

AN APPRAISAL ON CUSTOMER SERVICE OF INDIA POST

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Abstract

This paper deals with the customer service of a head post office (HPO) under India Post. Data have been collected personally from 100 account holders of the post office. Account holders have been selected at random basis. A questionnaire has been used to collect the primary data. Data has been analyzed through different tables and using statistical tests. In this study, it was found that most of the account holders are satisfied with how the post office provides customer service. As the study is based on only 100 samples and only one HPO has been studied for the purpose, the conclusion of this study cannot be generalized but the method of study claims some newness which can be explored in future big studies.

Keyword: India Post, Customer Service, Post Office, Account Holder, Courier Service

Abstract

Makalah ini membahas layanan pelanggan kantor pos utama (HPO) di bawah India Post. Data telah dikumpulkan secara pribadi dari 100 pemegang rekening kantor pos. Pemegang rekening telah dipilih secara acak. Kuesioner telah digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data primer. Data telah dianalisis melalui tabel yang berbeda dan menggunakan tes statistik. Dalam penelitian ini, ditemukan bahwa sebagian besar pemegang rekening puas dengan bagaimana kantor pos menyediakan layanan pelanggan. Karena penelitian ini hanya didasarkan pada 100 sampel dan hanya satu HPO yang telah dipelajari untuk tujuan tersebut, kesimpulan dari penelitian ini tidak dapat digeneralisasikan tetapi metode studi mengklaim beberapa hal baru yang dapat dieksplorasi dalam studi besar di masa depan.

Kata kunci: India Post, Layanan Pelanggan, Kantor Pos, Pemegang Rekening, Layanan Kurir

Introduction

The Department of Post of the government of India runs India Post, which is the oldest government venture of India; India Post has consistently provided customer service to the best of its ability since its establishment. The kind of customer service any organization provides will determine the level of satisfaction of its customers. In the government sector, 'India Post' has relied on providing outstanding customer service all over India without regard to its profits. At present, however, the conditions have changed; strong winds of globalization are blowing across the Indian subcontinent; as a result, many private organizations have already launched postal services (couriers), financial services, and also insurance services.

In spite of stiff competition from private players, they significantly increase the level of customer expectation through various innovative customer services. It has successfully adapted to the various changes the new era has brought, by virtue of its large infrastructure. Two customers are not the same; each and every customer is unique in terms of their choice, their expectation, their attitude, their temperament, and their sentiment. The organizations

should strive to satisfy the majority of the customers by offering top-notch service, even if they cannot satisfy all of them.

In this study, its objective is to evaluate the level of customer service provided by a Head Post Office under the 'India Post' organization in the current era, so that it may determine whether the 'customer service' delivered by India Post is on par with that provided by contemporary private companies.

Literature Review

India post is an interesting field of research among the financial as well as service sectors operating in Indian market. Some past research works related to the present topic are being highlighted below:

The study conducted by T.W. Adreassen and B. Lindestad (1998) argue that customer satisfaction and corporate image do not work separately for complex services that require customer loyalty. This finding was consistent with high and low service expertise levels, which were associated with customer loyalty and customer satisfaction separately. From a managerial perspective, information about the relative strengths of the two routes is indispensable for resource allocation with the aim of improving customer loyalty. This data challenges the disconfirmation paradigm that predicts customer satisfaction as the primary method to achieve customer loyalty.

Using an integrated model of service quality, customer value, and customer satisfaction, Haemoon Oh (1999) developed a model that integrates these three factors. This study seeks to provide preliminary insights into the post-purchase decision-making process of luxury hotel customers using a sample from the luxury segment. As well as being theoretically sound, this model may also be useful when predicting customer behavior.

By integrating Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Knowledge Management (KM) into a Customer Knowledge Management (CKM) model, Henning Gebert, Malte Geib, Lutz Kolbe and Gerold Riempp (2002) show how Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Knowledge Management (KM) will be enhanced and risk of failure will be reduced. It is necessary to manage knowledge for the customer, knowledge about the customer, and knowledge from the customer when managing relationships. By delivering the four components of knowledge (content, competency, collaboration, and composition) within limits of budget, KM serves as a service provider for CRM.

It is reported by Jane E. Fountain (2002) that customer service ideas are widely used in government; however, the concept and its implications for services produced and delivered by the public sector are still poorly developed. A series of paradoxes are presented in his paper on the use of customer service in the public sector, that on 'Paradoxes of Public Sector Customer Service'. Even as some aspects of government service improve, there seems to be a paradox in the fact that customer service tools and techniques can lead to greater political inequality. An assessment of the dominant structural features of service management in the private sector is used to develop the argument; customer satisfaction is viewed as a central objective of service firms. Current reform efforts in the federal government are informed by an understanding of customer service and know the operational and political contests of customer service in public management.

According to an empirical study by A.K. Chakrabarty (2006) published on Life Insurance Corporation of India, a public company, customer service was identified as an intangible asset that enhances the organization's business potential. As expressed Citizens' Charter (2006) describes that 'India post' is responsible for providing mail, parcel, and related services across India and globally. The organization will be acknowledged as an efficient, excellent organization that exceeds the expectations of the community, employees, and customers. The goal is to be recognized as an efficient and excellent organization by:

- a) Customer service that focuses on understanding and satisfying customers',
- b) Dedication to providing the best value for money for customers, through efficient and reliable services,
- c) A commitment to providing each employee with an exciting and fulfilling career,
- d) Becoming fully responsible as a member of the country's social, industrial, and commercial powerhouse,
- e) To be innovative and forward-looking in all areas.

The Indian Postal Service requires a technological, social, cultural, and economic transformation as outlined in a case study by Sonia Riyat (2008). It can create a monopoly on the market with a little bit of change. M.B. Anand (2013)'s study, India Post has implemented a centralized core banking solution with alternate delivery channels to enhance its service quality and operational efficiency. Using this core banking environment, funds can be transferred faster and withdrawals made easier. Alternative delivery channels include ATMs, Internet, Phone, SMS, and Mobile Banking. The paper explores the growth and performance of postal services in India and future opportunities.

Srp. Vijaya and A. Abbas Manthiri (2017) have attempted to explain the profile of respondents to financial inclusion, their experience in providing various services, its consequences and their attitude to financial inclusion in Sivagangai postal division. Study results revealed that the Sivagangai Postal Division has been serving its postal customers well. The purpose of M. S. Lakshmi, G. Ragunath and Aiswarya. R's (2020) study was to learn about the various financial services offered by the post office as well as their current performance. In conclusion, the post office should advertise and promote their financial services for long-term success and demonstrates a wide scope in the development of post financial services for the future. Accordingly, the author seeks to examine the opinions of account holders regarding the 'customer service' of Kalna Head Post Office in this study.

Need of the Study:

India is not the only country experiencing the breeze of liberalization and globalization. There are many private organizations providing postal and financial services to the Indian market that fall under the purview of open economy and market economy. Customers are attracted to such services by the schemes they offer and the high quality of the service they offer. In spite of being a government sector, Indian Post faces significant competition. Private courier services are the main competitor of Indian postal service. In addition to being obstructed by private companies, post offices are also unable to offer financial and insurance services. However, it should be pointed out that there is no organization, such as a post office, that offers both financial services and insurance services under the one roof. Postal service

should be emphasized more by 'India Post' to meet the demands of the modern era. This is the backdrop to the empirical study presented in this paper.

Objective of the Study:

The present study examines customer service performance at the Kalna Head Post Office. To evaluate customer service at the studies post office, a variety of approaches have been used, including:

- a) Types of services provided by the post office in the customers.
- b) Reasons for preferring Kalna Head Post Office for getting service.
- c) The way of approaches followed by the customers for availing services from the post office.
- d) Problems faced by the customers while getting services from the post office.

The study also desires to advocate few suggestions to provide best services to the customers by the post office.

Hypotheses:

In order to realize the objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses have been formulated.

- 1) Ho: There exists no significant relationship between the duration of holding the accounts in the post office and availing the best services by the respondents.

An alternative hypothesis formulated is:

Ha: There exists a significant relationship between the duration of holding the accounts in the post office and availing the best services by the respondents.

- 2) Ho: There exists no significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondent and availing the cheque collection service of the post office by the respondents.

An alternative hypothesis formulated is:

Ha: There exists a significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondents and availing the cheque collection service of the post office by the respondents.

Methodology

Selection of Sample:

A sample of 100 account holders of Kalna Head Post Office has been selected at random for the purpose of the study. The sample account holders deal with Kalna Head Post Office and reside at Kalna Town. Kalna is a Sub Divisional town of Purbabardhaman district under the State of West Bengal, India and located is 80 KM away from Kolkata. The Kalna Head Post Office is under the jurisdiction of Burdwan Divisional Office. Kalna is an agriculture based town. The sample account holder truly represents the total population. The economy of Kalna depends a lot upon agricultural activities of village people surrounding Kalna town. Although, there are some agriculture based industries, no heavy industries are there. The overall economic environment of Kalna is very strong and prospecting. Poor people favours

post office for easy accessibility rather than banks or other financial institutions for their saving purpose. The author chooses Kalna HPO for all these reasons for the purpose of the study.

Selection of Tools:

The tool selected and used for this empirical study is a structured questionnaire. It has been used to collect the primary data from the sample respondents.

Description of Questionnaire:

A structured, large and close ended questionnaire had been prepared for the purpose of collecting the opinions of sample respondents. There were several questions in the questionnaire. The sample account holders' opinions were collected regarding the quality of customer service at the post office. In the questionnaire, respondents are asked about the reasons for their preference and kind of assistance received. In some cases, items can be rated four ways, viz. very good/good/no opinion/bad, or two alternatives, yes/no. The questionnaire was designed in Bengali in order to facilitate understanding and communication.

Collection of Data:

The data have been collected directly from 100 account holders through door to door investigation by the investigator himself. Sample respondents are requested to give their natural, free and frank responses to the queries. They are taken into confidence and are told that the information is required only for research purpose and will be strictly kept secret.

Tabulation and Classification of Data:

The data was collected through a single type of questionnaire compiled on suitable tabulation sheet, which were also prepared for the purpose. The data have been classified on the basis of age, profession, monthly income, gender, marital status and type of accounts held by the respondents.

Statistical Technique Used:

Based on the objectives set forth and hypotheses formulated, data was tabulated and analyzed. The responses of the respondents were analyzed with a simple percentage method. The hypothesis testing has been done with the Chi-square (X^2) test using 5 % significance level.

Limitation of the Study:

The study has been conducted for only one Head Post Office of 'India Post'. Since the study is based on sample opinion, the result may vary due to change of sample size and also composition. The conclusion of the study is purely based on sample opinion of the respondents. Therefore, the inference from the study may not be generalized.

Analysis and Findings:

In order to analyze the primary data collected from respondents, the following methods have been used. To maintain the simplicity of the research article, easy communication and

comprehension of research outcome, tabular analysis technique, descriptive statistics and some simple statistical tests has been used to analyse the data.

Table I
Break up of Respondents According to Age

Serial No	Age	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Up to 20	09	09
2	20-30	11	11
3	30-40	15	15
4	40-50	51	51
5	50-60	10	10
6	Above 60	04	04
Total		100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table I portrays the breakup of respondents according to their age. The data exposed that 51 % of total account holders are in the age group of 40-50 years. Only 4 % account holders are definitely senior citizen as their ages are beyond 60 years. It is also revealed that 20 % (i.e. 9+11) account holders are youth, whose ages are below 30 years. It was found that only 15 % of the postal clients are in the age group of 30-40 years and 10 % belong to the age group of 50-60 years. The data indicates that people aged between 40-50 years are very much interested to avail the services of the post office.

Table II
Break up of Respondents According to Profession

Profession	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Farmers	17	17
Govt. Servant	25	25
Businessmen	36	36
Home maker	07	07
Private co-employee	09	09
Retired employee	06	06
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table II displays the breakup of respondent according to their profession. From this table it is clear that businessmen are keen to transact with the post office as they hold 36 % of the total accounts. Government servants also hold a noticeable share of accounts that is 25 %. Since the study is conducted in an urban area, the farmers represent only 17 % of the total respondents. Private company employees hold only 09 % accounts as the economy of the studied area is agriculture based and also lacks private venture in the locality. Housewife and retired Employees occupy negligible share in the total account that is 7 % and 6 % respectively.

Table III
Break up of Respondents According to Monthly Income

Profession	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Up to Rs. 3000	06	06
Rs. 3000- Rs.5000	15	15
Rs. 5000 - Rs. 7000	16	16
Rs. 7000 - Rs. 9000	41	41
Above Rs. 9000	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table III exhibits the breakup of respondents according to their monthly income. The remarkable picture is that account holders who belong to the income slab of Rs. 7000-Rs. 9000 hold maximum accounts (41 %) of the post office. Account holders, whose income is above Rs. 9000, hold a moderately large share (22 %) of total postal accounts. Respondents belonging to monthly income of Rs. 3000-Rs. 5000 and Rs. 5000-Rs. 7000, hold more or less the same share that is 15 % and 16 % respectively of the postal accounts. Only 6 % of the account holders earn below Rs. 3000 per month.

Table IV
Break up of Respondents According to Gender Status

Gender	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	79	79
Female	21	21
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table IV shows the breakup of respondents account according to their gender status. Out of total account holders, 79 % male and only 21 % are female. Most alarming picture is that only 21 % of the respondents are female who are, really, in need of financial security than men are.

Table V

Break up of Respondents According to Marital Status

Marital status	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	71	71
Unmarried	29	29
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table V exhibits the breakup of respondents account according to their marital status. Major portion (71 %) of the account holders are married, and rest (29 %) are unmarried. Married persons are more interested to avail the postal services than their counterparts.

Table VI

Break up of Respondents According to Type of Account

Type of Account	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Savings Accounts	15	15
Recurring Account	25	25
Monthly Income Scheme	33	33
Senior Citizen Savings Scheme	06	06
Term Deposit	13	13
Public Provident Fund	08	08
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table VI shows the breakup of respondents account according to type of account. Data shows that Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) is the most popular account for the customer, since maximum (33 %) account holders are holding this type of account in the post office. Then Recurring Deposit Account (25 %), Saving Account (15 %) and Term Deposit Account (13 %) achieve the second, third and fourth position according to popularity among the customers. Since only 8 % account holders are operating Public Provident Fund Account, it conveys the message that postal customers are more interested in savings scheme than scheme having tax rebate. As the Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS) is exclusively for the Senior Citizens (age above 60 years), the operators of this type of account are only 6 % of the total account holders.

Table VII
Reasons for preferring Kalna Head Post Office

Type of Account	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Trust	35	35
Interest	19	19
Nearness to Home	21	21
Known Officials	07	07
Liberal than Bank	05	05
Fast Service	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table VII segregates the respondents according to their opinion about ‘the reasons for preference’ of the studied post office. Most of the account holders (35 %) prefer the post office for ‘trust’ of service. ‘Nearness to Home’ is also an important reason for preference as the 21 % of the customers have opened their account in the post office for that reason. Only 19 % of the customers prefer the post office for ‘Interest’ because interest rate is not attractive presently. Out of total respondents, 13 % preferred the studied post office for ‘Fast Service’. ‘Known Agent’ (4 %) and ‘Known Officials (7 %) are negligible causes of preference of the customers. A percent (5%) of total respondent opines that post office is more liberal than bank.

Table VIII
Type of Assistance Received by the Respondents

Type of Assistance	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Pen to Write	13	13
Help to fill up the form	15	15
New Scheme information	20	20
Information relating to maturity and interest rate	31	31
Amendments in existing Scheme	21	21
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table VIII categorized the respondents according to ‘type of assistance’ received from the post office. Out of the total respondents, 31 % are availing the assistance of receiving information with regard to maturity of their deposit and interest rates and 21 % of the account holders are getting assistance relating to ‘amendments in existing scheme’. The assistance received by the respondents relating to ‘pen to write with’ (13 %), ‘help to fill up the form’ (15 %) and ‘new Scheme information’ (20 %) is more or less of the same degree.

Table IX
Service Rating by the Respondents

Type of Account	Respondents	Percentage (%)
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Very good	07	07
Good	44	44
No opinion	18	18
Bad	31	31
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

From Table IX we observed that maximum account holders (44 %) have rated the services offered by the post office as good, 18 % respondents have no opinion about the postal services. The study reveals that 51 % (i.e. 7+44) respondents have positive opinion relating to the service provided by the post office. In other words, more than half of the total customers have a positive opinion regarding the services offered by the post office, while 31 % account holders' have rated the postal services as bad.

Table X
Duration of Holding Accounts and Satisfaction with Postal Services

Satisfied with the services of the post office	Educational Qualification				Total
	Up to 5 yrs	5-10 yrs	10-15 yrs	15-20 yrs	
Yes	11	30	13	14	68
No	06	07	11	08	32
Total	17	37	24	22	100

Source: Primary Data

Table XI
Respondents' Educational Qualification and Cheque Collection Service Availd by the Respondents

Availing Cheque Collection Service	Educational Qualification				Total
	Up to MP	H.S	U.G	P.G Technical	
Yes	07	13	04	05	29
No	17	18	19	17	71
Total	24	31	23	22	100

Source: Primary Data

Table XII
Result of Statistical Tests.

Attributes	Name of the tests	Calculated value of X ²	Table value of X ²	Degree of freedom	Hypothesis accepted
Service obtained vs. Duration of	Chi-Square (X ²)	5.08	7.82	3	H ₀

holding of account					
Educational Qualifications vs. Cheque Collection Service availed	Chi-Square (X ²)	6.55	7.82	3	H ₀

Source: Compiled by Author

Table XII shows the breakup of respondents account according to test the hypotheses. In the first case, calculated value of X^2 does not exceed the table value of X^2 at 5 % significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means that there exists no significant relationship between duration of account holding and availing the best service from the post office. In the second case, calculated value of X^2 also does not exceed the table value of X^2 at 5 % significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. It proves that the cheque collection facility of the studied post office does not depend on the educational qualification of the account holder.

Conclusion:

In this study, it was found that most of the account holders are satisfied with how the post office provides customer service. In addition to being safe and reliable, nearby, providing a stable interest rate, and offering prompt service, post offices are preferred by most account holders. According to the study, the post office provides the same level of service through several methods, such as: Among these activities are (a) providing information about maturity and interest rate, (b) making changes to existing schemes, (c) providing evidence on new schemes, (d) providing assistance in filling out forms, (e) providing writing instruments etc. Customers are becoming more attracted to Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) after the announcement of a bonus (5%). Due to this, Senior Citizen Savings Schemes lose their significance. Additionally, post office customers have shown an interest in opening Postal Savings Accounts, Recurring Deposit Accounts, and Term Deposit Accounts. People who earn between Rs. 6000 to Rs. 8000 per month and those who are male and married are more inclined to open an account at the post office. A majority of women in the locality reside outside the postal service's reach. According to the study, businessmen and those in the 40-50 year age bracket are interested in conducting business with the post office. Customer service at the studied post office is unaffected by the length of time an account has been held. There is no discrimination in the way the post office offers cheque collection services irrespective of the customer's educational background.

Suggestion:

In analysing the data, the researcher noticed a number of weaknesses in the post office's provision of customer service. Here are some suggestions for improving service to account holders and overcoming the weaknesses.

- (a) It is necessary for both electronic and print media to highlight the public service offerings of the post office so that people are aware of them. Customer service should be fast and efficient.
- (b) It is more affordable and certain to reach its destination on time for most of the account holders to choose courier service over postal service. The government should, therefore, consider reducing both the rate and 'time to reach' of registered mail in order to popularize the registered post service of the post office. The most likely solution to this problem is to reduce the price of the speed post service, since it isn't utilized by most customers today.
- (c) A Postal Provident Scheme and Postal Link Insurance awareness program should be prepared by Post Offices to showcase the benefits of both schemes and their tax advantages.
- (d) The best customer service is provided by employing efficient employees at each counter and therefore the counter service must be improved.
- (e) Customers who hold accounts for a long period of time should be treated with special consideration.
- (f) The Postal Service's Money Order (MO) operation does not meet customer expectations while Electronic Money Order (EMO) service has stagnated. These services suffer from technical problems that are not being addressed.
- (g)** To make SCSS more attractive, a bonus should be offered to Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS).

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