

Patterns of Use, Trustworthiness, and perceived Values of Agripreneurship Communication Sources and Channels among youth in the Kamuli District, Uganda.

Reagan Suubi

Iowa State University
513 Farm House Ln
220E Curtiss Hall
Ames, IA 50011
515-291-0240
suubi@iastate.edu

Michael Retallick

Iowa State University
513 Farm House Ln
206 Curtiss Hall
Ames, IA 50011
515-294-4810
msr@iastate.edu

Introduction

Youth engagement in agripreneurship is critical for the sustainability of agriculture and the development of a future agricultural workforce, particularly in Uganda where agriculture remains the primary livelihood for most rural communities (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2021). Despite national and international efforts to attract youth into agriculture, participation continues to decline due to negative perceptions, limited access to reliable information, and gaps in extension service delivery (Johnston and Lane, 2021). Communication plays a central role in shaping how youth perceive agriculture, access information, and make agripreneurship decisions (Tayeebwa et al., 2022). Understanding how youth evaluate communication sources and channels is therefore essential for designing effective extension and educational strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in Source Credibility Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study conceptualizes agricultural communication as an active process in which youth agripreneurs select information sources and channels they perceive as trustworthy and valuable for meeting their needs. Source Credibility Theory posits that individuals are more likely to accept and act on information when it originates from credible and trustworthy sources (Wilkins et al., 2018). Uses and Gratifications Theory explains how audiences deliberately choose communication channels that best satisfy their informational and decision-making needs (Katz et al., 1973). Together, these theories provide a framework for examining how trust, perceived value, and information needs shape youth engagement in agripreneurship.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine how youth agripreneurs in Kamuli District access, evaluate, and utilize agripreneurship communication sources and channels, with emphasis on perceived trustworthiness and value for decision-making. The study was guided by four objectives:

1. Identify the communication sources and channels youth agripreneurs use to access agripreneurship information.
2. Describe youth perceptions of trustworthiness and credibility of these sources and channels.
3. Examine the perceived value and usefulness of various information sources and channels.
4. Analyze how patterns of information use, trust, and perceived value shape agripreneurship decisions and engagement.

Methods

A qualitative exploratory case study design was used to examine youth agripreneurs' communication experiences in Kamuli District, Uganda. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 17 youth agripreneurs (ages 18–35) affiliated with the Iowa State University – Uganda Program (ISU- UP). Participants were actively engaged in agripreneurship for at least three years. Interviews were conducted in Lusoga to ensure participant comfort and depth of expression, then translated into English. Data were analyzed thematically using Braun

and Clarke (2022b) six-step approach, with MAXQDA software used for data organization and coding.

Findings

Findings revealed that youth agripreneurs relied on a hybrid communication ecosystem consisting of extension officers, private organizations, peer farmers, agro-input dealers, mobile phones, radios, and face-to-face interactions. Peer farmers and private organizations were perceived as the most trustworthy sources because of shared experiences, consistent engagement, and observable outcomes. Extension officers were viewed as credible and knowledgeable but were inconsistently accessible, which affected sustained trust and utilization.

Mobile phones and radio were the most frequently used communication channels due to accessibility and convenience, while face-to-face interactions such as farm visits, training, and extension meetings were perceived as the most valuable for building trust and understanding. Youth accessed agronomic, market, weather, and value-addition information primarily to support production decisions, market timing, and enterprise diversification. Trust and gratification strongly shaped information use. Youth were more likely to act on information they perceived as timely, practical, locally relevant, and delivered by trusted sources

Discussion, Implications and conclusions

The findings demonstrate that youth engagement in agripreneurship is influenced not only by access to information, but by how information is trusted and how well it gratifies youth needs. Consistent with Source Credibility Theory, youth preferred information from sources perceived as trustworthy and reliable, including extension officers, private organizations, and fellow farmers (Wilkins et al., 2018). Uses and Gratifications Theory further explains youth preferences for communication channels that met practical needs, such as mobile phones for immediacy and face-to-face interactions for clarity and confidence-building (Okwu & Daudu, 2011).

Extension services emerged as a critical yet constrained communication mechanism. When extension communication was accessible, practical, and relationship-based, it enhanced trust and supported youth decision-making (Mukembo et al., 2020; Lamm et al., 2021). However, inconsistent extension reaches, limited follow-up, and infrastructural barriers including high internet costs and poor connectivity affected information gratification and weakened engagement of the youth in agripreneurship (UCC, 2019).

Overall, the findings highlight the need for youth-centered extension and communication strategies that prioritize trust-building, practical relevance, and blended communication channels. Integrating peer learning, experiential approaches, and consistent follow-up can enhance perceived value and sustained engagement (Mukembo & Edwards, 2020). Addressing communication barriers is essential for strengthening youth participation, underscoring that effective agricultural communication is foundational to long-term youth engagement in agripreneurship (Ng' Atigwa et al., 2020).

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022b). Toward Good Practice in Thematic analysis: Avoiding Common Problems and becoming a Knowing Researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6. tandfonline. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Johnston, K. A., & Lane, A. B. (2021). Communication with intent: A typology of communicative interaction in engagement. *Public Relations Review*, 47(1), 101925.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2747854>
- Lamm, K., Mulvaney, C., Lamm, A., Davis, K., & Masambuka-Kanchewa, F. (2021). Model of success: extension services helping Ugandan youth find a career in agriculture. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 28(3), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.5191/jiaee.2021.28301>
- Mukembo, S., Edwards, M., & Watters, C. (2020). Development of livelihood skills through school-based, agripreneurship projects integrating youth-adult partnerships: the experiences of youth partners in Uganda. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 27(4), 111-127. <https://doi.org/10.5191/jiaee.2020.274111>
- Ng'Atigwa, J., Mbilinyi, L., & Njehu, M. (2020). Assessment of factors influencing youth involvement in horticulture agribusiness in Tanzania: A case study of Njombe region. *Agriculture*, 10(7), 287. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture10070287>
- Okwu, O. J., & Daudu, S. (2011). Extension communication channels usage and preference by farmers in Benue State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development*, 3(5), 88-94. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JAERD.900004>
- Tayeebwa, D. W., Wendo, D. C., & Nakiwala, D. A. S. (2022). Theories and models of science communication. *Science Communication Skills for Journalists*, 14-22. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781789249675.0002>
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). (2021). *Youth and Adolescents in Uganda: A Statistical Abstract 2021*. Kampala, Uganda: UBOS. <https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/Youth-and-Adolescents-in-Uganda.pdf>
- Uganda Communication Commission (UCC), (2019). *State of information Communication Technology for Agriculture Innovation in Uganda*. Kampala, Uganda. <https://www.ucc.co.ug/ucusaf/ict-for-agriculture/>
- Wilkins, E. J., Miller, H. M., Tilak, E., & Schuster, R. M. (2018). Communicating information on nature-related topics: Preferred information channels and trust in sources. *PloS one*, 13(12). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0209013>