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Information Needs and Sources of Maasai Pastoralists at Orkesumet in Simanjiro District Manyara Region -Tanzania

By

Lotegelwaki, Obedy¹, Mosha, Goodluck² and David, Onyago Nyakwaka³

Abstract

Purpose: This paper reports a study, which examined the specific information needs and sources of Maasai pastoralists at Orkesumet area in Simanjiro District, Manyara -Tanzania

Design/methodology/approach: The study used pragmatism paradigm which is a mixed method approach. Simple random sampling was used to select 40 respondents from the five villages (Mukumbi, Naibor-enderit, Narosoito, Orkirung'urung' and Endonyengijape. Purposive sampling was used to select clan leaders (*Ilaigwanak* and *Ingopir*), two from each of the five villages forming ten purposively selected respondents. Questionnaire, interview schedule, and observation were designed to extract information from respondents.

Findings: The findings of the study showed that, Maasai practicing pure pastoralism had different needs from those who practice agro-pastoralism. Traditional leaders and extension officers were regarded as the reliable sources of information. Mobile phones were preferred as a source of information but facing challenges. Acquaintance and family members were acknowledged as reliable sources of information. Maasai pastoralist face challenges in the use of information technology due to their low level of educational and inadequate formal sources of information.

Practical implications – The authors anticipates that this study will act as an eye opener to the United Republic of Tanzania government and non-government organizations to think of providing appropriate reliable sources of information to Maasai pastoralists so that their contribution can be seen in the socio-economic development of the country.

Originality/value – Several studies have been conducted on information needs and sources for different tribes in Tanzania. However, none of these studies have been conducted on Maasai pastoralist. This study is expected to serve as a stepping-stone for further studies on this neglected tribe in socio-economic activities in Tanzania.

Keywords Information sources, information needs, Maasai pastoralist, pure pastoralism, agro-pastoralist, and Simanjiro district,

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Background of the Study

The word Maasai is an English expression from the word Ilmaasai from one of the ethnic groups living in Kenya and Tanzania, which means the people who speaks Maa language (Mtaita, 1998). Maasai are pastoralists who are known to be nomads before the colonial times and after independence of all the East African countries, they are currently being categorized as Semi-nomads (Mollel, 2011). Maasai pastoralist lives in the interior plains where they can get green pastures and water for their animals.

Information is slowly becoming one of the basic human needs, it ranks next to air, water, food and shelter (Devi and Dlamini, 2014). Information is therefore unavoidable ingredient in almost all forms of life. It is a prerequisite to the development of any society and is a driving force for development, whether economic, social, or political. Information helps people to make informed decisions relevant to their undertakings in all walks of life (Godlee *et al.*, 2004 and Gathoni, 2012). Information according to (Uzezi, 2015) helps people to open up and provide opportunities for people to shape their lives, reduce vulnerability to sickness and misfortunes.

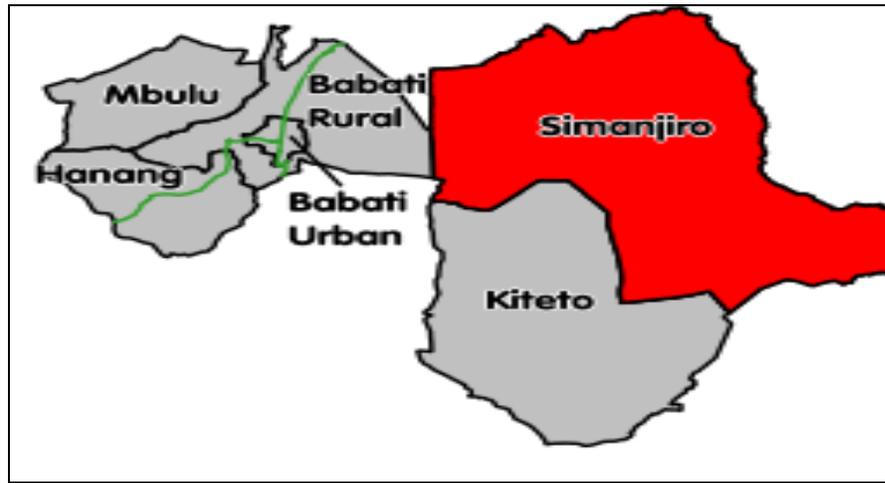
Maasai are native African ethnic group of semi-nomadic people located in Tanzania and Kenya; they are among the most well known African ethnic groups internationally for being reluctant to adopt a more sedentary lifestyle. Their major economic activity is livestock keeping; however, some of them are currently engaged in crop cultivation. Nomadic life practiced by the Maasai require information to enable them to make informed decisions concerning livestock keeping, their health, education as well as political issues. As livestock keeping and crop cultivation systems become more complex, Maasai access to reliable, timely, and relevant information sources is becoming more critical to their survival (Coast, 2002). Information which livestock keepers access must be relevant and meaningful to farmers, in addition to being packaged and delivered in a way preferred by them (Diekmann, Loibl and Batte, 2009).

Angello, Msuya and Matovelo (2016) emphasized that livestock keepers including pastoralists need information on animal diseases, nutrition, treatment and control of diseases, breeding techniques and markets for their products, among many other information needs. This is supported by Kalusopa (2005) who mentioned livestock diseases, disease diagnosis, pasture availability, livestock products management, and market and price as major information needs of livestock keepers. Furthermore, Luseno *et al.*, (2003) suggest strongly that timely information on forage supplies is of vital importance to pastoralists.

Description of Study Area

Simanjiro District is one of the six districts of the Manyara Region in Tanzania. It is bordered to the north by Arusha Region, to the north east by Kilimanjaro Region, to the south east by Tanga Region, to the south by Kiteto District, to the south west by Dodoma Region and to the west by Babati Rural District. Simanjiro District is the largest of the four Maasai districts in Tanzania with a population of more than 71,531 undertaking pastoralism as a way of life (Ole-Lengisugi, 1994). The district headquarter is located in Orkesumet which is a Maasai word meaning "long wells of water".

Simanjiro District's location within Manyara Region



Source: Google Map 2018

Statement of the Problem

In Africa in general, very few studies have been conducted to assess information needs and sources used by pastoralists (Kaitho *et al.*, 2007). In East Africa, where Maasai pastoralists live, no studies have so far been conducted to explore the information needs and sources of pastoralists. Nomadic life practiced by Maasai involves roaming around with their livestock throughout southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. Maasai herded livestock over large distances in order to make use of sparse resources such as pastures and water (Coast, 2002; Forstater, 2002, and Conroy (1999). All these endeavors require relevant information before making informed decision about moving or staying (Fratkin & Mearns, 2002). Information needed entails availability of water and pastures for grazing, and livestock diseases. A study by Wangui (2008) noted that the reasons for Maasai pastoralist having limited access to information is attributed to lack of the medias such as libraries, reliable cellular phone networks, newspapers, radios, TV stations and alike. Transhumance nature of their life contribute to the lack such services lack of the mentioned media.. Although there is a radio station located at Terat in Simanjiro District the Orkonerei Radio Service (ORS FM- Sauti ya Wafugaji) which disseminate information to the Maasai pastoralist using Maasai language, the frequency of the radio does not reach Orkesumet area. It is with above inadequacies that the researchers decided to conduct this study with an intention of identifying Information needs and source used by Maasai pastoralists at Orkesumet Area in Simanjiro District at Manyara Region, Tanzania and provide recommendations for improvement.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to assess the information needs and sources used by Maasai pastoralists at Orkesumet in Simanjiro District Manyara Region. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. Identifying the types of information needed by Maasai pastoralist at Orkesumet Area in Simanjiro District.

2. Determining sources of information which Maasai pastoralists nomads at Orkesumet Area in Simanjiro District preferred and utilize.
3. Examining the Maasai pastoralists' satisfactions with the sources of information at Orkesumet Area in Simanjiro District.

Maasai Pastoralists Defined

Pastoralist are persons who are devoid of fixed residence or places of domicile who engage in continuous and purposeful movement searching for pastures and water for their livestock (Ezeomah, 1990). Maasai pastoralists are groups of Nilotic who lives in both Tanzania and Kenya who are always and perpetually on the move with their livestock , primarily in search of animal pastures. Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, rank among the top ten countries in the world in terms of pastoral population size. In all these countries, the Maasai make up one of the largest pastoral groups in East Africa.

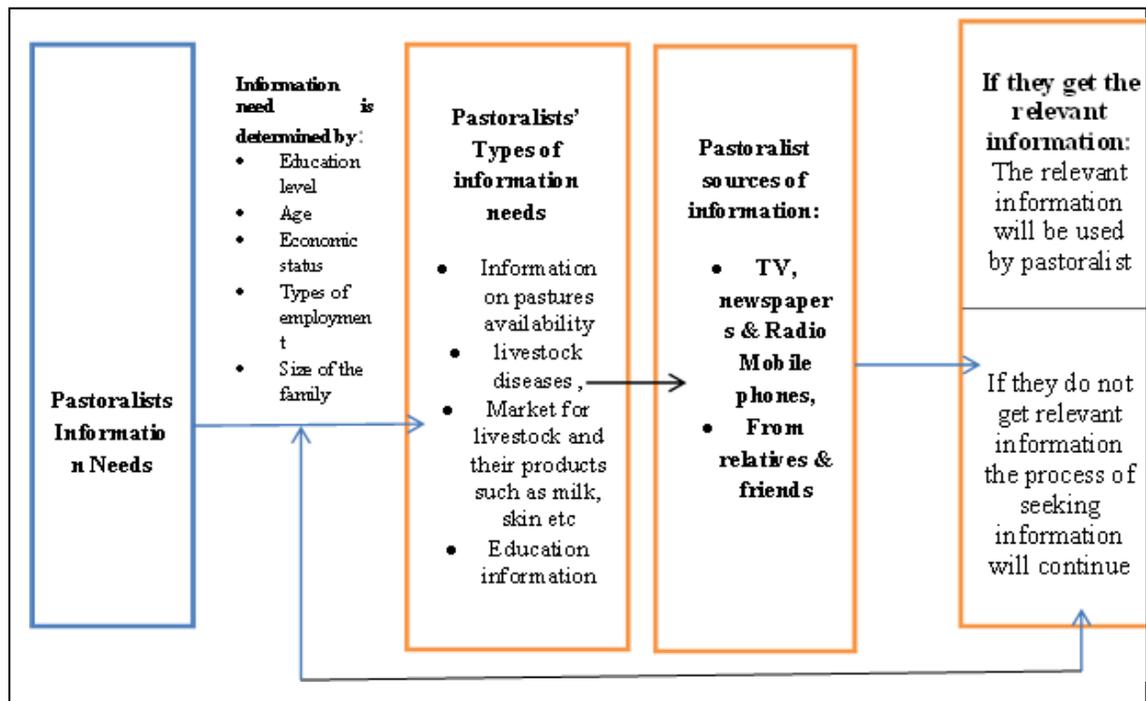
Theories and Models

This study was guided by a modified Wilsons' Model 1996 of Information Seeking Behavior

Wilson's Model of Information Seeking Behavior

This study used the conceptual model "Information and Seeking" adapted from Wilson (1996) as modified by the researchers. The model was used because it incorporates both aspects of information needs and sources which are the subject of the study.

Figure 2.1: Modified Wilson's Model of Information Seeking Behavior



Source: Modified Wilson's Model 1996

The model suggests that information need and seeking arises as a consequence of a perceived

need by an information user, who, in order to satisfy that need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information. If successful, the individual then makes the use of the information found and may fully or partially satisfy the perceived need - or, indeed, fail to satisfy the need and have to reiterate the search process. The model also shows that part of the information need and seeking may involve other people through information exchange and that information perceived as useful may be passed to other people, as well as being used (or instead of being used) by the person himself or herself.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Orkesumet, which is at Simanjiro District in Manyara region. The study used pragmatism paradigm, which is a mixed method approach. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:16-17) this paradigm favours a mix of research approaches in order to achieve a good fit in responding to research questions. Simple random sampling was used to select 40 respondents from the five (5) villages (Mukumbi, Naibor-enderit, Narosoito, Orkirung'urung' and Endonyengijape. Purposive sampling was used to select clan leaders (*Ilaigwanak* and *Ingopir*), two (2) from each of the five (5) villages forming ten (10) purposively selected respondents.

Questionnaires, interview, and observation were used to collect data. The target group for questionnaire were Maasai pastoralists; interview was administered to the clan leaders (*Ilaigwanak* and *Ingopir*). Data gathered through questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS, and data gathered through interview was analyzed using thematic analysis. Reliability and validity were ensured through pretesting questionnaires and interview guides.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Age and educational level were regarded as a vital variable in this study since it enables the researcher to discover whether the information needs and sources used by Maasai pastoralists at Orkesumet area are influenced by age and level of education. The findings of the study were as follows: Respondents within an age group of 20-30 years, where 12 (24%) were not able to read and write. Age group 31-40, which were 9 (18%) were not able to read and write, only 1 (2%) had secondary education. Age group 41-50, that is 7 (14%) were not able read and write, 3 (6%) had primary education. Two (2%) had secondary education while none of them had diploma education. Age group 51-60, 4(8%) of all participants were not able to read and write. Those with ability to write and read were able to seek different sources of information.

Table 1: Age Group and Educational Levels of the Respondents

Sample Size N=50	Age Group	Educational Level								Total	
		Cannot read & write		Primary Education		Secondary Education		Diploma			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	20-30 years	12	24	00	00	0	00	00	00	12	24
	31-40 years	9	18	00	00	1	02	00	00	10	20

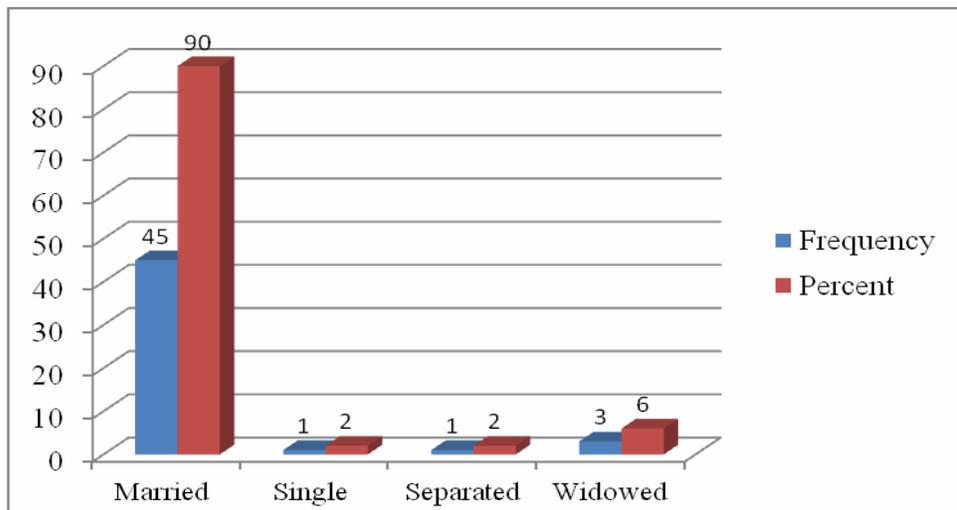
41-50 years	7	14	3	06	2	04	00	00	12	24
51-60 years	4	8	00	00	0	00	00	00	4	08
60-Above	11	22	00	00	0	00	01	02	12	24
Total	43	96	3	06	3	6	01	02	50	100

Source: Field Data 2018

Marital Status of the Respondents

Respondents were requested to indicate their marital status in the questionnaire distributed to them. The findings in Figure 4.1 below revealed that 43 (90%) were married, and 1 (2%) were single. Respondents within category of separated were 1 (2%) whereas 3 (6%) were widowed. The reflection was that married respondents were the dominant group in this study. Observation carried out by researchers revealed that married respondents were eagerly seeking a lot of information related to livestock keeping to improve their income which will ultimately enable them meet their basic needs. Single respondents did not struggle to search for information since they have little responsibilities.

Figure 1: Marital Status of the Respondents



Source: Field Data 2018

Occupations of the Respondents

Two major groups of occupations were identified as shown on Table 4.2 below. Respondents who engage in pure pastoralist were 48 (96%) whereas those who are agro-pastoralist were two (4%) of the total respondents. These occupations have varied information needs and sources. For example pure pastoralist needs are based only on livestock keeping while their counterpart agro-pastoralist needs are both livestock keeping and crop cultivation.

Table.2: Occupations of the Respondents

Sample	Categories of Responses	Frequency	Percent
	Pure Pastoralists	48	96
	Agro-pastoralist	2	4

	Total	50	100
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Source: Field Data 2018

To supplement data obtained through questionnaire, an in-depth interview was carried out from respondent who practice pure pastoralist and had the following remarks:

“... actually, as a pure pastoralist, my information needs are on places with pastures, water, market for my livestock, areas which are free from livestock disease, availability of medicine for treatment of livestock diseases. When I do not get this information, I normally plan to move with my livestock to a place where they are available. This is the way I behave when searching for information”

On the other hand, respondent who practice both livestock keeping and crop cultivation had the following to comment:

“... information which which will enable me to keep both livestock and grow crops. Our counterpart “pure pastoralist never interacts with non Maasai when seeking information unless they are in need of modern medicine for treatments of their livestock. We agro-pastoralist do interact with “Irmeeek”(that is non Maasai or Swahili people) as most of them are also crop cultivators and they form market of our produce livestock produce.”

The above findings show that occupation of respondents influence information need and sources this is in line with the modified Wilson Model (1996).

Sources of Information Used by Maasai Pastoralists

The study findings identified the following sources of information used by Maasai pastoralists:

Religious Leaders as Source of Information

Religious leaders, whether tradition or religious are considered as the most reliable sources of information by Maasai pastoralists. The study involved Maasai religious’ leaders who are Christian, *“Ilairitak and Ilainosunok loo lomon* (Pastors and Evangelists) since no Maasai who are Muslims. Religious leaders are highly respected people in the community for their wisdom. Respondents who participated in this study were provided with options to rank their frequencies of using religious as sources of information. The findings are summarized on Table 3 below. A total of 1 (2%) used such leaders frequently. A total of 28 (56%) used them rarely, whereas 21 (42%) opted for very rare option. The findings therefore indicates that these leaders are not major source of information.

Table 3 Sources of Information Needs: Religious Leaders

Sample Size N= 50	Categories of Responses	Frequency	Percent
	Very frequently	1	2.0
	Rarely	28	56.0
	Very rarely	21	42.0
	Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Data 2018

A participant who is a Christian member of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) Orkesumet Parish, when interviewed had the following quotation extract:

“...meseja naleng’ inosu ilaiturukok lekanisa imbaak naipirita eramatare aamu keisilig ninje aajokiyelo. Einosu ake duo ilomon leNgai o enyorata toltungani pookin. Kake teneimin eramatare (engiteng’, engine arashu enger, ore pee ing’oruni nelauni neyai orkilikwai kanisa pee ewuoi aaliki esirit tenasaa inosuni lomom paa tenetii oltung’ani otadua nelimu”.

In English version of the quotation, the Maasai respondent who is also a member of Lutheran Church had the following argument:

“... Always our religious leaders rarely preach on issues related to livestock keeping. Their assumptions are that Maasai have enough knowledge on livestock rearing. They therefore preach the word of God and emphasizing on the need of loving and respecting each other. However, when church elders reading church announcements, issues such as lost livestock (cows, goat and ships)” may be included if any. This is the major reason why they are not regarded as sources of livestock information.

One of the respondents who is a member of Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG) had the following remarks:

“...inosakitai iyook ororei leNgai kake inosuta sii ake peekintong’or esiana oongishu aamir pekishetie ingajijik enakata nekirikie ingera engisoma. Mekiyeu pae iyook ena bae, kiyeu ake duo nepona ingishu aamu ore enganyit ormaasinda ingishu kumok. Tenemiata ingishu nikiji orkunjai, naa enjunet torono naleng ina too yook Irmaasai”.

In English version of the quotation that Maasai respondent mean the who is also a following:

“...We are preaching the words of God but also as a Pastor i encourage Maasai to reduce a number of livestock through selling in order to earn money for building modern houses and also to send their children to school. The challenge we are facing is that, they don’t accept this notion because

personality and wealth of a Maasai is counted based on quantity and not quality of the livestock. Large quantity of livestock is a sign of wealth and respect in the Maasai community”.

The above findings revealed that religious leaders are respect but they are not given mandate to advise on livestock keeping and therefore they are not among reliable sources of livestock information.

Libraries as Sources of Information

It is undisputed reality that public libraries are one of the world known sources of information. The researcher were interested to know the frequencies of library use by Maasai pastoralists, the findings revealed that 44 (88%) of respondents indicated that they had never used the libraries as the sources of their information. Only minority of the respondents that is 3 (6%) indicated that they had rarely been using library as source of information these are those who happen to have formal education. A total of 3 (6%) did not respond to this item. Findings are as summarized in Table 4 below.

To clarify above findings the researcher interviewed one of the respondents as to why library was poorly ranked. The interviewee had the following to responses:

“...No! I have never heard the word library and I do not know what it is. As we are talking, this is the first time to hear it as a possible source of information. This is because of our /nomadic nature of livestock keeping that one has to move from one area to another searching for water and pastures and therefore no chances for moving to town searching for information in libraries”.

Additionally, the researcher interviewed a Maasai who is practicing agro-pastoralist who claimed that:

“...I have been using library because i had a privilege to attend primary and secondary education where libraries were to be used for reading and studying. ” ”.

Extension Agents as Sources of Livestock Information

Extension agents are agricultural experts who provide farmers and livestock keepers with agricultural information. The findings revealed the following: 27 (54%) indicated to have been always using extension officers as source of information. A total of 10 (20%) opted occasionally category, 1 (2%) never whereas 12 (24%) respondents opted very frequently. The finding generally indicates that extensions agents are reliable source of livestock information by Maasai pastoralist (see Table.4 below).

The researcher interviewed a respondent who engage in pure pastoralist had the following remarks:

“...we always get information concerning livestock keeping from our extension agents. This is because they are very helpful in times of livestock disease outbreak. Their advices are always helpful to us”.

These findings have been supported by the modified Wilson model (1996) as shows extension agents as pastoralist source of information.

Mobile Phones as the Source of Information

The findings of the study revealed that 25 (50%) participants indicated have been using mobile phone always, 20 (40%) indicated to use mobile phones very frequently, 3 (6%) indicated to use them occasionally, 2 (4%) indicated to use them very rarely. Findings are as summarized in (Table 4). The implication of the findings are that mobile phones are the most reliable source of livestock information.

The researcher interviewed one of participant who affirmed that;

“...although sometimes we moved with our cattle to remote areas with no mobile phones networks but still it is an important tool for accessing information. While in the remote pastures we always climb on the long trees or on hills looking for possibility of fetching mobile networks to communicate with extension agents, livestock markets, incidences of livestock raids as well as communicating with families.

Family members

Respondents were provided with likert items to opt the frequency of using family members as source of information. The finding indicated that 42 (84%) of respondents opted for always category, 6 (20 very frequently, 2 (4%) opted for never. This indicates that family members are valued by maasai as a source of information (see Table.4 below).

Acquaintances

These are the people whom someone know a little about, but they are not their best friends: Maasai always respect information from acquaintances as they are believed to have knowledge on livestock keeping. On the use of acquaintances as source of information the findings revealed that half of the respondents 25 (50%) always rely on them. Two(4%) ranked occasionally,13 (26%) rarely whereas 10 (20%) were of never category (Table 4 below). The finding in general indicated that Maasai trust acquaintances as sources of information for their livestock information.

Traditional Leaders

Most society in Tanzania have traditional leaders who are appointed to guide and ensure traditional norms and customs are effectively respected. In Maasai pastoralist, these leaders are believed the authentic source of information. It was from this opinion that made the researchers to prove this allegation. Findings revealed that 48 (96%) supported by opting "always" category, 1 (2%) ranked "occasionally", One that is (2%) ranked "rarely" whereas none of them opted never category (see Table 4below). From these findings traditional leaders are proved to be a major source of livestock keeping information.

Table 4: Various Sources of Information used by Maasai Pastoralists

	Sources of Information	Category of response	F	%
Sample Size N=50	Family members	Always	42	94
		Very frequently	6	12
		Rarely	2	4
		Never	0	0
	Acquaintances/friends	Always	25	50
		Occasionally	2	4
		Rarely	13	26
		Never	10	20
	Traditional leaders	Always	48	96
		Occasionally	1	2
		Rarely	1	2
	Libraries	Never	0	0
		Rarely	3	6
Never		44	88	
		No response	3	6

	Sources of Information	Category of response	F	%
	Extension Agents	Always	29	58
		Very frequently	18	36
		Occasionally	3	6
		Never	0	0
		No Response	0	0
	Mobile phones	Always	25	50
		Very frequently	20	40
		Occasionally	3	6
		Very rarely	2	4
		No Response	0	0

Source: Field Data 2018

Information of Importance to the Maasai Pastoralist

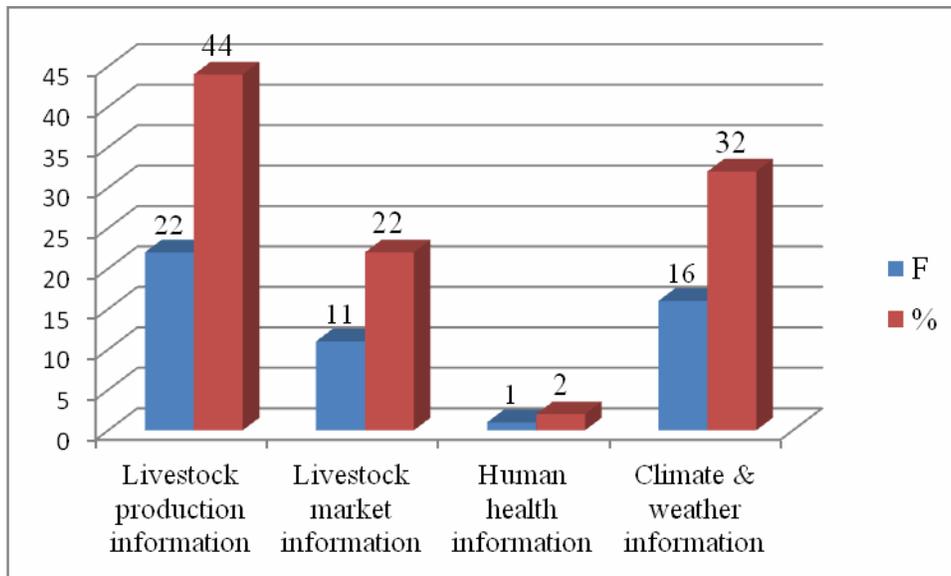
Respondents were provided with items to opt on type of information which is of importance to them. The findings showed that 22 (44%) ranked livestock production information, 16 (32%) opted for Climate and weather information. Eleven, that is (22%) ranked livestock market information. Only one that is (2%) ranked human health information (Figure 2). This implies that Maasai prefer livestock market information than other types.

The interviewed respondent had the following views:

“...it will be very astonishing to see a Maasai pastoralist ranking other

information sources indicated in your questionnaire while the most important information for us “livestock information” is indicated. This is so because it is a backbone of survival. However, there is a need for creating awareness on others such as human health and politics since affect our lives”.

Figure 2 Specific Information of Importance to the Maasai Pastoralists



Source: Field Data 2018

Most Preferred Information Sources by Maasai Pastoralists

Results on Table 5 below shows that majority of respondents 49 (98%) prefer Veterinary Officers as the most preferred information sources, 1 (2%) slightly preferred radio,TV was slightly opted by 48 (96%) Newspapers had 24 (48%) respondents pointing slightly preferred as source of livestock information. The findings indicated that veterinary officers and newspapers were the most preferred source of information.

Table 5 Most Preferred Information Resources

Sample Size N= 50	Most preferred information resources	Category of response	F	%
	Veterinary officers	Slightly preferred	1	2
		Preferred	49	98
	Radio	Slightly preferred	48	96
		Preferred	2	4
	Television (TV)	Slightly preferred	49	98
		Preferred	1	2
	Newspapers	Most preferred	1	2
		Slightly preferred	25	50
		Preferred	24	48

Source: Field Data 2018

An interview was conducted to supplement above findings. The following are the responses, which were captured by the researcher:

“...for sure, veterinary officers are the major livestock source of information to us Maasai pastoralists. With the current climatic changes there are so many livestock diseases. Some of which our traditional elders cannot treat. Therefore, these trained officers in modern treatments are our major source of information especially incidences of disease outbreak”

Challenges Facing Maasai Pastoralist in Searching for Information

One of the challenges, which was strongly mentioned by Maasai pastoralist, is the poor knowledge of using modern channels of disseminating information. The most cited channels were mobile phone and social media. This is attributed with the high illiterate rates among Maasai pastoralist. This was supported by an in-depth interview where one of the respondents had the following claims:

“...Accessing information in modern media is a critical problem to us. Important information concerning livestock rearing is always flowing through such media but our poor knowledge and inability to understand the information which is always in English and some in Swahili is indeed a problem.”

Poor Infrastructure was another challenge, Radio stations, which are available at Simanjiro, are the stations from Kenya and sometimes Radio Tanzania is accessed with difficulty. Mobile phones network connectivity is also a problem as they are weak and one cannot use them comfortably.

Poor reading culture among Maasai pastoralist was also noted as a problem, majority of pastoralist are illiterate, they cannot read and write properly, this makes them fail to access

important information for their livestock, political, as well as human health related information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Tanzania Library Service Board (TLSB) is recommended to think of building a Public Library at Simanjiro District. This will enable dissemination of information on livestock keeping as well as other necessary information to Maasai pastoralist. The idea of using Mobile Libraries through using cars/ motor vehicles could also help to reach Maasai pastoralists. This has worked in Bagamoyo District, and Tabora region in the past.
- ii. Religious organizations were also requested to think of building libraries in areas where they run their activities to enable Maasai pastoralist to access varied information recourses.
- iii. Ministry of Education and District Educational Officer are called upon to think of revamping Adults Education Programmes to tackle the problem of relapsing illiterate rate at Simanjiro district. This could enable Maasai pastoralist to be able to benefit information sources and resources.
- iv. The Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) was blamed by Maasai pastoralist for neglecting Simanjiro district. They are therefore requested to direct Television station owners, radio, and mobile phone companies to exit their services to Simanjiro district.

Conclusion

The dynamic nature of the information needs and sources for pastoralist calls for a continuous process of identifying them. Appropriate and relevant information sources are continuously becoming key components of improved economic activities, pastoralist being the one. Pastoralist like other farmers require proper information, which will enable them to make informed decisions. If the information needs of Maasai pastoralist will continue being undermined, the Tanzania vision of developing industries related to beef, turneries, and milk processing industries will be realized with a difficulty.

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