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PM Chavan
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
Agricultural Extension and
Communication, PGI, MPKV,
Rahuri, Maharashtra, India

VS Shirke
Director, Extension Education,
Maharashtra Council of
Agricultural Education and
Research, Pune, Maharashtra,
India

PB Kharde
Associate Professor, Department
of Agricultural Extension and
Communication, PGI, MPKV,
Rahuri, Maharashtra, India

Sources of information used by client farmers utilizing private extension services in the Nashik district of Maharashtra

PM Chavan, VS Shirke and PB Kharde

Abstract

In Indian context, agriculture is the highly important economic sector. Emergence of paid extension services in agriculture is relatively recent phenomenon in India. Many professionals are providing consultancy (free or paid) to the farmers in high value crops such as fruits and flowers, exotic vegetables etc. Consultancy services exist and they advise farmers by visiting their farms. It ensures food and income stability. Maharashtra is the country's largest grape-producing state. The Maharashtra government has proposed establishing an agriculture export zone that would include Nashik, Sangli, Pune, Solapur, Satara, and Ahmednagar districts for exporting table grapes and value-added products like wine in a coordinated manner. The research was carried out in the Nashik district. In the research Seventy-two villages were purposively chosen. A total of 200 farmers were chosen for the study wherein 100 out of those were taking services from private consultancies and rest 100 were not taking any consultancy services. The information was gathered through personal interviews. Majority of the client and non-client farmers were using medium level of sources of information, the main source of information for the client farmers was grape master consultancy. On the other hand, it was found that, the non-client farmers were not seeming to be using information sources to the great extent.

Keywords: sources of information, client farmers, private extension service

Introduction

Information has gained widespread acceptance as a vital resource in the twenty-first century. It has been described as a process of simulating creativity, which results in new outcomes and processes. All human societies rely heavily on information for survival; information is life. Objective decision making requires the proper identification and use of information sources. As a result, awareness and the use of appropriate information ensure individual and organisational functioning. The primary function of information is to increase the user's knowledge, reduce his level of uncertainty, or reduce the variety of options available to information users. To be effective, information must be accurate, timely, and relevant.

Information sources are tools that can potentially meet the information needs of various types of users. They are the carriers of information. There are various sources of information, but what matters is 'what' sources are available and relevant to the various categories of users, and what sources of information are useful for their various seeking behaviour, and most importantly for utilisation in order to accomplish tasks/needs. The various methods by which information is recorded for use by an individual or organisation are referred to as information sources. Radio, television, extension workers, cooperative societies, friends and colleagues, newspapers and magazines, books/leaflets, phones, libraries, and institutes are all good places to get information. Observation of people, organisations, speeches, documents, pictures, and art work are all examples of information sources.

The present study was conducted in the Nashik district of Maharashtra, wherein the Nashik district is considered as the 'Grape capital of India'. In Nashik district, 56000 ha. Area was under grape cultivation and production was 1237000MT. About 60-70 per cent of total production of seedless grapes is produced in Nashik district. Out of 15 talukas from Nashik district, 90.00 per cent of grape production is from Nashik, Niphad and Dindori talukas. As grape is a commercial crop and it is very prone to the climate change, due care of the crop is important. Any harm to the crop can result in economically higher losses to the farmers. Accordingly, the grape grower farmers were using different sources of information to get their problems solved and to keep them updated regarding the knowledge in grape farming.

Corresponding Author
PM Chavan
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
Agricultural Extension and
Communication, PGI, MPKV,
Rahuri, Maharashtra, India

By keeping in view the above aspects the present study has been conducted with an objective of knowing the sources of information used by client farmers utilizing private extension services.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Nashik district of Maharashtra state, as it is one of the most important grape producing regions in Maharashtra state. Two tahsils namely Niphad and Dindori selected purposively for this study on the basis of maximum area under cultivation of grape crop. From each selected tehsil, 36 villages were selected on the basis of highest number of farmers who were taking consultancy services regarding grape crop. The list of farmers who were taking consultancy was obtained from the consultant. Total 200 respondents were selected for the study, 100 out of it were taking consultancy while rest 100 were not taking any kind of consultancy service. The data was collected through personal interview method. The ex-post facto research design was used for the present study. The extent of use of information sources was measured by taking into

consideration the possible sources available to the farmers. Each respondent was asked to indicate as to how frequently he got information about all aspects of grape farming, production technologies and management from each of the listed sources. The scoring procedure used was regularly (3), occasionally (2) and never (1). Categorization of the respondents was done by considering the range method. Farmers use many distinct sources for different needs of them. Information sources are very important for any farmer who seeks to better farming and problem solving. The variable was considered as necessary in case of respondents so as to know about how they utilize different sources of information

Result and Discussion

Sources of Information

It means the frequency of contact or exposure of a farmer to different sources for obtaining information on recommended production and management techniques related to grape crop. The following table gives the information related to the distribution of respondents according to their detailed sources of information;

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their detailed Sources of Information

Sr. No.	Information Source	Client Farmers (n=100)			Non-client Farmers (n=100)		
		R. U.	O. U.	N. U.	R. U.	O. U.	N. U.
A	Individual						
1	Scientist from Agriculture University/ICAR	4	28	68	5	31	64
2	Krishi Vigyan Kendra/SMS	0	14	86	3	29	68
3	Taluka Agriculture Officer/ Circle Officer	2	27	71	10	48	42
4	Agril. Assistant	28	49	23	43	54	3
5	Dealers/Agro-service Centres	18	68	14	60	37	3
6	Progressive farmers	51	49	00	49	47	02
7	Grape Consultant	100	00	00	00	00	100
8	Company representative	16	58	26	8	70	22
9	Local leaders	25	54	21	73	42	15
10	Friends/Neighbour/Relatives	72	28	00	59	40	01
B	Group						
1	Demonstrations	20	61	19	43	49	08
2	Meetings	19	81	00	26	72	02
3	Group discussions	17	63	20	28	63	09
4	Field visits	19	81	00	22	75	03
C	Mass						
1	News papers	73	27	00	39	61	00
2	Farm magazines	14	73	13	22	75	03
3	Radio	00	19	81	03	13	84
4	T.V.	67	33	00	41	58	01
5	Exhibitions	28	72	00	19	80	01
6	Farmers rally	00	17	83	02	11	87
7	Internet	58	42	00	13	70	17

* Values in the table also denote percentages

Information sources of client and non-client farmers

Individual contact methods

The information regarding the extension personnel or any individual as the information sources was obtained from the respondents.

It is evident from the Table 1 that the main individual contacts regularly used by the client farmers as their source of information were grape consultant (100.00%), friends/neighbour/relatives (72.00%), progressive farmers (51.00%), Agril. Assistant (28.00%), Local leaders (25.00%),

dealers/agro-service centers (18.00%), company representatives (16.00%) respectively. The least regularly used sources of information by the client farmers were scientists from agricultural universities (04.00%), Taluka/Circle Agriculture Officer (02.00%) and Krishi Vigyan Kendra/SMS (00.00%). Occasionally used sources of information by the client farmers were dealers/agro-service centres (68.00%), company representatives (58.00%), local leaders (54.00%), agricultural assistants (49.00%), progressive farmers (49.00%), scientists from SAUs

(28.00%), friends/neighbours/relatives (28.00%), TAO/Circle officer (27.00%), and KVK/SMS (14.00%) respectively. 86.00 per cent of client farmers never used as KVK/SMS as their source of information followed by TAO/Circle officer (71.00%), scientists from SAUs/ICAR (68.00%), company representative (26.00%), Agril. Asst. (23.00%), local leaders (21.00%) and dealers/agro-service centers (14.00%) as their sources of information were never used by the client farmers.

In case of non-client farmer's information sources, it was seen that, majority of them regularly used local leaders (73.00%), dealers/agro-service centres (60.00%), friends/ neighbour/relatives (59.00%) and progressive farmers (49.00%) respectively. Comparatively less regularly used individual sources of information by the non-client farmers were Agril. Asst. (43.00%), TAO/Circle officer (10.00%), company representative (08.00%), and KVK/SMS (03.00%) respectively. The occasionally used sources of information were company representative (70.00%), Agril. Assistant (54.00%), progressive farmers (47.00%), TAO/Circle officer (48.00%), local leaders (42.00%), friends/neighbours/relatives (40.00%), Scientists from SAU/ICAR (31.00%), KVK/SMS (29.00%) respectively. Sixty-eight per cent of the non-client farmers never used KVK/SMS as their source of information followed by scientists from SAU/ICAR as source of information (64.00%), TAO/Circle officer (42.00%), company representative (22.00%), local leaders (15.00%). Negligible number of non-client farmers never used Agril. Asst. (03.00%), dealers/agro service centers (03.00%) and friends/neighbours/relatives (01.00%) as their source of information.

From the result it was observed that, there is no great difference in between client and non-client farmers in the case of use of information sources. Only exception is of 'Grape consultant' as a source of information. This is because the respondents were purposively chosen based on this. The client farmers have 'Grape consultant' as their main source of information while non-client farmers didn't used it as their source of information.

Group Contact Methods

There were four group contact methods considered for this particular research study from which the respondent farmers acquire information. The group methods considered were demonstrations, meetings, group discussions and field visits. Both the client and non-client farmers approaches different group contact sources. The respondents were categorized into three groups viz., low, medium and high as shown in the previous Table.

It is apparent from the data presented in Table 4.2 that, majority of the client farmers utilized all the group contact methods occasionally as their source of information. The results shown that, 81.00 per cent of the client farmers occasionally participate in the meetings and field visits for getting information while, 63.00 per cent of the client farmers involve themselves in the group discussions and 61.00 per cent client farmers occasionally participate in the demonstrations for the information. The group sources were comparatively less regularly used as, 20.00 per cent of them used demonstration regularly as their source of information, followed by meetings and field visits (19.00%) and group discussions (17.00%). Similar number of (20.00 and 19.00%) of them never used group discussions and demonstrations as

their source of information.

The non-client farmers in case of utilizing group contact methods are no different than client farmers. Majority of the non-client farmers as well occasionally use all group contact methods as their source of information. As shown in the table, 75.00 per cent of the non-client farmers occasionally prefer field visits for getting information. 72.00 per cent of non-client farmers involve themselves in meeting for information purpose. While, group discussion as a source of information was utilized by 63.00 per cent of them. Half of i.e. 49.00 per cent of the non-client farmers participated in the demonstrations to get acquainted with the required information. Comparatively more number of non-client farmers regularly used demonstrations (43.00%), group discussion (28.00%), meetings (26.00%) and field visits (22.00%) as the source of information. Very less number of them never used these sources for getting information.

Mass contact methods

Mass contact methods are the most important sources of information used by the respondents for the obtaining the information about grape production and management practices.

It was observed from Table 4.2 that majority 73.00 per cent of the client farmers were regularly seeking information from newspaper followed by 67.00 per cent (T.V.). 58.00 per cent of the client farmers were utilizing internet regularly, followed by 28.00 per cent used exhibitions and farm magazines (14.00%). None of the client farmers regularly used radio and farmers rally as their source of information. 73.00 per cent of client farmers were occasionally taking the information from farm magazines followed by 72.00 per cent (Exhibitions) followed by internet (42.00%), T.V (33.00%), newspaper (27.00%), radio (19.00%) and farmers rally (17.00%). Radio and farmers rally were never used (83.00 and 81.00%) by client farmers followed by 13.00 per cent of them never used farm magazines, while none of them used remaining mass contact sources for a single time.

The majority 80.00 per cent of the non-client farmers occasionally utilized exhibitions as their source of information followed by 70.00 non-clients utilizing internet. Farm magazines, newspaper and T.V. were utilized occasionally by 75.00, 61.00 and 58.00 per cent non-client farmers respectively. Only 13.00 per cent and 11.00 per cent of them used radio and farmers rally occasionally. Highest regularly used source of information by the non-client farmers was T.V (41.00%) followed by newspaper (39.00%), farm magazines (22.00%), exhibitions (19.00%), internet (13.00%), radio (03.00%), farmers rally (02.00%) etc. Similar to the client farmers, non-client farmers were also never utilizing farmers rally to higher extent (87.00%) followed by radio (84.00%), internet (17.00%). Negligible number of them used farm magazines (03.00%), T.V. and exhibitions (01.00%) and newspaper (00.00%) as their source of information.

From the results, it was observed that majority of the client and non-client farmers were using most of the sources of information to medium extent while, major difference between them was only 'grape consultant' as source of information.

The overall distribution of respondents according to their sources of information is given in the Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their overall sources of information

Categories (Score)	Client Farmers (n=100)	Categories (Score)	Non-client Farmers (n=100)
	Frequency		Frequency
Low (31-40)	33 (33.00)	Low (29-37)	10 (10.00)
Medium (41-50)	65 (65.00)	Medium (38-45)	74 (74.00)
High (51-55)	2 (2.00)	High (46-54)	16 (16.00)
Total	100 (100.00)	Total	100 (100.00)
Max. Score= 55	Min. Score = 31	Max. Score = 54	Min. Score = 29

*Values in the parenthesis indicates percentages

It was observed from Table 2 that 65.00 per cent of the client farmers were having 'medium' level of use of information sources, while 33.00 per cent of the client farmers were having 'low' level of use of information sources. Only 02.00 per cent of the client farmers were having 'high' level sources of information about grape production and management practices.

While on the other hand it can be seen that 74.00 per cent of the non-client farmers were having 'medium' level of use of information sources, followed by 16.00 per cent have 'high' level of information sources and 10.00 of the non-client farmers use the sources of information at 'low' level. As both client and non-client farmers are into grape farming for a longer period of time, they tend to have similar sources of information.

From the result it was seen that, majority of both client and non-client farmers use the sources of information at 'medium' level.

Conclusion

It is concluded that majority of the client farmers rely on informal sources of information from neighbors, friends and relatives along with progressive farmers and most importantly on consultancy services rather than on the public extension services. The study also revealed that the non-client farmers were using local leaders, friends/neighbours/relatives, agro services centres and progressive farmers as their main sources of information. From the study it was observed that, both client and non-client farmers does not lean towards public extension services so as to get information.

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