



The public's perception of extension in Montana
by Charlene Rich Garoutte

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:

This study determined the perceptions of Montana citizens of the Montana Extension Service. The study focused on the specific services utilized, the quality of the service provided, usage by program area, willingness to pay a fee for services and preference for educational information.

One thousand Montanans were selected to participate through a random sample. Information from the returned questionnaires was statistically analyzed with the use of *SupqrCalc 4*.

Based on the results of the research, it was concluded that over half of the people are familiar with Extension and those that are give Extension an excellent or good rating. Most persons familiar with Extension form their perceptions based on only one to four contacts per year. Contacts are made most frequently in the areas of agriculture and home economics. Montanans prefer to receive educational information at in-depth short courses and "learn-at-home" materials. A user fee would most willingly be paid for workshops, publications, computer programs and video programs.

Recommendations for marketing Extension in Montana include: a statewide organizational marketing effort which would include a high visibility emphasis for the entire organization, target marketing for specific programs, program offerings to be designed around preferred methods of receiving educational information and a closer examination of user fees for services provided.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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in

Home Economics

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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APPROVAL

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Charlene Rich Garoutte

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

May 16, 1988
Date

Margaret Briggs
Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Approved for Major Department

25 May 1988
Date

[Signature]
Head, Major Department

Approved for College of Graduate Studies

June 9, 1988
Date

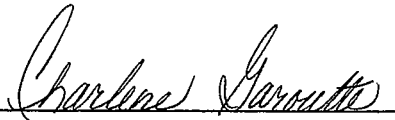
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Need for the Study	2
Objectives	4
Definitions	5
Limitations	6
Assumptions	6
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	7
Awareness of Extension	7
Program Usage	9
Financial Support for Services	10
3. METHODOLOGY	12
Population and Sample	12
Instrumentation	13
Data Analysis	14
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	15
Introduction	15
Demographics	15
Usage of Extension Services	19
Preferred Sources of Information	22
Home Economics	22
Agriculture	24
Community Development	26
Youth Education Programs	28
Methods of Receiving Information	29
Awareness and Support of Funding	29

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	Page
5. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
Conclusions	32
Discussion and Recommendations	33
Summary	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY	37
APPENDICES	40
Appendix A--Survey Instrument	41
Appendix B--Cover Letter, Follow-Up Letter, and Post Card	50

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Summary of Responses.	16
2	Residency of Montana Citizens.	16
3	Age of Respondents.	17
4	Marital Status of Respondents.	17
5	Level of Education.	18
6	Family Income Level.	19
7	Usage of the Extension Service.	19
8	Contact by Program Area.	20
9	Services Utilized.	20
10	Frequency of Use.	21
11	Quality of Service Provided.	21
12	Preferred Sources of Information in Home Economics.	23
13	Preferred Sources of Information in Agriculture.	25
14	Preferred Sources of Information in Community Development.	27
15	Preference of Youth Education Programs.	28
16	Rank Order of Frequency of Five Most Preferred Methods of Receiving Educational Information.	29
17	Public Awareness of Extension Funding Source.	30
18	User Fee for Services Provided.	31
19	Level of Support for Extension Service.	31

ABSTRACT

This study determined the perceptions of Montana citizens of the Montana Extension Service. The study focused on the specific services utilized, the quality of the service provided, usage by program area, willingness to pay a fee for services and preference for educational information.

One thousand Montanans were selected to participate through a random sample. Information from the returned questionnaires was statistically analyzed with the use of SuperCalc 4.

Based on the results of the research, it was concluded that over half of the people are familiar with Extension and those that are give Extension an excellent or good rating. Most persons familiar with Extension form their perceptions based on only one to four contacts per year. Contacts are made most frequently in the areas of agriculture and home economics. Montanans prefer to receive educational information at in-depth short courses and "learn-at-home" materials. A user fee would most willingly be paid for workshops, publications, computer programs and video programs.

Recommendations for marketing Extension in Montana include: a statewide organizational marketing effort which would include a high visibility emphasis for the entire organization, target marketing for specific programs, program offerings to be designed around preferred methods of receiving educational information and a closer examination of user fees for services provided.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What will the role of the Montana Extension Service be in the information society of the 21st century? Will most counties have one or two Extension Agents? Will these agents advertise and conduct public workshops for clientele as they have in the past? Will they travel around the county making farm or home visits? Will Extension offices be warehouses for "free" brochures for the public?

The Extension Service as a publicly supported educational agency is struggling for its identity in a changing society. Issues of defining appropriate target audiences, delivering quality programs, projecting a positive image, and maintaining an adequate support base are being widely discussed (Warner and Christenson, 1984).

All organizations and agencies whether private or public have a public image. In the private sector firms engage in elaborate public relations campaigns in order to create a certain public image. Although Extension may not advertise per se, Extension does have an image. Its image has evolved over time and Extension's vitality in the future will rest with its ability to develop, maintain, and enhance a positive, viable public image.

Knowledge about Extension occurs as people contact the organization as direct users of the services or indirectly through others. The image people have of the organization is developed through the direct

or indirect experiences they have had with the organization or its programs. Warner and Christenson (1984:44) maintain that "images are not grounded in fixed events but rather in information and interpretative processes that are constantly changing."

The Montana Extension Service realized a need for an improved public image during the 1987 legislative session. Dr. LeRoy Luft selected a committee of administrators, county agents, state specialists and media staff to formulate a marketing plan for the Montana Extension Service. The purpose of the committee was

. . . to prepare a plan to increase the visibility of the Montana Extension Service, its programs, and the Extension professionals, which will result in (1) greater participation by the people of Montana in Extension Education programs, and (2) greater understanding and support from key groups and individuals (Luft, 1987:1).

As a part of this charge, data was needed to assess how the public perceived the Extension Service in 1987 and thus to gather data to formulate a marketing plan.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine Montana citizens' perception of programs offered by the Montana State University Extension Service.

Need for the Study

As society grows more complex, the need for a public agency to communicate educational information to its public becomes even greater. One cannot assume that the world will beat a path to your door just

because you build a better mouse trap. Although an agency delivers high quality programs, it still is necessary to create and maintain a public awareness of those programs. The public could be identified as the consumer, the client, the non-user or the cost-bearer.

Clientele who benefit from an organization's programs are its most obvious public. They are the consumers of the assistance provided. However, there are individuals that are not directly served by the organization. These include persons who are aware of the organization and its programs but do not use them, as well as persons who may be totally unaware of the organization.

The Extension Service network traditionally has effectively served the needs of rural America. Eventually rural concerns have been balanced with similar programs in urban areas.

The demand for information and education allowed the Extension Service to be driven by program, much as business was driven by production. In other words, whatever programs were produced, clients bought. Consequently, there was little need to focus or set priorities for these programs, or to promote them.

Then, much like in the business world, competitors in adult education began to appear on the scene. "Extension found too many programs chasing too few clients." Thus, marketing of Extension has become the password to success, a lesson learned from business (O'Brien, 1987).

As a result of the effort by the Marketing Extension Committee to determine the public's perception of the Montana State University Extension Service, the Marketing Committee obtained objective data on

Montana Extension's current image. The committee can utilize the data as a basis for marketing decisions and activities and to identify target audiences for future Extension marketing efforts.

Objectives

The study was conducted under the guidance of the Marketing Extension Committee. The objectives were:

1. To determine the public's perceived effectiveness of the Montana State University Extension Service by measuring:
 - a. The specific services utilized: office visits, publications, educational programs, specialists' assistance, county agent.
 - b. How the consumer rates the quality of the service provided.
2. To determine usage of the following program areas:
 - a. Family Financial Management
 - b. Housing and Energy
 - c. Foods and Nutrition
 - d. Human Development/Family Life
 - e. Livestock
 - f. Farm Management/Finance
 - g. Crops/Soils/Pest Management
 - h. Natural Resources/Soil/Water/Forestry
 - i. Horticulture/Gardening
 - j. Community Development
 - k. Youth Education Programs

3. To determine if the public is willing to pay a fee for the following services:
 - a. Office Consultations
 - b. Farm/Home Visits
 - c. Publications
 - d. Workshops/Educational Programs
 - e. Newsletters
 - f. Computer Programs
 - g. Video Programs
4. To determine if the public is aware of how the Extension Service is funded and how they perceive the current funding level.
5. To identify sources other than Extension where educational information is obtained.

Definitions

Terms used throughout the study are defined here in order to provide for an understanding of the terms for consistent interpretation.

Montana Extension Service: The branch of Montana State University established by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 with the purpose of taking research based information to the off-campus clientele in Montana.

Marketing Extension Committee: A committee unique to Montana Extension Service with the purpose of identifying target audiences and establishing a market plan to increase Extension's visibility.

Consumer: Any person in Montana who may have utilized the Extension Service.

Non-user: Any person in Montana who has not utilized the Extension Service.

Cost-bearer: Any person in Montana who supports the Extension Service financially. Included would be taxpayers and legislators.

Limitations

1. The time period of the study was from September 4, 1987 to October 16, 1987.
2. The survey was limited to a sample of 1,000 persons from the population of those Montanans 18 years and older holding current driver's licenses as of August 1, 1987.

Assumptions

1. All persons in Montana have the opportunity to participate in Montana Extension Service programs.
2. Information is provided by sources other than Montana Extension Service and not all persons have utilized the services available through Extension.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What is the extent of public awareness of Extension? Who really uses its services? Are they primarily rural or urban, rich or poor, young or old? How do they rate the quality of the services? Is the public willing to pay for services they may have previously received at no cost? All of these questions will be explored in the following review of literature.

Awareness of Extension

Warner and Christenson (1984) maintain that it has generally been assumed that Extension has a high level of visibility, especially with traditional audiences. This might be expected in rural areas as Extension has a long history of working with rural people. But, does the urban public know that Extension even exists? Or is Extension's identity lost among the maze of the many other government agencies?

It has been suggested, due to the diversity of Extension programs, that instead of a single identify, Extension actually has many identities. For some clientele, Extension may be known only as 4-H, homemakers clubs or agriculture related.

Extension's historical base has evolved over the past 75 years. This longevity is unique among similarly situated adult educational programs.

In business many advertisements can be found with the words, "We've been serving you for the past 25 years . . ." Establishing a historical base in business is akin to establishing credibility for success (O'Brien, 1987).

Warner and Christenson (1984) also suggest it is possible that there is more name recognition for programs of Extension than for the organization itself. For example, when Extension staff identify themselves as 4-H agents or Extension Home Economists, it is not always clear that they work for the same agency.

A recent definition of marketing is "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives" (O'Brien, 1987). All major companies have a research and development unit to conduct market surveys and field research so they can develop and diversify their products.

Extension has not felt it necessary to promote its product as an organization. Instead, it has operated on the philosophy that a job well done is the only advertisement needed. According to a recent survey administered by a member of the Marketing Extension Committee, this philosophy is currently held by a certain portion of Montana Extension's staff. However, in the present era of competition for limited federal, state and local resources, the current administration recognizes the need for more attention to be given to Extension's identity.

Awareness of an organization precedes use of an agency's services and support for its existence, according to Warner and

Christenson (1984). Awareness is seen as the wide mouth of a funnel, with use the next lower ring in the funnel, followed by satisfaction and support. This explains why private businesses commit large sums of money to marketing a positive image or awareness of their products. Pending the results of this study, Montana Extension may want to seriously consider allocation of resources for enhancing awareness of their products and services.

Program Usage

Extension clientele are predominately middle class. They are middle to upper income, high school and college educated, white, married, employed, and homeowners. The study of use patterns indicate a lack of representation of clientele that are poor, single, divorced, and widowed (Warner and Christenson, 1981).

Warner and Christenson examined use patterns of Extension services for the year 1981 for each of four program areas. Agricultural programs enjoyed the highest level (62%) of use of the four programs. Home Economics programs were second with just over 40%. Community development and 4-H programs had between 20 and 30% usage.

Social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the users of the four program areas were also studied by Warner. It was found that women, as expected, were the largest user group for home economics programs, but 25% of the home economics information was used by men. It was found that women also made extensive use of agricultural programs. Blacks and minority groups were the largest

users of community development programs. Agriculture served the smallest percentage of minorities.

In a Kentucky study (Christenson, 1980), over half of Extension users (58%) considered themselves to be occasional or frequent users. Forty-two of those surveyed reported using the service only rarely. The most frequent users of Extension programs were farm residents.

In the same study, almost all of the users had received some printed material from Extension. Over 90% of those surveyed had contact through a radio or television program, while 39% had attended an Extension workshop in the past year.

Financial Support for Services

Like all organizations, Extension must have resources in order to survive and grow. Without adequate support, it will wither and die. Public service organizations often have a separation between recipients of the services and policy makers who control the resources (Etzioni, 1964).

Positive public opinion about an organization results in a perception of greater organizational effectiveness and support. The more the organizational efforts are viewed as consistent with public need, the more willing people are to support the organization (Meier and Browne, 1983). Therefore, it is necessary for Montana Extension to possess a favorable public image to insure adequate funding for the future.

In the Kentucky study (Christenson, 1980), once people used the services of Extension, they were more favorable toward increased spending and opposed to spending reductions. They found the large

majority wanted the funding level to remain unchanged. The more frequently people used the services of Extension, the more willing they were to lend support. Twice as many frequent users, compared with occasional users, wanted more money spent on Extension.

In a study conducted in Colorado (Newlin, 1986), more than half of those respondents who indicated familiarity with Extension said they would be willing to pay for workshops, video tapes, and computer software programs. Less than half said they would be willing to pay for publications. A third to less than one-fourth expressed a willingness to pay for home/farm visits, office visits, newsletters, and telephone information services.

Although this current study will focus on whether users or potential users are willing to pay a fee for services, there may be some correlations that can be made between quality of service and willingness to pay. Overall satisfaction is positively related to support but may not be as strong as one might expect. The Warner and Christenson study (1984) found that satisfied people are more supportive, but the Kentucky study showed only that satisfied persons are less likely to want funds reduced. This would suggest that positive experiences with Extension result in positive opinions about support.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To address the objectives of the study and to solicit the desired information, the research design utilized was descriptive research. A closed form survey instrument was used to collect data. Specific activities are outlined in the following sections: population and sample, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Population and Sample

The sample population chosen for this study was a list of all Montana residents who held driver's licenses. Permission was obtained from the Department of Justice to secure this list of drivers holding a Montana license. A driver's license list has advantages over other sampling frames in that it contains the names and addresses of individuals and is not subject to many of the socio-economic biases of other sampling sources (Warner, Burdge, Hoffman, and Hammonds, 1975).

One thousand (1000) Montana residents were drawn in a random sample of driver's license holders. The Department of Justice chose the random sampling technique. This sample size drawn represented an effort to obtain a return of 400 responses to achieve a confidence level of $\pm 4.9\%$ or 95.1% reliability.

Instrumentation

A postal survey (Appendix A) was used to obtain responses. Weiers (1984) indicated the low cost of the mail questionnaire has a distinct advantage when compared to either personal or telephone interviews. Weiers also maintained the cost advantage of the mail survey would be especially great if respondents are geographically dispersed:

The questionnaire was developed using Dillman's Total Design Method (TDM). The questionnaire was printed as a booklet. An attractive cover was designed to stimulate interest in the questionnaire. The title was designed to convey the topic of the study and to make it sound interesting. The graphic illustration was designed to contain the new logo-type of the Extension Service and to represent rural and urban populations. The question pages were printed in a photographically reduced form to fit the booklet format. The questionnaire booklet was reproduced on white paper by a printing method that provided a quality close to the original typed copy. The questionnaire was designed to fit a standard 7½" x 10½" mail-out envelope and, when folded, a standard business envelope.

Questions were ordered with "easy" to answer questions coming first to build respondents' confidence. Questions of similar content were grouped together. Questions that were considered most likely to be objectionable were positioned after less objectionable ones. Demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire.

A first draft of the questionnaire was pre-tested by a panel consisting of members of the Marketing Extension Committee for content validity.

A second pre-test was conducted was conducted by an Extension administrator. Dillman (1978) recommends this pre-test of potential "users" of the data.

A third pre-test was conducted with people drawn from the population to be surveyed. This group was given a questionnaire accompanied by a cover letter and asked to fill it out in the presence of the researcher. Revisions to the questionnaire were made in accordance with information gathered from the three pre-tests.

A final questionnaire (Appendix A) and a cover letter (Appendix B) were mailed to Montana residents on Friday, September 4, 1987. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed for the return. A reminder post card (Appendix B) was sent to all non-respondents on Friday, September 18, 1987. A second mailing of the questionnaire and a second cover letter (Appendix B) were sent two weeks later to those who did not respond to the first mailing.

Data Analysis

Results of the survey were compiled by entering the data from the surveys into a SuperCalc 4 computer program. This computer program was designed to correspond with specific survey items. SuperCalc 4 has the capability of calculating mean, frequency, rank, and standard deviation. Tables were then developed to portray the statistical analysis in a descriptive form.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the public's perception of the Montana State University Extension Service. To measure the perceptions, a survey was developed to obtain the opinions of Montana citizens. The information obtained from the surveys was used to generate data to fulfill the objectives of this study. Frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to report the data.

The findings are presented under the following major headings:

- 1) Demographics
- 2) Usage of Extension Services
- 3) Preferred Sources of Information and Services
- 4) Support and Awareness of Funding

Demographics

Table 1 displays data showing that a total of 1000 postal surveys were sent to individuals in 55 counties, with 312 being returned for a response rate of 31.2%. The 31.2% return rate from respondents resulted in a confidence level of $\pm 5.6\%$. Not all respondents chose to answer each question, which resulted in a variation of the (N=) and will be represented as such in the following tables.

Table 1. Summary of Responses.

Respondents	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percent Return
Montana Citizens	1000	312	31.2%

The questionnaire secured information regarding the sex of the respondents. Of the Montana citizens who responded, 37.4% were male, while 62.6% were female.

Data in Table 2 reveal the place of residence of the respondents. Eleven percent indicated they lived on a farm or ranch, 23.6% lived in a rural but not farm setting, 27.4% lived in towns under 10,000, and 38.1% lived in a city with a population of 10,000 and over. According to the Montana census (1980), 53% of the total population of Montana live in urban areas and 47% live in rural (under 2,500) areas.

Table 2. Residency of Montana Citizens (N=310).

Location	N	%
Farm or Ranch	34	11.0
Rural but not Farm	73	23.6
Town (under 10,000)	85	27.4
City (10,000 and over)	118	38.1

Information in Table 3 reveals the age of the respondents. Those 18-25 years of age comprise 10.3% of the sample, 26-35 years report 22.4%, 36-45 years report 17.6%, 46-55 years report 17.6%, 56-65 years report 13.5%, and those 66 years and older were 18.6% of the

responses. According to the Montana census (1980), the total percent of the population of Montana is as follows: 18-25 years = 9%; 26-35 years = 17%; 36-45 years = 11%; 46-55 years = 9%; 56-65 years = 9%; 66 years and older = 10%.

Table 3. Age of Respondents (N=312).

Age	N	%
18-25	32	10.3
26-35	70	22.4
36-45	55	17.6
46-55	55	17.6
56-65	42	13.5
66 and older	58	18.6

Previous profiles of users of Extension programs have indicated an underrepresentation among Extension clientele of single, divorced, and widowed persons. Table 4 indicates that married persons (69.5%) represented a large portion of those responding. Never married or single people comprised 13.5% of the sample and divorced and widowed totaled 17.1% (8.7 + 8.4).

Table 4. Marital Status of Respondents (N=311).

Marital Status	N	%
Never Married	42	13.5
Married	216	69.5
Divorced	27	8.7
Widowed	26	8.4

The profile of educational level of Montana citizens suggests that almost half (49.2%) have a high school diploma and another one-fourth (24.1%) have a college degree. A grade school education was reported by 6.1% of the sample, a trade school educational level by 16.1%, and a graduate degree was reported by 4.5% of those responding. According to the Montana census (1980), the median years of school completed for persons 25 years and older is 12.6. Seventy-four percent (74%) of males and females 25 years old and over are high school graduates.

Table 5. Level of Education (N=311).

Education	N	%
Grade School	19	6.1
High School	153	49.2
Trade School	50	16.1
College Graduate (BS/BA degree)	75	24.1
Graduate Degree (MS/PhD degree)	14	4.5

Awareness of the Extension Service based on the level of family income has been examined in other studies. As can be seen in Table 6, 27.1% of the respondents in this study were persons with incomes in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range, with another one-fourth (23.6%) in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range. Almost equal percentages were under \$10,000 (16.1%) as were over \$30,000 (17.5%). The lowest representation was for those persons making \$40,000 and above (6.9% + 8.9%). According to the Montana census (1980), the mean family income for Montana is \$20,659.

Table 6. Family Income Level (N=292).

Income Level	N	%
Less than \$9,999	47	16.1
\$10,000 to \$19,999	79	27.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999	69	23.6
\$30,000 to \$39,999	51	17.5
\$40,000 to \$49,999	20	6.9
\$50,000 and above	26	8.9

Usage of Extension Service

A review of data in Table 7 indicates that 60.8% of the Montana citizens responding said they had used the services of the Montana State University Extension Service and 39.2% said they had not used the services.

Table 7. Usage of the Extension Service (N=311).

Answer	N	%
Yes	189	60.8
No	122	39.2

Contact by program area is represented in Table 8. Agriculture accounts for 33.3% of the contacts. Home Economics accounts for 28.3% of the contacts. 4-H/Youth Programs represent 19.3% of the contacts, with Community Development representing 8.0% of the contacts.

Table 8. Contact by Program Area (N=300).

Program Area	N	%
Agriculture	100	33.3
Home Economics	85	28.3
4-H/Youth Programs	58	19.3
Community Development	24	8.0
Other	33	11.0

The type of services utilized by respondents is depicted in Table 9. The County Extension Office was the most frequently utilized with 33.4%; Extension publications was next with 23.9%; followed by the County Agent with 22.5%. Extension specialists from Montana State University, Extension sponsored programs or workshops and "other" together accounted for 20% (7.5 + 10.9 + 1.7) of the responses.

Table 9. Services Utilized.

Service	N	%
County Extension Office	156	33.4
Extension Publications	112	23.9
County Agent	105	22.5
Extension Specialist from MSU	35	7.5
Extension Sponsored Program/Workshop	51	10.9
Other	8	1.7

Data in Table 10 give evidence of the frequency of contact of the citizens with the Extension Service. Of the 60.8% who initially said that they had used the services of the Montana State University Extension Service, only 5.4% (1.6 + 3.8) indicated they used the

service once a week or once a month. Three to four contacts per year were reported by 17.8% of the respondents. Another 67% reported they use the Extension Service 1-2 times per year or less.

Table 10. Frequency of Use (N=185).

Frequency of Contact	N	%
Once a week	3	1.6
Once a month	7	3.8
3-4 times per year	33	17.8
1-2 times per year	57	30.8
Less than once a year	67	36.2
Other	18	9.7

The information in Table 11 illustrates how Montana citizens rated the services of the Extension Service. The majority of respondents rated the services as either excellent (43.2%) or good (41.5%). A total of 15.3% rated the services provided by the Extension Service as fair, poor or don't know.

Table 11. Quality of Services Provided (N=185).

Rating	N	%
Excellent	79	43.2
Good	76	41.5
Fair	12	6.6
Poor	5	2.7
Don't know	11	6.0

Preferred Sources of Information

Recognizing that there are many sources of information available, the Extension Service was interested in identifying where Montana citizens prefer to go for information in the subject matter areas of Home Economics, Agriculture, Community Development and Youth Education.

Home Economics

Table 12 indicates that the respondents chose magazines (26.3%) and the Extension Service (23.5%) as their most preferred sources of information in the area of Foods and Nutrition. The table further indicates that the power company (33.4%) and the Extension Service (15.2%) would be their choices for information in the subject matter of Housing and Energy. For Family Financial Management, respondents overwhelmingly indicated professionals (bankers, lawyers, insurance) (41.9%) as their preferred source of information, followed by magazines (13.1%). Physicians and nurses (17.2%), closely followed by magazines (15.4%), were the top choices for information on Human Development and Family Life. By program areas within Home Economics, the Extension Service in general was not found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, magazines (68.4%) ranked first as a preferred source of information for Home Economics, followed by the Extension Service (59.5%) and professionals (47.9%).

Table 12. Preferred Sources of Information in Home Economics.

	Magazines	Television	Newspaper	Extension Service	Counselors	Clergy	Power Company	Dept. of Natural Resources	Physicians and Nurses	Family and Friends	Professionals (Bankers, Lawyers, Insurance)
HOME ECONOMICS											
Foods/Nutrition	26.3	8.9	15.0	23.5	1.8	.18	1.3	1.3	13.3	8.4	1.08
Housing/Energy	13.6	8.5	12.3	15.2	1.2	.19	33.4	8.6	--	4.4	2.7
Family Financial Management	13.1	7.1	9.0	10.3	7.7	1.5	--	.21	.21	9.0	41.9
Human Development/ Family Life	15.4	8.9	8.5	10.5	11.6	12.1	.36	.18	17.2	13.2	2.2
TOTALS	68.4	33.4	44.8	59.5	22.3	14.0	34.0	10.3	30.7	35.0	47.9

Agriculture

Table 13 contains information on how Montana citizens prefer to obtain information in the subject matter area of Agriculture. Farm magazines (17.6%) followed by the Extension Service (15.3%) were the preferred sources of information on Livestock. In the area of Farm Management/Finance respondents chose agribusiness (19.8%) followed by the Extension Service (16.7%) as the top two choices. The Extension Service (28.1%) was chosen as the preferred source of information for Crops/Soils and Pest Management, followed by the State Department of Agriculture (15.8%). The State Department of Agriculture (24.1%) and the Extension Service (22.6%) rated closely as information sources for Natural Resources/Soil, Water and Forestry. Over 31% of those responding chose the Extension Service as the primary choice of information for Horticulture and Gardening. Family and neighbors (19.6%) followed the Extension Service as a source of information for Horticulture and Gardening. By program areas within Agriculture, the Extension Service in general was found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, the Extension Service (113.9%) ranks first as a preferred source of information for Agriculture information, followed by the State Department of Agriculture (76.5%) and farm magazines (62.5%).

Table 13. Preferred Sources of Information in Agriculture.

AGRICULTURE	<i>Family and Neighbors</i>	<i>Agribusiness</i>	<i>Farm Magazines</i>	<i>Farmer Stockman/ Prairie Star</i>	<i>Extension Newsletter</i>	<i>Association Newsletter</i>	<i>Extension Service</i>	<i>SCS Office</i>	<i>ASCS Office</i>	<i>State Dept. of Agriculture</i>
Livestock	11.5	12.0	17.6	12.2	10.7	3.4	15.3	2.10	2.7	12.6
Farm Management/ Finance	8.1	19.8	13.9	5.0	9.5	3.3	16.7	3.1	6.4	14.2
Crops/Soils/Pest Management	7.4	8.9	8.9	4.5	9.1	2.5	28.1	8.2	6.7	15.8
Natural Resources/ Soil/Water/Forestry	6.5	5.7	7.9	3.9	8.4	3.0	22.6	10.7	7.2	24.1
Horticulture/Gardening	19.6	4.4	14.2	3.3	12.6	2.0	31.2	1.5	1.5	9.8
TOTALS	53.1	50.8	62.5	28.9	50.3	14.2	113.9	25.6	24.5	76.5

Community Development

Ratings of preference on topics of Community Development are shown in Table 14. Of the citizens responding, 28.9% indicated a preference for obtaining educational information on Group Leadership from the Extension Service. The Local Chamber of Commerce followed closely (26.1%) as a source of information. The City/County Planning Office was the preferred choice for information on Community Facility Improvement (36.6%) with the Local Chamber of Commerce (30.4%) being a close second. The City/County Planning Office (30.6%) and Media (26.7%) were the top two choices selected for information on local government. The City/County Planning Office (48.5%) followed by the Local Chamber of Commerce (21.9%) were the preferred sources of information for Local Community Planning. The Local Chamber of Commerce (22.3%) was closely followed by the State Department of Commerce (21.5%) as the preferred choices for information on Economic Development. By program areas within Community Development, the Extension Service in general was not found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, City/County Planning Offices (147.9%) ranked high as a preferred source of information on Community Development, followed by the Local Chamber of Commerce (125.6%) and the Media (98.0%).

Table 14. Preferred Sources of Information in Community Development.

	State Dept. of Commerce	Extension Service	Local Chamber of Commerce	City/County Planning Office	Media (Television, radio)
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT					
Group Leadership	7.1	28.9	26.1	15.2	22.7
Community Facility Improvement	6.8	12.1	30.4	36.6	14.1
Local Government	9.0	8.7	24.9	30.6	26.7
Local Community Planning	3.4	12.0	21.9	48.5	14.3
Economic Development	21.5	18.9	22.3	17.0	20.1
TOTALS	47.8	80.6	125.6	147.9	98.0

Youth Education Programs

Youth Education programs are often intended to develop communication, leadership and decision making skills, as well as a positive self-concept. When asked to rank the Youth Education programs listed in Table 15, respondents indicated very little difference in preference. While not distinctly different, the youth education program activities were ranked in the following descending order: 4-H/Extension Youth Programs ($\bar{x}=2.44$), Extra-curricular School Activities ($\bar{x}=2.73$), Other Youth Groups ($\bar{x}=2.88$), Church Activities ($\bar{x}=2.97$), Local Recreation Programs ($\bar{x}=3.98$).

Because this question sought rank ordered data, statistical analysis is presented using frequency, mean and standard deviation.

Table 15. Preference of Youth Education Programs (N=260).

Program	Rank	f	\bar{x}	SD
4-H/Extension Youth Programs	1	271	2.44	1.37
Extra-curricular School Activities	2	272	2.73	1.31
Other Youth Groups (Boy Scouts, etc.)	3	267	2.88	1.18
Church Activities	4	270	2.97	1.46
Local Recreation Programs	5	262	3.98	1.22

Methods of Receiving Information

When asked to select and rank their five most preferred methods of receiving educational information, respondents chose in-depth short courses (3-5 class sessions) as the most preferred choice. The other four most preferred methods were learn-at-home materials ($\bar{x}=2.8$), public meetings, tours, demonstrations ($\bar{x}=2.9$), newspaper, feature stories, news articles ($\bar{x}=3.0$) and newsletters ($\bar{x}=3.1$).

The least preferred methods of obtaining information, ranking 6-10, were magazine articles ($\bar{x}=3.1$), television ($\bar{x}=3.3$), video programs ($\bar{x}=3.5$), radio ($\bar{x}=3.5$) and computer ($\bar{x}=3.7$).

Table 16. Rank Order by Frequency of Five Most Preferred Methods of Receiving Educational Information.

Method	Rank	f	\bar{x}	SD
Short Course	1	174	2.1	1.41
Learn-at-Home Material	2	165	2.8	1.31
Public Meetings, Tours, Demonstrations	3	182	2.9	1.39
Newspaper Feature Stories, News Articles	4	188	3.0	1.34
Newsletters	5	164	3.1	1.42
Magazine Articles	6	179	3.1	1.31
Television	7	150	3.3	1.36
Video Programs	8	73	3.5	1.16
Radio	9	61	3.5	1.43
Computer	10	35	3.7	1.26

Awareness of Support of Funding

With the Extension Service having a strong local identity in most communities, the Marketing Extension Committee wanted to obtain data

on the public awareness of Extension's funding source. Over half of the respondents (Table 17) were accurate in identifying the partnership of county, federal and state funding. Other possible funding sources selected were Montana State University (16.8%), United States Department of Agriculture (11.7%), county government (11.0%) and Montana Department of Agriculture (7.3%).

Table 17. Public Awareness of Extension Funding Source (N=274).

Source of Funding	N	%
County, Federal and State Funds	139	50.7
Montana State University	46	16.8
United States Department of Agriculture	32	11.7
County Government	30	11.0
Montana Department of Agriculture	20	7.3
Other	7	2.6

Historically services provided by the Extension Service have been on a low or no-cost basis to the clientele. With funds being cut in recent times, the Extension Service was interested in obtaining data on the citizens' willingness to pay a user fee for services. Table 18 tells us that over one-fourth (26.7%) of the sample would be willing to pay a fee for workshops, with an additional 16% willing to pay for video programs. Close to 15% were willing to pay for computer programs (15.6%) and publications (15.4%). Respondents were not as willing to pay for newsletters (9.3%), farm-home visits (8.6%) or office consultations (5.0%).

Table 18. User Fee for Services Provided.

Service	N	%
Workshops	178	26.7
Video Programs	107	16.0
Computer Programs	104	15.6
Publications	103	15.4
Newsletters	62	9.3
Farm/Home Visits	57	8.6
Office Consultations	33	5.0
Other	23	3.5

A favorable public image makes securing resources from funding sources much easier. Montana citizens' willingness to support funding is overwhelmingly demonstrated by the data in Table 19. Over 90% (64.8 + 26.1) of the individuals indicated that funding should either remain the same or be increased. Less than 10% (9.1) advocated decreasing the funding for the Extension Service.

Table 19. Level of Support for Extension Service (N=264).

Support	N	%
Funding should remain same	171	64.8
Funding should be increased	69	26.1
Funding should be decreased	24	9.1

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this section are organized and presented as they pertain to the objectives of this study.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis and summarization of the data presented in this study, it was concluded that:

1. Visits to the County Extension Office, Extension publications and contacts with the County Extension Agent are the most frequent services utilized by Montana citizens. It was also determined that the majority of people surveyed contacted the Extension Service two times a year or less.

2. The quality of the services provided by the Extension Service were rated as good or excellent by Montana citizens.

3. The most frequent contacts were made in the area of Agriculture and Home Economics. 4-H/youth programs and community development programs accounted for slightly more than one-fourth of the contacts (27%) with the Extension Service.

4. The respondents indicated a willingness to pay a fee for workshops. A segment of the population was willing to pay a fee for

video and computer programs. The public is not as willing to pay a fee for newsletters, farm/home visits or office consultations.

5. One half of the respondents are aware that funding for Extension is a combination of county, federal and state funds. Montana citizens indicated a preference for the current funding level to remain the same.

6. In the area of Home Economics, Montana citizens identified magazines, professionals and newspapers as preferred sources of information in addition to the Extension Service.

7. In the area of Agriculture, Montana citizens identified the State Department of Agriculture, farm magazines and family and neighbors as preferred sources of information following the Extension Service.

8. In the area of Community Development, Montana citizens identified city/county planning offices, the local chamber of commerce and the media as preferred sources of information.

9. In the area of Youth Education Programs, Montana citizens did not show a marked preference for any one youth activity.

Discussion and Recommendations

As a result of the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the public's perception of the Extension Service is based on few contacts per year with the County Extension Office, Extension publications and the county agent, Extension's marketing effort should address these three areas. Knowing that the County

Extension Office was the most frequent service utilized, the Montana Extension Service should make every effort to ensure that a county office is located in every county. Extension publications should reflect the uniform image Extension is trying to portray throughout the state. All staff must be actively involved in planning, implementing and evaluating a marketing program. Since Extension's programs are its educational products, Extension must be able to market the organization while improving educational programs to meet the needs of clientele.

2. A user fee system should be explored as a possible source of funding for workshops, video and computer programs. Further study needs to be done on the educational use of video and computer programs. Video and computer programs ranked low as preferred methods of receiving educational information; however, respondents said they would be most willing to pay a fee for these services. Further study might focus on whether videos are considered "educational" or whether clientele have access to video and computer equipment.

3. Extension should design program delivery in the area of Home Economics, giving consideration to magazine format, other professionals (bankers, lawyers) and newspapers. Knowing that magazines are a preferred method of obtaining educational information, Extension should consider a magazine format with renewable subscriptions. Target audiences for Home Economics programming should be designed by county agents and specialists for professionals such as bankers, lawyers and insurance agents. Home Economics programming should

continue to utilize the newspaper as a method of program delivery and expand on this option whenever possible. Further study needs to be done on program delivery and the interdisciplinary opportunities available to Extension in all program areas.

4. Extension should design program delivery in the area of Agriculture to include the State Department of Agriculture and farm magazines. With the magazine as a preferred source of information surfacing again, Extension should consider this format for agriculture utilizing a renewable subscription. Further study needs to be done to clarify the public's perception of the State Department of Agriculture as an educational agency.

5. Extension should design program delivery in the area of Community Development to include city/county planning offices, the local chamber of commerce, television and radio. In the area of Community Development, Extension is only recognized for its programming in the area of group leadership. A marketing effort for Community Development should be designed for program recognition.

6. Extension should give further consideration to collaborating with other youth education programs, given there is such competition for youths' time.

7. Extension should consider a marketing effort to support increased funding for Extension targeting all audiences.

8. Further studies to augment a major marketing effort by the Extension Service should focus on existing clientele and decision makers.

Summary

The data presented in this study reveal the public's perception of the Montana State University Extension Service relative to the aspects studied. These perceptions can be further examined by the Marketing Extension Committee to obtain objective information on Extension's current image in Montana. The Marketing Extension Committee can utilize the data on which to base marketing decisions and activities and to identify target audiences for future Extension marketing efforts.

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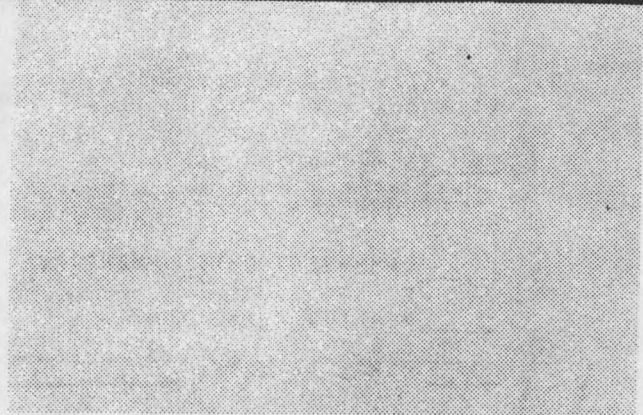
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APPENDICES

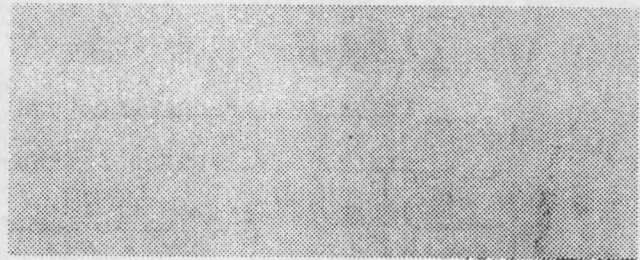
APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**MONTANA
STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Extension Service



The Public's Perception
of Extension



September 1987



INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each question carefully and respond with an (x) in the blank(s) to the left of the question. A space has been provided on some questions for you to provide additional information if the appropriate response is not listed.

1. Have you ever used the services of the Montana Extension Service? (Sometimes called County Extension Service, Cooperative Extension, or Agriculture Extension Service.)

YES NO (If no, go to question 6)

2. In which of the following program areas have you had contact with the Extension Service? Check (x) all that apply.

AGRICULTURE
 HOME ECONOMICS
 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 4-H/YOUTH PROGRAMS
 OTHER (specify) _____

3. Check (x) all of the following services you have utilized?

COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE
 COUNTY AGENT
 EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS
 EXTENSION SPECIALIST FROM MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
 ATTENDED EXTENSION SPONSORED PROGRAM OR WORKSHOP
 OTHER (specify) _____

4. How often do you contact the Extension Service?

ONCE A WEEK
 ONCE A MONTH
 1-2 TIMES PER YEAR
 3-4 TIMES PER YEAR
 LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR
 OTHER (specify) _____

5. How would you rate the services provided by the Extension Service?

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR
- DON'T KNOW

6. In the following chart, identify where you would prefer to obtain information on the topics listed under Home Economics. Possible choices are listed across the top.

Indicate your answers by marking (x) in the appropriate boxes.

HOME ECONOMICS	Magazines	Television	Newspaper	Extension Service	Counselors	Clergy	Power Company	Dept. of Natural Resources	Physicians & Nurses	Family & Friends	Professionals (bankers, lawyers, insurance)
Foods/Nutrition											
Housing/Energy											
Family Financial Management											
Human Development/ Family Life											

Comments _____

7. In the following chart, identify where you would prefer to obtain information on the topics listed under Agriculture. Possible choices are listed across the top.

Indicate your answers by marking (x) in the appropriate boxes.

	Family & Neighbors	Agribusiness	Farm Magazines	Farmer Stockman/ Prairie Star	Extension Newsletter	Association Newsletter	Extension Newsletter	SCS Office	ASCS Office	State Dept. of Agriculture
AGRICULTURE										
Livestock										
Farm Management/ Finance										
Crops/Soils/Pest Management										
Natural Resources/ Soil, Water, Forestry										
Horticulture/ Gardening										

Comments _____

8. In the following chart, identify where you would prefer to obtain information on the topics listed under Community Development. Possible choices are listed across the top.

Indicate your answers by marking (x) in the appropriate boxes.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Group Leadership.
- Community Facility Improvement
- Local Government.
- Local Community Planning.
- Economic Development.

	State Dept. of Commerce	Extension Service	Local Chamber of Commerce	City/County Planning Office	Media (Television, radio)
Group Leadership.					
Community Facility Improvement					
Local Government.					
Local Community Planning.					
Economic Development.					

Comments _____

9. Assume you were going to enroll a child in a Youth Education Program to develop communication, leadership, decision making skills and positive self concept. Rank the following activities in the order of your preference. (1 being the most preferred, 2 being the next preferred etc.)

- _____ EXTRA-CURRICULAR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
- _____ CHURCH ACTIVITIES
- _____ OTHER YOUTH GROUPS (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts etc.)
- _____ 4-H AND OTHER EXTENSION YOUTH EDUCATION
- _____ LOCAL RECREATION PROGRAMS

GENERAL INFORMATION:

10. Select and rank your five (5) most preferred methods of receiving educational information. (1 being the most preferred, 2 being the next preferred etc.)

- _____ IN-DEPTH SHORT COURSES (3-5 class sessions)
- _____ NEWSLETTERS
- _____ PUBLIC MEETINGS, TOURS, DEMONSTRATIONS
- _____ MAGAZINE ARTICLES
- _____ "LEARN-AT-HOME" MATERIAL (study manuals, bulletins etc.)
- _____ NEWSPAPER, FEATURE STORIES, NEWS ARTICLES ETC.
- _____ VIDEO PROGRAMS
- _____ TELEVISION
- _____ COMPUTER
- _____ RADIO

11. For which of the following services provided by Extension would you be willing to pay a user fee? Check (x) all that apply.

OFFICE CONSULTATIONS

FARM/HOME VISITS

PUBLICATIONS

WORKSHOPS

NEWSLETTERS

COMPUTER PROGRAMS

VIDEO PROGRAMS

OTHER (specify) _____

12. As you understand it, the Extension Service is funded from which of the following source(s). Check (x) only one.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

COMBINATION OF COUNTY, FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY THROUGH STATE APPROPRIATIONS

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OTHER (specify) _____

13. Which of the following would best represent your level of support for the Extension Service?

FUNDING SHOULD REMAIN THE SAME

FUNDING SHOULD BE INCREASED

FUNDING SHOULD BE DECREASED

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER, FOLLOW-UP LETTER AND POST CARD



Cooperative Extension Service

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND MONTANA COUNTIES COOPERATING

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
BOZEMAN, MONTANA 59717

September 4, 1987

Dear Montana Citizen,

The Montana State University Extension Service is interested in the opinions of Montana residents about its existing programs and services. It is the mission of the Extension Service to transfer research-based information to the people of Montana. Consequently, we are concerned about delivering the best possible services for the tax dollar spent. With the information you provide, Extension can develop programs that best suit the clientele of the state.

You are one of a group of individuals being asked to provide your perceptions about the MSU Extension Service. Your name was drawn in a random sample of residents from throughout the state. Your responses are very important to us and we hope you will take 10 minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your response is vital to assure that our results are representative of all Montana residents.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Persons participating in this survey will not be identified with the information in any way. You will note that the questionnaire has an identification number. This number allows us to remove your name from the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned.

It will be greatly appreciated if you will complete the enclosed survey and return in the stamped, reply envelope enclosed by September 18. You may receive a summary copy of the survey by contacting the Montana State University Extension Service, Bozeman, Montana 59717.

Thank you for your assistance. Your response is of the utmost importance to the success of this study.

Sincerely,

Charlene Garoutte
Graduate Student
County Extension Agent

Leroy Luft
Associate Director of Extension
Montana State University



Cooperative Extension Service

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, BOZEMAN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND MONTANA COUNTIES COOPERATING

REPLY TO:

P.O. BOX 740

FERGUS COUNTY

LEWISTOWN, MONTANA 59457

TEL. 538-3919 OR 638-7611

October 2, 1987

Dear Montana Citizen:

About four weeks ago I wrote to you seeking your perception of the Extension Service in Montana. As of today we have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

The Montana State University Extension Service has undertaken this study to enable them to deliver the best possible services to the people of Montana.

In order for the results to be truly representative of the opinions of all Montana residents, it is essential that each person return their questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Charlene Garoutte
Graduate Student
County Extension Agent

CG/bj

September 18, 1987

Dear Montana Citizen,



Recently, I sent you a questionnaire to help determine the Public's Perception of Extension. I have not received your response.

The information you provide is extremely important. Please take a few minutes from your busy schedule to complete and return the questionnaire. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

If you have returned the questionnaire, please disregard this notice.

Sincerely,
Charlene Garoutte
Charlene Garoutte

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



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