

Satisfaction Level of Farmers Regarding e-Choupal Services

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ABSTRACTS

e-Choupal tackles the challenges posed by Indian Agriculture, characterized by fragmented farms, weak infrastructure and the involvement of intermediaries. The programme installs computers with Internet access in rural areas of India to offer farmers up-to-date marketing and agricultural information. ITC Limited kiosk with Internet access is run by a sanchalak- a trained farmer. Being one among the numerous private ICT initiatives need to be studied in detail owing to its success and to know about satisfaction level of users for various services provided by e-choupal. Multistage Purposive random sampling technique was adopted to carry out the research. Two villages out of two selected block were randomly selected, and from each selected village 30 e-Choupal users selected randomly for data collection. Results revealed that more than seventy five percent respondents 'Strongly agree' over the bench mark price set by ITC for crops procurement is comparatively higher than any other agencies while, more than 65% respondents were highly satisfied with marketing of crops. Majority were medium level satisfied with supply of proper inputs by e- choupal.

Keywords: e chaupal, Services, Marketing, ITC

INTRODUCTION

e-Choupal is an India-based business initiative by ITC Limited that provides Internet access to rural farmers, a conglomerate in India, to link directly with rural farmers via the Internet for procurement of agricultural and aquaculture products. The purpose is to inform and empower them and, as a result, to improve the quality of agricultural goods and the quality of life for farmers. e-Choupal tackles the challenges posed by Indian agriculture, characterized by fragmented farms, weak infrastructure and the involvement of intermediaries. The programme installs computers with Internet access in rural areas of India to offer farmers up-to-date marketing and agricultural information. ITC Limited kiosk with Internet access run by a sanchalak- a trained farmer. The computer is housed in the sanchalak's house and is linked to the Internet via phone lines or by a VSAT connection.

Each installation serves an average of 600 farmers in the surrounding ten villages within about a 5 km radius. The sanchalak bears some operating cost but in return earns a service fee for the e-transactions done through his e-Choupal. The warehouse hub is managed by the same traditional middle-men, now called samyojaks, but with no exploitative power due to the reorganization. These middlemen make up for the lack of infrastructure and fulfill critical jobs like cash disbursement, quantity aggregation and transportation. There are number of ICT initiatives in India by the Government, CO-operative agencies, Non-governmental Organizations and private players. Most of them are location specific or crop specific, isolated and are confined to a small area. e-choupal, one among the numerous private ICT initiatives need to be studied in detail owing to its success hence, present study has been planned to know about satisfaction level of users for various services provided by e-choupal.

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METHODOLOGY

Multistage Purposive random sampling technique was adopted to carry out the research. District Allahabad (now Prayagraj) was purposively selected as e-Choupal is running successfully. District was divided into seven blocks and two blocks namely Karchana and Meja were purposively selected as e-Choupal is very well functional in these two blocks. Two villages out of each selected block were randomly selected, and from each selected village 30 e-Choupal users were selected randomly for final data collection making a total of 120. Data were gathered through personal contact by a pre-coded interview Schedule. For the socio-economic status of Users Trivedi and Pareek (1964) scale was used to categorize as per the score they got.

The farmer's satisfaction towards services of e-Choupal was measured using the modified scale developed by Arun Kumar (2005). The scale followed the ranking procedure of 0,1,2,3 and 4 for strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree respectively. An index was developed from the five-point continuum scale. The index consists of twenty-eight statements upon which the responses were sought from the users of e-Choupal. The satisfaction index of an individual was calculated as below:

$$\text{Satisfaction Index} = \frac{\text{Score obtained by the individual}}{\text{Maximum score (112)}} \times 100$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

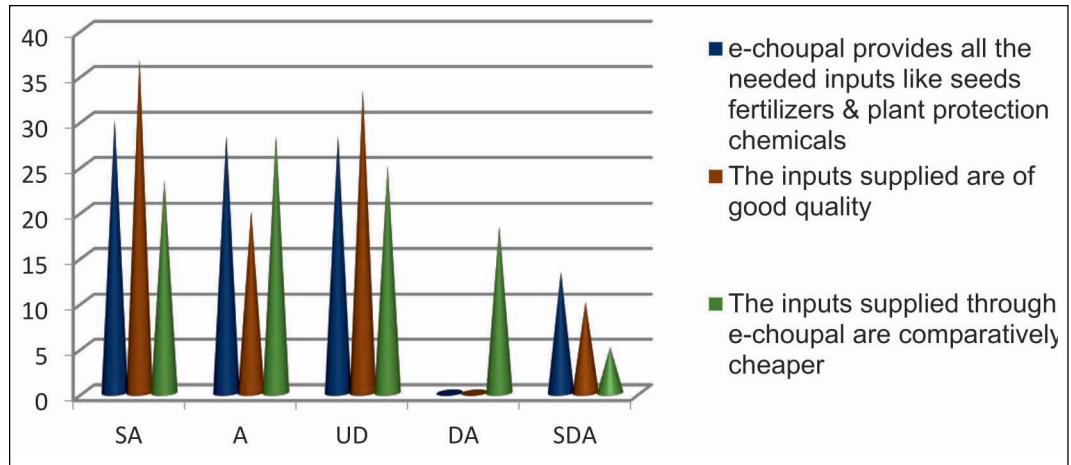
Data pertinent to socio-economic reveal that majority of respondents under study were from middle age group i.e. 31-50 years, general category, marginal farmers, literate (can read and write only), and belonged to nuclear family, small farmers (having 1-2 ha land), doing agriculture only. Annual Income of maximum respondents were Rs. 50000-75000, fell in medium category. As per the score obtained majority of the respondent were of medium socio-economic status followed by 31.67 per cent who belonged to low-socio economic status group.

Data in Table 1 reveals that about sixty three percent responsible were found 'Agree' about 'The technological information provided by e-choupal are highly relevant to farming system' followed by 60.00 percent who 'agree' upon 'The technological information provided by e-choupal are suited for both big and small farmers. Twenty five were 'Strongly Disagree' with 'The soil testing facilities provided by e-choupal are highly useful in reducing the input costs while, more than sixty five percent respondents were found 'Undecided' about The soil testing facilities provided by e-choupal are highly useful in reducing the input costs. About seventeen percent respondents were 'strongly Agree' on 'the technological information provided by e-choupal are highly relevant to farming system' and 'the technological information provided by e-choupal are suited for both big and small farmers 'respectively. Thirty five percent respondents were found 'Agree' on 'the technological

Table 1: Satisfaction of Farmer towards Provision of Appropriate Technological Information (N=120)

S.No.	Statements	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
1	Technological information provided by e-choupal are highly relevant to your farming system	16.7	63.3	15.0	-	5.0
2	Technological information provided by e-choupal is cost effective	10.0	35.0	21.7	18.3	15
3	Technological information provided by e-choupal are suited for both big and small farmers	16.7	60.0	18.3	-	5.0
4	Technological information provided by e-choupal has increased your yield and income	11.7	40.0	26.7	11.6	10
5	Technological information provided by e-choupal are highly sustainable	8.3	41.7	36.7	8.3	5.0
6	The soil testing facilities provided by e-choupal are highly useful to you in reducing the input costs	-	5.0	63.3	6.7	25.0
Average		10.6	40.8	30.3	7.5	10.8

Figure 1: Satisfaction of farmers with supply of proper inputs by e-choupal



information provided by e-choupal is cost effective' but in contrast 18.30 per cent respondents were 'Disagree on this. As per average satisfaction towards 'Provision of appropriate technological information about forty one percent respondents were found 'Agree'.

Figure 1 depicts that same number of respondents were found 'Agree' and 'Undecided' that e-choupal provides all the needed inputs like seeds, fertilizers and plant protection chemicals while about thirty seven percent 'Strongly agree' on that the inputs supplied from e-choupal were of good quality whereas 28.30 per cent Agree that over the inputs supplied through e-choupal were comparatively cheaper. Figure 2 reveals that thirty per cent and little less were 'Strongly agree' and undecided as well on average satisfaction towards supply of proper inputs by e-choupal. As per the Figure 3 majority

(78.3%) of the respondents 'Strongly agree' that if crops are marketed through e-choupal, the transaction cost is less followed by 76.70 percent who also 'Strongly agree' on The ITC procurement system has greatly reduced the transaction time. Maximum (62.5%) respondents were 'Strongly agree' on average satisfaction towards transaction of crops (Figure 4).

Table 2 dealing with price info and improved marketing practices reveal that more than seventy five percent respondents were 'Strongly agree' over the benchmark price set by ITC for crops procurement is comparatively higher than any other agencies followed by 76.70 per cent who were 'Strongly agree' upon the market price provided by e-choupal helps them to analyze the market trends thereby increasing the sale value of the crop produce. In line to above, 62.50 per cent 'Strongly

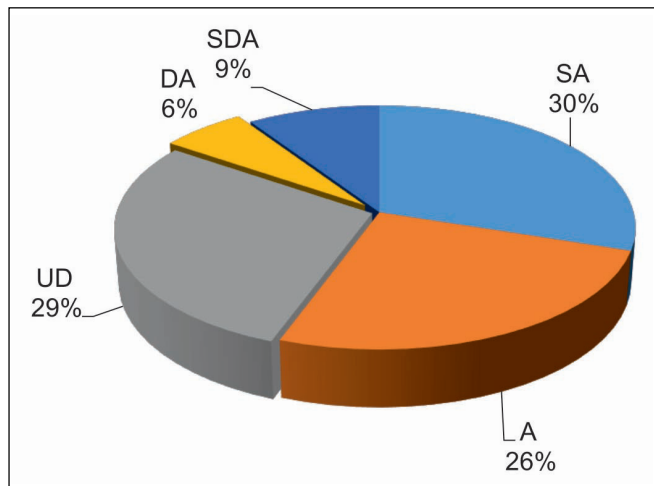


Figure 2: Average satisfaction towards Supply of Inputs

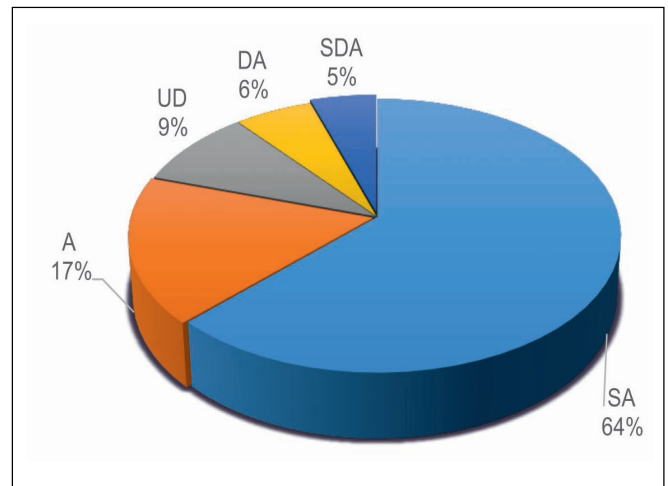


Figure 3: Average satisfaction towards transaction of crops

Figure 4: Satisfaction of farmers with transaction of crops

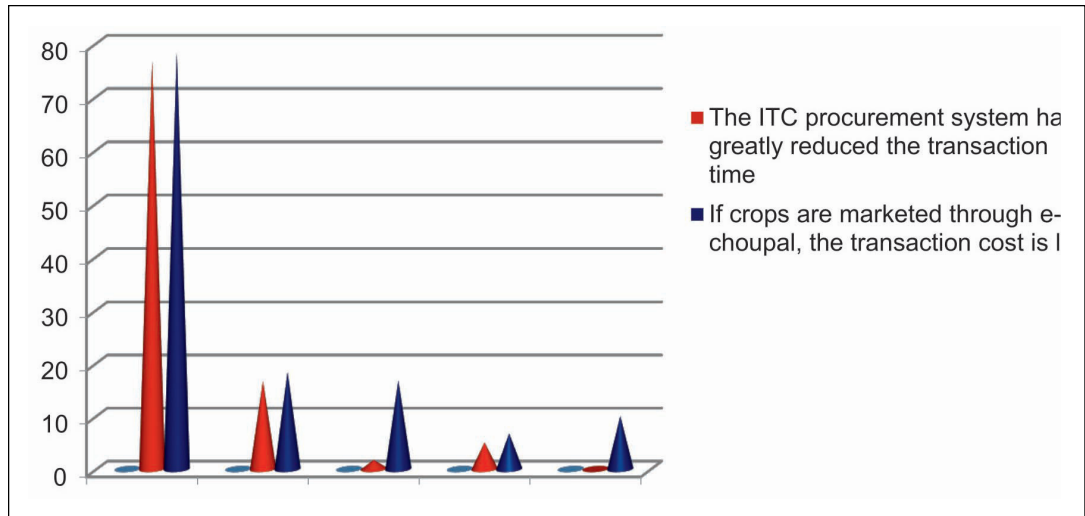
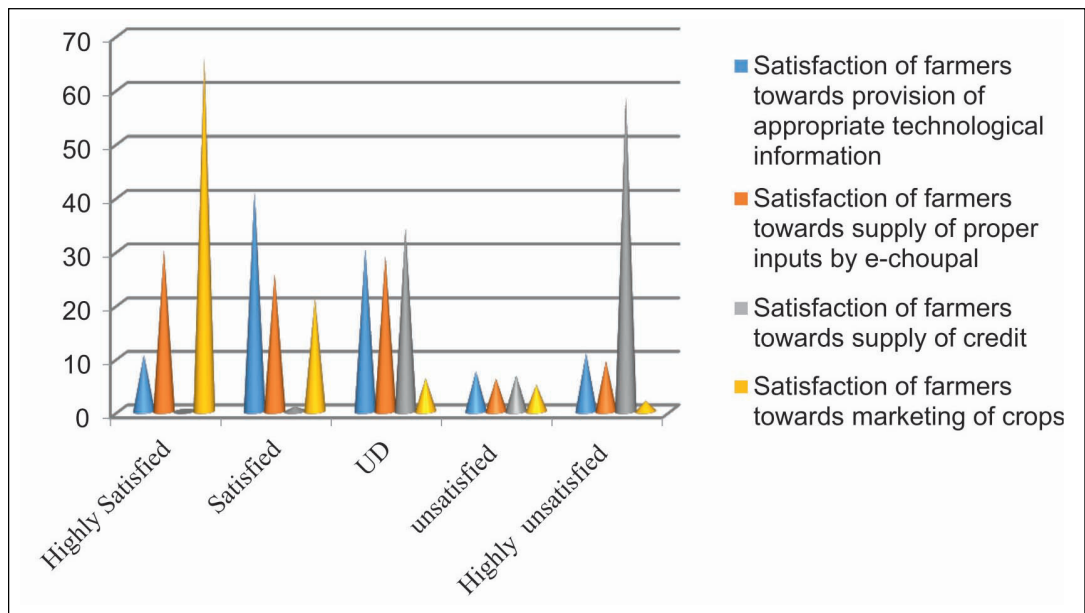


Figure 5: Overall satisfaction of farmers towards the services of e-choupal



agree' towards average satisfaction towards prize info provided by e-choupal. Maximum (85%) respondents were 'Strongly Agree' on the e-choupal make them feel good and happy as it performs the quality tests like measuring moisture content, weighing in electronic balance right in front of them followed by Seventy five percent respondents who were 'Strongly agree' on the ITC treats them as a customer with great respect while 25.00 per cent were 'Agree' upon the statement whereas, no any respondents reported disagreement. Further a little less than seventy percent found 'Strongly agree' on in terms of marketing of produce e-choupal is better than any other agency followed by 66.70 per cent who were 'Strongly agree' over that the payment of full cash immediately after selling the produce greatly helps them

to take up further activities. Thus 73.8 per cent respondents were 'Strongly Agree' on improved marketing practice.

Data reflected with Figure 5 states that about forty one per cent respondents found highly satisfied towards provision of appropriate technological information while about fifty eight percent respondents were highly unsatisfied towards supply of credit. On the other hand more than sixty five per cent respondents were reported highly satisfied towards marketing of crops.

The level of overall satisfaction of farmers towards the services of e-choupal is presented in Table 3. It reveals that maximum 50.00 per cent respondents have medium

Table 2: Satisfaction of respondents towards Price Info and improved marketing practices Provided by e-choupal (N=120)

S.No.	Statements	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
Price Info provided by e-Choupal						
1	The market price provided by e-choupal helps you to analyze the market trends thereby increasing the sale value of the crop produce	76.7	16.6	1.7	5.0	-
2	The bench mark price set by ITC for crops procurement is comparatively higher than any other agencies	78.3	18.3	16.7	6.7	10.0
Average		62.5	17.4	9.2	5.9	5.0
Improved marketing practice						
1	The e-choupal makes you feel good and happy as it performs the quality tests like measuring moisture content, weighing in electronic balance right in front of you	85.0	15.0	-	-	-
2	In terms of marketing your wheat produce e-choupal is better than any other agencies	68.3	25.0	6.7	-	-
3	The payment of full cash immediately after selling the produce greatly helps you to take up further activities	66.7	28.3	5.0	-	-
4	The ITC treats you as a customer with great respect	75.0	25.0	-	-	-
Average		73.8	23.3	2.9	-	-

Table 4: Level of overall satisfaction of farmers towards the service of e-choupal

S.No.	Dimensions	Level of satisfaction (% respondents)				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
1	Satisfaction of farmers towards provision of appropriate technological information	10.0	30.0	50.0	5.0	5.0
2	Satisfaction of farmers towards supply of proper inputs by e- choupal	5.0	3.3	66.7	13.3	11.7
3	Satisfaction of Farmers towards supply of credit	13.4	10.5	5.8	20.1	50.2
4	Satisfaction of farmers with respect to marketing of produce	41.7	51.7	6.6	-	-

level of satisfaction towards provision of appropriate technological information followed by 41.7 per cent respondents who were found highly satisfied with respect to marketing of produce. Majority about sixty seven percent respondents were medium level satisfied with supply of proper inputs by e-choupal but in contrast half of the respondents under study were highly un satisfied with supply of credit.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that e-choupal is an effective web based information and procurement system to improve the overall profit of the farmers. The e-choupal system is a good example of market-led extension strategy.

Though the farmers were accessing various services from e-choupal, the market price information was found to be the most important service in demand. Maximum 50.00 per cent respondents have medium level of satisfaction towards provision of appropriate technological information followed by 41.7 per cent respondents who were found highly satisfied with respect to marketing of produce while, about fifty eight percent respondents were highly unsatisfied towards supply of credit. The e-choupal has helped the farmers to have access to market price information and marketing infrastructure for sale of the produce. Farmers were not very much interested in getting improved agronomic practices, but they found e-choupal useful with regard to facilities created for

procurement of the produce and provision of market information. The overall impact of e-choupal was varies very high to very low for the services provided, Therefore, e-choupal has got lot of scope to improve its effectiveness. The study showed that the most satisfactory service of e-choupal was with regard to market information and making arrangement for procurement based upon the quality of produce. Therefore, in coming days the extension approach should be market-led for its success. It is suggested that some features related to credit should be added to make it more useful.

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