CUSTOMERS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS POSTAL SERVICES WITH REFERENCE TO SALEM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The post office provides numerous services to the public. These services can be broadly classified into postal and non-postal services. The postal services include registration of letters and parcels, booking of value payable letters and parcels, booking of money orders, certificate of posting, sale of stamps and postal stationary. A post office serves a variety of functions, thereby making the nature of postal services divergent. Postal services are administered by the Government of India throughout the country and the charges for all these services are minimal, which the common man can afford. Methodology of this study, The study is both a descriptive and analytical one and it was carried out through sampling. The primary data have been collected directly from the post offices of Salem west division in Salem District and the customers of post offices through a pretested interview schedule. The Secondary data have been collected from the published documents like, Annual reports, Information booklets, Hand book of postal products and services, Hand books of postal Training College and other relevant books and journals. Findings of this study, while analyzing demographic profile of the customers, 62 percent of the customers who availed postal services were male. 72 percent of the customers belong to the age group of 25-35 years who were the active beneficiaries of the postal services. 52.8 percent of the educated customers had more access to the postal services. Suggested this study, The customer should be considered the most valuable element in the business plan for individual postal products. Conclude this study; this will also represent a significant growth opportunity for India Post beyond its current business base.

Keyword : Attitude, Modernised, postal services, Recurring deposit

INTRODUCTION

The post office provides numerous services to the public. These services can be broadly classified into postal and non-postal services. The postal services include registration of letters and parcels, booking of value payable letters and parcels, booking of money orders, certificate of posting, sale of stamps and postal stationary. As far as non postal services are concerned, the post offices serve as the financial institution for millions of people in rural India. Currently the
post offices extend their services like Public Provident Fund, National Savings Certificate, Kisan Vikas Patra, Savings Bank Account, Monthly Income Scheme, Recurring Deposit Account and Post Office Time Deposit, Post boxes for mail receipt and identity card for Residence proof to the General Public.

India Post lays maximum stress on customer care in rendering its services and also to sort out the grievances that arise in the course of providing these services. Customers can lodge their complaints in the nearby post offices which are authorized to collect them. The complaints are consolidated at a customer care centre which registers these cases on the website to obtain a reply online for a final reply at the earliest. There are 1116 computerized customer care centers to handle public grievances through online. These centers also provide the facility of online registration.

**OPINION TOWARDS THE MODERNISATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICES**

The Department of Posts supplied computers and its peripherals like scanner weighing scales, modems, etc. along with requisite power equipment like Gensets, UPS, etc. to all Head Post Offices and a large number of sub post offices. A total of 8263 post offices have been computerized by March 2007. The NIC is also implementing a WAN connecting all the Head Post Offices, Administrative Offices, Major Speed Post centers and Accounts Offices. National Data Centre has also been set up at New Delhi and this Data Centre is being connected to the WAN. The WAN will ensure a quantum jump in the quality of services being provided by the Post Offices.

**MODERNIZATION OF OPERATING OFFICES**

Under the 10th Five Year Plan, to improve the ergonomics and ambience, 822 Post Offices were taken up for modernization. This has resulted in better quality at counters, better furniture for customers and staff, proper illumination and uniform for both sign ages. The Department plans to take a quantum leap in its efforts to provide an electronic network of all Post Offices in the 11th Five Year Plan. It also plans to develop a single integrated software to link the data being received from all the Post Offices into a single repository, thereby empowering the customers and the managers.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A post office serves a variety of functions, thereby making the nature of postal services divergent. Postal services are administered by the Government of India throughout the country and the charges for all these services are minimal, which the common man can afford. It is viewed as the most dependable means of written communication. It is also used by the common man as the most reliable means of sending money through money orders to persons staying at far off places. It is also the most commonly used means for delivery of articles of value. There are two sets of variables, which help an individual to occupy a particular social position. The first set of variables is called ‘ascriptive’, which includes kinship relationships, family relationships, family occupation, income etc., The other set is the ‘achieved’ which encompasses the individual’s attainment through the efforts like education, occupational skills, economic returns etc., In addition to these two sets of variables, the ‘life experiences’ of an individual also influence his or her attitude and behaviour pattern. Coupled with the ‘life experience factor’, the
“ascriptive” and “achieved” variables would get transferred into socio-economic variables and help to determine the social and economic status of the people in the community.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the opinion of the customers towards postal services and
2. To offer suggestions for the improvement of postal services offered by India post

METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

The study is both a descriptive and analytical one and it was carried out through sampling. The primary data have been collected directly from the post offices of Salem west division in Salem District and the customers of post offices through a pretested interview schedule. The Secondary data have been collected from the published documents like, Annual reports, Information booklets, Hand book of postal products and services, Hand books of postal Training College and other relevant books and journals. The sampling was done in customers, 15% of the total number of post offices was chosen. This comes to around 38 post offices which were rounded off to 40 for arithmetic convenience. In the third stage, out of the 40 post offices identified, 10 customers from each post office were randomly chosen. The field work of this study was conducted during the period of January 2012 and April 2012. The data were collected through a pre-tested interview schedule. For the study, descriptive statistics namely, Percentages, Mean and standard deviation were used to understand the nature of the sample. Kendall’s co-efficient was used for ordinal type of data (ranked data) to find out the similarity among the respondents in ordering the item.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

OPINION SCORE ON POSTAL SERVICES BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE FOR THE CUSTOMERS

H₀: Opinion score on postal services does not vary significantly based on the demographic profile of the customers.

To test the above hypothesis, t-test for equality of means and ANOVA are applied. The results of the test are given below.

TABLE-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>F</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>35.41</td>
<td>5.42</td>
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<td>398</td>
<td>1.966</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35.13</td>
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58
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>15-25 yrs</th>
<th>25-35 yrs</th>
<th>35-45 yrs</th>
<th>45-55 yrs</th>
<th>2.014</th>
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<td>35.55</td>
<td>33.85</td>
<td>36.10</td>
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<td>5.27</td>
<td>6.29</td>
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<td>4.61</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Below `.5000 36.28</td>
<td>`.5000-10000 34.96</td>
<td>`.10000-15000 34.73</td>
<td>`.15000-20000 34.34</td>
<td>Above `.20000 36.50</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>- 1.75</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Schooling 37.03</td>
<td>Under graduation 35.82</td>
<td>Post Graduation 34.14</td>
<td>Professional 35.26</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>5.42</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<td>Urban 34.03</td>
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Source: Primary data

Note: NS – Not Significant, * - 5% level of significance, ** - 1% level of significance
Table describes that there is a significant difference in the overall scores on postal services among different groups of demographic profile namely literacy, occupation and location of the respondents. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected. Significant difference is not found in the overall scores on the postal services based on other demographic profile namely gender, age, and income of the respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H_0$) is accepted.

**FINDINGS**

- While analyzing demographic profile of the customers, 62 percent of the customers who availed postal services were male. 72 percent of the customers belong to the age group of 25-35 years who were the active beneficiaries of the postal services. 52.8 percent of the educated customers had more access to the postal services.
- 42.8 percent of the business men mainly preferred postal services for promoting the business. 42.3 percent of the respondents highly preferred the post card service, followed by book post (49.8 percent), Registered post (56.8 percent), money orders (47 percent) and speed post (69.3 percent). Among the services, most of the customers (69.3 percent) highly preferred the Speed Post services.
- 51.7 percent of the customers belonged to urban areas and 48.3 percent of them were living in rural areas. 62.7 percent of the customers preferred to visit during the forenoon. Among these respondents (251), 66.1 percent of them wished to visit between 10.am-12.00 noon.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The customer should be considered the most valuable element in the business plan for individual postal products. Ensuring timely and quality service to the customers is the pre-requisite for retaining the present market share of the India Post. For this, certain service standards have to be fixed and monitoring of delivery has to be ensured. Networked hand-held digital devices could be developed to be carried by Postmen/Postal staff to enable not only delivery of articles and intimation of their status in real time, but also for booking of articles. A policy of allotting exclusive pin codes to bulk mailers could also be followed which will increase the customer base in addition to cutting cost for Department of post.

**CONCLUSION**

To be successful in Competition with other (private) competitors, it must be ready to offer high-quality IT – related services. More awareness must be created among the people about the schemes introduced and the reach of the schemes must be checked. This will also represent a significant growth opportunity for India Post beyond its current business base. Technology will continue to remain a key driver of its business practices across the country.

**REFERENCES**