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Accessibility of Horticulturists to the Different Sources Information in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The role of information in farming practices is crucial to increasing the production. The accessibility of the farmers to the different information is very important Horticulture/ Agriculture accounts for 9.4% of the net state domestic product. It is the main source of income and employment in Himachal. About 90% of the population in Himachal depends directly upon agriculture/horticulture, which provides direct employment to 62% of total workers of state. Himachal Pradesh has emerged as "Horticultural State" of the country. Horticultural practices have a strong reliance on information exchange among farmers. The thrust of the study is to identify various horticultural information sources, their accessibility to the horticulturists and of nature and types of information required by the horticulturists. The study conducted through survey method with sample size of 200 respondent. Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. The secondary data was collected from sources like government records and previous research studies. Primary quantitative data was collected using the survey method and was analysed using descriptive statistics with IBM SPSS 26.0. The structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool to fulfilling the objectives of the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used for the spot selection of farmers.

Keywords – Information, access, media, horticulture, Himachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Information is most important element in the present time in any society and the present age is called as an Information Age. The massive work force is working in information providing sectors. In developing countries people realize the importance and need of information (I.K. Ravichandra Rao, 2000).

Information has been described as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food and shelter. In today's life, everyone needs information about everything on his day-to-day life. In agriculture sector, relevant and timely information helps farmers community to take right decision to sustained growth of agriculture activity. In agriculture sector, use of information is enhancing farming productivity in a number of ways. Availability of information on weather trends, best practice in farming, timely access to market information helps farmer make correct decisions about what crops to plants and where to sell their product and buy inputs. India is an agriculture-based country with farming and related activities constituting to a huge chunk of the GDP and employment (Kemp, 1976).

Different studies have analysed the information need in rural areas. These studies show that the needs of the farmers are different according to the area or region. Information need are also varied from village to village and as well as crop to crop. Farmers need information about market rate and transport facilities etc. Some studies are found. The pattern, need and access of the information of the rural and tribal farmers in of the Himachal Pradesh indicate that it varies region to region and person to person.

Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is a state in the northern part of India. Situated in the Western Himalayas, it is one of the thirteen mountain states and is characterized by an extreme landscape featuring several peaks and extensive river systems. Himachal Pradesh is the northern most state of India and shares borders with the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to the north, and the states of Punjab to the west, Haryana to the southwest, Uttarakhand to the southeast and a very narrow border with Uttar Pradesh to the south. The state also shares an international border to the east with the Tibet Autonomous Region in China. Himachal Pradesh is also known as *Dev Bhoomi*, meaning 'Land of Gods' and *Veer Bhoomi* which means 'Land of the Brave'.

Horticulture

Agriculture/Horticulture accounts for 9.4% of the net state domestic product. It is the main source of income and employment in Himachal. About 90% of the population in Himachal depends directly upon agriculture, which provides direct employment to 62% of total workers of state. Apple is the principal cash crop of the state grown principally in the districts of Shimla, Kinnaur, Kullu, Mandi, Chamba and some parts of Sirmaur and Lahaul-Spiti with an average annual production of five lakh tonnes and per hectare production

of 8 to 10 tonnes. The apple cultivation constitutes 49 per cent of the total area under fruit crops and 85% of total fruit production in the state with an estimated economy of ₹3500 crore. Apples from Himachal are exported to other Indian states and even other countries. In 2011–12, the total area under apple cultivation was 104,000 hectares, increased from 90,347 hectares in 2000–01. According to the provisional estimates of Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, the annual apple production in Himachal for fiscal 2015–16 stood at 753,000 tonnes, making it India's second-largest apple-producing state after Jammu and Kashmir. The state is also among the leading producers of other fruits such as apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, plums and strawberries in India.

Shimla District

Shimla is the former summer capital of the British India, and the present capital of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla has been blessed with all the natural bounties which one can think of. It has got a scenic location; it is surrounded by green hills with snow-capped peaks. The place is also famous for its natural beauty, architectural buildings, wooden crafts and apples.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To find out the access to the sources of information used by the horticulturists.
2. To find the nature and types of information required by the farmers.

Methodology

The survey method was used to conduct the study and questionnaire was used as a data collection tool for the fulfilling the objectives of the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used for the spot selection of farmers. The data collected through questionnaire and tabulated using simple statistical method, tables and percentage. The data was collected from 200 respondents by distributing questionnaires randomly to the farmers.

Scope & Limitation

The scope of the present study is limited to the Shimla district and whose main occupation is horticulture. The study was involving only horticulturists and therefore it is not projectable of the entire population of the region. Further the information collected was based on a small number 200 of respondents/horticulturists. Hence the result cannot apply to the entire population of the district and all farmers of the State.

Data presentation and analysis

This section presents the detailed analysis of data collected from 200 respondents for quantitative study with analysis in access to the information of horticulturists in Himachal Pradesh.

1.1 Sample Distribution

This section presents the distribution of the sample. Tables 1.1 to 1.8 present the data related to respondents' demography.

Table no. 1.1
Sex-wise Distribution of Sample

	Sex	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	186	93.0	93.0	93.0
	Female	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per table 1.1.1 above, of the total sample of 200 respondents, 93% (N = 186) were males and 7% (N = 14) were females. The sampling bias in favour of males.

Table no. 1.2
Age-wise Distribution of Sample

	Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-30yrs	37	18.5	18.5	18.5
	31-40yrs	81	40.5	40.5	59.0
	41-50yrs	51	25.5	25.5	84.5
	51-60yrs	27	13.5	13.5	98.0
	above 61	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per table 1.1.2 above, of the total sample of 200 respondents, approximately two-fifth (18.5%, N = 37) were in the age group of 21-30 years. The presentation of other groups in the sample is as follows: 40.5% (N = 81) were found to be in the age group of 31-40 years, 25.5% (N = 51) in 41-50 years, and 13.5% respondents (N= 27) were found in the 51-60yrs and above 61 were found 2% (N = 4). It is also evident that the number of respondents in the sample slowly declined with the increase in age.

Table no. 1.3
Education-wise Distribution of Sample

	Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No School	5	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Up-to +2	47	23.5	23.5	26.0

	Graduate	92	46.0	46.0	72.0
	Post Graduate	56	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per table 1.1.3 above, of the total sample of 200 respondents, the respondents (2.5%, N = 5) were found to have no formal education, (23.5%, N = 47) were found to have Up-to 10+2 school education, respondent (46%, N = 92) up to graduation, respondent (28%, N = 56) were post graduate.

Table no. 1.4
Income-wise Distribution of Sample

Income		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 - 3 lac	45	22.5	22.5	22.5
	4 - 6 lac	29	14.5	14.5	37.0
	7 - 9 lac	30	15.0	15.0	52.0
	10 - 12 lac	34	17.0	17.0	69.0
	More than 13 lacs	62	31.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per table 1.1.4, of the total sample of 200 respondents, (31.0%, N = 62) belongs to more than 13 lacs income group, (17.0%, N = 34) belongs to10 to 12 lacs income group. The representation of other group in the sample is as follows (15.0%, N = 75) belong to 7-9 lacs, (14.5%, N =29) belongs to 4 - 6 lac income group and (22.5%, N = 45) are from the low-income group.

Table no. 1.5
Land-wise Distribution of Sample

Land		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Small (up-to-5 Bigha)	3	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Medium (5-10 Bigha)	169	84.5	84.5	86.0
	Large (Above 10 bigha)	28	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per the above table 1.1.5, of the total sample of 200 respondents, only (1.5%, N = 3) belongs to small land category, (84.5%, N = 169) belongs to medium land category, whereas (14.0%, N = 28) are from the large land category.

Table no. 1.6
Cultivated-wise Distribution of Sample

Cultivated		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Small (up-to-5 Bigha)	32	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Medium (5-10 Bigha)	37	18.5	18.5	34.5
	Large (Above 10 bigha)	131	65.5	65.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per the above table 1.1.6, of the total sample of 200 respondents, (16.0%, N = 32) belongs to small cultivated land category, (18.5%, N = 37) belongs to medium cultivated land category and (65.5%, N = 131) belongs to large cultivated land owner category.

Table no. 1.7
Crop-wise Distribution of Sample

Crop		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Apple	200	100.0	100.0	100.0

As per the above table 1.1.7, of the total sample of 200 respondents, apple is the major crop of all horticulturist (100%, N = 200) which is their basic source of livelihood.

Table no. 1.8
Experience-wise Distribution of Sample

Experience		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5yrs	41	20.5	20.5	20.5
	6-10yrs	34	17.0	17.0	37.5
	11-15yrs	43	21.5	21.5	59.0
	16-20yrs	33	16.5	16.5	75.5
	More than 21yrs	49	24.5	24.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

As per the above table 1.1.8, the total sample of 200 respondents, (24.5%, N = 49) are holding more than 21 years of experience in horticultural practices, (16.5%, N = 33) are having 16-20yrs of experience. The representation of other groups in the sample are as follows (21.5%, N = 43) are belonging to 11-15yrs, (17.0%, N = 34) belongs to 6-10yrs and (20.5%, N = 41) are from 1-5yrs of experience group.

Data Table no. 2.1
Access to Print Media as sources of information for Horticulture practices

Source of information	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Newspaper	200	2.94	1.24
Magazine	200	2.68	1.09
Valid N (listwise)	200		

Table no. 2.1 above shows the mean scores of the accessibility to print media as sources of information for horticulture practiceson a scale of 1 to 5 for 200 respondents. It was observed that the newspaper was accorded the highest accessibility with a mean score of M = 2.94 (SD = 1.24), followed by magazine, M = 2.68 (SD = 1.09).

Data Table no. 2.2
Access to Broadcasting Media as sources of information for Horticulture practices

Source of information	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Radio	200	3.90	1.14
TV	200	4.21	0.90
Valid N (listwise)	200		

Table no. 2.2 above shows the mean scores of theaccessibility to broadcasting media as sources of information for horticulture practices on a scale of 1 to 5 for 200 respondents. It was observed that the television was accorded the highest accessibility with a mean score of M = 4.21 (SD = 0.90), followed by radio, M = 3.90 (SD = 1.14).

Data Table no. 2.3
Access to Digital Media as sources of information for Horticulture practices

Source of information	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Website	200	4.04	1.03
Social Media	200	4.34	0.87
Valid N (listwise)	200		

Table no. 2.3 above shows the mean scores of the accessibility to digital media as sources of information for horticulture practices on a scale of 1 to 5 for 200 respondents. It was observed that the social media was accorded the highest accessibility with a mean score of M = 4.34 (SD = 0.87), followed by website, M = 4.04 (SD = 1.03).

Data Table no. 2.4
Access to Horticulture Professionals as sources of information for Horticulture practices

Source of information	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
On-site Training	200	2.92	1.05
Horticulture Professionals	200	3.57	1.22
Valid N (listwise)	200		

Table no. 2.4 above shows the mean scores of theaccessibility tohorticulture professionalsas sources of information for horticulture practices on a scale of 1 to 5 for 200 respondents. It was observed that the horticulture professionals were accorded the highest accessibility with a mean score of M = 3.57 (SD = 1.22), followed by on-site training, M = 2.92 (SD = 1.05).

Data Table no. 3.1
Nature and Types of Information Required by the Horticulturists

Table 3.1 above, shows the percentage of nature and types of information required by the horticulturists for 200 respondents. It was observed that the information required by the horticulturists to compete in international market 7% (n = 14), followed by information required by the horticulturists to improve quality and production of crop 21% (n = 42), information required by the horticulturists to shift on smart farming 8% (n = 16), information required by the horticulturists as per need of the hour 19% (n = 38), information required by the horticulturists for new verities of crop 7% (n = 14), information required by the horticulturists for new methods of crop production and management 38% (n = 76).

Findings

- It was observed that 93% were males and 7% were females. The sample was bias in favour of males.
- It was observed that 18.5% were in the age group of 21-30 years, 40.5% were found to be in the age group of 31-40 years, 25.5% in 41-50 years, and 13.5% respondents were found in the 51-60yrs and above 61 were found 2%. It is also evident that the number of respondents in the sample slowly declined with the increase in age.
- It was observed that 2.5%, were found to have no formal education 23.5%, were found to have Up-to 10+2 school education, respondent 46%, up to graduation, respondent 28% were post graduate.
- It was observed that 31.0% belongs to more than 13 lacs income group, 17.0% belongs to10 to 12 lacs income group. The representations of other group in the sample are as follows 15.0%, belongs to 7-9 lacs, 14.5%, belongs to 4 - 6 lac income group and 22.5%, are from the low-income group.
- It was observed that only 1.5% belongs to small land category, 84.5%, belongs to medium land category, whereas 14.0%, are from the large land category.

S.no.	Nature and Types of Information Required by the Horticulturists	No.	Percentage
1	To compete in international Market	14	7%
2	To improve quality and production of crop	42	21%
3	To shift on smart farming	16	8%
4	Information as per need of the hour	38	19%
5	New Verities of crop	14	7%
6	New Methods of crop production and Management	76	38%
	Total	200	100%

- It was observed that 16.0%, belongs to small cultivated land category, 18.5%, belongs to medium cultivated land category and 65.5% and belongs to large cultivated land owner category.
- It was observed that apple is the major crop of all horticulturist 100%, which is their basic source of livelihood.

- It was observed that 24.5%, are holding more than 21 years of experience in horticultural practices, 16.5% are having 16-20yrs of experience. The representation of other groups in the sample are as follows 21.5%, are belonging to 11-15yrs, 17.0%, belongs to 6-10yrs and 20.5%, are from 1-5yrs of experience group.
- It was observed that the accessibility to print media as sources of information for horticulture practiceson, the newspaper was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by magazine.
- It was observed that the accessibility to broadcasting media as sources of information for horticulture practices, television was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by radio.
- It was observed that the accessibility to digital media as sources of information for horticulture practices, social media was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by website.
- It was observed that the accessibility to horticulture professionals as sources of information for horticulture practices, the horticulture professionals were accorded the highest accessibility, followed by on-site training.
- It was observed that the information required by the horticulturists to compete in international market 7%, followed by information required by the horticulturists to improve quality and production of crop 21%, information required by the horticulturists to shift on smart farming 8%, information required by the horticulturists as per need of the hour 19%, information required by the horticulturists for new verities of crop 7%, information required by the horticulturists for new methods of crop production and management 38%.

Conclusion

It was observed that the accessibility to print media as sources of information for horticulture practices, the newspaper was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by magazine. The accessibility to broadcasting media as sources of information for horticulture practices, television was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by radio. The accessibility to digital media as sources of information for horticulture practices, social media was accorded the highest accessibility, followed by website. The accessibility to horticulture professionals as sources of information for horticulture practices, the horticulture professionals were accorded the highest accessibility, followed by on-site training. Concluding the accessibility to all information sources, social media was accorded the highest accessibility. Which means that horticulturists are for comfortable to access information from social media.

It was observed that nature and types of information which was mostly required by the horticulturists was to improve quality and production of crop and followed by the information required as per the need of the hour (which means that the horticulturists need the solutions to their problems that they are facing in their horticulture practices).

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