dharmapuri district and Kaveripattinam block from Krishnagiri was selected for the study. Four villages from each block were selected. Thus, a total of 12 prominent villages was covered for this study. A sample size of 300 was selected for the study. From each district 100 respondents were selected**.**

Information seeking behavior was operationalized as the respondent’s frequency of contact with various sources of information pertinent to agricultural and allied activities. It was calculated by using a scale consisting of three subheads i.e., personal localite sources, personal cosmopolite sources and impersonal cosmopolite sources. Personal localite sources refers to the local residents who serve as best source of information in the close proximity. Personal cosmopolite sources refer to the individuals working in various institutions and not necessarily to be the local resident. Impersonal cosmopolite refers to the electronic and non-

electronic media tools that helps the individuals to get information widely. The behaviour was measured as 'Always', 'Occasionally' and 'Never' and was scored as 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The data was collected in personal interview mode.

Results and discussion:

The collected data was tabulated, analysed using appropriate statistical techniques and results were discussed below**.**

Based on the mean scores obtained by each source they were ranked and presented in Table 1

Table 1 Information seeking behaviour of respondents over different sources

S. No.	Particulars	Mean score	Rank
I	**Personal Localite Sources**		
1	Friends	2.673	First
2	Relatives	1.410	Third
3	Neighbours	1.890	Second
II	**Personal Cosmopolite Sources**		
1	AAO/AO/ADA	2.023	Second
2	Agricultural scientists	1.980	Third
3	Bank officials	2.030	First
4	Extension personnel of other development departments	1.930	Fourth
5	KVK personnel	1.916	Fifth
6	Personnel of NGOs	1.853	Sixth
III	**Impersonal Cosmopolite Sources**		
1	Radio	2.027	Sixth
2	TV	2.450	First
3	Newspaper/ magazines	2.280	Third
4	Folders/ Leaflets/ Pamphlets	2.187	Fourth
5	Meetings/ Discussions	2.363	Second
6	Trainings/ Campaigns	2.160	Fifth
7	Website/ e-journals	1.940	Seventh

A glance at the Table 1 depicted that among personal localite sources, friends occupied first rank followed by neighbours with mean score of 2.673 and 1.890 respectively. This might be due to the reason that friends and neighbours were easily accessible to the respondents. Among the personal cosmopolite sources bank officials occupied first rank followed by AAO/AO/ADA with mean score of 2.030 and 2.023 respectively. The respondents always seek information related to crop insurance and crop loans from the bank personnel followed by crop related cultivation advices from Agricultural Department officials. Among the impersonal cosmopolite sources television occupied first rank followed by meetings/ discussions with mean score of 2.450 and 2.363 respectively. Television being a part and parcel of every household in the present generation serves the best source to seek information by the respondents.

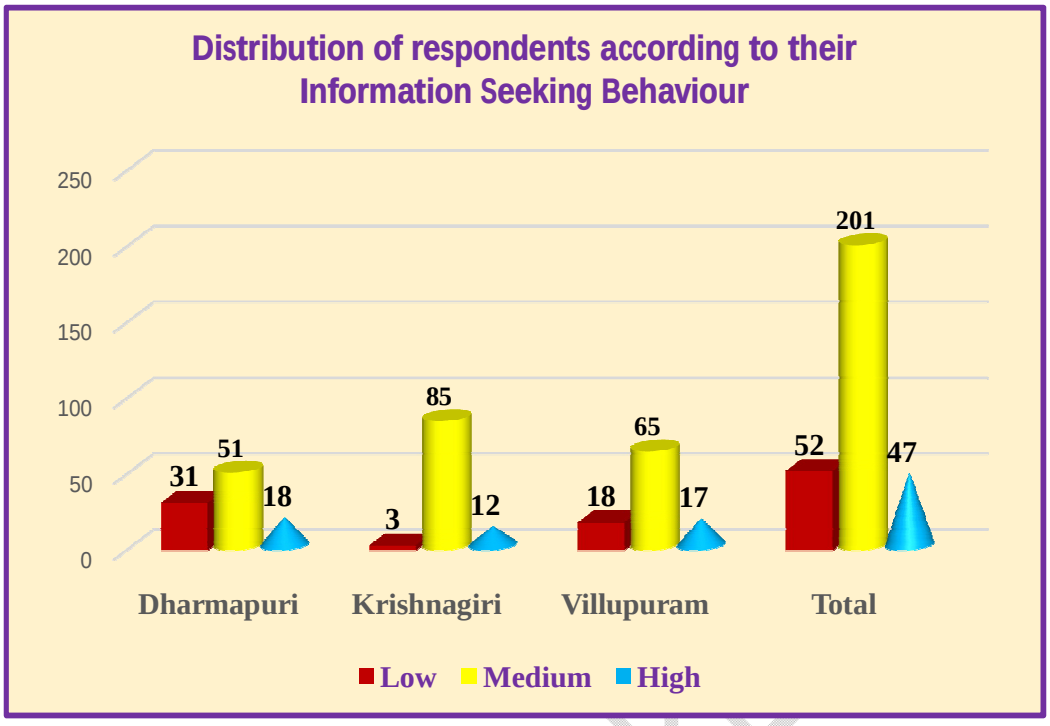
Based on the overall score obtained by a respondent in Information Seeking Behaviour the respondents were categorized into low, medium and high categories according to their mean and standard deviation. The results were furnished in Table 2 and graphically represented in Figure 1

Table 2 Distribution of respondents according to their Information Seeking Behaviour (n=300)

S. No	Category	Dharmapuri district	Krishnagiri district	Villupuram district	Total	
					n	%
1.	Low	31	3	18	52	17.33
2.	Medium	51	85	65	201	67.00
3.	High	18	12	17	47	15.67
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**300**	**100.00**

n-frequency; %-percentage

Figure 1 Distribution of respondents according to their Information Seeking Behaviour



The perusal of the above table and figure revealed that above half of the respondents in all the districts belonged to medium category of information seeking behaviour. The overall information seeking behaviour of all the respondents in all the district of three cropping systems depicted that slightly above two-third of the farmers (67.00 per cent) had medium level of information seeking behaviour, less than one-fifth of the farmers (17.33 per cent) and only little amount of the farmers (15.67 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour. This might be due to the reason that the respondents were not aware of all the information sources available and they were not seeking diversified information required from these sources. The extension agencies could take efforts to increase the awareness and information seeking behaviour among the farmers of all the cropping systems.

Conclusion

The results indicated that slightly above two-third of the farmers (67.00 per cent) had medium level of information seeking behaviour, less than one-fifth of the farmers (17.33 per cent) and only little amount of the farmers (15.67 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour. It shows that still a significant amount of farmers' information seeking behaviour need to be enhanced to improve their socio-economic conditions. It helps the various development departments related to agriculture and rural development to make relevant policies in suitable communication models.

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