

**RESEARCH ARTICLE :**

Perception as an indicator of soft power: Influence on extension services

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SUMMARY : Soft power is a new form of power, described as the ability to influence other behaviour or ability to shape the preferences of others in such a way that it leads to the achievement of the targeted purpose. In other words, soft power could be seen as the ability to use the power of attraction ability to direct the preference of others a kind of identification and attraction based referent power denoted by perceptions. Therefore, in the present study farmer perception has been selected an indicator soft power and its relationship with agricultural extension services. Present study was conducted on the 220 respondents in two districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh *i.e.*, Varanasi and Mirzapur. Data were obtained on the basis of interview schedule. The findings of chi-square test indicated that there were no significant differences between most of the extension services provided by public or private sectors which mean farmer perception towards public and private extension service were found to be different. Finally, the results indicated that in particular services private sector was found to be better than public sector services. Limitations and future research suggestions were also discussed.

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Behaviour, Extension service, Perception, Preference, Soft power

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Soft power is a new form of power, described as the ability to influence other behaviour or ability to shape the preferences of others in such a way that it leads to the achievement of the targeted purpose (Nye, 1990). Nye (1990) has described soft power as the “ability to influence other behaviour” or “ability to shape the preferences of others what others want” without using hard or coercive power which is “ability to soft power is more humane than hard power and like the other form of power it has also different

sources. In other words, soft power could be seen as the ability to use the power of attraction ability to direct the preference of others a kind of identification and attraction based referent power denoted by perceptions. The relevance and ultimate effectiveness of soft power depends on the perception and response of its target audience and based on the central assumption to get others to want what you want. Our behavior is unknowingly and unintentionally influenced by our perceptions. Farmer perceives the services of service provider on the basis of past

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experience and perception of what they offer and what they actually delivered. Therefore, we can say perception is the key factor which influences the decision and behavioral pattern of farmer and may be selected an indicator of extension service soft power.

Perception is one of the psychological factors which provide sensory information and insight into the behaviours in order to represent and understand the environment. In other words we can say our behaviour is unknowingly and unintentionally influenced by our perceptions. Farmer perceptions may also be used to explain the adoption of new technologies interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world. Weak and unhealthy perception of extension is one of the factors that affect the success of extension trainings and responsible for weak extension lobby and imperfect initial organizational set-up. The service quality of a service provider might be judged on the basis of past experience and perception of what they offer and what they actually delivered. 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. Therefore, we can say perception is the key factor which influence the decision and behavioural pattern of people and act as indicator to judge the service quality of a service provider. Thus, we can select perception as an indicator of extension soft power.

Perception is an inborn ability to view things in their totality and it can be modified through experience and training. He also said that perception could help to shape farmers' perceptions on extension education programmes by developing strategies to achieve this goal (Leeper, 1935). Further Coats (1998) stated that perception is the process that encompasses the senses and enables individuals to reach true beliefs about their environment.

Our perceptions usefully hide the complexity of the world, and guide adaptive behaviour. This implies that farmer perceptions may also be used to explain the adoption of new technologies pre scented to farmers through extension services. Thus, we can select perception as an indicator of extension soft power (Adesina and Baidu-Forson, 1995; Hoffmann, 2009). Our behaviour is unknowingly and unintentionally influenced by our perceptions (Van *et al.*, 2003). In this regard, the same applies to famer's abilities to change their behaviour

based on what extension programs deliver, which depends greatly on their perceptions of extension training programmes (Ghimire 2010; Reichheld, 1996).

Although, there are so many studies in various dimensions of soft power *i.e.*, country soft power to influence other country; political soft power, policy soft power etc. there are many gap in the literature exist. First, no any research work done in the field of extension service soft power, however, extension is a soft science. Second, there is a very limited study on the indicator of the soft power *i.e.* farmer perception and its relationship with the extension services. Finally, on the basis of review of the existing study it has been clear that there are very limited studies on the extension services, therefore, further studies has been required to explore this concept.

Hence, the present study sought to shed light on soft power research by following ways. In the present study, the term perception is used to describe the beliefs of farmers regarding extension education programmes. Finally, the conclusions and some important areas for future research have also been identified.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

This is very new study in discipline of extension and there has never been done a regional study of soft power in India before. So the researcher selects Eastern U.P. for conducting the research because of having familiarity with social conditions, local language and culture of the people, which could help in extracting information from respondents. The research was conducted in two districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh *i.e.*, Varanasi and Mirzapur, which were selected purposively. The geographical area and population density of the district were the selection criteria; two development blocks *i.e.*, Harahua from district Varanasi and Narainpur from district Mirzapur were selected by simple random selection; four Panchayat were selected from each selected block by simple random selection. The respondents were selected proportionately according to the population of village. Thus, a total of 220 respondents were selected for the purpose of study. The respondents were the beneficiaries of public and private extension services. The research used explanatory research designs which focus on the discovery of ideas and insights and conducted prior to the main investigation. Comparative research method was selected. This study was based only on primary data and the data were collected through personal interview method

was classified, tabulated and analyzed in the light of the objective of the study.

For judging the farmer perception towards extension services we used an extension service model adapted by Misra (1997) with some modification are as under:

- Organizing demonstration (Method/ result)
- Organizing field day
- Arranging training programme
- Arranging meeting
- Organizing farmer fairs / Ghosties
- Providing farm advisory service
- Providing farm input-like quality seed, fertilizer, pesticide, Agri machinery, plant material etc.
- Distribution of pamphlets, leaflets, etc.

The interview schedule was a graphic rating scale designed to measure farmer perception towards extension services with regard to each of the extension services to which numerical scores were assigned thus: not effective = 1, effective = 2, and very effective = 3. Frequency and percentage were used for tabular analysis. The chi-square analysis was used to find the association between public and private extension service sector in respect of selected indicators.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Findings of the Table 1 show the farmer perception towards public extension service. Results indicated that more than half (56.75 %) of the public extension services were in effective category. In which arranging training programme (63.03%) and organizing field day (61.84%) were found to be more effective than other factors. Further, the results show that more than one third farmers

(34.18 %) perceived that the public sector services were very effective, however; only 9 % farmers perceived that the public extension services are non effective.

The findings of the Table 2 show the farmer perception towards private extension service. Similar to the finding of the public extension service the results of private extension service reveals that more than half (60.17%) of private extension services were in effective category in which organizing field day (68.35%), distribution of pamphlets, leaflets (62.91%) and arranging training programme (61.78%) perceived more effective than other. About one third farmers (30.40 %) perceived that the private sector services were very effective however; only 9.4 % farmers perceived that the private extension services were not effective.

The result of the Table 3 shows the association between farmer perception towards extension service quality of both public and private sector. To ascertain the association between farmer perception toward public sector extension service and private sector extension service, the above table was put under the chi-square test. The findings of chi-square test indicated that there were no significant differences between most of the extension services provided by public or private sectors which mean farmer perception towards public and private extension service were found to be different. However, some services like organizing farmer fairs, Ghosties and providing farm input the results of chi-square test indicated the significant association between public and private sector extension services. This shows that farmers have same perception towards public and private sector extension services on these services. The significant association means farmer perceptions towards

Table 1 : Farmer perception towards public extension service quality

Sr. No.	Services	Public sector						Total	%
		Very effective*3	%	Effective*2	%	Not effective*1	%		
1.	Organizing demonstration (Method/ result)	168	37.75	226	50.79	51	11.46	445	100
2.	Organizing field day	99	23.91	256	61.84	59	14.25	414	100
3.	Arranging training programme	159	33.40	300	63.03	17	3.57	476	100
4.	Arranging meeting	174	37.66	252	54.55	36	7.79	462	100
5.	Organizing farmer fairs / Ghosties	174	38.41	234	51.66	45	9.93	453	100
6.	Providing farm advisory service	147	32.66	264	58.67	39	8.66	450	100
7.	Providing farm input-like quality seed, fertilizer, pesticide, Agri machinery, plant material etc.	198	40.99	262	54.25	23	4.76	483	100
8.	Distribution of pamphlets, leaflets, etc	123	28.67	254	59.21	52	12.12	429	100
Average percentage (%)			34.18		56.75		9.07		100

Table 2 : Farmer perception towards private extension service quality

Sr. No.	Services	Private sector							
		VE *3	%	E *2	%	NE*1	%	Total	%
1.	Organizing demonstration (Method/ result)	153	33.85	260	57.52	39	8.63	452	100
2.	Organizing field day	60	15.19	270	68.35	65	16.46	395	100
3.	Arranging training programme	123	28.15	270	61.78	44	10.07	437	100
4.	Arranging meeting	138	31.15	262	59.14	43	9.71	443	100
5.	Organizing farmer fairs / Ghosties	132	30.07	262	59.68	45	10.25	439	100
6.	Providing farm advisory service	132	29.80	270	60.95	41	9.26	443	100
7.	Providing farm input-like quality seed, fertilizer, pesticide, Agri machinery, plant material etc.	213	43.83	248	51.03	25	5.14	486	100
8.	Distribution of pamphlets, leaflets, etc.	144	31.23	290	62.91	27	5.86	461	100
			30.41		60.17		9.42		100

Table 3 : Association between farmer perception towards public and private extension service¹

Sr. No.	Services	Public sector		Private sector			χ^2 value d.f. = 2	χ^2 tabulated = 5.991 Level of significance = 0.05	
		VE*3	E*2	NE*1	VE*3	E*2			NE*1
1.	Organizing demonstration (Method/ result)	168	226	51	153	260	39	4.01	Non –significant
2.	Organizing field day	99	256	59	60	270	65	1.30	Non –significant
3.	Arranging Training programme	159	300	17	144	290	27	1.73	Non –significant
4.	Arranging meeting	174	252	36	138	262	43	4.98	Non –significant
5.	Organizing farmer fairs / Ghosties	123	254	52	123	270	44	9.27	Significant
6.	Providing farm advisory service	147	264	39	132	270	41	1.09	Non –significant
7.	Providing farm input-like quality seed, fertilizer, pesticide, Agri machinery, plant material etc.	198	262	23	213	248	25	6.18	Significant
8.	Distribution of pamphlets, leaflets, etc.	174	234	45	132	262	45	1.34	Non –significant

χ^2 tabulated = 5.991 Level of significance = 0.05

public and private extension service are differed. Finally, the results indicated that in particular services private sector was found to be better than public sector services.

Findings of this study suggested that our behavior is unknowingly and unintentionally influenced by our perceptions. Farmer perceives the services of service provider on the basis of past experience and perception of what they offer and what they actually delivered. Therefore, we can say perception is the key factor which influences the decision and behavioural pattern of perception. Thus, we can say that perception is an indicator of extension Soft power.

Besides the usual limitation of social science studies, this study will have limitations of time, funds and a single researcher; the findings of the study will be based on secondary data as well as expressed response of the respondents. Hence, the objectives of the study will be limited to secondary sources and the frankness and fairness of the respondents in furnishing the information.

On the basis of review of the existing study it has been clear that there are very limited studies on the extension services, therefore, further studies has been required to explore this concept (Nye, 1990; Purushothamam, 2010 and Sarker and Itohara 2009).

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