



SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT AMONG CHANNEL PARTNERS FOR IDEA CELLULAR LIMITED

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Abstract

Success of a service organization depends on many factors, among them Service Quality is a major factor. Though measuring Service Quality is not easy because of intangibility, inconsistency, inseparability and non inventory, SERVQUAL MODEL a more accepted model in research and industry is used for this study. The main objective of this paper is to measure Service Quality (using SERVQUAL model) satisfaction among distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Limited at Puducherry. This feedback is useful for Idea Cellular Limited service provider while formulating strategies for success in a competitive market scenario characterising the telecom sector. This is also the need for the hour as our government of India is strategising on Digital India wave which basically also leverages on the telecom industry.

Key Words: *Servqual.*

Introduction

In developing countries like India, cellular telecommunication sector plays a vital role in economic growth. The present digital India revolution being pioneered by our government of India also depends on the telecommunication penetration in our country. The telecom industry sees a high potential in partnering with the Indian government in its drive to develop an inclusive India. This sector is highly competitive and is dominated by major players in the various states of our country. There is an immense competition among the players like Airtel, Vodafone, Reliance Communications, Idea Cellular Limited, BSNL, Tata Docomo, Aircel, MTS etc., In this regard it is essential for telecom operators like Idea Cellular to study service quality satisfaction among its distributors who play a major role in influencing the consumers and act as change agents. This will enable it to provide competitive services, so that it can leverage from the huge potential this industry offers.

Rationale for the Study

The researcher has tried to identify the core customer service parameters & will study their impact on customer satisfaction. As per the Servqual model given by **Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry** there exists gap between the services delivered & services received by the customer. Similarly there is a gap in understanding the customer requirements from the service provider's & customer's perception. Service satisfaction is associated with the service quality & service expectation. But this expectation is closely related & associated with customer perception, which changes from person to person.

To raise the service satisfaction level & to ensure good service quality even the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has also put up several benchmarks on the basis of Servqual model. The need is to compare the observed data against these benchmarks in order to understand the service satisfaction level. Servqual model has identified factors like reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles as important to assess the service quality satisfaction of a services organisation like a telecom service provider. Hence this study will enable Idea Cellular Limited to assess its present performance level to provide more competitive services in this category. This is indeed the need of the hour when our govt. is also planning to embark on its drive towards connectivity and net neutrality for all.

Objectives & Hypothesis of The Study

The objectives proposed for the study are i) to assess service quality satisfaction among distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Ltd. using SERVQUAL Model; ii) to identify gaps in service quality satisfaction level from distribution channel partners and suggest measures; iii) to evaluate the distribution channel partners overall satisfaction with Idea Cellular Limited and suggest measures.

The hypothesis proposed H_1 : There is a significant relationship between distribution channel partners satisfaction level with assurance/empathy/tangibles/reliability/responsiveness aspects of service quality.

Methodology for the Study

Sampling method used is stratified sampling; Sample size 60 (distributors 30 and retailers 0); Statistical Tools – Independent sample T test to test the hypothesis proposed in the study.



Findings & Discussion

On the basis of the data collected for the study and analysis done the following are the findings made for further improvement of satisfaction among distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Limited in the town of Puducherry.

- 50% of the channel partners surveyed was distributors and 50% of them were retailers in the sample.
- Majority of the channel partners belonged to age group of 18 to 22 years.
- 82% of channel partners were male and 18% of them were female.
- 46% of the channel partners were graduates i.e. 33% Graduates. and 13% PG
- 52% of respondents were owners and 45% of them were key employees of the store.
- 35% of them were having less than 2 yrs. of experience and 28% of them were having between 3 to 5 years and 25% of them were having between 6 to 8 years.
- Majority of the channel partners were using Bharti Airtel (38%) as their personal number followed by Vodafone 25% and Idea Cellular Limited 17%.
- 55% of the customers Port in to Idea Cellular Ltd to avail better offer and 12% of them were dissatisfied with old operator and curious about new provider.

Mean Score On Responsiveness (Distributors Vs Retailers) Towards Idea Cellular Limited Applying independent sample T test to the factors used to measure the parameter on responsiveness, it is seen that there is no significant difference in opinion with respect to service provider's willingness to help and gives attention to problems and it is rated as good. While with respect to feedback since Levene's Test for equality of variances result shows significant value of 0.137 T test for variances assumed is considered and also significant value is greater than 0.05 (0.300) and we accept the null hypothesis i.e. there is no significant difference between the respondents opinion in this factor and it is rated as only neutral in opinion.

Mean Score on Assurance (Distributors Vs Retailers) Towards Idea Cellular Limited: Applying Independent sample T test statistics with respect to capability of understanding problem, capability of answering queries and skill to answering queries, Levene's Test for equality of variances result shows significant value of 0.665, 0.139 and 0.139 respectively T test for equal variances assumed is considered and also significant value for all three factors is greater than 0.05 (0.885, 0.378 and 0.378 respectively) and we accept the null hypothesis i.e. there is no significant difference between the respondents opinion in these factors. Finally Levene's Test for equality of variance result shows significant value is 0.031 with respect to patience in resolving problem and hence T test for equal variance not assumed is considered and result generated by SPSS shows significant value lesser than 0.05 and we reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is significant difference between their opinion i.e. distributors agree and retailers are mostly neutral in opinion.

Mean Score on Tangibles (Distributors Vs Retailers) Towards Idea Cellular Limited

The Table 1 shows mean score on tangibles based on the opinion between distributors and retailers. On this table, to study if there is any significant difference between their opinion Independent sample T test was applied. Levene's Test for equality of variances result shows significant value is 0.023 and 0.001 for Clear top up card visibility and offer communication and hence T test for equal variances not assumed is considered. Based on the result generated by SPSS, the significant values are 0.250 and 0.114 respectively. Since these values are greater than 0.005 and we accept the null hypothesis. Hence there is no significant difference between the opinions of respondents. Further with respect to billing method transparency, outlet availability and friendly website since Levene's Test for equality of variances result shows significant value of 0.051, 0.058 and 1.000 respectively T test for variances assumed is considered and significant value is 0.043, 0.007 and 1.000 respectively. Hence the value is lesser than 0.05 for billing method transparency and outlet availability we reject the null hypothesis and there is significant difference between the respondents opinion i.e. distributors mostly agreed and retailers are mostly neutral in opinion. But the significant value is greater than 0.05 with respect to friendly website hence we accept the null hypothesis i.e. no significant difference between the respondents opinion.

Table 1: Group Statistics					
	Channel Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Info/Message in Top-up card is clear and useful.	Distributor	30	4.67	.479	.088
	Retailer	30	4.80	.407	.074
Promotional offers are communicated properly.	Distributor	30	4.67	.479	.088
	Retailer	30	4.40	.770	.141



Billing methods are transparent & simple	Distributor	30	4.07	.691	.126
	Retailer	30	3.67	.802	.146
Retail outlets are available in enough numbers & are easily accessible	Distributor	30	4.60	.498	.091
	Retailer	30	4.13	.776	.142
Service provider having user friendly website	Distributor	30	4.80	.407	.074
	Retailer	30	4.80	.407	.074

Mean Score on Empathy (Distributors Vs Retailers) Towards Idea Cellular Limited

Based on the result generated by SPSS , the significant values are 0.029. Since these values are less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis.

	Channel Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Having convenient periods & terms for activation and recharge	Distributor	30	4.80	.407	.074
	Retailer	30	4.53	.507	.093
Having working hours convenient to all customers	Distributor	30	4.77	.430	.079
	Retailer	30	4.70	.466	.085

Hence there is significant difference between the respondents i.e. the factors are strongly agreed upon more by the distributors than the retailers whose opinion is agree mostly. Further with respect to convenient working hours since Levene's Test for equality of variances result shows significant value of 0.254 T test for variances assumed is considered and also significant value is greater than 0.05 (0.567) and we accept the null hypothesis i.e. there is no significant difference between the respondents opinion in this factor.

Mean Score on Reliability (Distributors Vs Retailers) Towards Idea Cellular Services: Significant difference in opinion was seen with the factors target slabs achievable and timely release of payments. There was dissatisfaction more with the retailers than the distributors.

Mean Score on Satisfaction with Distribution Channel Partner

Applying Independent sample T test to the above table 5.15 it was found from SPSS output that H_0 null hypothesis is accepted among distributors and retailers with respect to the statements channel partners satisfaction to responses for commercial queries and satisfaction with sales support from the service provider. Their level of satisfaction with their channel partners is high level of satisfaction. While there is agreement in the opinion of the channel partners with the variables satisfaction with target slabs, ability to achieve targets and on time delivery of stocks, they show dissatisfaction with respect to these statements. With respect to timely release of payments also satisfaction level is only moderate or neutral in their opinion. However with respect to the statements payout calculations being transparent and willingness to refer others to take Idea cellular distributorship there is significant difference between their opinion and we see that distributors have a greater satisfaction level to the retailers whose satisfaction is only moderate or neutral.

Suggestions

On the basis of the study following are the suggestions made for further improvement of satisfaction among distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Limited.

- 55% of them Port in to Idea Cellular limited for the reason of better offer being provided here which needs to be consistently maintained and improve it better if possible. Service provider also has to concentrate on getting their feedback and spend more time to understand their problem like frequent channel partners meet i.e. twice in a month.
- Network coverage is the back bone of the service provider where negative feedback is seen mostly. Hence company need to improve the quality of network coverage and voice clarity. This will in turn clear the call drop issue and roaming coverage.
- Time taken to resolve their problem is not satisfactory with the channel partners, hence nominate some dedicated team to solve by regular follow ups.



- Company need to consider on giving to targets to Distributors where they finding more difficulty to achieve the same and same pressure distributors provide to retailers. Delivery of stocks on time is other concern both channel partners facing and which company needs to find the better way.
- Retailers are not satisfactory with respect to the factors billing methods of distributors, patience in resolving their problem and willingness to help hence authorised person from company have to do regular retail outlet visit for collecting feedback.
- The respondents suggests that activation have to happen in distributor location like Aircel, 3G & 4G services expansion and activation on all days of the week.

Conclusion

The study on assessment of service quality satisfaction among distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Limited at Puducherry found that in terms of assurance and responsiveness channel partners are satisfied with service provider and in terms of empathy and tangibles the channel partners are highly satisfied with service provider. However with respect to the factors service provider is always willing to help, giving attention to their problem, patience in resolving problem and transparent billing methods are agreed upon more by the distributors than the retailers whose opinion is neutral mostly. With respect to reliability overall they are satisfied but dissatisfaction seen with network coverage. In terms of distribution channel partners satisfaction neutral opinion were seen and most of dissatisfied with target and delivery of stock.

Thus the Distribution channel partners of Idea Cellular Limited at Puducherry were satisfied with the service provider. Company also need to work technology (4G) and promotional offers are increasing with the competitors.

Future Research Scope

A comparative study of Distribution channel partner satisfaction among the close competitor of Idea Cellular Limited.

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