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Sources of Frames for Organic Farming Practices in Kenya's Newspapers: Analysis of Seeds of Gold and Smart Harvest Articles

Sources of Frames for Organic Farming Practices in Kenya's Newspapers: Analysis of Seeds of Gold and Smart Harvest Articles

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Abstract
Organic farming practices are being promoted as a sustainable farming system that has less effects on both humans and the environment at large. Research shows that there is the low adoption of organic farming methods in Kenya. One of the reasons could be due to lack of adequate skills and knowledge in organic farming technologies. Hence, this paper analyses the source of mass media frames on organic farming practices as covered in Kenya's newspapers. The focus of the study was on two Kenya's national newspapers; Daily Nation and The Standard which have weekly news articles (pullouts); 'Seeds of Gold' and 'Smart Harvest' every Saturday. This study employed content analysis to achieve the objectives. Two pull-outs from leading newspapers 'The Seeds of Gold' from the Daily Nation and 'The Smart Harvest' from the standard Newspaper were used for this study. Data was collected using a coding sheet (book). The key sources of information on organic farming frames were organic farmers (through interviews, and farm visits), institutions and advocacy groups on organic farming, scientists (including crop and agronomists), entrepreneurs on organic foods, and industries involved in organic food products. However, government institutions sources promoting the organic farming systems were found to be low and therefore shows that the government is not committed to advancing the sustainable agenda in Kenya. It is therefore recommended that newspapers amplify the voice of organic farmers through their news articles rather than relying on sponsored articles for publication purposes which are dominated by inorganic farming players.

Introduction
Agricultural information dissemination is a crucial stage in the development and transfer of agricultural technology (Masambuka-Kanchewa, Rumble, & Buck, 2021). It is essential because if it is not done correctly and through the appropriate channel, it will not serve the purpose for which it was intended. Agricultural communication involves delivering information to the public and various stakeholders within the agricultural industry through different communication channels. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that the public has access to reliable and transparent information to guide them in making informed decisions (Gottschalk & Leistner, 2013).

Organic farming practices worldwide are characterised by the significant role of communication as a factor of change and progress. Mass media transmit organic information to farmers in different geographical regions of a country (Memon et al., 2014). Abubakar et al. (2009) indicate that various mass media are used to disseminate agricultural information and techniques to farmers, including agri-newsletters, grey literature, handbills, wall newspapers, posters, radio programs, and television programs. Acquisition of information alone is insufficient to promote adoption, as the source of the information must be trusted. Information from a trusted source, or one that the farmer highly regards, is more likely to enhance the adoption of new technologies (Chege & Mberia, 2019).

Necessary alternative online resources have begun to emerge, such as the e-Organic online community that is part of the national online Extension service. The goals of e-Organic include engagement of farmers, agricultural professionals, and other members of the organic agriculture community with timely and relevant science-, experience-, and regulation-based information in a variety of media and educational formats (e-Organic, 2012). Data provide strong evidence that organic growers place more value on interactive learning, with the most frequently mentioned and most effective information sources generally involving interactive exchange of information rather than a linear transfer of facts.

In the United States of America, Dobelbower's (2018) research found that the most common sources used in agricultural publications were government officials and conservation group members. The most common sources in the mainstream articles were government officials and farmers. Meyers and Chodil's (2011) study employed qualitative analysis methods to investigate how *The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Chicago Sun-Times* framed organic foods over 18 months. They found out that familiar sources included consumers, industry representatives, and organic farmers. Framing means organising a storyline and idea which provides meaning to a-developing chain of events, weaving a linkage among them (Asplund, Hjerpe & Wibeck, 2012). Frames communicate how and why a matter should be observed as a challenge, and how it should be managed and who is responsible for it. This paper, therefore, looks at the sources of organic farming frames as appearing in Kenya's two newspapers' weekend pull-outs on 'Seeds of Gold' and 'Smart Harvest'.

Literature Review

Various research studies have been undertaken to examine sources of agricultural frames. Serebrennikov et al.'s (2020) findings show that farmers' environmental and economic attitudes, in addition to their sources of information, have a substantial effect on the adoption of organic farming. Masambuka-Kanchewa, Rumble, and Buck's (2021) exploratory qualitative study sought to gain initial insights into how farmers involved in different production practices communicate with consumers. A thematic analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with eight organic and 12 conventional farmers in Ohio revealed that organic farmers are more proactive in communicating with the public about their production practices. In contrast, traditional farmers tend to focus on improving productivity.

Furthermore, organic farmers reported using various communication channels, such as Facebook, flyers, and YouTube, when interacting with consumers. In contrast, conventional farmers reported being too busy working on their farms to communicate with consumers. The involvement of organic farmers in communication activities with the public about their production practices and products was reported to stem from their beliefs and values regarding sustainable farming practices and environmental conservation.

Masambuka-Kanchewa, Rumble and Buck's (2021) exploratory qualitative study sought to gain initial insights into how farmers involved in different production practices communicate with consumers. A thematic analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with eight organic and 12 conventional farmers in Ohio. Results indicated that organic farmers were more proactive in communicating with the public about their production practices, unlike traditional farmers, who tend to focus on improving productivity. Furthermore, the organic farmers reported using various communication channels, including Facebook, flyers, and YouTube, when communicating with consumers. Conventional farmers reported being busy working on their farms and not having time to communicate with consumers. The involvement of organic farmers in communication activities with the public about their production practices and products was reported to stem from their beliefs and values regarding sustainable farming practices and environmental conservation.

Furthermore, unlike conventional farmers, most organic farmers sold their produce directly to consumers, and as such, used communication as a marketing tool. The active involvement of organic farmers in communicating with consumers may be partly attributable to increased media coverage of the benefits of organic farming practices. On the other hand, limited involvement of conventional farmers in communicating with the public may be partially attributable to limited media coverage about the benefits of traditional farming. There was a need to start developing standalone communication organisations and interventions committed to providing unbiased information about the advantages and disadvantages of the different farming practices.

Crawford, Grossman, Warren and Cubbage (2015) report on a study to determine which information sources organic growers use to inform farming practices by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 organic farmers across 17 North Carolina counties. Effective information sources included networking, agricultural organisations, universities, conferences, Extension, Web resources, personal experience, books, organic buyers and certifiers, and consultants. Results suggest that grower-to-grower networking is a highly effective information-seeking behaviour for organic growers. Recommendations for Extension personnel include reshaping educational programming for organic growers to include peer-to-peer information sharing, as well as increased investment in graduate and undergraduate programmes that train future Extension agents in organic production approaches.

Data shows that networking, organisations, universities, and books are among the most frequently mentioned sources and behaviours used by organic growers. Networking had the highest FoM, significantly higher than online, personal experience, certifiers, and consultant sources and behaviours, while organisations, universities, and books were statistically indistinguishable from networking. Organic certifiers and consultants were mentioned fewer times than all other sources and behaviours, except online sources and self. Online resources were generally cited as a less effective information source overall and were mentioned only occasionally as a supplemental information source among organic growers (a mean of 0.75 times mentioned per respondent; Figure 2). This was surprising, because existing data suggests that organic growers may have had increased Internet access before conventional growers, where in 2004 almost 78% of organic growers had Internet access (Walz, 2004), while in 2007, only 57% of *all* growers nationwide had Internet access (USDA Census of Agriculture Organic Survey, 2008).

Networking has been highlighted as the number one information source and behaviour through which the farmers in our sample learned, agreeing with other studies demonstrating that farmers and natural resource managers value social learning and networking for development of their

management practices (Sagor & Becker, 2014; Millar & Curtis, 1999; Roling & Wagemakers, 1998). Findings suggest that organic growers view Extension as a supplementary, rather than a primary, source of information. Due to the dynamic state of knowledge about organic agriculture production, other scholars have suggested that an organic knowledge base has yet to be fully instituted within Extension (Ingram, 2010; Park & Lohr, 2007; Warner, 2006). The question remains as to the degree to which organic growers utilise the growing number of organic agriculture resources available through Extension (Ingram, 2010).

In Spain, Jurado, Ucles, Moral, and Viruel (2019) examined the social media penetration and activity of companies in the olive oil sector. The research also ascertained whether organic and non-organic operators present differences in this respect. To this end, a checklist was used to analyse the social media activity of 663 olive oil companies in total, comprising both organic and non-organic producers. The results reveal statistically significant differences in social media penetration and use by organic and non-organic operators, with the former being more active in these networks. Nevertheless, the social media efforts of organic operators are less effective, owing to the limited demand for their products. It was also observed that the organic companies had a greater following among users. This was due to a lack of information and the confusion consumers face in the traditional market, as well as the experiential nature of these products. The demand for information was not limited to the physical product but also extended to other aspects related to quality, healthiness, and respect for the environment during the production process.

Nevertheless, it was the non-organic companies that achieved better results with less effort on these media, as predicted by previous studies of the organic olive oil sector. Alternatively, this finding could be explained by the network effect, as conventional organisations currently address a far broader demand than that addressed by organic organisations. These findings may help make organic agri-food sector companies more aware of the potential of social media for addressing the commercial problems they face and their more favourable position to utilise this potential, given the specific characteristics of their market.

In Pakistan, Shaikh, Hassan, and Forooqui (2020) evaluated the role of mass media in disseminating information related to agricultural activities and identified the most preferred medium of information among farmers. The study found a significant role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information. Moreover, the newspaper's contents help farmers stay informed about the latest developments in agricultural activities. In another study, Farooq Muhammad, Chauhdary, and Ashraf (2007) found that fellow farmers and print media were the primary sources of agricultural information for all respondents. However, based on the ratings of various information sources by respondents regarding their contribution to the dissemination of agricultural information, the print media ranked third after fellow farmers and television. The most used form of print media for agricultural information was pamphlets, followed by posters, newspapers, books/booklets, magazines and journals. Pamphlets were reported for the highest use, while journals were the lowest.

Abinesh, Jebakumar, and Ambedkar's (2019) study aims to understand the usage patterns of new media among farmers and to identify the perceptions and challenges farmers face towards new media usage in Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu. A quantitative study has been conducted to investigate farmers' use of new media. The study consists of 150 samples of farmers from Kancheepuram District. The study identifies that the majority of farmers have greater awareness and access to New media. It also found that new media technologies are widely used for weather forecasting, environment-related information, and to stay informed about market trends, such as prices and stock availability. It is also

identified that farmers in Kancheepuram District has positive perception towards new media in bringing agricultural development.

In India, the study by Bhatia et al. (2016) aimed to identify the preferences of organic paddy farmers for mass media in receiving agricultural information. Results showed that 48.6% had medium, 36.6% had low, and 14.6% had high mass media exposure. Television was found to have the most uses, followed by newspapers, magazines, kisan call centres, workshops/training, radio, and the internet, respectively, by the farmers. It was found that education level, farm size, innovativeness, urbanisation, and knowledge had a significant positive relationship with mass media exposure.

Kolar and Kakade (2013) studied the impact of organic farming radio programs and the effectiveness of radio communication (All India Radio) on the knowledge level of organic farmers in Karnataka state. The study provides insight into the role of radio in imparting information to farmers, their knowledge gains, and the media habits of farmers. It will help further researchers in this field. Literature indicated that Radio is a powerful tool for the dissemination of information to farmers about the latest technologies in agriculture. Mass media (electronic & print media) are playing a critical role in creating awareness about new agricultural technologies among farmers, and the Radio provides a platform to explore topics in depth.

In Saudi Arabia, Alotaibi, Yoder, Brennan, and Kassem (2020) indicated that the sustainability of organic agriculture is associated with farmers' experience, the quality of information provided, risk management, and compliance with legislation. The objectives of this study were to identify the sources used by the organic farmers to gain information related to organic production and to assess organic farmers' perceived attitudes towards extension services. To address the research objectives, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 organic farmers in central Pennsylvania. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, categorised and coded, then thematically analysed using an interpretive description methodology. The results showed that extension services were not identified as a primary source of information frequently used by organic farmers. Other organic farmers and organisations for organic agriculture were the two primary sources of information. The organic farmers were very adept at building social capital in seeking information to address their issues and problems. The primary challenges faced by organic farmers were controlling insects and weeds, as well as weather-related issues. The results highlighted that, in addition to identifying viable information sources, factors such as adaptive capacities to climate change and certification were key to successful production in organic systems. The present study provides rich and deep information on how farmers perceive organic agriculture and extension services. The outcome of the research undertaken will enable planners, policymakers, and related Cooperative Extension personnel to understand farmers' perceptions better, thereby devising viable and workable policies and plans that address the concerns and challenges of farmers.

Sarker, Chowdhury, Miah, and Peloschek (2014) stated that organic farming in Bangladesh is still operated mainly by NGOs and the private sector due to a lack of proper attention from the public sector. Thus, the use of effective media is crucial for mass promotion. The present study demonstrated that farmer-led participatory videos have the potential to highlight the benefits of organic farming (i.e., vermi-compost and botanical pesticides) and convince farmers to adopt organic farming, as these types of videos are created with their voices and feature actors who are also part of their peer groups.

In Nigeria, Kuchi and Msughter's (2023) study examined press coverage of agricultural news. The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis as its research methodology. Framing and development theories were considered theoretical discourse. The study

population consists of 310 newspapers, and the four papers under investigation constitute the sample size of the study. The four papers were purposively selected due to their circulation strength and wide coverage of issues. The study found that 70.2% of the stories examined portrayed agriculture in a positive light. However, the findings also revealed that only 4.4% of agricultural news was featured on the front pages, 0.9% on the back pages, and 6.8% on the centre spread pages.

In comparison, 87.10% was used in the inside pages of the four newspapers, indicating a lack of prominence. The study concluded that the coverage of agriculture in newspapers needs to be given prominence, bearing in mind the potential of agriculture in the development of a world-class economy. Result shows that all the news stories analysed were published in the inside pages of newspapers, amounting to 403 (87.10%), while the front page recorded 4.4%; the back page constitutes 0.9%, and the centre spread got 6.8% within the period under study. Based on the data, the selected newspapers did not attach importance to agricultural issues because only a few stories were placed on the front page. Within the framework of the research question, news stories on agriculture appear more often on the inside pages than on the front and back pages. This suggests that print media reports Agricultural news on the inside pages, and stories on these pages tend to attract less attention. Agricultural news was not considered necessary by Nigerian newspapers and consequently did not receive the due attention it deserved from them.

In Zimbabwe, Mugwisi (2015) investigated how print and electronic media sources contribute to the communication of information related to agricultural development. The results indicate that there is significant media coverage of issues related to agriculture and the farm industry. The broadcast media, in particular, make efforts to reach a range of audiences who speak minority languages, such as Kalanga, Venda, Sotho, Doma, Yao, and Shangaan.

Ogessa and Sife's (2018) study examined the coverage of agricultural information in Tanzania's newspapers published between 2009 and 2013. Four newspapers: Mwananchi, Habari Leo, The Guardian, and Daily News, comprising 840 editions, were selected for the study. Findings show that of the 63,609 news articles in all four newspaper editions, only 836 (1.3%) articles were on agriculture. The proportion of agricultural news articles published ranged from 0.79 per cent in 2010 to 1.92 per cent in 2012. Habari Leo had an average of 61.4 agricultural articles, followed by Mwananchi with an average of 39.4 articles. The prominence of agricultural information was as low as 4.9 per cent in all the newspapers.

Materials and Methods

The paper was grounded in the interpretivist philosophical paradigm. Saunders et al. (2019) indicate that this philosophy holds that people construct knowledge as they interpret their experiences of and in the world, denying the objectivist belief that knowledge is just there to be collected and identified. The interpretivism paradigm follows a qualitative research approach. Hence, the target population for this paper was Kenya's mainstream newspapers, The Saturday Standard and Saturday Nation, which have special pull-outs every Saturday on Agriculture. The Saturday Standard publishes the 'Smart Harvest' while Saturday Nation publishes 'Seeds of Gold'. Considering that the two newspapers publish the pull-out for 52 weeks in a year, the study considered studying those published for six months in a year (October 1, 2022, to April 29, 2023). The reason for making this decision was to make the research more manageable and conducive to helping achieve research objectives. Data in this study was collected using a coding sheet (book). The coding book was used to analyse the content of information required from the two newspapers concerning different sources of news frames on organic farming. Data for this study was collected from the two newspapers pull-outs covering

organic farming practices in Kenya. Articles were identified and thereafter extracted. To undertake the process, the researcher first identified articles on organic farming. The data were correctly arranged according to both qualitative and quantitative forms. Quantitative data from the coding book was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Findings and Discussions

Sources of Frames for Organic Farming Information in Kenya's Newspapers

The study analysed the sources of frames from The Seeds of Gold and The Smart Harvest newspaper pullouts. Utilising newspaper article selection procedures, a total of 52 were found with Organic farming information, with 20 articles from Saturday Nation's Seeds of Gold' and 32 from Saturday Standard's 'Smart Harvest'. To determine the sources of frames for organic farming articles in the two newspapers, the researcher read each article and attributed every direct quote to a source listed in the codebook. Examining the sources most often depended upon for comments and quotes, which provided a sense of who the primary definers of the issue were; those people who are allowed to shape the "primary interpretation or initial definition of the organic farming (O'Morain & Robbins, 2024). A source was identified where a direct quotation was included. Direct quotes taken from the two newspaper editors/reporters were not included. In several instances, several representatives from the same institutions were quoted within the same article. Still, that institution was only coded once for that article for this analysis. Table 4.1 represents the sources of articles published by two newspapers.

Table 1: Sources of Articles on Organic Farming Frames in the Two Newspapers

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percent
Reporters	14	26.9
Scientists	7	13.5
Advocacy group / organization	7	13.5
Organic farmer	5	9.6
Government agencies	5	9.6
Industry representative	5	9.6
Business / entrepreneurs	3	5.8
Correspondents / contributors	3	5.8
Conference proceedings	2	3.8
Book author	1	1.9
Total	**52**	**100.0**

An analysis of the frames from the 52 sampled articles indicated that 14 (26.9%) of the articles were sourced by reporters from different sources and reported under one news article in the newspapers. Direct frames from agronomists (scientists) were present in 7 (13.5%) of articles. A farmer was quoted in 5 (9.6%) of the articles, and the same number of articles quoted information from representatives of the organic farming industry value chain. Direct frames from government officials were identified in 5 (9.6%) of articles. Additionally, 7 (13.5%) of identified frames came from advocacy groups championing organic farming in Kenya. The above results suggest that most newspapers collect information on organic agriculture from reliable sources. This means that the content of information presented in the newspapers is credible, providing the audience with an understanding of the issues related to organic farming. Unlike the study, research conducted by O'Morain and Robbins (2024) in Ireland found that the most frequently quoted sources of climate information frames were government ministers and farming organisations. This indicated that the two groups were the most sought after for comments or information regarding issues under consideration.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that newspapers constitute a crucial communication channel used to publicise information related to organic farming practices. The sources of information on organic farming primarily stem from reporters visiting organic farmers and interviewing them to comprehend the dynamics of the organic farming process, as well as institutions and advocacy groups focused on organic agriculture, scientists (including crop specialists and agronomists), organic farmers, entrepreneurs engaged in organic foods, and industries involved in processing and marketing organic food products. It is concluded that farmers serve as the primary sources of information for organic farming; however, the frequency with which newspapers interview them to provide information on the topic is low. Most articles on organic agriculture published in the two newspapers were sponsored pieces by related organisations. Government sources of information concerning organic farming were found to be limited. Given the shift in technology, information sources have transitioned from print-based media to online platforms. Therefore, stakeholders involved in the dissemination of organic farming should heed this change. There is also a pressing need for newspapers to elevate the voices of farmers engaged in organic agriculture in the country, rather than solely relying on sponsored articles for publication purposes.

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