

Clientele satisfaction towards the services rendered by government to the tea small holding sector

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Introduction

Tea is pre-eminent among Sri Lanka's plantation crops and it is one of the most important industries in the country in terms of employment and foreign exchange earnings (Basnayake, 2002). Next to China and India, Sri Lanka is the oldest tea producing country in the world producing nearly for 150 years (Asopa, 2004). Over the years, the word Ceylon has become synonymous with quality tea.

The entire economic base of the country was centered on the plantation sector at the time when Sri Lanka was gaining independence in 1948; nearly 32% of GDP came from exports of plantation crops, which contributed 92% of the total export earnings. The development of the small holder sector, especially in the Low country helped to maintain the production level during the 1980's despite the deterioration of the estate sector production. The smallholder sector expanded very rapidly and presently accounts more than half (76%) of the total production. (Annual Report, Tea Small Holding Development Authority, 2012)

Small holders must receive current information and technology for effective management of their production, marketing and financial decisions. Individual characteristics of producers affect on the demand for information services while confidence in the information services is a central determinant of the frequency at which a producer refers to the services. (Yapa and Ariyawardana, 2005). Coupled with the information, financial support is vital to expand and maintain the tea production. This requirement is fulfilled through the subsidy policy of the government.

Tea small Holding authority is the institute established as the main supportive body to the small holding sector. Other institutions that are responsible for tea are, namely, Tea Research Institute, Sri Lanka Tea Board and Tea Commissioner's Department.

So the research was conducted to identify the satisfaction level of the small holders towards the services rendered by the government, to identify major factors that cause to farmers satisfaction, to evaluate strong and weak areas of the government service procedure and to make suggestions to overcome the weaknesses in government services.

Materials and methodology

Data were collected through a sample survey by giving structured questionnaire to randomly selected 150 small holders in 8 tea inspector's (TI) ranges at Badulla administrative district .

The degree of satisfaction of the small holders was the dependent variable and it was measured with respect to five different dimensions of the present government service. The dimensions considered were quality of the service, relevancy of technologies/service, competency of extension personnel, general usefulness/effect and characteristics of extension agent. Responses were obtained from five point Likert scale with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Coded and scored data were analyzed by Using SPSS software package. Based on mean and standard error, farmers were grouped in to three as less satisfied group, moderately satisfied group and highly satisfied group. The cut-off points for this categorization was derived by using the formula "mean (X) + or - 1.96 Standard Error (SE)" (V.S Sidhakaran, 2008).

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to present the demographic features of the sample. Simple correlation coefficient values were worked out to find out the strength of association between dependant variable and independent variables.

Multiple linear regression analysis was worked out to find out the contribution of independent variables to dependant variable. Age, Gender, Education level, farming experience, innovativeness, number of training attended, membership of a small holder association and contact intensity with an extension agent were selected as independent variables.

Results and Discussion

Larger proportion of respondents expressed low level of overall clientele satisfaction. Equal proportion of them was highly satisfied with the present government service procedure followed by less proportion of them moderately satisfied. This further indicates that there is a wide variation with respect to the clientele satisfaction levels.

Table 1: Distribution of small holders according to their overall clientele satisfaction levels towards the government services (n=150)

No	Overall clientele satisfaction level	Satisfaction index	Number	Percentage
1	Low	<62.22%	58	38.66%
2	Medium	62.22%-69.48%	34	22.66%
3	High	>69.48%	58	38.66%

Table 2: Correlation of Independent Variables with the Dependent Variable

Variable	Description	Co-efficient
X1	Constant	1.00
X1	Age	0.15
X2	Gender	0.068
X3	Education Level	0.063
X4	Farming Experience	0.173*
X5	Membership of a small holder association	0.741**
X6	Frequency of meeting a extension Agent	0.824**
X7	Innovativeness	0.719**
X8	Communication channel usage	0.876**
X9	Time spend for tea cultivation	0.046

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Out of nine independent variable studied, only five variables farming experience, membership of a small holder association, frequency of meeting a extension agent, innovativeness, communication channel usage shows positive and significant association with the clientele satisfaction

Farming experience was significant under 0.05 significant level. It shows that there is a weak positive relationship between Overall clientele satisfaction and farming experience.

The variable, membership of a small holder association, frequency of meeting extension agent, communication channel usage and time spend for tea cultivation is significant at 0.01 significant levels. It shows that there is a strong positive relationship between overall clientele satisfaction and the mentioned variables.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Factors affects on overall Clientele Satisfaction towards the Government Services

Variable No	Description	P value
	Constant	0.000
X1	Age	0.302
X2	Gender	0.840
X3	Education Level	0.766
X4	Farming Experience	0.233
X5	Membership of a small holder association	0.000
X6	Frequency of meeting a extension Agent	0.000
X7	Innovativeness	0.002
X8	Communication channel usage	0.000
X9	Time spend for tea cultivation	0.623

Table 3 reveals that out of nine independent variable studied, only four variables Membership of a small holder association, Frequency of meeting a extension Agent, Innovativeness, Communication channel usage shows positive and significant association with the clientele satisfaction at 5% significant level .

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that government services have been effective in creating general awareness on agricultural practices. The extension services have been helpful in solving agriculture related problems. Most of the services seem to be received on time. Extension personnel are competent in communication and they have been maintaining a friendly relationship with the farmers.

The findings suggest that there are several drawbacks in the government service procedure. The technologies and recommendations are cost ineffective and incompatible with socio-economic conditions. Clients are facing inconveniences when assessing to the service providing places such as TRI and sub office of TSHDA. Clients are not having a positive attitude towards the way of distributing the subsidies. Also there are some weakness in monitoring and evaluation after launching a new project.

Membership of a small holder association, Frequency of meeting a extension Agent, Innovativeness of the farmer, Communication channel usage are having positive relationship with clientele satisfaction.

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