

# Exploring the Baseline: What Michigan Residents Know About Michigan State University Extension

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## Abstract

Michigan's Cooperative Extension Service, now called Michigan State University (MSU) Extension, has a long history of serving the state's residents, especially in agricultural and rural program areas. Today's Extension works to "help people help themselves" through programs aimed at meeting the needs of urban, suburban, and rural residents. But what do the state's residents know about the programs offered through this organization? This paper looks at awareness surveys related to Cooperative Extension systems and examines the results of the MSU Extension Market Assessment Survey, a statewide telephone survey conducted by the MSU Institute for Public Policy and Social Research to explore what Michigan residents know about MSU Extension and its main programming areas. Responses were analyzed according to respondents' ages, education levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, region of the state and type of community of residence. Analysis showed more than half of Michigan residents were aware of MSU Extension, with wider awareness among older, white and rural residents. However, awareness of MSU Extension programs did not follow this trend. This study will provide information for Extension administrators, educators, and communicators in planning future programming and marketing efforts.

## Introduction

Marketing, a long-held and widely used practice in the business world, has become not only accepted but also embraced by nonprofit organizations and educational institutions. It has become a staple for colleges, universities, and land-grant institution-based Cooperative Extension systems. To institute a marketing plan, whether for a brand of toothpaste or a forest management educational workshop, it's critical that the strategist begin by understanding the audience's needs, attitudes, and behavior. Effective Extension marketing

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planning requires this orientation to customer needs and wants. Extension marketing efforts should be organized and controlled and begin with establishing baseline information. Before setting targets for awareness and service to various segments of the population, it's vital to understand existing awareness and service levels and what these population segments already know about the organization and its programs.

To generate baseline data for development of an organization-wide marketing plan, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) commissioned the MSUE Market Assessment Survey, which was designed by MSU Extension and administered by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) in the summer of 2000. There were no current studies addressing Michigianians' awareness of MSU Extension and its programs.

## Purpose and Objectives

In Michigan, the Cooperative Extension Service has grown and changed since its inception, taking the name Michigan State University Extension and modifying its programming scope. Today's MSUE offers county-based information in three primary areas: 1) agriculture and natural resources; 2) children, youth, and families; and 3) community and economic development. These primary areas are addressed at the county level through four different programs: 4-H Youth Programs, Family Strengths Program, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Community and Economic Development.

Just as society itself faces changes and challenges, MSU Extension continually works to ensure that it is striving to help all citizens meet their needs within its programming areas. Like every state Extension system, MSUE works to extend the resources of Michigan State University research to help meet the needs of the state's citizens. But the awareness among Michigan residents about MSUE and its programs has not been measured. No known previous studies have examined what adult Michigan residents know about MSU Extension. This study examines the awareness of Michigan residents of MSUE and its programs and compares the findings to related studies in other states and for the nation. Its specific objectives were to:

- assess awareness levels of MSUE and its programs by region,
- determine MSUE awareness by characteristics of respondents,
- determine MSUE program awareness by characteristics of respondents,
- probe respondents' view of important problems and issues facing Michigan residents.

The final section discusses the implication of the research findings for planning future program and marketing efforts for MSUE.

### Other Studies

A limited number of national and state studies were found related to the concept of awareness of Extension and its programs. Some of these studies measured awareness directly, while others measured related concerns and interests. Among the items investigated were awareness and public perception of Extension, usage of Extension resources, user satisfaction, potential usefulness and support, organizational image and identity, expressed met and unmet needs, outstanding experiences with the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), and dissatisfactions with CES.

Warner and Christenson conducted widely referenced national surveys in 1982 and 1995 looking at public perceptions of Extension. In 1982, they found 40% awareness of the Extension Service. This number rose to 45% by 1995. They also found highest awareness of 4-H (77% in 1982, 69% in 1995), even higher than for the Extension organization. They noted higher awareness of the CES in the southern U.S. and the Midwest. The authors also found that Extension awareness differed by gender, race, place, and minority status of the respondent. Greatest Extension awareness was registered among older (at least 40 years old) and rural residents. Program awareness and usage was lowest among young, urban, and minority individuals.

Other studies on the awareness of CES and its programs have been done at the state level. Verma and Burns (1995) looked at public awareness, Extension user satisfaction and potential usefulness in Louisiana. The statewide telephone survey of Louisiana adults found more than 40% awareness of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES), which was similar to Warner and Christenson's findings. Again, awareness of the 4-H youth program was higher (49.6%) than awareness of the Extension program itself. Rural residents were more aware of Extension and its programs than urban residents.

The Kansas State University Research and Extension Program commissioned telephone surveys in 1996 and 2000 to examine Kansans' awareness, use and support for its activities. In 1996, there was 34% awareness among respondents about a university-based program offering research-based educational programs. This awareness rose to 45% in 2000. When the program was referenced by name, awareness increased 27% in 1996, but only 3% in 2000. Of those who were aware of their county's Extension office, 71% said they had called or e-mailed the county office for information. The number of respondents who believe information they receive from Kansas State

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Research and Extension is “very credible” was at 56% in 1996. This number rose to 63% in 2000. There was even higher positive response to the question regarding the importance of K-State’s Research and Extension programming. The 1996 importance rating of 96% was very similar to the 2000 response of 94%. Current funding level approval was at 85% in 1996 and 89% in 2000.

## Methods and Procedures

The MSUE Market Assessment Survey, designed to determine Michigan residents’ knowledge of MSU Extension and its main program areas, was developed by the staff of the MSU Center for Evaluative Studies, which is based in the MSU Department of Community, Agriculture Recreation and Resource Studies (CARRS). It was evaluated, tested, and conducted by the Instituted for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) in the spring and summer of 2000.

The telephone survey, administered by IPPSR staff members, was developed after careful review of MSU Extension’s marketing study needs as identified by the MSUE Marketing Task Force. Some of the questions were adapted from the Children, Youth and Family State of the State survey conducted in 1997. The questionnaire was reviewed by the MSU Extension Marketing Committee to ascertain content validity. In addition, a group of Extension professionals and faculty members from CARRS served as the review panel. Their feedback, along with comments from IPPSR staff members, was incorporated into the survey.

The survey employed a stratified, random sample and consisted of 1,156 individuals from across the state. The referent population was Michigan’s noninstitutionalized, English-speaking adult population (age 18 and older). Because the survey was conducted by telephone, only persons living in households that had telephones were interviewed. The survey used a random digit dialing method.

## Research Findings

MSUE has a long history of service to agriculture and rural audiences, but has expanded programming to serve urban audiences. The MSUE Market Assessment survey looked at whether members of these audiences had heard of the organization or its programs and sought to draw correlations between awareness levels and various demographic groups.

### *Awareness of MSUE and its program by region*

When we consider awareness of MSUE and its programs by region, a pattern emerges suggesting that differences in awareness by program are consistent across the different regions of the state (Table 1). For example, 4-H

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is ranked first in awareness compared to MSUE and the other program areas in each region of Michigan. MSUE ranked second-highest in each of the six regions. Moreover, the Agriculture and Natural Resources program ranked third highest in four of the six regions and fourth highest in the two remaining regions. Family Strength awareness was lowest in four of the six regions and second lowest in the other two.

The pattern we see in the awareness ranking of programs and MSUE by region, coupled with the proportion of the state population by region, helps explain the awareness of MSUE and its programs that we see statewide (Table 1). At the state level, 4-H is ranked first in awareness and MSUE is ranked second. Community and Economic Development ranked third, above Agriculture and Natural Resources, because of that program's relative

**Table 1.** *Awareness of MSU Extension and its main programming areas by Michigan region*

MSUE Region	MSU Extension (1143)	Communi- & Economic Development (1148)	4-H Youth (1156)	Family Strengths (1140)	Agriculture & Natural Resources (1145)
<i>Percent awareness (n)</i>					
U.P.	71.8 (28)	64.1 (25)	95 (38)	42.5 (17)	42.5 (17)
Northern Lower	76 (38)	46 (23)	94.1 (48)	42 (21)	63.3 (31)
W. Central	54.9 (84)	43.5 (67)	89 (138)	39.5 (60)	43.8 (67)
East Central	60.6 (60)	41 (41)	94 (94)	42.4 (42)	49.5 (49)
Southwest	56.6 (90)	36.4 (59)	91.5 (150)	35.4 (57)	45.1 (74)
Southeast	44.2 (284)	37.6 (242)	76.4 (494)	29.6 (189)	30.6 (196)
Statewide	51.1 (584)	39.8 (457)	83.1 (962)	33.9 (386)	37.9 (434)

higher awareness ranking in southeast Michigan, the most populated region of the state and the least agricultural region. Family Strengths has the lowest awareness rating of all programs statewide.

Another observable pattern is that awareness of MSUE and its programs varies by region. For example, compared to other regions, the Upper Peninsula had the highest awareness ranking in three of the five programs and second-highest awareness ranking in Extension. Compared to other regions, the North Region has the highest awareness ranking for MSUE and the Agriculture and Natural Resources program and second highest for Community and Economic Development. The southeast region, home of Detroit, one of the largest U.S. urban centers, ranked sixth in awareness of

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**Table 2.** Awareness of MSU Extension, Community and Economic Development Program, 4-H Youth Programs, Family Strengths, Agriculture and Natural Resources Program by age category

Age category	MSU Extension (1133)	Community & Economic Development (1133)	4-H Youth Programs (1142)	Family Strengths (1128)	Agriculture & Natural Resources (1131)
<i>Percent reporting awareness (n)</i>					
18-24	18.8 (31)	18.8 (31)	64.2 (106)	30.9 (51)	18.2 (30)
25-29	33.1 (41)	24.8 (31)	75.4 (95)	33.3 (42)	7.1 (9)
30-39	39.2 (102)	22.6 (59)	83.6 (219)	23.7 (60)	26.4 (67)
40-49	61.4 (121)	41.6 (82)	91 (181)	32 (63)	41.9 (83)
50-59	72.9 (97)	61.1 (80)	92.6 (125)	38.1 (51)	52.6 (71)
60-64	70.4 (50)	74.3 (52)	95.7 (67)	60 (42)	63.8 (44)
65 & up	73.8 (135)	63 (116)	85.9 (159)	40.4 (74)	67.9 (125)
Overall	50.9 (577)	39.8 (451)	83.4 (952)	34 (383)	37.9 (429)

**Table 3.** Awareness of MSU Extension, Community and Economic Development Program, 4-H Youth Programs, Family Strengths, and Agriculture and Natural Resources Program by respondents' racial backgrounds (Note: Awareness by respondents of Hispanic background was gauged in a separate question).

Race category	MSU Extension (n = 1147)	Community & Economic Development (n = 1149)	4-H Youth Programs (n = 1156)	Family Strengths (n = 1143)	Agriculture & Natural Resources (n = 1144)
<i>Percent reporting awareness (n)</i>					
African American/Black	37.9 (47)	42.3 (52)	51.6 (64)	33.1 (41)	26.6 (33)
Asian/Pacific Islander	28.6 (2)	42.9 (3)	42.9 (3)	37.5 (3)	28.6 (2)
Native American	38.9 (7)	38.9 (7)	94.4 (17)	58.8 (10)	41.2 (7)
White/Caucasian	53.6 (520)	39.7 (386)	87.4 (856)	33.8 (326)	40 (387)
Overall awareness	51 (585)	39.8 (457)	83.2 (963)	33.9 (387)	38 (435)

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**Table 4.** Awareness of MSU Extension, Community and Economic Development Program, 4-H Youth Programs, Family Strengths, and Agriculture and Natural Resources Program by community type.

Community type	MSU Extension (n = 1141)	Community & Economic Development (n = 1147)	4-H Youth Programs (n = 1154)	Family Strengths (n = 1140)	Agriculture & Natural Resources (n = 1144)
<i>Percent reporting awareness (n)</i>					
Rural community	63.2 (156)	39.9 (99)	92.7 (230)	41.1 (99)	51.5 (124)
Small city / town / village	49.2 (204)	41.9 (177)	84.7 (359)	37.6 (157)	35.5 (150)
Suburb	48.5 (161)	36.8 (121)	79.6 (265)	28.3 (94)	37.3 (124)
Urban community	41.1 (58)	41.3 (59)	72 (103)	22.5 (32)	23.9 (34)
Other	50 (3)	20 (1)	83.3 (5)	71.4 (5)	28.6 (2)
Overall awareness	51 (582)	39.8 (457)	83.4 (962)	33.9 (387)	37.9 (434)

**Table 5.** Awareness of MSU Extension, Community and Economic Development Program, 4-H Youth Programs, Family Strengths, and Agriculture and Natural Resources Program by education level

Education Level	MSU Extension (n = 1143)	Community & Economic Development (n = 1146)	4-H Youth Programs (n = 1153)	Family Strengths (n = 1139)	Agriculture & Natural Resources (n = 1144)
<i>Percent reporting awareness (n)</i>					
11th grade or less	41 (25)	39.3 (24)	77.4 (48)	38.7 (24)	48.4 (30)
High school grad / GED	47.2 (170)	36.6 (133)	82.7 (302)	34.2 (123)	38.1 (138)
Technical school / jr. college / 1-3 yrs college	44 (162)	39.5 (146)	79.3 (295)	26.5 (98)	32 (119)
College grad	58.9 (112)	38.6 (73)	88 (168)	41.3 (76)	45.4 (84)
Post graduate	70.7 (116)	49.7 (81)	90.8 (148)	39.9 (65)	39.9 (65)
Overall awareness	51.2 (585)	39.9 (457)	83.3 (961)	33.9 (386)	38.1 (436)

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MSUE, 4-H Youth, Family Strengths, and Agriculture and Natural Resources, and ranked fifth in awareness of the Community and Economic Development program.

### *Awareness of MSUE*

This survey found Michigan residents' awareness of the existence of MSU Extension and its programs increased with age and education (Tables 2 and 5, respectively) and was different among racial groups and residential community types. Among age groups, Table 2 shows that awareness of MSU Extension was greater among people over 65 years old. For ages 50 to 59 it was 72.9%, for those 60 to 64 it was 70.4% and for those 65 and older, it was 73.8%. Among younger respondents, 18.8% of 18- to 24-year-olds expressed awareness of MSUE, as did 33.1% of those ages 25 to 29. The highest differences in awareness were between respondents above and below the ages of 30 to 39. There was a statistical significance associated with increase in age and awareness of MSUE (R-squared value of .142). This means that the greater the age of the respondent, the greater the probability that he or she would be aware of MSU Extension. Between racial groups, the highest awareness of MSUE was among whites (53.6%). Native Americans had the second highest awareness rate (38.9%), followed by African Americans (37.9%) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (28.6%). Awareness of MSUE by respondents of Hispanic background, measured in a separate question, was 29%, just slightly higher than awareness for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

By education (Table 5), there was more awareness of MSUE among those with four-year college degrees or higher than among those with other educational levels. Those with technical training, junior college or some college (one to three years) had 44% awareness, and high school graduates had a 47.2% awareness level. There seemed to be a relationship between awareness of MSUE and education levels. Examining the statistics results in a R-squared value of .027, which indicates a correlation between these two variables.

In summary, MSU Extension's 51.1% awareness level among Michigan residents is greater than that enjoyed by other state Extension services. There was greater awareness of MSU Extension with older residents and those with higher education levels. Rural residents also had higher awareness than suburban or urban respondents. These findings confirm other studies' reports about awareness of Extension. In this survey there was also higher awareness of MSUE among whites than for other racial groups. Given the demographic characteristics of Michigan residents and the urbanization of

the southeast region, it is understandable why awareness of MSU Extension and its program is clearly lowest in the urban Southeast region. This suggests that for MSUE to achieve its marketing plan target of 80% awareness among all adult Michigan residents, it should consider a regional strategy in promoting awareness of MSUE and its programs and concentrate efforts in the state's urban areas.

### *Awareness by Program Area*

As Table 1 showed, an association exists between individual MSUE programs and awareness of Michigan residents, regardless of the state's region where they reside. This section considers how awareness of MSUE programs by Michigan residents is influenced by characteristics of the respondents.

When considering awareness of program area by racial background (Table 3), the MSU Extension Community and Economic Development Program (ECED) reflected higher awareness by African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders than white survey respondents. When considering awareness of ECED by age (Table 2) there was no statistical significance, though awareness did increase with respondents' age categories, dropping slightly with those over age 65. This may be because ECED programs are targeted for those active in business and community development activities. Senior citizens who are retired and not involved in the business or governmental affairs of their communities might not be as aware of this program's offerings.

The 4-H Youth Program had highest awareness, even higher than for MSUE. Table 2 showed a correlation between awareness of 4-H and age (older respondents had higher awareness), while Table 5 pointed to some increase in awareness of 4-H with an increase in respondents' education levels. There was also higher awareness by rural residents than suburban or urban dwellers (Table 4). Among racial groups, Native Americans had highest awareness of the 4-H Youth Program (Table 3). The findings related to 4-H also confirm what other studies have shown – that awareness of 4-H is higher than awareness of Extension, regardless of the respondent's age, education, racial background, or community type. Part of this can be related to the program's longevity (the program itself is older than the Cooperative Extension system) and partly to the fact that in its century-long existence, 4-H's clover emblem and motto have remained constant.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Program had highest awareness among rural residents and older survey respondents (Tables 4 and 2, respectively). Native Americans had highest awareness among racial groups (Table 3), and there was no statistical correlation between awareness of this

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program area and educational level (Table 5). The awareness among rural and older respondents confirms other studies' findings. The higher awareness by Native Americans corresponds to the findings related to higher awareness in rural areas. According to 1990 U.S. Census Bureau data, Michigan's Native American population primarily resides in the mostly rural Upper Peninsula.

There was also no correlation between either education level or age and awareness of the Family Strengths Program (Tables 5 and 2, respectively). There was higher awareness by rural respondents than suburban or urbanites. Awareness of this program was very low among all audiences, regardless of region, age, education, race or type of community (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively).

### *Important Problems and Issues*

In addition to exploring awareness of MSUE among various demographic groups, the survey also gathered baseline data about the most important issues facing Michigan communities. The survey included a series of questions focused on what survey respondents believe are the most important problems facing the state's communities, natural resources, children/youths, and farmers.

Table 6 shows the top five responses for each topic. Quality of schools was the most frequently mentioned answer when residents were asked for the most important problem facing their communities. When asked about the most important natural resource problem, water pollution/water quality was most often stated. Similarly, drought/rain/water/weather was the most-often mentioned problem facing farmers. The most serious problem facing children/youths was identified as drugs.

If MSUE is to fulfill the Cooperative Extension Service's mission of helping improve people's lives by bringing scientific knowledge to bear on issues and needs (Rasmussen, 1989), it is important to know what Michigan residents see as important issues. While the responses to these questions may not relate to Extension-related programming (e.g., street and road repair), those that do relate to MSUE give the organization's educators the chance to consider future programming emphases and resource allocations.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

There was relatively higher awareness of MSUE and the 4-H and Family Strengths programs among rural and small town respondents in the state (Table 4), but this was not the case for the Community and Economic Development or the Agriculture and Natural Resource programs. With

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**Table 6.** *Most important problems facing Michigan communities, natural resources, youths, and farmers (n = 925).*

<b>Problems Facing Communities</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Quality of schools/improve education	9.4
Crime	7.7
Overexpansion/too much growth	6.9
Traffic	6.4
Roads/road repair/street upkeep	5.4
<b>Natural Resource Problems</b>	
Water pollution, quality/clean water/clean lakes, rivers	29.8
Destruction of land/development/building, growth, expansion	10.6
Pollution	7.7
Preserving woods, forests, trees, wetlands	6.8
Air pollution/air quality	5.9
<b>Problems Facing Children/Youths</b>	
Youths and drugs	18
Youth activities/things for kids to do	16.4
Quality of schools/improving education	14
Divorce/broken homes/single parents	10
Gangs/gang violence/teenage trouble	8.2
<b>Problems Facing Farmers</b>	
Drought/rain/water/weather	20.9
Financial/don't make enough money	13.2
Crop pricing/fair pricing	12.8
Competition with big business	10.4
Farm sold/disappearing land/development	8.8

regard to Community and Economic Development, urban respondents had slightly higher awareness than suburbanites (41.3% to 36.8%). In the Agriculture and Natural Resources area, suburban respondents expressed slightly higher awareness than those from small towns (37.3% versus 35.5%). There was also a correlation between the amount of education respondents had and awareness of MSUE and 4-H (Table 5). This correlation did not hold with the other program areas.

Slightly more than one-half of the survey's respondents were aware of MSU Extension's existence. This observation cuts across region, community type, and respondents' demographic categorization as a whole. A higher percentage was aware of the 4-H Youth Program, and fewer were aware of the Community and Economic Development, Family Strengths, and Agriculture and Natural Resources programs.

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There was a statistical correlation between awareness and age of respondent. This held for MSUE and each of its program areas, with the exception of 4-H. With regard to 4-H, awareness was higher at all age levels (Table 2), and was more than 90% for respondents in age groups from 40- to 49-year-olds through the 60- to 64-year-olds. It declined slightly (85.9%) for those over age 65.

Minorities had lower awareness of MSUE compared to whites but did not have lower awareness of the organization's programs (Table 3). African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians/Pacific Islanders all had higher awareness of the Community and Economic Development Program than whites. Native Americans had greatest awareness of the 4-H Youth Program and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Program. Native Americans, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics also had higher awareness of the Family Strengths Program.

This study's findings are consistent with other studies that have shown higher awareness for the 4-H Youth Program than for MSU Extension. While the reason for this finding bears exploration, this is a positive for 4-H. However, it also signals that residents are not connecting the program with MSUE. The connection between the overall organization and its component is not being made, and it is up to both to bridge the awareness gap through communication and marketing.

There was some concurrence with findings from other studies of higher awareness of Extension among traditional audiences. There was also higher awareness among older respondents, but this did not hold true across the board for strictly rural residents or for minorities. Awareness of the Community and Economic Development Program was higher with some minorities, suburban and urban audiences.

The relatively higher awareness of Extension Programs among minorities found in the study is in contrast with findings from previous studies that show that when compared to whites, minorities have relatively low program awareness. But if considered alongside the finding that rural respondents have higher awareness of Extension than urban residents, then minority groups who reside in rural areas might be expected to reflect higher awareness.

According to 1990 U.S. Census data, while African Americans primarily reside in or near major metropolitan areas (like Detroit), other minorities in Michigan do not. Native American population densities, for example, are higher in the primarily rural Upper Peninsula. The population density for persons of Hispanic background is fairly evenly spread across the Lower

Peninsula. Thus, African Americans in this study might reflect the lower awareness found across urban areas, while Native Americans and Hispanics are more reflective of rural respondents in general.

A better understanding of how Michigan residents see Michigan State University would go well beyond serving Extension's needs for measuring awareness. It would also help MSUE understand the degree to which citizens identify it as a part of the university and would give the university a better idea of how people view its connections to them.

In striving to increase awareness, MSUE may want to reach out to younger and more urban audiences. One possibility might lie with taking advantage of the very high awareness of 4-H by strengthening suburban and urban 4-H programs and making the ties between 4-H and MSUE clearer. This can give youngsters positive experiences with Extension that they can carry on into adulthood and might make them more predisposed to seeking information and education from MSUE later in life. While additional resources may not be available to support new endeavors, partnerships with schools, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, after-school programs and other youth development organizations might prove valuable.

The 4-H Youth Programs had the highest awareness levels among all Extension programs and even higher than the organization itself, regardless of age, ethnicity, type of community, or education level. The century-old 4-H program has a highly recognized symbol (the clover) that has not changed since its inception, and it earns more media attention than other MSUE program areas, especially for youngsters involved in animal programs. While the Family Strengths program has followed a common marketing strategy of changing its name (from Home Economics) to better reflect its activities and audience, this name change may not be recognizable, even to current and former program participants, and may have negatively affected the program's awareness among survey respondents.

This study is being used in MSUE's marketing activities, and it opens the door to further marketing research within specific audiences. Such studies might examine residents' use of MSUE programs, how use might be increased, and whether MSUE clients differentiate county-based programs from those located on the main university campus. Many MSUE offices are located in county buildings. Do residents believe they are making use of strictly county resources? If so, MSUE must more clearly delineate that a unique network of federal, state and local resources allows them to access university-generated knowledge in their home counties.

While this study did bring to light some information about what Michigan residents know about MSU Extension and its main programs,

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there is a need for studies that dig deeper for further information that goes beyond awareness. For example, as Extension's educational offerings have expanded, so have those of other organizations. How do Michigan residents compare MSU Extension's nonformal educational programs to those offered by such organizations as health care providers, conservation organizations or other youth development groups like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts? How do they differentiate (or do they) between the type and quality of Extension programming with other program providers?

This paper offers a look at what Michigan residents know about Michigan State University Extension and its main programs. It can and should be a starting point for further studies that more closely examine what citizens value and need from Extension, first from the standpoint of marketing, but much further and deeper, to examine questions that address the organization's long-term health, vitality, and stability.

## Keywords:

Awareness, marketing, audience

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