

ATTITUDE OF RURAL PEOPLE TOWARDS E-CHOUPAL

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ABSTRACT

ITC's e-Choupal initiative caters to the information needs of the farmers at their doorstep by bridging the information and service gap of rural India. Services of e-Choupal include agriculture, health, insurance, education and entertainment. The effectiveness of these services depends upon the adoption or rejection by rural people. Attitude plays an important role in the adoption or rejection of an innovation. Therefore the present investigation was undertaken with the objective to know the attitude of rural people towards e-Choupal. The present study was conducted in 16 villages of 4 districts of Rajasthan namely Ganga Nagar, Kota, Bharatpur, and Chittorgarh on a sample of 160 women and 160 men users of e-Choupal. Attitude scale was used for collecting data. The findings of the study indicated that 85 per cent men and 54.4 per cent women had favourable attitude towards e-Choupal followed by 11.9 per cent men and 45.6 per cent women with neutral attitude. A very few men (3.1%) had most favourable attitude towards e-Choupal. It can thus be said that most of the users displayed favourable attitude towards e-Choupal.

INTRODUCTION

Typically poor and often illiterate rural Indian farmers generally have very limited access to information regarding improved farming techniques, sources of credit and insurance and health scheme. They do not have ready access to quality inputs like seeds, herbicides and pesticides, or to critical information such as accurate weather forecast that could help them to improve the quality of their crops. Such inefficiencies drastically increase transaction cost and slash potential profits for the rural Indian farmers. e-Choupal is an alternate means of technology transfer to rural people. It has an immense power in speeding up the development process by making information available at the doorstep of rural masses with an unimaginable speed and accuracy. e-Choupal has the capability to bridge the gap between the have and have-nots (Anupindi, 2003).

Under e-Choupal (which means "village square" or "gathering place" in Hindi) project, Internet centers are set up in rural Indian farming villages to provide farmers with easy access to real-

time information. The e-Choupal portal also provides information in local language on weather forecast, education on improved farm practices and risk management, and knowledge about insurance policies and health schemes. It also render the educational and entertainment facilities in the villages

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in four purposively selected districts namely Ganga Nagar, Kota, Bharatpur, and Chittorgarh of Rajasthan where e-Choupal is in operation. Two Panchayat samities from each district and two villages from each panchayat samities were selected on random basis. The sample consisted of 160 rural women and 160 rural men who are users of e-Choupal. Thus, the

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total sample was 320 rural people.

Measurement of attitude

A attitude scale was developed (suggested by Thurstone and Chave, 1929, equal appearing intervals) through collection and editing of items, judges rating of attitude scale, calculation of scale and Q values of attitude statements and final selection of items. The scale was tested for its reliability and validity. Standardized scale consisting of 26 statements (13 positive and 13 negative) was administered to measure the attitude of rural people about e-Choupal. The responses were obtained on a five point continuum viz Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree with the weightage scores of 5,4,3,2 and 1 for positive and reverse scoring system for negative statements. Mean scores were worked out for all the respondents by adding scores for all the statements and dividing it by the number of statements i.e. 26. On the basis of mean scores which could range between 1 to 5, following categories were made:

Categories	Score Range
Most favourable	4.51 – 5.00
Favourable	3.51 - 4.50
Neutral	2.51 – 3.50
Unfavourable	1.51 – 2.50
Most Unfavourable	1.00 – 1.50

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attitude is commonly considered to be a mental state of readiness and preparedness organized through experiences which exert dynamic and positive influence upon an individual to respond in a particular way.

The mean attitude score of each respondent was calculated and classified in five categories as shown in Table 1. The table illustrates that 85 per cent men and 54.4 per cent women had favourable

attitude towards e-Choupal followed by 11.9 per cent men and 45.6 per cent women with neutral attitude. It was found that a very few men (3.1 %) had most favourable attitude towards e-Choupal. It can be thus said that most of the users displayed favourable attitude towards the e-Choupal.

The reasons for such a positive attitude towards e-Choupal might be that the farmers got better prices for their agriculture produce at the same time they got real time information on weather, market trend and best farming practices. The farmers felt that they were economically better off and their community was more close-knit as a result of having an e-Choupal in their village. e-Choupal is the only project that transfers new technologies to the wide audience literally at the click of a mouse.

The e-Choupal also helped rural people to eliminates wasteful intermediation, multiple handling in agriculture, reduce transportation cost in selling of produce and get right price for their agriculture produce. e-Choupal is the only source in the village to obtain results of various examination in time.

Critical examination of the table further reveals that very few respondents (1.5%) expressed most favourable attitude towards e-Choupal as they felt some of the constraints like no direct access to e-Choupal website, insufficient numbers of computers, less knowledge of computer handling, no timely and area specific information in some context. Upadhyay (2000) in a study of attitude of beneficiaries towards DWCRA programme revealed that majority of tribal (72.22%) and non tribal (77.78%) respondents had favourable attitude and less than one forth respondents (24.44 per cent tribal and 21.11 per cent non tribal) had neutral attitude towards the programme. Very few respondents exhibited most favourable attitude whereas, none of them had unfavourable and most favourable attitude towards DWCRA programme.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by their attitude towards e-Choupal and its services

n=320				
S. No.	Attitude Categories	Men, n= 160 [f (%)]	Women, n= 160 [f (%)]	Total
1	Most favourable (4.51 – 5.00)	5 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	5 (1.5)
2	Favourable (3.51 - 4.50)	136 (85.0)	87 (54.4)	223 (69.7)
3	Neutral (2.51 – 3.50)	19 (11.9)	73 (45.6)	92 (28.8)
4	Unfavourable (1.51 – 2.50)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
5	Most Unfavourable (1.00 – 1.50)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

To know the attitude of respondents towards the different aspects of e-Choupal all the twenty six statements were considered. For this mean per cent scores for each statement was calculated. The results are presented in Table 2.

Data incorporated in Table 2 reveal that all the respondents strongly agreed with the statement "e-

Choupal is useful in checking examination results in time" with MPS 100. Table further reveals that out of 26 statements, 17 were viewed favorably by the majority of the respondents (62.7 - 92.3 MPS). They stated that e-Choupal provides timely and relevant information on agriculture, insurance and education.

Table 2. Attitude of the respondents towards different aspects of e-Choupal

S. No.	Statement	MPS		
		Rural men	Rural women	Total
		n =160	n=160	
1.	e-Choupal provides relevant and real time information on agriculture	95.1	89.3	92.3
2.	e-Choupal does not reduce transportation cost in selling of produce	88.1	79.6	83.9
3.	e-Choupal eliminates wasteful intimidation and multiple handling in agriculture	95.3	89.3	92.3
4.	e-Choupal does not help in producing quality agriculture produce	82.3	70.5	76.4
5.	e-Choupal provides timely information on day to day weather	94.6	89.3	91.9
6.	Farmers does not get right prices for their agriculture produce in e-Choupal	95.4	81.9	88.7
7.	e-Choupal demonstrates production potentialities of improved agricultural technology through Choupal pradarshan khet.	89.3	80.4	84.9
8.	e-Choupal is not effective in solving farmer's queries related to agriculture	95.3	74.5	84.9
9.	e-Choupal provides complete information on soil testing.	86.9	72.5	79.7
10.	e-Choupal does not provide detailed information about improved agronomical methods for various crops	88.8	64.8	76.8
11.	e-Choupal brought a network of insurance companies to rural people which can help them in crucial situation	87.0	58.3	72.7
12.	e-Choupal does not help farmers to recover the losses in agriculture due to natural disasters through weather insurance	56.3	50.8	53.6
13.	e-Choupal makes loan procedure easy by making kisan credit card	72.4	53.0	62.7
14.	e-Choupal (ITC) does not give claim in time	24.8	21.5	23.2
15.	e-Choupal provides useful information on health.	61.3	42.6	51.9
16.	e-Choupal does not provide quality medical facilities to rural people.	27.0	23.4	25.2
17.	e-Choupal provides information regarding various household treatment of various diseases	62.0	35.2	48.6
18.	e-Choupal is not effective in giving timely information about various competitive examination	43.5	42.3	42.9
19.	e-Choupal increases education facilities in the village	75.3	54.5	64.9
20.	e-Choupal is not useful in getting information about various universities	81.3	49.8	65.6
21.	e-Choupal is useful in checking examination result in time.	100.0	100.0	100.0
22.	Information is not given in time in e-Choupal	73.0	55.6	64.3
23.	e-Choupal renders entertainment facilities in the village.	66.8	48.6	57.7
24.	e-Choupal is not useful for illiterate people	31.8	30.6	31.2
25.	e-Choupal provides fast moving consumer goods at lower price	95.3	89.3	92.3
26.	e-Choupal benefits only ITC company.	94.4	89.3	91.9

They further expressed that e-Choupal does not only reduce transportation cost but also eliminates wasteful and multiple handling in selling of agriculture produce. e-Choupal also allowed farmers to do soil testing, buy farm products, insurance policies and household provisions such as soap, toothpaste, oil and batteries. Respondents were neutral about 5 statements i.e. "e-Choupal does not help farmers to recover the losses in agriculture due to natural disasters through weather insurance", "e-Choupal provides useful information on health", "e-Choupal provides information regarding various household treatment of various diseases", "e-Choupal is not effective in giving timely information about various competitive examination" and "e-Choupal renders entertainment facilities in the village" (42.9 - 57.7 MPS) as they were not utilizing these facilities of e-Choupal. Regarding weather insurance only 1 user got benefit from it till date thus they were neutral about benefits of weather insurance. Negative statements like e-Choupal (ITC) does not give claim in time, does not provide quality medical facilities to rural people and is not useful for illiterate people were reported correct by some of the respondents (23.2 to 31.2 MPS). From the above discussion it could be concluded that rural people showed favourable attitude towards e-Choupal and its services.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings it is concluded that rural people had favourable attitude towards e-Choupal and its services however only very few of them had most favourable attitude towards e-Choupal as they experienced some constraints in utilization of e-Choupal services. Thus it is recommended that the awareness need to be generated among rural people about all the services of e-Choupal so that they can be used by them up to maximum extent. ITC should make effort to update website with current, relevant and useful information from time to time for more utilization of its services.

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