Prominence of Agricultural Information in Print Media: A Content Analysis of Selected Nigerian Newspapers
https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jae.v27i2.8

Arigbo, Precious Obinna
Corresponding author
Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria
Email: precious.arigbo@unn.edu.ng
Phone no: +2347038788969
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4868-8046

Adeogun,Taiwo Foluke
Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria Nsukka
Email: adeogun.taiwo@unn.edu.ng
Phone: +2348037717797

Agwu, Ekwe Agwu
Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria
Email:; ekwe.agwu@unn.edu.ng;
Phone: +234 803 402 4251
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6842-0955

Abstract

This study adopted a content analysis to describe the prominence given to agricultural information in print media using four selected Newspapers. Specifically, the study determined the space allotted; the number; and prominence given to agricultural information in Nigerian newspapers. Stratified and purposive sampling procedures were used to select a sample of 384 editions of newspapers for analysis. Data were collected from hard copies of the selected Newspapers and were analysed using percentages, Kruskal Wallis (H) test and Pearson Product Moment correlation. Findings revealed that a total of 102,317.57cm^2 space was allotted to agricultural information out of which 41% was used by the Guardian Newspaper. Only 398 pieces of agricultural information were reported out of a total of 29,666 pieces of information reported. There were significant differences across the newspapers in the number and space allotted to agricultural information and there was a positive and significant correlation (r=0.794) between the space allotted to agricultural information and the number of agricultural information reported. The majority (86.6%) of the agricultural

information were reported on other pages of Newspapers. The study recommended that agricultural information should be reported at prominent pages and Ministries and Agencies should advertise their products and services in the newspapers.

Introduction

Agriculture is an important sector of the Nigerian economy. It has a high potential as source of raw materials, food security, poverty reduction and for employment generation (Olagunje, Onyegbula, Olagunju & Oyegbile, 2019). The contribution of the agricultural sector to the Nigerian economy is about 29.67 per cent of the GDP in the third quarter of 2022 (NBS, 2022).

Despite these contributions, agricultural development in Nigeria is faced with many challenges like the inability of farmers and other stakeholders to access reliable and timely agricultural information (Othman, 2019). To forestall this anomaly, accurate agricultural information becomes paramount. According to Ejeh, Okwu, Obinne & Ejembi, (2018), the contributions of agriculture towards economic development can only be effective if stakeholders are in touch with the latest and efficient production methods (information) that will enhance production and profitability. This assertion underscores the need for agricultural information.

Access to reliable and timely agricultural information enhances the performance of farmers and other agricultural stakeholders (Ogessa & Sife, 2018). Technological and other agricultural information can only be beneficial until they are properly disseminated to the intended end users. To accomplish this requires the use of different channels of information dissemination.

The traditional approach of disseminating agricultural information through face to face contacts by extension agents has experienced several shortcomings in many developing countries like Nigeria (Ogessa & Sife, 2018). Some of these shortcomings include inability of the extension agents to reach all the stakeholders with the needed information within a specified period of time. To address this shortcoming, there is need for a more efficient and faster means of communication that will reach majority of agricultural stakeholders at the same time. This calls for the use of other communication channels such as the mass media to enhance the dissemination and sharing of agricultural information.

Mass media channels in agricultural information dissemination are generally essential and effective in reaching a large number of audiences in a very short time. They are very important sources of agricultural information for farmers, and they also constitute a method of notifying farmers of new developments (Shaikh, 2020; Donye, 2018). Among the various mass media channels, Print media plays an important role in the dissemination of agricultural information (Akhter, 2021). In print media, newspaper plays unique role of providing up-to-date information on local, state, national and world issues. They are among the most widely read periodicals that are available and accessible to the vast majority of people of all ages and walks of life in the community. Newspapers are very important in inducing the public to change attitudes, become more aware, increase knowledge and skills, and learn about different topics including those in agriculture. This is because newspapers can be read and re-read at convenience, thus, allowing for a fuller and better understanding of mass media content (Delahunt-Smoleniec & Smith-Mery, 2020)

Considering the critical role of agriculture in the development of the economy and the advantages of newspapers as compared to other channels of information, it is expected that newspapers should give high prominence in reporting agriculture agricultural information. This study sought to analyse the prominence given to agricultural information using selected Nigerian newspapers (Vanguard, The Nation, Sun and Guardian newspapers) covering a period of two years (2017-2018). Specifically, the study:

1. ascertained the of space allotted to agricultural information;
2. ascertained the number of agricultural information reported in the selected Nigeria newspapers; and
3. determined the prominence given to agricultural information in the selected Nigerian newspapers.

The hypotheses of the study stated in the null form are:

$H0_1$: there is no significant difference in the space allotted to agricultural information among the selected newspapers.

$H0_2$: there is no significant difference in the number of agricultural information reported among the selected newspapers.

$H0_3$: there is no significant relationship between the space allotted to agricultural information and the number of agricultural information reported among the selected newspapers.

Methodology

The study adopted a content analysis approach. The population for the study were all the daily newspapers published by the 4 (Vanguard, The Nation, Sun, and the Guardian) selected Newspapers in Nigeria between 2017 and 2018. A total of 2,920 newspapers were published by the 4 selected newspapers in the two years. Stratified and purposive sample procedures were used to select a sample size of 384 newspaper issues. In the first stage, all the copies of the issues of the selected newspaper were divided into four strata; this was done on the bases of the four weeks of the month

1. 1st to 7th of every month,

2. 8th to 14th of every month,

3. 15th to 21st of every month,

4. 22nd to the end of every month.

In the second stage, a purposive selection of one (1) issue of the newspaper was selected from each stratum, making a total of four (4) newspapers issues per publisher per month. The total sample now was (4 newspapers x12 months x 4 publishers x 2 years =384). The purposive sampling was to ensure that the dates sampled for each month for the publications were deliberately made similar. Data were collected from hard copies of the publications of the selected dailies. The dates sampled for each month for the publications were deliberately made similar. Data were collected from hard copies of the publications of the selected dailies from the

University of Nigeria Library. The space allotted to agricultural information was measured by mapping out the dimension of the newspaper used for agricultural information in square centimetres. The dimensions were measured with a tape and multiplied to give the area of space allocated. The number of agricultural information reported was measured by counting the pieces of agricultural related articles in the selected newspapers. While the prominence was measured by counting the number of times that agricultural issues featured on the front, middle and back pages of newspapers. These pages are referred to as the prominent pages of the newspapers. Data generated were presented using frequency and percentages, hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using Kruskal-Wallis (H) test while hypothesis 3 was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)

Results and Discussion

Space Allotted to Agricultural Information

Figure 1 shows that the total space allocated to agricultural information was 102,315.57cm^2., The Guardian newspaper allocated the largest space (42,173.86cm^2) , which is 41% of agricultural issues compared to other newspapers. The smallest space (8,275.72cm^2) allocated to agricultural information was by Vanguard newspaper. This accounts for 8% of the total area of space used by the four selected newspapers in reporting agricultural information. The Guardian newspaper published more agricultural information in number and details than others. Farmers and agricultural stakeholders seeking information from newspapers are more likely to subscribe to the Guardian newspaper than other newspapers. This corroborates the result of Ogunlade et al (2020) that the Guardian Newspaper allocated more space than other newspapers in their findings on coverage and content analysis of agricultural transformation agenda news in selected newspapers in Nigeria.
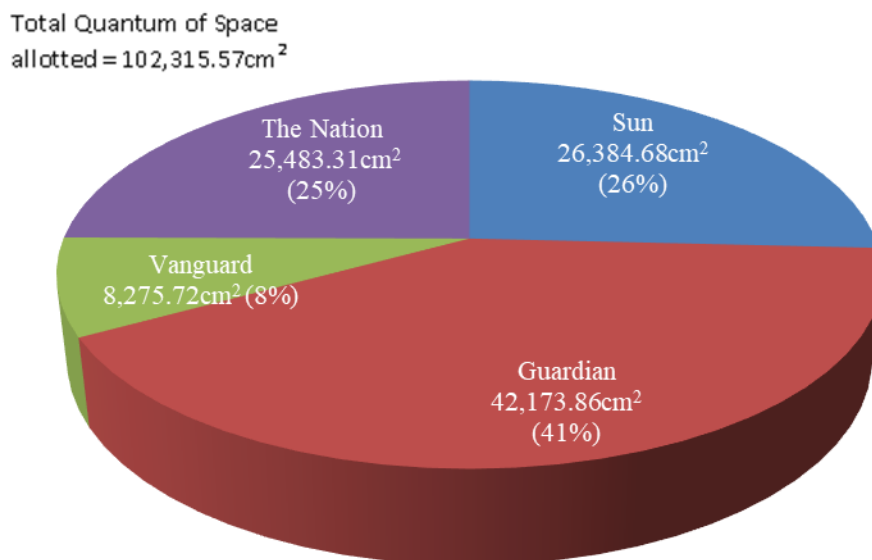
Figure 1: Space allocated to agricultural information

Difference in the Space Allotted to Agricultural Information

 The Kruskal-Wallis H-test in Table 1 reveals that there was a statistically significant difference in the space allocated to agricultural information across the selected newspapers $X^2(3) = 17.359$ $P= 0.001$ with a mean rank score of 51.83 for the Sun, 61.00 for the Guardian, 29.04 for the Vanguard and 52.13 for the Nation Newspaper. This finding implies that the newspapers differ significantly in the space allotment to agricultural information.   This finding is in contrast with the report of Ejeh, et al (2018), who observed that there is no significant difference in the of space allotment provided for agricultural information in the Nigerian newspapers.

Table 1: Difference in space allotted to newspapers

Newspapers	Mean Rank	X^2	Df
Sun	51.83	17.359*	3
Guardian	61.00		
Vanguard	29.04		
The Nation	52.13		

* Significant at 0.001

Number of Agricultural Information Reported

Figure 2 shows the number of agricultural information reported in the newspapers. A total of 29,666 pieces of information were reported in the selected newspapers. Out of this number, only 398 pieces of agricultural information were reported. This number is less than 2% of the total pieces of information reported by the newspapers. Compared to none agricultural related information reported by the newspapers, the ratio of reporting agricultural information to none agricultural information is 1:75, meaning that for every 75 pieces of other information reported in the newspapers, only one piece of agricultural information is reported. This result further illustrates the low prominence and importance attached to agricultural information by newspaper publishers. This shows that the newspaper is not seen and used as a major means of agricultural information dissemination.
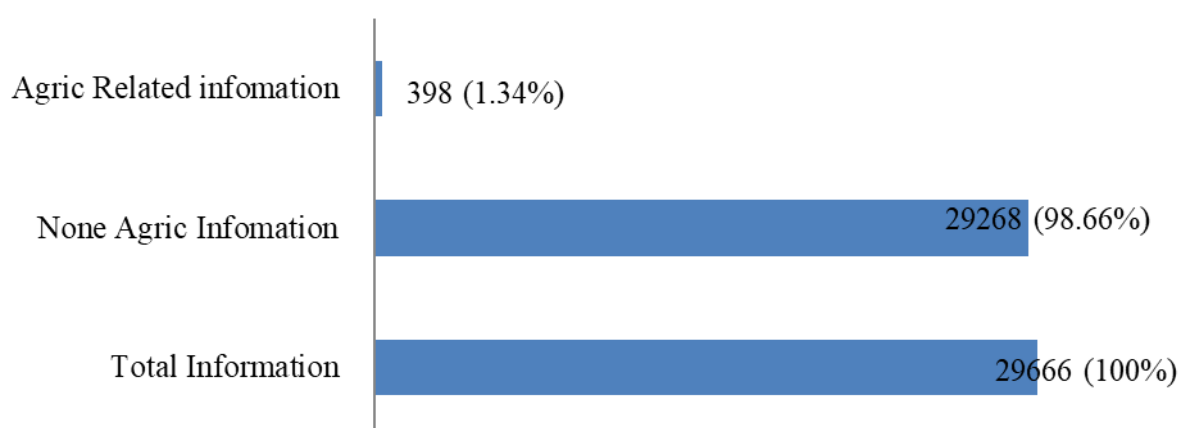
Figure 2: Number of agricultural information reported

Difference in the Number of Agricultural Information

Table 2 shows the difference in the number of agricultural information reported. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of agricultural information reported across the selected newspapers. $X^2(3)$ =16.0 P=0.001 with a mean rank score of 53.83 for the Sun, 59.88 for the Guardian, 29.83 for the Vanguard and 50.46 for the Nation Newspaper. This finding implies that the newspapers differ significantly in the number of agricultural information reported. This is in line with the findings of Anorue & Nwogbo (2020), Hasan and Dutta (2019) and Ani, et al (2018) that newspapers differ in the number of information they report on a subject matter at the same time.

Table 2: Difference in the number of agricultural information in the newspapers

Newspapers	Mean Rank	X^2	Df
Sun	53.83	16.000	3
Guardian	59.88		
Vanguard	29.83		
The Nation	50.46		

*P≤ 0.001

Relationship between Number of Agricultural Information Reported and Space Allotted to Agricultural Information

Table 3 indicates that the space allocated to agricultural information has a positive and significant relationship with the number of agricultural information reported (r = 0.794). This implies that the more space that is allocated for agricultural information, the more the number of agricultural information is reported and vice-versa. This is true because the number of agricultural information is the different pieces of agricultural-related articles in the newspaper. The larger the space designated for this purpose, the tendency to accommodate such articles thereby increasing the number of agricultural information. With this result, newspaper publishers are expected to increase the space allotment to agricultural information in other to accommodate more information on agriculture. This is in contrast with the findings of Ijeoma & Olajide (2018) that space allotment does not correlate with the frequency of reportage

Table 3: Relationship between the number of agricultural information and space allotted to agricultural information

Variables	R
Number of agricultural information	0.794*

*P≤0.01

The Prominence to Agricultural Information

The prominence given to information in the newspaper is often determined by the placement of such information in the newspaper. Table 4 shows that the majority (86.68%) of the agricultural information reported was on the other pages of newspapers. This was followed by 12.31% that was reported on the centre page, only a few (1.01%) were reported on the front pages whereas none was reported on

the back pages of the newspapers. This result indicates that most of the agricultural information were reported on other pages of the newspapers. This finding reveals the importance and prominence newspapers attached to agricultural information. It is expected that information of great importance would occupy the prominent pages (front, centre, and back pages) of the newspaper to catch the attention of the readers. With this, it could be inferred that agricultural information is of less importance to newspaper publishers. This result corroborates with that of Ejeh, et al (2018), that the majority of agricultural information were reported on other pages of newspapers. Ogunlade et al (2020) categorized the level of prominence given to information in the newspapers into high prominence (information on the front and back pages), medium prominence (information on the middle pages) and low prominence (information on the inside pages). They observed that Agricultural information was given a low prominence by the Nigerian newspapers.

Table 4: Prominence given to agricultural information in the selected newspapers

Pages	Percentage (%)
Other Pages	86.68
Centre Page	12.31
Front Page	1.01
Back Page	0.00

Conclusion and Recommendation

Some newspaper publishers (The sun and Guardian) allocate more space and report more agricultural information than others. Agricultural information were less reported on the prominent pages of the newspapers indicating a low prominence of agricultural information. The Ministry of Agriculture and agencies should advertise their products and service in the newspapers as this will help to increase the space allotment to agricultural information. Agricultural information should be placed on strategic pages of the newspapers to increase the prominence given to it.

References

Akhter, P., Hussain, T., & Ahsan, H. B. (2021). Mass media as a source of agricultural information: An overview of literature. *Global Regional Review, VI*(II): *58 - 63. https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2021(VI-II).08*

Ani, N. A., Olajide, B. R. and Onyebuchi, S. I.(2018) coverage of agricultural related corrupt practices in the Nigerian Newspapers. *Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology Vol. 18(2):40-45*

Anorue, L. I.;and Nwogbo,V. C (2020) Coverage of Agricultural News in Select Nigerian Mainstream Newspapers *Journal of Communication Studies.(2):56-66*

Delahunt-Smoleniec, N and Smith-Mery, J (2020) A qualitative analysis of the portrayal of young people and psychosis in Australian News Report. *Journalism Practice 14(7):847-86* https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1640071

Donye, A. O. (2018). Assessment of Mass Media Performance in Agricultural Information Dissemination to Rural Farmers in Girei Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development 6(5):639-647*

Ejeh Z. S., Okwu O. J, Obinne C. P. O. and Ejembi E. P. (2018). Content Analysis of Agricultural Information in Selected Nigerian Dailies: 2010 – 2014. *Greener Journal of Agricultural Sciences. 8*(8) 173-178, http://doi.org/10.15580/GJAS.2018.8.080118109

Hasan, S and Dutta, P (2019). Coverage of Environmental Issues in Local Dailies of Chattogram Centering. *World Environment Day Socio-Economic Challenges, Volume 3(4): 63-71* https://doi.org/10.21272/sec.3(4).63-71.2019

Ijeoma, M. C and Olajide, B. R (2018). Coverage and content analysis of agricultural transformation agenda news in selected newspapers in Nigeria. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies Vol. 10(1):1-7* https://doi.org/10.5897/JMCS2017.0589

National Bureau of Statistics (2022). Nigeria Gross Domestic Product, Report Q3 2022 https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/#

Ogessa C. M and Sife A. S (2018). Types and Sources of Agricultural Information Published in Newspapers. *Huria Journal 25(1):171-181*

Ogunlade, I.; Olabanji, O. P.; Adebisi, F. A.; Omotesho, K. F (2020). Reporting of Rural Grazing Area Initiative in Selected Daily Newspapers in Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension Vol. 24 (4):82-90* https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jae.v24i4.9

Olagunje, O. E., Onyegbula, C. B., Olagunju, O. S.,and Oyegbile, S. A. (2019). Assessment of Rural Women Participation in Cassava Farming in Oyo State. Proceeding of the 24th Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria: 112-121.

Othman, M. K. (2019). Use of Information Communication Technology for Agricultural Extension Delivery in Nigeria: Opportunities, Roles and Challenges of the National Agricultural Extension Research Liason Services. Proceeding of the 24th Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria: 1-10.

Shaikh, S. S., Hassan, A., Farooqui, Y. S. (2020). Role of Mass Media in Dissemination of Agricultural Information among Farmers of Hyderabad, Sindh-Pakistan.*Global Economics Review, V*(III), *88-96.* http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/ger.2020(V-III).09