Diverse Market Segments and Customer Satisfaction: Does Extension Serve All Clients Well?

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Abstract

Extensionists face increasing requirements for documenting the relevance, quality, and impact of services provided. From a Total Quality Management perspective, it also is important to determine if the level of quality is uniform across Extension's delivery system. Customer satisfaction surveys are a useful tool for obtaining a perspective on the quality of services and outcomes. This study explored whether audience diversity had an effect on the perceptions of clients regarding the quality of Extension's services. Using survey data collected from 2003 through 2007, clients' race-ethnicity and gender were found to be associated with small, but significant differences in satisfaction. Blacks and other minorities perceived having a somewhat lower quality experience with the services provided by Extension than did Whites and Hispanics. Men also had slightly lower levels of satisfaction with the quality of service received and outcomes experienced than did women. Given these findings, action is needed to implement improvements, including using more participatory approaches to promote equal involvement of the diverse clientele during the planning process, developing skills for the delivery of information that are suitable for use with culturally diverse audiences, and getting a better understanding of the cultural characteristics of the different market segments in the community.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Market segments, Diversity, Gender, Race-ethnicity

Introduction

Extensionists everywhere face increasing expectations and requirements for documenting the relevance, quality, and impact of services provided to clients (Radhakrishna, 2002; Richardson, 2001; Rivera & Alex, 2004). Though accountability requirements may lead to efforts to collect data, this information also can be used to maintain or enhance the quality of educational programs. Customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) are an important tool for measuring program quality (Hatry, 1999; Ladewig, 1999; Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman 2007). On the one hand, feedback from Extension clients can identify gaps in the delivery processes used by Extension. On the other hand, very satisfied clients mean that the organization is "on track" and likely to enjoy high levels of loyalty (Terry & Israel, 2004).

The Florida Cooperative Extension Service (FCES), for example, annually measures the quality of the services provided across its many educational programs, including agriculture and natural resources, residential horticulture, family and consumer sciences, and community development, using a customer satisfaction survey. The state's standard is that 92% of clients will be "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the quality of the service received. Clients' perceptions of quality have remained high in recent years, increasing slightly from 92.3% in 2003 to 95.3% in 2007. To maintain high levels of satisfaction, FCES strives constantly to identify, prioritize, and provide solutions that meet the needs and expectations of the different market segments that it serves.

One challenge facing Extension is meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations, not only in the U.S., but in Europe and other regions of the world. Continuing with Florida as an example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2005) reports that the proportions of Hispanic/Latino and Black people in Florida are greater than those at the national level (19.5 vs. 14.4% and 15.7 vs. 12.8%, for Hispanic/Latino and Black, respectively). The same report shows that women account for 51% of the population in Florida, a percentage slightly greater than the national average. The importance of the population's diversity for planning and marketing Extension programs in Florida has been widely documented and explored (Brennan, 2005; Guion, 2005a; Guion & Kent, 2005; Place & Toro, 2006).

Even though the overall Extension customer satisfaction in Florida is high (Haile & Israel, 2005) and meets the performance target, it is important to determine whether the quality of the experience with Extension remains equally high across different market segments, particularly those characterized by race-ethnicity (hereafter, referred to as race) and gender. From an equal opportunity perspective, involving diverse audiences in Extension programs meets the minimum criteria for quality. Exploring clients' experiences with Extension measures another dimension of program quality.

Conceptual Framework

Embracing the spirit of Total Quality Management (TQM), it is important to conduct in-depth analyses to determine if the level of quality is uniform across the different process carried-on by the organization (Royse, Thyer, Padgett, & Logan, 2006). TQM conceptualizes organizations as networks, or systems, of interdependent components encompassing critical factors, practices, techniques, and tools (Hellsten & Klefsjö, 2000; Tarí, 2005). Hackman and Wageman (1995) summarized four principles that should guide any intervention aimed to increase the quality of the products and services of an organization according to the writings of the TQM founders: (a) focus on work processes, (b) analysis of the variability in processes, services, and outcomes, (c) management by fact, and (d) continuous learning and

improvement. The first principle addresses the idea that an organization must articulate how it operates and set standards for performance. In Extension, plans of work and objectives serve as a basis for describing work processes and for assessing fidelity of program implementation and the generation of impacts.

Thus, quality is seen as being a direct result of work processes within the organization and, in the case of Extension, this relates to aspects of programming and delivery of educational interventions. Hackman and Wageman (1995, p 311) note that "uncontrolled variance in process or outcomes is the primary cause of quality problems" and this leads to the second principle, which is the analysis of FCES' services and outcomes through the annual CSS. The resulting data are reported to county and state-level administrators for use in making management decisions aimed at program improvement. TQM assumes that people are naturally interested in improving their performance and will be actively involved in doing it, if they receive the appropriate information and tools. The utilization of the results from the CSS should lead to a continuous learning and improvement within the Extension organization, thereby accomplishing the fourth principle of TQM.

The analysis of processes, services and outcomes can be conducted with data from either internal or external sources. Customer satisfaction surveys have maintained a prominent place in the agendas of researchers since the early 1980s (Allen & Rao, 2000) because they are a useful tool for obtaining an external perspective on the quality of services and outcomes. Rennekamp et al. (2001) examined the customer satisfaction of the Kentucky CES and found that overall almost 92% of the clients were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service. It is worth mentioning that respondents in the same study also perceived that Extension valued all questions from its clients equally, provided answers in a timely fashion, and treated people with respect and dignity. Extension should not only be competent, it needs to show real concern for the clients (Haile & Israel, 2005) which will lead to more repeating loyal customers (Terry & Israel, 2004). Customer satisfaction is such an important measure of quality that in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria customer focus and satisfaction account for more than 25% of the possible points of evaluation (Allen, 2004). The results obtained from a CSS can be used to establish a benchmark against which similar programs can compare their performance. For example, Radhakrishna (2002) compared the results from Texas and Florida against those from South Carolina.

Although a CSS provides an assessment of the general satisfaction of Extension's clients, it is important to explore the data further to make sure that differences are not due to significant variation in program experiences between clientele groups. Multiple studies have shown, however, that gender, age, and education (Anderson, Pearo, & Wildener, 2008; Caruana, 2002; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Oly Ndubisi, 2006) have an effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Female automotive customers were found to report greater satisfaction with the service than did males (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Similarly, gender plays a moderator role on the trust-customer loyalty relationship in banking whereby, female customers are significantly more loyal than men when the bank is deemed very trustworthy (Oly Ndubisi, 2006). Several recent studies also suggest that the basis for customer satisfaction differs between men and women, with the former focused more on functional aspects and the latter were influenced more by affective and relational aspects of the service experience (Anderson, Pearo, & Wildener, 2008; Voss & Cova, 2006). In the case of race-ethnicity, one study reported similar levels of customer satisfaction but the importance of each

aspect of service quality was found to differ among Hispanics, African-Americans, and non-Hispanic whites (Lopez, Hart, & Rampersad, 2007). In sum, the principles of TQM and findings from research on customer satisfaction give credence to efforts to assess how well Extension is serving different market segments.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore if audience diversity has an effect on the perceptions of clients regarding the quality of services provided by Extension. The objectives are:

1. To describe and look for associations in how assessments of the quality of Extension services differed by race and gender.
2. To describe and look for associations in the outcomes of the experiences with Extension services by race and gender.

Methods

Data from the Customer Satisfaction Surveys (CSS) for the years 2003 to 2007 were used in the study. The self-administered survey was sent to a sample of clients who were selected from the population that had attended a workshop or seminar, called the Extension office, or visited the office in order to solicit feedback about their experiences. The survey was implemented using a sequence of contacts – pre-letter, survey and cover letter, reminder post card, and second survey and cover letter to nonrespondents. A total of 2,808 useable surveys were pooled for the analysis (275 for 2003, 442 for 2004, 747 for 2005, 793 for 2006 and 551 for 2007). The response rate (RR1, AAPOR, 2004) was 58.2% in 2003, 51.0% in 2004, 63.6% in 2005, 63.3% in 2006 and 60.1% in 2007.

The 2-page survey instrument included questions on the following: overall customer satisfaction with the services provided by Extension, clientele's satisfaction on four dimensions of quality, outcomes of the use of Extension service, and demographic attributes of the respondents. The dimensions of service quality were: accuracy of information, timely delivery of information, relevance of information, and ease of use of information. These items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The four items were combined into a service quality index (calculated as the items' mean). Based on procedures recommended by Carmines and Zeller (1979), the index met criteria for unidimensionality (a single factor was extracted from principle components analysis with an eigenvalue of 3.238) and Cronbach's alpha was .918. Because the percentage of responses for the "Very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" was less than 1.7 percent each for the service quality items and overall satisfaction and could not be analyzed in a meaningful way, they were combined with the "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" to form an "Other" category for subsequent analyses. The outcomes of the use of Extension services measured in the survey were: opportunity to use information, whether the client's problem was solved or question answered, and sharing information with other people. The response categories and distributional statistics are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Note that the racial-ethnic categories are White, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; and Other (which include Asian Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, and multi-racial persons).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Service Quality, Outcomes, and Overall Satisfaction

		N	*%*	*SD*
Service Quality				
Accuracy	Very Satisfied	1825	65.5	
	Satisfied	817	29.3	
	Other[a]	145	5.2	
Timely Delivery	Very Satisfied	1772	63.6	
	Satisfied	843	30.3	
	Other[a]	171	6.1	
Relevancy	Very Satisfied	1696	61.1	
	Satisfied	859	30.9	
	Other[a]	222	8.0	
Ease of Understanding	Very Satisfied	1824	65.8	
	Satisfied	805	29.0	
	Other[a]	143	5.2	
Service Quality Index		2740	4.48	.78
Outcomes				
Opportunity to Use	Yes	2188	79.7	
	No	452	16.5	
	Don't know	106	3.9	
Solved the Problem	Yes	1872	86.2	
	No	118	5.4	
	Don't know	183	8.4	
Shared Information	Yes	2002	73.3	
	No	650	23.8	
	Don't know	81	3.0	
Overall Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	1855	66.8	
	Satisfied	765	27.6	
	Other[a]	156	5.6	

[a]Other includes Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, and Very dissatisfied.

Data for each dimension of quality and outcome of use of Extension services were analyzed by race and gender using cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests for significance. Additional demographic attributes and two measures of extension experience were included in regression and logistic regression models to test for potential moderator and mediator effects (Barron & Kinney, 1986) in the relationships between quality and race/gender using software from the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) Institute. To address problems with missing data, values for the demographic controls and Extension experience variables were estimated using multiple imputation prior to the regression analyses (Schafer & Graham, 2002; Yuan, 2000).

Logistic regression was used to estimate the effects of race and gender categories on the likelihood of being

"Satisfied" versus "Very satisfied" with the quality of the experience. The same procedure was used to estimate the effects of those same variables on the likelihood of having an opportunity to use the information, solving the problem, and sharing the information with others. A significant parameter estimate means that the predictor variable affects either the quality of the experience, outcomes of using Extension's services, or both.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Attributes and Extension Experience

		N	*M/%*	*SD*
Demographics				
Race	White, non-Hispanic	2411	89.6	
	Black, non-Hispanic	147	5.5	
	Hispanic	77	2.9	
	Other	57	2.0	
Gender	Male	1325	47.2	
	Female	1483	52.8	
Age		2808	56.5	15.2
Education	Some H.S. or less	103	3.7	
	High School diploma or GED	547	19.5	
	Some college	1038	37.0	
	4-year College degree	663	23.6	
	Graduate degree	457	16.3	
Residence	Farm	440	15.7	
	Rural, non-farm	794	28.3	
	Urban	1574	56.1	
Extension Experience				
Extension contacts last 12 months		2808	5.3	8.0
Type of Contact	Office visit	647	25.2	
	Phone call	533	20.7	
	Planned program	1392	54.1	

Findings

Significant associations were found to exist between gender of the respondent and the perception of quality of Extension services. Although the overall satisfaction reported by Extension clients was above the legislated performance standard, Table 3 shows a small but statistically significant association between gender of the respondent and most of the indicators of satisfaction. A larger percentage of women were very satisfied for each of the four items concerning service quality, as compared to men, and the mean for the service quality index also was significantly higher for women than for men. Although the opportunity to use the information was not different, more women said that they had their problem solved or the question answered than did men (87.7 and 83.9 percent, respectively). Similarly, women were slightly more likely to share information with others. Finally, women had a somewhat higher percentage who were very satisfied with the overall service of the Extension office than did men (69.4 and 63.7 percent, respectively).

The respondent's race also was significantly associated with the perception of satisfaction for several indicators of service quality. Specifically, Whites had the largest percentage who were very satisfied with the timely delivery and relevancy of the information, followed by Hispanics (Table 4). Blacks and persons of other races had lower percentages saying that they were very satisfied with the timely delivery and relevancy of the information. Because the number of respondents was relatively small for each race category except Whites, the difference did not achieve statistical significance for accuracy of the information and ease of understanding. The trend for accuracy and ease of understanding, however, followed the pattern for the other two items. Whites and Hispanics were also more likely to use the information (80 percent versus 68 percent for Blacks and Others) but did not differ from Blacks and persons of other races on whether the information solved the problem and sharing the information. Finally, a higher percentage of Hispanics and Whites reported that they were very satisfied with their overall experience than did Blacks and persons of other races (68.4, 67.8, 55.8 and 60.7 percent, respectively, in Table 4).

Tables 5 and 6 summarize the results from logistic regression and regression analyses. The logistic regressions in Table 5 predict the likelihood of being "Very satisfied" versus "Satisfied" for the service quality dimensions (the other response categories were excluded from these models). Similarly, the model in Table 6 compares "Very satisfied" and "Satisfied" for the overall satisfaction measure and "Yes" versus "No" *and* "Don't know" for the outcome measures. The results further support that there are race and gender differences while controlling for other demographic characteristics and type of contact. With regard to gender, men were less likely to report that they were very satisfied with each aspect of service quality (accuracy, timely delivery, relevancy, and ease of understanding) than did women, as shown by the significant negative parameter estimates for males in Table 5. Likewise, men were predicted to have a lower score on the service quality index than women (see Table 5) and they were less likely to be very satisfied with the overall service of the Extension office (Table 6). On the other hand, controlling for other demographic variables in the model reduced differences between men and women on the two outcome variables, solved the problem and shared information, from significant in Table 3 ($p=.024$ and .042, respectively) to nonsignificance in Table 6 ($p>.05$ for both outcomes). This suggests that other variables, such as education, the amount of contact with Extension, and the type of contact (e.g., office visit, phone call, or planned program) might mediate the relationship between these outcomes and gender that was observed earlier in Table 3.

Table 3
Service Quality, Outcomes, and Overall Satisfaction by Gender

		Male	Female	*p*[a]
Service Quality				
Accuracy	Very Satisfied	61.3	68.6	
	Satisfied	32.9	26.7	.00
	Other[b]	5.7	4.8	
Timely Delivery	Very Satisfied	59.7	66.6	
	Satisfied	34.0	27.3	.00
	Other[b]	6.3	6.0	
Relevancy	Very Satisfied	56.3	65.1	
	Satisfied	35.1	27.3	.00
	Other[b]	8.6	7.5	
Ease of Understanding	Very Satisfied	61.4	69.5	
	Satisfied	32.8	25.9	.00
	Other[b]	4.6	5.8	
Service Quality Index	Mean	4.50	4.59	.00
Outcomes				
Opportunity to Use	Yes	80.0	79.1	
	No	16.5	16.7	.73
	Don't know	3.6	4.1	
Solved the Problem	Yes	83.9	87.7	
	No	5.8	5.1	.02
	Don't know	10.3	7.1	
Shared Information	Yes	71.5	75.1	
	No	25.7	21.6	.04
	Don't know	2.8	3.2	
Overall Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	63.7	69.4	
	Satisfied	30.0	25.7	.01
	Other[b]	6.3	4.8	

[a] p-value is the significance level for test Chi-square (for categorical variables) or F-test (for the service quality index).
[b] Other includes Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, and Very dissatisfied.

Table 4
Service Quality, Outcomes, and Overall Satisfaction by Race-ethnicity

		White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other	*p*[a]
Service Quality						
Accuracy	Very Satisfied	66.0	61.0	64.9	53.6	
	Satisfied	29.0	34.3	29.9	37.5	.43
	Other[b]	5.0	4.8	5.2	8.9	
Timely Delivery	Very Satisfied	64.7	53.5	61.0	50.9	
	Satisfied	29.4	41.0	29.9	42.1	.03
	Other[b]	5.9	5.6	9.1	7.0	
Relevancy	Very Satisfied	62.3	51.8	54.6	50.0	
	Satisfied	29.9	42.7	33.8	42.9	.01
	Other[b]	7.8	5.6	11.7	7.1	
	Very Satisfied	66.8	59.7	61.8	54.4	
Ease of Understanding	Satisfied	28.2	36.1	32.9	40.4	.20
	Other[b]	5.0	4.2	5.3	5.3	
Service Quality Index	Mean	4.56	4.50	4.52	4.40	.22
Outcomes						
Opportunity to Use	Yes	80.5	68.1	80.3	68.4	
	No	15.9	27.1	13.2	24.6	.00
	Don't know	3.7	4.9	6.6	7.0	
Solved the Problem	Yes	86.0	90.9	92.1	81.0	
	No	5.3	5.1	3.2	11.9	.23
	Don't know	8.7	4.0	4.8	7.1	
Shared Information	Yes	73.3	75.2	75.0	80.4	
	No	23.6	22.7	21.1	17.9	.88
	Don't know	3.2	2.1	4.0	1.8	
Overall Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	67.8	55.8	68.4	60.7	
	Satisfied	26.7	39.5	25.0	32.1	.05
	Other[b]	5.5	4.8	6.6	7.1	

[a] p-value is the significance level for test Chi-square (for categorical variables) or F-test (for the service quality index).
[b] Other includes Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, and Very dissatisfied.

Table 5
Regression of Service Quality on Demographic and Extension Experience Variables

	Dependent Variable[a]				
	Accuracy	Timely Delivery	Relevancy	Ease of Understanding	Quality Index
Intercept	.25	.06	.38	.30	4.42
Male	-.40***	-.37***	-.44***	-.45***	-.10***
Female[b]	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Black[c]	-.25	-.50**	-.51**	-.37*	-.08
White/Hispanic[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Age	.01	.00	-.00	.00	.00
Education	.10*	.14***	.15***	.15***	.04**
Farm	.20	.00	.05	.04	.04
Rural nonfarm	-.05	-.02	-.08	-.16	-.04
Urban area[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Ext. contacts	.02*	.02**	.02**	.02**	.00
Office visit	.10	.29***	.30**	-.03	-.00
Phone call	-.03	.12	.34**	.07	-.10**
Planned program[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Model Fit					
X^2 or F	39.8	58.3	72.6	55.1	4.69
p-value	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
R^2	.02	.02	.03	.02	.01

[a]Parameter estimates are based on logistic regression, except for the service quality index. For the logistic regression models, a positive parameter estimate means that the respondent was more likely to be very satisfied. [b]Denotes reference category, which has a parameter estimate of zero by definition. [c]Includes other non-Hispanic minorities.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Turning to differences by race-ethnicity, our preliminary analysis suggested that the key difference is between Black, non-Hispanic clients and all other clients (labeled White/Hispanic in Tables 5 and 6). Thus, the results in Table 5 show that Blacks are less likely to be very satisfied than other clients for three of the four service quality indicators (and the fourth one has an estimate in the same direction but is not significant). Note that differences between Blacks and other clients were significant for ease of understanding in the model with controls, whereas this effect was suppressed in Table 4. Though the service quality index was not significantly different for Blacks and others, the direction of the estimate was consistent with the individual items. Blacks also were less likely to report being very satisfied overall with the service of the Extension office (Table 6). Regarding the outcome measures, Blacks were significantly less likely to use the information than other clients and of those

who had an opportunity to use the information, Blacks were less likely than other clients to say that their problem was solved or the question answered. Like ease of understanding, the relationship of Blacks and having the problem solved appears to have been suppressed in Table 4. In this case, the respondent's education level and the number of contacts with Extension appear to be factors in revealing the relationship.

Table 6
Regression of Outcomes and Overall Satisfaction on Demographic and Extension Experience Variables

	Dependent Variable[a]			
	Opportunity to Use	Solved the Problem	Shared Information	Overall Satisfaction
Intercept	.46	.25	1.20	.40
Male	.03	-.05	-.16	-.26**
Female[b]	.00	.00	.00	.00
Black[c]	-.79***	-.32*	.00	-.50**
White/Hispanic[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00
Age	.00	.00	-.01*	.01*
Education	.18***	.11*	.13***	.05
Farm	.08	.15	-.06	-.10
Rural nonfarm	-.16	-.00	.01***	.02
Urban area[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00
Ext. contacts	.03***	.04***	.02***	.03***
Office visit	.53***	.20	-.43***	.03
Phone call	.45***	.15	-.49***	-.07
Planned program[a]	.00	.00	.00	.00
Model Fit				
X^2 or F	71.6	45.0	60.0	43.1
p-value	.00	.00	.00	.00
R^2	.03	.02	.02	.02

[a]Parameter estimates are based on logistic regression. A positive parameter estimate means that the respondent was more likely to be very satisfied, use or share the information, or have the problem solved. [b]Denotes reference category, which has a parameter estimate of zero by definition. [c]Includes other non-Hispanic minorities.
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Finally, several of the control variables have significant effects on the measures of service quality and outcomes. Education showed a significant positive effect on every measure, except overall satisfaction (Tables 5 and 6). As expected, the number of contacts with Extension also was a positive factor in clients being very satisfied with the elements of service quality (but it was not significant for the index),

having an opportunity to use the information, having the problem solved, and sharing the information, as well as overall satisfaction. In addition, receiving information via a phone call or office visit generally had a positive effect on service quality ratings and using the information but was negatively associated with sharing the information, as compare to clients who attended a planned program or workshop.

Conclusions and Implications

Consistent with the studies by Caruana (2002), Mittal and Kamakura (2001), Oly Ndubisi (2006) and Reinartz, Thomas and Kumar (2005), we found that client attributes were associated with differences in customer satisfaction. The results have shown that Blacks and other minorities perceived having a somewhat lower quality experience with the services provided by Extension than did Whites and Hispanics. This is particularly true for the timely delivery, relevance, and ease of use of the information. One implication is that Blacks and other minorities are somewhat less likely to develop a loyalty to the organization and continue to patronize Extension at the levels of Whites and Hispanics because patronage depends on achieving a high satisfaction level (Terry & Israel, 2004). Gender of the respondent also was found to be significantly associated both with the quality of experience and for the outcomes of receiving Extension services.

Given these findings, action is needed to implement improvements consistent with Hackman and Wageman's (1995) procedures for total quality management. Three actions can be recommended based on the results of this study. First, Extension should use more participatory approaches to promote equal involvement of the diverse clientele during the processes of assessing needs and developing Extension programs that deliver information in appropriate ways (Tuttle, Lindner & Dooley, 2004). One important step is to ensure that county advisory councils' composition reflects the diversity of the local population. Making face-to-face contacts with members of minority groups also can build rapport and help agents to develop empathy for specific audiences (Guion, 2005b). Both formal advisory committee meetings and informal conversations can contribute to well-designed programs with appropriate educational activities.

Second, Extension professionals should develop skills for the delivery of information that are suitable for use with culturally diverse audiences. Learning about and practicing educational methods appropriate for diverse audiences can enhance the quality of clients' experience and, in turn, their satisfaction and patronage. For example, Guion and Kent (2005) note that African American audiences will be more receptive to information that includes examples involving Blacks or validating their culture and norms. Guion and Kent also suggest having African American representatives present your message and encouraging audiences to ask questions about your programs. The latter accommodates Blacks' preference for oral communication.

Finally, Extension should work to identify and get a better understanding of the cultural characteristics of the different market segments that are part of its clientele or community. As noted by Brennan (2005), people are more likely to accept solutions to their problems that are consistent with their local culture. One practical step for meshing with a group's culture is to take the program to their turf and present it on their terms. Moving forward on these recommendations is important to creating a more uniform level of quality in Extension's services, which is critical to the TQM process (Royse et al., 2006).

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