

CHAPTER I

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the problem under study, its importance and objectives as well as the methodology adopted.

The Present Study

A postman carries memoirs of many and sundry. The Postal department being an important organ of public utility services in India, has been rendering varied services right from delivering the letters to receiving investments from the public.

For its operations sky is the only limit and distance is no barrier.

It goes without saying that postal services in India is reckoned as best in the world. Still on the other end people

feel that more and better services are due and expected from Postal department. It is against this background, its (Postal Department) positive aspects as well as lapses in services are to be appraised in the greater interest of its functioning and better performance. There is a need to improve the standards of services offered by the Postal department in our country. The consumers of various services rendered by Public Sector are no exception to that of Private Sector, who are at large confused, ill-informed, and misguided group the world over. It is only the seller who is at the gain this situation has to be revised. A kind of public awareness is necessary on the part of consumers of various public utility services. Even an ordinary man in the street should also be able to assert his rights and privileges as an individual citizen. Thus, the present study is an attempt to create awareness among the Postal Consumers about their rights and protection measures available to them in case they suffer from any deficiency in the quality of services. The present study is an attempt to promote strong consumer movement in the country through academic research and to offer necessary consultancy, in the aid of solving certain problems pertinent to postal consumers.

The present study aims at motivating postal consumers by involving them as participating ^{ants} in mobilising public opinion

so that they can express their grievances as an organised group with regard to the quality and cost of the services rendered by Postal department.

The present study finally offers a few suggestions to the government so that they identify^{ied} lapses will not recur elsewhere.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study;

1. To assess the present state of functioning of Postal department and the extent of customer satisfaction on account of postal services.
2. To study the customer satisfaction with particular reference to Postal services rendered in Prakasam District.
3. To offer some suggestions and safeguards for consumer protection and satisfaction in general, Prakasam District in particular.

Methodology

The data needed for the study are collected from Primary and Secondary sources. The Primary data consists of the opinions gathered ~~from~~ through administere^{ing}d structured

questionnaires. 500 questionnaires were distributed among the inmates of Prakasam District. The questionnaires were distributed among literates as well as semi literates in the rural as well as urban areas. However, only 200 responses could be secured and this was taken as representative sample and thus distribution of questionnaire was unbiased. The problems expressed by the respondents and witnessed by the researcher are found uniform in nature. Thus from the emergent sample the researcher could make generalisations and findings. However, the researcher had to make several attempts in contacting and persuading the respondents to get the necessary sample for his study and elicit some of their opinions orally.

Secondary Sources

The secondary sources from which the data collected included public literature available in the form of books, journals, legislations and courts verdicts given by the Consumer Forum on the subject.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The collected data is tabulated and presented through percentages.

Significance of the study

The subject 'Postal Services' concerns ^{almost} ~~all-most~~ every citizen in the country. Hence, the significance of the present study.

The present study is unique because postal services have an essential place in the cumulative development process, for, it ~~is for it~~ plays a dominant role in establishing communication linkages between people and people, people and institutions institutions and institutions the government and the people and so on and so forth. Thus the study has a social and economic imperative.

The study becomes all the more important because it aims at providing adequate information and guidance to the postal consumers by way of enlightening them on various quality aspects of the postal services as there are many instances of deficiency in service incurred by postal department leading to large scale litigation between postal consumers and the department before the various consumer redressal fora.

This study provides the necessary caution to the Postal department to overcome its lapses and also create awareness among the postal consumers regarding how to safeguard their interests through consumer court. Thus, this study seems to have launched campaign for quality in postal services lest the postal

department should face litigation in Consumer Forums. The study is important because it gives an opportunity to the postal consumers to express their satisfaction or otherwise directly about the quality of services offered to them by the Postal department.

As the consumer movement is swaying round the globe the present study attaches more importance to it. The present study is more important in view of the rural background of India as well as increasing urbanisation in the recent past. Whether the communication is reaching to the desired destination in time is the criteria for assessing quality of services rendered by Postal department.

The study assumes further significance as it focusses on the grievances of postal consumers of National Saving Certificates (NSCs), Monthly Income Scheme (MIS) etc. who face varied problems to recover their savings at the time of maturity missing registered parcels, non-delivery of money orders, parcels with damage etc.

Survey of Literature

Consumer Research as such is of recent origin. Therefore, the literature on consumer research in India pertinent to postal consumers is limitedly available. However, a few studies, articles in the area of consumer protection have been referred

for the purpose of the study which are quoted during the make-up of the thesis. This study is essentially a primary one designed to create instantaneous impact on the society for the cause of consumer awareness and protection in the area of postal services.

Shanta Gopinath¹ observes that an important parameter of customer satisfaction is the customer's perception of the officials' attitude. The speed with which the official turns out his assigned job, his honesty, courtesy and helpfulness are the indices measured to determine this parameter. V.Jagannadham and N.S. Bakshi² have found that citizens were not well informed by the public utility services organisations about rules and regulations the communication was defective and the language of communication dysfunctional. K.S. Bhat³ observes that the postal department is quality conscious and there is a regular system for monitoring the quality of service. A.V. Rao⁴ informs that the major thrust of the policy of modernisation was to provide primacy to more efficient counter service and other appropriate

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- 1 Shanta Gopinath: Customer Satisfaction in the Postal Services Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
 - 2 V. Jagannadham and N.S. Bakshi, Citizen and Municipal Bureaucracy, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1971.
 3. K.S. Bhat, Director, Postal Staff College, Ghaziabad, in Consumer Protection, November, 1994.
 4. A.V.Rao, Chief Post Master General, The Hindu, 16th Oct. 1994.

improvements in front office operation with the objective of achieving greater customer satisfaction. R. Hariharan⁵ views that we have to choose between the short present full of consumer comforts or sacrifice present consumption for a long and bright future. Navin Chandra Joshi⁶ feels that consumerism in India should have an element of protest and militancy.

Agarwal, V.K.⁷ observed that unstinted co-ordination on the consumer activities spread over all nook and corner, should be activated for a concerted action. Anita Ghatak⁸ laments that consumer movement is still in its budding stage but slowly and steadily must come to grips while Giri, H.N.⁹ feels that case judgements in various consumer foras will have a telling effect on consumers reaction in the given circumstances. Anil Gupta¹⁰ understands that the behaviour of consumer in India is not yet scientific, unplanned and they happen in the spur of moment and due to the qualities of jealousy, prestige and status symbol.

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- 5 R. Hariharan, Consumerism Indian Style - Financial Express 17th January, 1990.
 6. Navin Chandra Joshi, Creating Consumerism - Financial Express, Dec., 21, 1989.
 7. Agarwal, V.K., 'Consumer Protection in India', Deep & Deep Publications, F-159, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi.
 8. Anil Ghatak, K., 'Consumer Behaviour in India', D.K. Publishers, Distributors (P) Ltd, New Delhi.
 9. Giri, H.N., 'Consumer Crimes and Law', Book Resort, Vizag.
 10. Anil Gupta, 'Consumption Behaviour in India', Atlantic Publishers and Distributions (Regd), Darya Gani, New Delhi.

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Paul N. Bloom and Stephen A. Greyser observe that mass discontent and public support for social change do not necessarily produce an active social movement and consumerism¹² remains an opportunity rather than a threat. Paul H. Appleby, observed that 'the first duty of government is to avoid disorder and its duty is to make tolerable, sensible and complimentary a host of other directed interests and activities.' V. Jagannadham, S.J. Eldersveld and A.P. Barnabas¹³ opined that uninformed rural citizens, seems to be less critical than the informed and the elites'.

Katz and Eisenstadt¹⁴ felt 'when a public bureaucracy has a monopoly of certain goods and services, the client has little chance of making an effective protest.' Manorama Year Book¹⁵ opines that a reasonably small deficit in the postal services of rural section is a part of the department's philosophy because this section is aimed to be run 'primarily and essentially as a Public Utility Service.' It adds the uneconomic post offices

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11. Paul N. Bloom and Stephen A. Greyser, 'The Maturing Consumerism, Harvard Business Review, Nov-Dec, 1981, Vol. 59, and No. 16.
 12. Paul H. Appleby, 'Citizens as Sovereigns' Syracuse : Syracuse University Press, 1962.
 13. Jagannadham, V.S.J. Eldersveld and Barnabas, A.P., "The Administrator and the Citizen in a Developing Democracy", New Delhi, 1968.
 14. Katz and Eisenstadt, "Some Sociological Observation on the Response of Israeli Organisations to New Immigrants Administrative Science Quarterly.
 15. Manorama Year Book is published from Kottayam, Kerala.

in the rural areas which are showing persistent losses have gone on without a stringent assessment of their viability. General Studies ¹⁶ felt that essential to development, communications services in India comprise the posts and Telegraphs and Telephone Services. Kalpana Raja Ram thinks that India being member of Universal Postal Union (UPU) has direct postal links with almost all countries.