

## PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION USED BY CROP FARMERS IN INI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceived effectiveness of traditional media of communication used by crop farmers in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The objective that guided this study was to determine whether crop farmers in Ini Local Government still utilize the various channels of traditional media of communication available to them in gathering and disseminating agricultural information to bring about optimal agricultural productivity. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 120 respondents. In this study, it was found out that traditional channels such as town Crier, signs and symbolic displays and traditional institutions were still actively being used in the dissemination of agricultural messages; whereas the town crier remained the most popular channel, traditional institution remained the least utilized channel. It also found out that lack of feedback challenges the use of traditional media by the farmers as information at most times flow in a downward trend making it difficult for them to also share their numerous challenges through the available traditional media channels. Traditional communication channels are still very effective in the study area. The study therefore recommended a modification of the traditional media as well as its frequent use to convey social change and agricultural messages to rural farmers as they rarely have access to modern media of communication due to high level of poverty and illiteracy.

**KEY WORDS:** Communication, Dissemination, Farmers, Media,  
Traditional.

### Introduction

In the distant past, people that lived as families and clans in villages and towns communicated among themselves. From Stone Age up to the present computer generation, communication has been the tool with which to interact and sustain individuals and societies in general. According to Ottah and Umar (2017), no people ever survived without communication; though the process and technicalities involved might differ, but every group of people that lived had a mode of communication and had continued to improve upon it. Furthermore, Bittner (1989) cited in Ottah and Umar (2017), aptly described the things that ensured society's survival and the central role of communication among all the elements thus: Society's survival depended on a number of things, among them a

system of communication through which people could exchange symbols and thus propagate learning at an accelerated rate.

African communities devised means to carry out their daily businesses through their own unique communication media—Traditional Media. The traditional media system is principally an oral process that makes effective use of the human auditory system (Ukonu & Wogu, 2008). The devices ranged from man-made equipment to those converted to use from peculiar to the Black nation (Ottah, 2016). Before the invention of the modern media of mass communication such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, films, books, journals and even the internet, societies that existed had their ways and forms of communication. Smyth (1954) in Mc Quail (1972, p.25) holds that, before the printing press, the electronic age and the age of film (video), communication was by face to face, whether for ordinary human relationship (conversation), entertainment or news delivery.

However, modern day agriculture operates in a complex and dynamic environment subject to a number of social, economic and environmental factors. Thus, for Agricultural development to thrive, Prathap and Ponnusamy (2006) noted that knowledge and information on important farm technologies, methods and practices need to be imparted to the farmer at the right time. In line with this, Adoyo (2004) saw communication as a key process in information dissemination in agriculture.

The role of traditional media has also been very significant in rural development since the turn of the century. Ekere and Ufot (2017), affirming this, note that with the advent of new media, the forms and ways of communication had become more specialized with every human society developing its traditional modes and channels of communication which characterized its existence, organization and development.

The survival of the traditional media in spite for the glamour of the new media is as a result of its various uses by the broad spectrum of the society (Nwachukwu, 2014). For example, in spite of availability of radio and TV, town criers are still being used to disseminate information within our rural and urban communities. This according to him is so because the town crier is a widely acceptable source of news and information within a community. More so, the town crier also serves as a major social and cultural facilitator helping to form attitudes, values and develop a climate of change.

Akinbile (2010) and Wilson (2005) note that sensitive information in African context is never passed in a straight forward manner but through songs, dances, drum, town crier, emissaries, festivals, bush or wood fire, smoke ashes, colour of clothing, tales and proverbs, gunshots, animals, birds and insects, grass, knots, fresh leaves knots, hair looks, tribal marks, wood carvings, legends and myths. All these according to them, are the creations of human interactions, consensus and conflicts. They are made norms, given values and mystified by the indigenous and traditional channels of interpersonal and group communication, mostly based on

age, kinship, gender, inheritance and marital status and with authority patterns embedded in the social structure and organization of the society. These and many more functions of the traditional media Ufot (2015) said have continue to marvel many, questioning the relevance of the African indigenous media, otherwise known as African Traditional folk media in the contemporary world despite the manifestation of Marshal McLuhan's theory of "Global Village".

According to Chiviloni (2004), there are cultural and endogenous responses to different community need for information, education, social protest and entertainment. Thus, Aldrige (2007) cited in Ufot (2015), believes that local media may lack glamour but their importance is beyond doubt. He further observed that in the rural Nigeria,; most people most times, have their everyday information need met by the traditional media and the strength of these media lie in the fact that they are accessible, reliable and culturally rooted as there is nothing like negativity portrayal of the people.

Also, Adedoyin and Adebayo (2005) cited in Ufot (2015) agreed that, in many developing countries of which the study area can be classified, too little attention is paid to the understanding of farm-level realities. Thus, behaviours and motives cold be attained by developing a sense of mutual trust and openness through correcting distortions in communication by way of constructive feedback; obviously, the traditional media is the right choice of media to carry messages to the rural community for the purpose and process of change and development (Stichele, 2000).

Traditional pattern of communication and social interaction in Africa are those ways of passing messages which are original to the African people as opposed to the modern communication methods (Kombol, 2002). Traditional media is interactive and participatory (Adoyo, 2004). For instance, drama as a traditional means of information allows different possible ending by encouraging audience participation which is aimed at changing the behavior of participants of such means of communication (Panelist, 2000; Adoyo, 2004). A symbiotic relationship exists between communication and development. It is in realization of the important role of communication in rural development that the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) recommends that development support Communication should be an integral part of development initiative so that the appropriate medium or media to effectively reach the target population could be specified (Yahaya, 2002).

### **Statement of the Problem**

A greater percentage of the people in Akwa Ibom still live in rural areas; the quest for expression and sharing of information in a beautiful manner becomes imperative (Ufot, 2015). Resource poor farmers may not be able to access information on print and electronic media. According to Igboka and Atinmo (2002), Information/Communication channels in Nigeria such as extension institution have collapsed, leaving no effective communication channels in the

study area. The small number of extension officers that exist aggregate in the urban towns, leaving behind those in the rural areas. The village heads are therefore forced to rise up to the challenge of disseminating information using traditional methods.

There is an urgent need to examine the characteristics of the sources, messages, channels, recipients and feedback involved in the process of communication with rural communities. This will help to see how they can be made more appropriate. For sustainable development of Agriculture, there is a need for close collaboration between development agents and traditional communicators to revive or strengthen the traditional communication system for making optimal use of its interactive power to stimulate people's participation (Ufot, 2015). It is also clear that not all the information required for rural development is available or accessible to the rural dwellers. Majority of the rural farmer dwellers in Ini are resource poor (Agom, *et al.*, 2022) with little or no access to print media. It is on this background that this research work is raised to determine perceived effectiveness of traditional media of communication used by farmers in Ini Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Aim and objectives**

The main of this study was to find out how effective is the use of traditional media of communication by crop farmers in Ini L.G. Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- i) identify the types of traditional media of communication that are still in use in the study area;
- ii) assess the frequency of use of the different types of traditional communication channels in the study area; and
- iii) find out the extent of effectiveness of the channels of communication in the study area.

### **Research Questions**

- i) what are the types of traditional communication channels still in use in the study area?
- ii) what is the frequency of use of the different types of traditional media of communication in the study area? And
- iii) to what extent is the effectiveness of traditional media of communication in the study area?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypothesis (Ho) to be tested is that there is no significant relationship between usage of traditional media of communication and adoption of improved seedlings among crop farmers in Ini L. G. Area.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Area**

The research was carried out in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Ini Local Government Area is located in the South of Nigeria covering the former Ikono Local Government Area and Abia State. It has a land area of 320,451 square kilometers. The people of Ini Local Government Area are members of the Ibibio, Itu Mbon Uso and Nkari languages are spoken. According to 2006 Census, the total population of Ini Local Government Area is 99,196, with 52, 644 male and 46,522 female residents. Natural resources found within Ini include: limestone, clay, gravel, fine sand, crude oil, gold and iron ore. The people of Itu Mbon Uso as the name implies, engage in arts and crafts. The forest region provides timber and firewood.

Ini is known as the food basket of Akwa Ibom State. Due to the expansive land mass, the citizens are predominantly farmers. Ini produces food items like rice, palm produce, cassava, cocoa, plantain and banana. There is potential for agricultural expansion and increased hunting. The study area lies between latitude 4°33<sup>1</sup> and 5°33<sup>1</sup> North; and longitude 7°25<sup>1</sup> and 8°25<sup>1</sup> East.

The local government area is made up of Ikpe clan, Ikono clan, Iwere clan, Nkari Clan, Itu Mbon Uso clan. Nkari, Itu Mbon Uso and Iwerre clan have 10 gazetted and recognized villages each, while Ikpe clan and Ikono clan have 52 and 43 villages gazette and officially recognized villages each, giving a total of 125 recognized villages (source; list of recognized villages and clan, Akwa Ibom State Official Gazete 2006)

### **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

The study made use of simple random sampling technique in choosing villages and respondents. There are 5 clans and 125 recognized villages in the study area. Firstly, 5 clans were selected, followed by 4 villages which were randomly selected from each of the 5 clans. Finally, 6 crop farmers were randomly selected from each of the 4 villages in the clans, to give a total of 120 crop farmers (respondents). The total of 120 respondents constituted the sample size of the study.

### **Analytical Technique**

Descriptive statistics such as means and percentages were used to describe the types of traditional communication channels available in the study area. On the level of usage of traditional media, a 4-point Likert scale type rating scale was used and presented thus; 4=Always, 3=Sometimes, 2=Rarely, 1=Never. The mean weight was calculated to obtain respondents' level of usage of the different traditional media identified. Also, the effectiveness of traditional media was analyzed with the use of a 4-point Likert type rating scale and the scaling presented thus; 4=very effective, 3=effective, 2=slightly effective, 1=not effective.

The mean weight was calculated to ascertain the percentage of the effectiveness of these traditional media.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the types of traditional communication channels that are still in use in Ini Local Government Area. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of the respondent 36(30.0%) who said the traditional communication channels still in use in Ini Local Government Area are combination of town Crier, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Traditional Institutions, while the least number of respondents were 1(0.8%) who affirmed a combination of town Crier, Beating of special drums, Music & Dance, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Folk Tales.

**Table 1 Percentage distribution of the types of traditional communication channels that are still in use in Ini Local Government Area**

Types of traditional communication channels	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Town Crier	20	16.7
Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Music & Dance and Signs & Symbolic Displays	1	0.8
Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Proverbs & Riddles	6	5.0
Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Folk Tales	1	0.8
Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Traditional Institutions	5	4.2
Town Crier, Beating of special drums and Traditional Institutions	3	2.5
Town Crier, Music & Dance and Folk Tales	1	0.8
Town Crier, Music & Dance and Traditional Institutions	4	3.3
Town Crier and Signs & Symbolic Displays	1	0.8
Town Crier, Signs & Symbolic Displays, Proverbs & Riddles and Traditional Institutions	4	3.3
Town Crier, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Traditional Institutions	36	30.0
Town Crier, Proverbs & Riddles and Traditional Institutions	3	2.5
Town Crier and Traditional Institutions	26	21.7
Beating of special drums	4	3.3
Signs & Symbolic Displays	1	0.8

Traditional Institutions	4	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

The frequency of use of the different types of traditional communication channels in Ini Local Government Area is presented in Table 2

**Table 2. Percentage distribution of the frequency of use of the different types of traditional communication channels in Ini Local Government Area**

Media	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Town Crier	111(92.2%)	3(2.5%)	3(2.5%)	2(1.7%)
Beating of special drums	8(6.7%)	27(22.5%)	29(24.2%)	
Music & Dance	47(39.2%)	14(11.7%)	39(32.5%)	20(16.7%)
Signs & Symbolic Displays	7(5.8%)	35(29.2%)	21(17.5%)	1(0.8%)
Proverbs & Riddles	6(5.0%)	30(25.0%)	38(31.7%)	6(5.0%)
Folk Tales	11(9.2%)	19(15.8%)	64(53.3%)	16(13.3%)
Traditional Institutions	3(2.5%)	7(5.8%)	10(8.3%)	25(20.8%)

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

Table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the different types of traditional communication channels in use in Ini Local Government Area. From the result, it was observed that for town crier, the highest percentage of the respondents 119 (99.2%) said town crier is always used while the least 2(1.7%) of them affirm that the media such as town crier is never used. It was also observed that the least frequently used media in the study area was traditional institution, 3(2.5%).

To find out the extent of effectiveness of the channels of communication in Ini Local Government Area. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3 Percentage analysis of the effectiveness of these channels of communication in Ini Local Government Area**

Media	Very Effective	Effective	Slightly Effective	Not Effective
Town Crier	119(99.2%)	17(14.2%)	98(81.7%)	4(3.3%)
Beating of special drums	10(8.3%)	31(25.8%)	22(18.3%)	1(0.8%)

Music & Dance	19(15.8%)	38(31.7%)	15(12.5%)	1(0.8%)
Signs & Symbolic Displays	15(12.5%)	29(24.2%)	18(15.0%)	2(1.7%)
Proverbs & Riddles	27(22.5%)	33(27.5%)	54(45.0%)	6(5.0%)
Folk Tales	11(9.2%)	14(11.7%)	71(59.2%)	13(10.8%)
Traditional Institutions	2(1.7%)	11(9.2%)	45(37.5%)	60(50.0%)

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

Table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the effectiveness of these (Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Music & Dance, Signs & Symbolic Displays, Proverbs & Riddles, Folk Tales and Traditional Institutions) channels of communication in Ini Local Government Area. From the result, it was observed that for town crier, the highest percentage of the respondent 119(99.2%) said town crier was the most effective media of communication used in Ini Local Government Area. However 4(3.3%) of the respondents affirm that this media is not effective. For Beating of special drums, the highest percentage of the respondent 31(25.8%) said effective, while the least 1(0.8%) affirm it not effective. For Music & Dance, the highest percentage of the respondent 38(31.7%) said effective, while the least 1(0.8%) said not effective. For Signs & Symbolic Displays, the highest percentage of the respondent 29(24.2%) said effective, while the least 2(1.7%) said not effective. For Proverbs & Riddles, the highest percentage of the respondent 54(45.0%) said slightly effective, while the least 6(5.0%) affirm it not effective. For Folk Tales, the highest percentage of respondent 71(59.2%) said slightly effective, while the least 11(9.2%) affirm it very effective. For Traditional Institutions, the highest percentage of the respondent 60(50.0%) affirm it not effective, while the least 2(1.7%) affirm it very effective. However, it was concluded the most effective channel of communication in Ini Local Government Area was Proverbs & Riddles 60(50.0%).

### Hypotheses testing

The null hypothesis states that there is significant influence of level of usage of the traditional media on the effectiveness of the media. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression was used to analyze the data, (see table 4).

**Table 4**

### Simple regression of the influence of usage of the traditional media on the effectiveness of the media

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.59 <sup>a</sup>	0.35	0.3	4.3	0.35

**\*Significant at 0.05 level; df =118; N =120; critical r-value = 0.197**

The Table shows that the calculated R-value 0.59 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.5 alpha level with 118 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.35 predicts 635% of relationship between socioeconomic characteristic and level of usage of traditional media.

This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of usage of the traditional media on the effectiveness of the media.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Finding of this study in Table 1 revealed that the highest percentage of the respondent 27(22.5%) affirmed that the various indigenous media in rural development are Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Music & Dance and Signs & Symbolic Displays while the least 1(0.8%) were respondents who mentioned Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Signs & Symbolic Displays, Proverbs & Riddles, Traditional Institutions, Music & Dance and Folk Tales. The result of the findings was therefore in agreement with the research definition of traditional communication given by Ottah and Umar (2017), which defines it as the process of disseminating information, ideas, and attitudes by certain specialized institutions set up for that purpose. It focuses on the exchange of information or messages that have traditional undertones. Thus, traditional modes of communication therefore means the ways Africans communicated among themselves, their societal *modus operandi*, the benefits of their cultural communication and how the process evolved to the present age from years back.

Finding of this study in Table 2 revealed that the highest percentage of the respondent 36(30.0%) who said the traditional communication channels still in use in Ini Local Government Area are Town Crier, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Traditional Institutions, while the least number of respondents were 1(0.8%) who said Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Music & Dance, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Folk Tales. This was in agreement with the opinion of Citing (Dede 1997, p.5), Ottah and Umar (2017), who states that Africa's traditional modes of communication form the interplay or synthesis of the traditional customs or conflicts of a community, its harmony and discord, its cultural affinities and disparities as well as its culture-specific values and practices. These traditional modes basically include oral tradition, such as mythology, interpersonal relations or interactions, symbols, symbols, signs, oral literature, etc.

Finding of this study in Table 3 revealed that most effective channel of communication in Ini Local Government Area was town criers 119(99.2%). The findings was in agreement with the opinion of Wilson (1997) in Ottah and Umar (2017), which they believes that traditional modes of communication are employed in predominantly traditional and rural societies. Although the modern media of mass communication appear to have replaced the traditional media, the fact remains that different parts of Africa still employ various aspects of the traditional media in their daily living.

The result of the data analysis in Table 4 which sought to find the influence of level of usage of the different channels of traditional media on the extent of effectiveness of the media was significant due to the fact that the obtained R-value (0.59) was greater than the critical r-value (0.197) at 0.05 level with 118 degree of freedom. This result implies that there is significant influence of level of usage of the different channels of traditional media on the extent of effectiveness of the media in Ini Local Government Area. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternate was retained.

### **Conclusion**

It is very obvious that in Ini Local Government Area various communication media are still in use. They use these media often to pass messages to their fellow indigenes and other people that reside the local government area. As it is, some media of communication become more useful to them than others such that Proverbs & Riddles become the most prominent available media of communication in the area under review. Also the most common and utilized media of communication in Ini Local Government Area are Town Crier, Beating of special drums, Signs & Symbolic Displays and Traditional Institutions. Socio economic characteristics of the people of Ini Local Government Area have significant influence on their level of usage of the above channels of traditional media. Finally, in Ini Local Government Area, their level of usage of the different channels of traditional media has significant influence on the extent of effectiveness of the media.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

- (i) Traditional media as well as its frequent use to convey social change and agricultural messages to rural farmers as they rarely have access to modern media of communication due to high level of poverty and illiteracy.
- (ii) Town crier is the most effective and frequently used traditional media of communication in the study area. The town crier should be motivated by way of incentives to encourage them to happily do their work.
- (iii) The Government through the Ministry of Information and Culture should encourage and improve the use of Traditional Communication by organizing regular workshops and seminar for the training of stakeholders in Indigenous Media operations.

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