

FARMERS PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY OF EXTENSION SERVICES PROVIDED BY PUBLIC EXTENSION ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: The study was conducted to know the service quality of extension services provided by public extension organizations as perceived by the clientele in Raichur, Gulbarga, Bidar, Yadgir, Koppal and Bellary districts of Karnataka state during 2013-14. 40 Clientele from Krishi vigyan kendras and 40 clientele from raita samparka kendras were selected randomly for the study. Thus the total sample comprised of 80 clientele respondents. Responses from the clientele respondents were gathered by personally interviewing to elicit required information. The results of the study revealed that, no significant difference was observed with respect to statement wise perceived service quality of extension services provided by the extension organizations. Access dimension of service quality was ranked first by the clientele of krishi vigyan kendras with a mean score of 3.23 followed by assurance (II rank, mean score 3.08), reliability (III rank, mean score 3.05) and responsiveness (IV rank, mean score 3.01). Access dimension of service quality was ranked first by clientele of raita samparka kendras with a mean score of 3.17 followed by reliability (II rank, mean score 3.02), assurance (III rank, mean score 2.94), timeliness (IV rank, mean score 2.93) and responsiveness (V rank, mean score 2.88. In case of Krishi Vigyan Kendras clientele characteristics, education, risk orientation, perceived satisfaction of services and perceived effectiveness had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality. While, economic motivation and risk orientation had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality in case of Raita samparka Kendras clientele characteristics.

Keywords: Access, Clientele, Perception, Service quality and tangible.

Introduction

Agricultural extension is an important factor that determines the success of agriculture development in a country like India. Various organizations are involved in providing agricultural extension services to farming community in India. Over the years, number of agencies providing agricultural extension services is increasing resulting in increasing the opportunity to reach greater number of farmers scattered across the country.

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Number of organizations are providing agricultural extension services independently to the farming community. Different organizations differ from each other in their area coverage, clientele served, staff strength and funding etc. The role of extension is very important for sustainable development of agriculture which is moving from mere production oriented towards an export and commercial oriented one. The service quality and effectiveness of the extension services is important for effective management of the organization. In this competitive world, providing quality and effective information is crucial for the survival of extension organizations. Farmers' perception of service quality plays an important role in success or failure of extension services. Quality is important and strategic aspect in effective management of not only for public and private sector firms, but also for other types of organizations including non-profit making organizations. The changing scenario demands increased expectations for superior quality of services rather than mere its availability (Rana *et al.*, 2013).

Keeping above facts in mind, the present study was undertaken with an objective to know the perceived service quality of extension services provided by public extension organizations.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Raichur, Gulbarga, Bidar, Yadgir, Koppal and Bellary districts of Hyderabad-Karnataka region of Karnataka state during 2013-14. Clientele of Krishi vigyan kendras under University of Agricultural Sciences and Raita Samparka Kendras under Karnataka State Department of Agriculture were selected randomly for the study. 40 clientele from Krishi Vigyan Kendras and 40 clientele from Raita Samparka Kendras were selected using simple random sampling technique from the clientele list obtained from the organizations. Thus the total sample comprised of 80 clientele respondents. Responses from the clientele respondents were gathered by personally interviewing to elicit required information. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

The service quality was measured using the 19 items in the SERVQUAL questionnaire developed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) and used by Rana *et al.*, 2013 with suitable modifications and adaptations for increasing its relevancy to agricultural services. It consists of seven dimensions: access, assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, tangibility and timeliness.

Results and Discussion

Perceived service quality of services provided by the public and private extension organizations

In order to know the difference in the service quality delivered by the two public extension organizations, statistical tools like mean and standard deviation were used for each of the service quality construct. The results presented in table 1 revealed that, the clientele perceive the quality of services from krishi vigyan kendras are better than raita samparka kendras. They are better satisfied with the service of krishi vigyan kendras.

No significant difference was observed with respect to mean score of service quality constructs like I have high level of confidence in the service, The extension personnel are easily approachable and are available at all times, They provide accurate information, Provide opportunity for Quick feedback mechanism and They provide In time delivery of required services among krishi vigyan kendras and raita samparka kendras.

It was evident from table 2 that, access dimension of service quality was ranked first by the clientele of krishi vigyan kendras with a mean score of 3.23 followed by assurance (II rank, mean score 3.08), reliability (III rank, mean score 3.05), responsiveness (IV rank, mean score 3.01), tangible (V rank, mean score 2.92), timeliness (VI rank, mean score 2.88) and empathy (VII rank, mean score 2.79).

Access dimension of service quality was ranked first by clientele of raita samparka kendras with a mean score of 3.17 followed by reliability (II rank, mean score 3.02), assurance (III rank, mean score 2.94), timeliness (IV rank, mean score 2.93), responsiveness (V rank, mean score 2.88), empathy (VI rank, mean score 2.87) and tangible (VII rank, mean score 2.87).

Access dimension of service quality was ranked first by the clientele of both public extension organizations, followed by assurance, reliability, assurance and timeliness. Availability of extension personnel in the office during farmers visit, friendly and well mannered nature of the extension personnel, high client accountability exhibited by the extension personnel, providing suitable feedback and required information and relevant farm literature to the farmers might have influenced the present findings. Providing assured and reliable information in time might also be the probable reasons for the above findings. Ndlovu (2010) reported that, the responsiveness dimension is rated higher than all dimensions with an average score of 4.93, indicating the fact that customers are more concerned about the willingness of the extension officer to help. Although a score of 4.8 on a five-point scale

represents relatively high, the score for the reliability dimension was the lowest of all five quality dimensions.

Dimension wise t test analysis (Table 3) of mean scores revealed no significant difference in the dimension wise service quality of extension services provided by both public and private extension organizations as perceived by the respective clientele. Similar results were also reported by Rana *et al.*, (2013).

Interrelationship between different characteristics of Krishi Vigyan Kendras clientele

A cursory look at table 5 showed that, in case of characteristics of krishi vigyan kendras clientele, land holding had positive and significant relationship with perceived satisfaction with services. Farming experience had positive and significant relationship with perceived effectiveness. Better land holding and farming experience encourages the farmers to try new technologies recommended by the extension personnel and if adopted technologies succeed the farmers will get satisfied with the extension services and also encourages the farmers to acquire relevant and quality information from the extension organization.

Perceived satisfaction had positive and significant relationship with the perceived effectiveness of extension services. Education, risk orientation, perceived satisfaction of services and perceived effectiveness had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality. Better educational status, risk bearing ability, perceived effectiveness and satisfaction directly affect the perceived service quality.

Interrelationship between different characteristics of Raita Samparka Kendras clientele

Results presented in table 6 revealed that, farming experience, land holding, annual income and mass media utilization of raita samparka kendras clientele had positive and significant relationship with perceived satisfaction of services. Better land holding, farming experience with substantiate annual income and medium to high mass media utilization by the clientele encourages the farmers to acquire relevant and quality information from the extension organization. Thus increases the perceived satisfaction among the clientele.

Farming experience and perceived satisfaction of services had positive and significant relationship with perceived effectiveness. Economic motivation and risk orientation had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality. If the extension services are effective in nature and better risk bearing ability of the farmers encourages the farmers to get quality information from the extension organization.

Conclusion and implications

It can be concluded from the results of the study that, no significant difference was observed with respect to perception of farmers regarding service quality of extension services provided by the public extension organizations. Access dimension of service quality was ranked first by the clientele of both public extension organizations, followed by assurance, reliability, assurance and timeliness. In case of Krishi Vigyan Kendras clientele characteristics, education, risk orientation, perceived satisfaction of services and perceived effectiveness had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality. While, economic motivation and risk orientation had positive and significant relationship with perceived service quality in case of Raita samparka Kendras clientele characteristics. Hence, there is a need to improve the other service quality dimensions such as assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibility, responsiveness and timeliness of the extension services provided by the public extension organizations. The policy makers and administrators should develop suitable strategies for improving the service quality of the extension services of public extension organizations.

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Table 1: Perceived service quality of services provided by the public and private extension organizations

Sl. No.	Statements	Public			
		UAS-KVK		SDA-RSK	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	The extension personnel are easily approachable and are available at all times	3.50	0.97	3.50	0.82
2	They provide opportunity and scope for Quick interaction between the stakeholder	2.97	0.89	2.83	0.59
3	Extension personnel give Special consideration to individual needs	2.77	0.73	2.53	0.68
4	Extension personnel has required Expertise and Skills	2.77	0.90	2.63	0.85

5	I have high level of confidence in the service	3.70	0.84	3.67	0.71
6	Extension personnel give attention to individual farmers and their needs	2.93	0.83	2.80	0.89
7	Extension personnel provide Localized Solutions	2.73	0.83	3.00	0.91
8	They Reorient themselves to provide first level assistance	2.70	0.79	2.80	0.81
9	They maintain consistency in changing circumstances and situations	2.80	0.76	3.03	0.85
10	They provide Relevant information	3.00	0.98	3.20	0.89
11	The information provided by them is Cost effective	2.97	0.72	2.80	0.71
12	They provide accurate information	3.43	0.86	3.03	0.85
13	They act efficiently and provide response to the individual or specific needs	2.93	0.87	2.77	0.77
14	They provide punctual Attention and understanding service	2.93	0.64	2.80	0.76
15	Provide opportunity for Quick feedback mechanism	3.17	0.99	3.07	0.83
16	They have and maintain appropriate facilities and equipments	2.93	0.87	2.83	0.75
17	They use Good communication materials and process	2.90	0.84	2.90	0.71
18	They provide In time delivery of required services	3.03	0.81	3.13	0.90
19	They provide opportunity for intermediary and after care services	2.73	0.64	2.73	0.69

Table 2: Dimension wise mean score of service quality perception of clientele of public and private extension organizations

n=80

Sl. No.	Dimension	UAS-KVK (n ₁ =40)		KSDA-RSK (n ₂ =40)	
		Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank
1	Access	3.23	I	3.17	I
2	Assurance	3.08	II	2.94	III
3	Empathy	2.79	VII	2.87	VI
4	Reliability	3.05	III	3.02	II
5	Responsiveness	3.01	IV	2.88	V
6	Tangible	2.92	V	2.87	VII
7	Timeliness	2.88	VI	2.93	IV

Table 3: Dimension wise t-test analysis of perceived service quality among clientele of public and private extension organizations

Sl. No.	Dimension	t value		
1	Access	KVK Vs RSK	0.360	P>0.05
2	Assurance	KVK Vs RSK	0.999	
3	Empathy	KVK Vs RSK	0.520	
4	Reliability	KVK Vs RSK	0.276	
5	Responsiveness	KVK Vs RSK	1.022	
6	Tangible	KVK Vs RSK	0.310	
7	Timeliness	KVK Vs RSK	0.306	

Table 4: Interrelationship between different characteristics of Krishi Vigyan Kendras clientele

n= 40

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	X ₇	X ₈	X ₉	X ₁₀	X ₁₁	X ₁₂
X ₁	1											
X ₂	-.160	1										
X ₃	.030	.544**	1									
X ₄	.101	.413*	.923**	1								
X ₅	.165	.351	.237	.115	1							
X ₆	-.017	.414*	.136	.055	.226	1						
X ₇	.001	-.216	-.294	-.404*	.153	.430*	1					
X ₈	.204	-.134	-.166	-.096	.131	-.091	-.017	1				
X ₉	.150	-.005	-.198	-.207	.138	.193	.163	.535**	1			
X ₁₀	-.307	.253	.373*	.176	.046	.221	.162	.071	.036	1		
X ₁₁	-.061	.418*	.355	.225	.050	.108	-.359	-.009	-.275	.457*	1	
X ₁₂	-.471**	.082	.300	.135	-.202	-.019	.013	-.320	-.388*	.539**	.470**	1

X₁ –EducationX₂ - Farming experienceX₃ –Land holdingX₄– Annual incomeX₅ -Mass media utilizationX₆ – Scientific orientationX₇ -InnovativenessX₈ – Economic motivationX₉ – Risk orientationX₁₀ – Perceived satisfaction of servicesX₁₁ – Perceived effectivenessX₁₂ – Perceived service quality

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 5: Interrelationship between different characteristics of Raita Samparka Kendras clientele

n= 40

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	X ₇	X ₈	X ₉	X ₁₀	X ₁₁	X ₁₂
X ₁	1											
X ₂	-	1										
X ₃	-	.434*	1									
X ₄	-	.328	.925**	1								
X ₅	.208	-.014	.145	.241	1							
X ₆	-	.369*	.495**	.370*	-.069	1						
X ₇	.075	-.110	.375*	.455*	.343	.285	1					
X ₈	.711	-.426*	-.212	-.180	.387*	-.136	.275	1				
X ₉	.298	-.093	.087	.031	.197	-.006	.071	.319	1			
X ₁₀	-	.464**	.560**	.514**	.375*	.351	.195	-.235	.134	1		
X ₁₁	-	.754**	.339	.266	.219	.171	-.035	-.101	.120	.415*	1	
X ₁₂	-	.132	.311	.220	-.184	.248	-.070	-.364*	-.490**	.204	-.057	1

X₁ –EducationX₂ - Farming experienceX₃ –Land holdingX₄ – Annual incomeX₅ -Mass media utilizationX₆ – Scientific orientationX₇ -InnovativenessX₈ – Economic motivationX₉ – Risk orientationX₁₀ – Perceived satisfaction of servicesX₁₁ – Perceived effectivenessX₁₂ – Perceived service quality

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level