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Abstract

In light of deregulation and the changing requirements for broadcasters, we wondered if we might see a decrease in the use of agricultural services.

A Survey of Southern Agricultural Broadcast Programming

Donald M. Springer and
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In light of deregulation and the changing requirements for broadcasters we wondered if we might see a decrease in the use of agricultural services. If there was a change we wanted to see what stations indicated for approach or content of public servicing programming. Before we could answer such questions we needed to know the current situation, and we had no answers at hand.

First we discussed what we needed to know and what we would like to discover through a survey of broadcasters. We assumed that most broadcasters probably would be familiar with the Cooperative Extension Service of their College of Agriculture. We were not so sure that the broadcasters would know a contact person or what services were available or if they would be making use of them.

Some of this attitude and use, we thought, might reflect long established station policy, habit or "tradition."

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Likewise it might indicate knowledge held by experienced personnel who had moved into non-production positions at the stations. This situation could then limit the amount of exposure to the land grant philosophy and services among newer employees.

We also wondered if there was a tendency for power, market, competition or other variables to influence the use of materials available.

If we were to continue to serve our extension clientele efficiently and effectively by reaching the broadcasters' listeners or viewers, we believed that we needed new information, especially if we might need to change the format or content of some or all of our broadcast services.

Purpose of this study

Our purpose then became to determine the attitudes of broadcast personnel responsible for making programming decisions regarding the broadcast of agricultural information. In the main, we wanted our study to determine the availability and use of public service programs for agriculture.

Our Approach to the Problem

We constructed a questionnaire to probe attitudes and degree of usage by managerial decision makers. Section one asked respondents about their job function, tenure in their type of position, tenure in broadcasting and their attitude toward the degree of importance they placed upon agricultural programming.

Section Two examined agricultural information types and services. Respondents were asked to identify the land grant university or college in their state by name and location. They were instructed to write "unknown" if they could not identify the institution.

Further, we asked respondents, "How familiar are you with the Cooperative Extension Service of the College of Agriculture in your state (county agents, state specialists, etc.)?" The respondents selected an answer from the following: very, somewhat, or not at all. A corollary to this question was, "Are you aware of the information services offered from the departments of information in the Cooperative Extension Service of the land grant institution of your state (actual name will vary from state to state)?" The respondents were instructed to circle either yes or no. Also,

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to help pinpoint usage, the respondents were asked, "Do you receive any of the information services offered by these information departments in the Cooperative Extension Service of the land grant institution of your state (yes or no)?" They were instructed to indicate whether or not they received information services from other states. If they received materials, they were instructed to continue with Part Two of that section. If not, they proceeded to the next section.

The respondents then were asked to identify in Part Two both the type of service received regularly and the name of a contact person in the extension information unit. There were five program types used in this study: news programs, farm programs, magazine format programs, PSA's and other. The respondents checked the one or ones they had used the previous week or indicated if none had been used. To give us a check on time-frame usage, we asked respondents, "Approximately how many minutes of broadcast time were involved last week?" They could answer by choosing from six categories, ranging from "none or less than one minute" to "more than 30 minutes."

We considered PSA's to be widely used. So we asked respondents, "Last week, how often did you broadcast PSA's from the radio/television information services of the Cooperative Extension Service of your land grant institution?" Answers ranged from "none" to "more than seven." A corollary question probed, "Do you use the materials for 'ideas' rather than actual airing?" The respondents selected either always, sometimes, or never.

A third section asked radio station respondents about market size, station type, power and network affiliation. Section four asked similar questions of television station personnel.

Getting the Sample for Our Study

Our institution printed the questionnaire and mailed 727 to radio and television stations in the 13 states of the Southern Region. There were 371 AM Stations, 65 FM and 291 television stations who received the questionnaire. To provide further stratification, the power output of the radio stations were classified and questionnaires were sent proportionately to each power classification. All television stations in the 13 state region were included in the survey.

There were 139 completed questionnaires returned, or 19.1 percent, in the short response period of two weeks.

Table 1 illustrates the breakdown of respondent locations and numbers.

TABLE 1: Respondents: State by type of media

State	Media				Total
	TV	AM/FM	AM	FM	
Alabama	2	5			7
Arkansas	4	1	4	2	11
Florida	6		2		8
Georgia	2	1	2	1	6
Kentucky	4	3	1		8
Louisiana	3	3	4	2	12
Mississippi	1	6	4		11
North Carolina	6	3	4	1	14
Oklahoma	3	2	4		9
South Carolina	7	1	3	2	13
Tennessee	3	6	3	2	14
Texas	7	2	4		13
Virginia	1	4	6	2	13
Total	49	37	41	12	139

As shown, 49 television stations, 37 AM/FM combination radio stations, 41 AM, and 12 FM stations were represented in the returns (N = 139). Most of the respondents were from North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi.

We got response from every state in the region and in almost every category in each state. Two states had 14 respondents each, three states had 13, one state had 12, and two others had 11 respondents. So, eight of the states were represented by eleven or more responses and the lowest number of responses was six for one of the remaining five states. Thus the range was from six to fourteen with the mean number of responses being ten, the median number of responses was eleven and the mode was thirteen.

Based on this distribution we treated the material as being indicative if not truly representative. We felt that the respondents reflected the attitudes and actions of broadcasters over the region. However, in this article we have addressed only the information and tendencies the responses of this small number from this region displayed without making projections for all broadcasters everywhere.

Results to be considered

Table 2 illustrates the position breakdowns among respondents. Most (30.2%) were program directors, with general managers and news directors second and third, respectively.

TABLE 2: Position of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
General Manager	33	23.7
Programming Director	42	30.2
Operations Director	4	2.9
News Director	28	20.1
Farm Director	15	10.8
Other	16	11.5
No Response	1	.7
Total	139	100.0

As shown in Table 3, more than half the respondents had more than five years' experience in this position. Nearly a third, however, had less than 3 years experience.

TABLE 3: Length of time held this or similar position in broadcasting

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	13	9.4
1-3 years	29	20.9
3-5 years	15	10.8
More than 5 years	81	58.3
No response	1	.7
Total	139	100.0

Table 4 shows that about two-thirds of the respondents (66.9%) have more than 10 years' experience in broadcasting. This result enhances the responses reflected in this study. In short, more than four out of five respondents (86.3%) had over five years of broadcasting experience.

How do these experienced broadcasters view the importance of agricultural programming in their markets? Table 5 provides the results. About half (49.6%) believed the programming is very important while an additional one-third (33.1%) place *extreme* importance to agricultural programming. So four-fifths (82.7%) of the respondents

TABLE 4: Length of time respondent worked in broadcasting

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3 years	5	3.6
3-5 years	14	10.1
5-8 years	20	14.4
8-10 years	7	5.0
More than 10 years	93	66.9
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 5: The importance of agricultural programming in respondent's market area

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely Important	46	33.1
Very Important	69	49.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant	17	12.2
Very Unimportant	6	4.3
Extremely Unimportant	1	.7
Total	139	100.0

indicated that agricultural programming is important to their viewers/listeners.

Could the respondents identify the land grant university or college in their state? Almost three-fourths (73.4%) correctly identified the land grant institution (see Table 6).

Most of the respondents were familiar with the Cooperative Extension Service of the College of Agriculture in their state. Only 10 percent were not at all familiar (see Table 7).

The key question is: Are they aware of information services offered from Departments of Information in the Cooperative Extension Service? Table 8 indicates that more than four of every five respondents (82.0%) were aware of information services. An important corollary to this question is, "Do you receive any of the information services offered by these information departments?" The overwhelming majority (84.2%) reported in the affirmative (Table 9). The response seems to indicate that they definitely knew from whom they were receiving materials.

TABLE 6: Respondent's identification of "land grant" university or college in his state by name and location

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Correctly Identified	102	73.4
Incorrectly Identified / Unknown	37	26.6
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 7: Respondent's familiarity with cooperative extension service of the college of agriculture in his state

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very	76	54.7
Somewhat	49	35.3
Not at All	14	10.1
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 8: Respondent's awareness of information services offered from departments of information in cooperative extension service

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	114	82.0
No	25	18.0
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 9: "Do you receive any of the information services offered by these information departments?"

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	117	84.2
No	19	13.7
No Response	3	2.2
Total	139	100.0

What type of materials do they receive regularly from information departments? There was an almost even split between audio tapes and news releases with about two of three respondents receiving one or the other (32.4% and

30.2% respectively). Public Service Announcements (PSA's) were used by about one in six (15.8%) of the respondents (see Table 10).

TABLE 10: Identification of the type of service received regularly from the extension information departments

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Video Tapes	9	6.5
Audio Tapes	45	32.4
Films		
Personal Appearances		
News Releases	42	30.2
Other/PSA's	22	15.8

Our study attempted to determine if respondents knew a person in the Extension Information Unit (note Table 11). That posed a great deal of confusion. More than half, for example, cited position titles were deemed questionable. County Agents received the most mention.

In what context were Cooperative Extension Service materials being used by these respondents? More than half (54.0%) were used in farm programs. More than a third (35.6%) were used in news programs and nearly as many were used as PSA's (30.4%) (see Table 12).

How much time did these respondents use for the program types? We asked them to indicate how many minutes they programmed "last week." Table 13 shows a wide range of responses. About one of five (22.3%) indicated they had used between 1-5 minutes of material during the previous week while one in six (16.5%) had used more than thirty minutes.

TABLE 11: Identification of a contact person in the extension information unit if there is one

Category	Frequency	Percentage
State Officer	18	12.9
County Agent	22	15.8
Home Economist	18	12.9
Questionable	76	54.7
No Response	5	3.6
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 12: Cooperative extension service materials used by program type

Category	Frequency	Percentage
News Programs	48	35.6
Farm Programs	75	54.0
Magazine Format Programs	9	6.5
PSA's	41	30.4
Other	16	11.9
None Used	17	12.6

TABLE 13: Number of minutes of broadcast time involved

Category	Frequency	Percentage
None or less than 1 minute	13	9.4
1-5 minutes	31	22.3
6-10 minutes	16	11.5
11-15 minutes	11	7.9
16-30 minutes	18	12.9
More than 30 minutes	23	16.5
No Response	26	18.7
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 14: Frequency of PSA's broadcast from radio/television information services of CES

Category	Frequency	Percentage
None	43	30.9
1-2 times	20	14.4
3-4 times	16	11.5
5-7 times	17	12.2
More than 7 times	22	15.8
No Response	21	15.1
Total	139	100.0

TABLE 15: "Do you use the materials for 'ideas' rather than actual airing?"

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Always	12	8.6
Sometimes	81	58.3
Never	21	15.1
No Response	25	18.0
Total	139	100.0

Next came a group that indicated one in eight (12.9%) had used more than fifteen but less than thirty minutes. This situation would seem to indicate that more than a third of the broadcasters were airing several minutes of our materials each day. But, when viewed over a five or seven day week no program format or preference was exposed. Understandably, PSA's received wide attention, and according to these respondents, PSA's were aired during the week in question by more than half of the stations. In fact, more than one of every six respondents (15.8%) indicated that on the average they aired a PSA more than once every day.

As a corollary to this use of materials, we asked the respondents, "Do you use the materials for 'ideas' rather than actual airing?" More than half reported "sometimes" and only about 15 percent said "never" (Tables 13-15). So, in most cases, the broadcasters are using the materials even if they aren't "airing" them or using them in the originally intended way.

Summary/Conclusion

In retrospect, although we did not receive enough information to answer all our original questions, we believe we can say the following about the attitudes of these respondents:

1. The older, more experienced personnel are aware of the importance of agricultural programming in their respective markets.
2. Radio stations appear to be making more use of the materials available to them than are television stations.
3. More public relations activities directed to the younger age groups seem to be indicated. After the older groups retire, what will be the attitudes of the younger broadcasters?
4. About a fourth of the respondents incorrectly identified the "land grant" institutions. More PR activities are indicated to alleviate this confusion.
5. About a third of the respondents are only *somewhat* familiar with Cooperative Extension Services of the college or university in his state. More efforts to alleviate this condition are needed. If they don't know who we are and what we can supply it is hard to serve our mutual audience.
6. Over half indicated a questionable response to the identification of a contact person. They are just not sure who

to contact about information services, although quite a few are aware that they have a county agent nearby.

7. About four-fifths of the respondents take and use an extension information service.

8. Most of the information appears to be used on farm shows or as agricultural items on a news program.

9. Information materials appear to be used on a fairly regular basis. This would seem to indicate that the reporting broadcasters view us as credible sources and that the information is of value to their viewers/listeners.

10. PSA's are being used. This research relied on direct recall. An investigation of actual logs would probably be more revealing.

