

A Study on the Customer Satisfaction towards Digitalization in Public Distribution Services

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ABSTRACT

The Indian ration card provides food for the poor people which is distributed by the government along with the fuel. It provides a distinct identity of person which is useful to update with the government record. The basic food items provided by government are rice, sugar, wheat. Ration Card is one of the most important document which acts as identity proof for any individual. The study shows how digitization of PDS has gained importance among the consumer in Kochi taluk of Ernakulam district of Kerala .Specifically, the study also identifies the difficulties faced by consumers in digitalized PDS. The demand for rationing and the factors influencing consumers to purchase the same will enable the government agencies in better decision making in terms of digitalization of PDS.

Key Words : Digitalization, Public Distribution system.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kerala's PDS evolved in response to hard struggles waged by the people during times of extreme scarcity created by its dependence on other States for food. Today, the Kerala Rationing Order of 1966, which specifies procedures for running the system, confers the statutory right on every individual to possess a ration card and draw rations on it. Kerala State has the privilege of having the best system of Public Distribution in the whole country.

The system is evenly spread over the whole state without any distinction between urban or rural. To ensure equitable distribution of the food grains at a low cost to all people especially to the weaker sections of the population. There is a very good network of wholesale and retail outlets for the distribution of rationed articles under the Public Distribution System. The Civil Supplies

Department discharges the important responsibilities of Public Distribution, enforcement of markets discipline and promotion of consumer awareness and protection of their interest. In the 60s and 70s it won many accolades for the pioneering achievements in the implementation of Universal Rationing System. The Department of Civil Supplies functions under the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs of the Government of Kerala.

The network of the ration shops is spread all over in India to provide food security to the people. This distribution of food and fuel is fully controlled by the government. But it has so many limitations. Most of the ration shopkeepers keep fake ration cards with them. Due to availability of all ration items these items are present with the ration shop dealer so he can falsify the records and use the items to sell in the market loosely. The dealer then does not provide these ration items to the customers. Many a time's people are not aware that the items have arrived in the shop. The dealer then sells these items in increased rates in the market. In this way, in the current situation we are facing problem due to lack in transparency. There is no such good system yet developed through which government gets message of usage of grains by the people.

Distribution system is one of the largest government's economic policies in India. Its main objective is to provide food grains (sugar, wheat, rice, kerosene etc.) to the public at reasonable rates. The network of the ration shops is spread all over in India to provide food security to the people. This distribution of ration is controlled and monitored by central government, along with the state government. But it has so many limitations. Most of the fair price shopkeepers hold fake ration cards with them. Due to which, the dealer receives the extra quantity from higher authority and sells it into the open market. Most of the time people are not aware of the availability of ration in ration shop. The dealer may sale ration at higher rates than recommended by the government or he may do wrong entries in register. Apart from the distribution of rice and wheat as per the Public Distribution System, there are some special schemes for providing food grains, rice and wheat to the underprivileged, destitute and malnourished population. The special schemes are as follows:

- (i). Antyodaya Anna Yojana Scheme (AAY]
- (ii). Annapoorna Scheme
- (iii). Mid-Day Meal Program

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To learn how digitalization of PDS is helpful to consumers in west Kochi area.
3. To study about the customer satisfaction towards Digitalization in public distribution services.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The PDS system is established to meet the basic needs of the community who cannot afford to depend upon the market for essential commodities. The study shows how digitization of PDS has gained importance among the consumer in Kochi taluk of Ernakulam district in Kerala .Specifically, the study also identifies the difficulties faced by consumers in digitalized PDS. The demand for rationing and the factors influencing consumers to purchase the same will enable the government agencies in better decision making in terms of digitalization of PDS.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present research is to study the impact of digitalization of PDS with reference to Kochi taluk in Ernakulam district. Food is one of the basic necessities of every man on the planet, so it is necessary to know the impact of changes in public distribution. In a developing country like India PDS plays a major role in providing basic food grains. This study would be of great help to authoritative agencies in bringing necessary changes and developments in the present scenario. It would also help the public to be more aware of their rights and to have knowledge about the facilities available to them. The result of the study points towards the impact of digitalization from the citizen's view. The outcome of this study would offer an important input to planners, policy makers and non-governmental agencies for framing future policies. The study also analyses the role of PDS in households and the problems faced in digitalized PDS. The findings of the study can be utilized by policy makers for planning the future programmes and strategies.

V. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

PDS is a government sponsored chain of shops entrusted with the work of distributing basic food and non-food commodities to the needy sections of the society at very cheap price. The aim of digitization is to bring efficiency and transparency in PDS that is prone to leakages and misuses. Digitalization helps to ensure that the benefits reaches the right beneficiaries. However, benefits may not be fully realized due to operational glitches. The digitalization of PDS itself lacks clarity even though it plays an important role in the food security of people. The current study is undertaken to measure the awareness and satisfaction of consumers on PDS and the various elements that contribute to the consumer's perception towards PDS.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. For the collection of primary data Questionnaire cum interview schedule method were used. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, articles, newspapers and websites.

The Ernakulam District consisted of 7 taluks. From these 7 taluks Kochi taluk was selected purposively. Total of 50 samples were taken. Convenient method of sampling were used to choose samples.

The collected data were processed with the help of appropriate statistical tools in order to fulfil the objectives of the study. For the present study simple percentage analysis and Garrett's Ranking Technique were adopted.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study is conducted in Kochi taluk alone, so its applicability is confined to the selected place.
- This study suffers from all the possible limitation of survey data used in social science researches.

VIII. ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION

This part analyses the socio-economic profile, level of satisfaction and problems of digitalization of PDS in Kochi taluk of Ernakulam District of Kerala in various aspects.

1. CLASSIFICATIONS ON THE BASIS OF AGE

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
18-29	10	20
30-39	12	24
40-49	14	28
50-59	8	16
Above 60	6	12
Total	50	100

(Source : Primary Data)

Interpretation:

Table 3.1 shows the classification of respondents based on their age. From the table it is clear that 28% of respondents belong to the age group of 40-49, 24% belong to the age group of 30-39 , and 20% belong to the age group of 18-29

2. CLASSIFICATIONS ON THE BASIS OF GENDER

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Female	40	80
Male	10	20
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table shows the classification of respondents based on their gender. Out of the total respondents 80% female and balance 20% male

3. CLASSIFICATIONS ON THE BASIS OF POVERTY LINE

Poverty line	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Above poverty line	10	20
Below poverty line	40	80
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table shows the classification of respondents based on poverty line.80% belong BPL category and 20 % belong to the APL category

4. CLASSIFICATION ON THE BASIS OF AWARENESS TOWARDS DIGITALIZATION OF PDS

Awareness of digitalisation of PDS	Number of respondents	Percentage
Fully aware	40	80
Moderately aware	5	10
Not aware	5	10
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation: Out of the total respondents 80% is fully aware of digitalized PDS and 10% is moderately aware and 10% of respondents are not aware the meaning of digitalized PDS

5. CLASSIFICATIONS ON THE BASIS OF NOTIFICATION ON AVAILABILITY OF GOODS FROM PDS

Notification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	40	80
No	10	20
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

80% of respondent's receives regular notifications relating with the availability of goods but 20% of respondents said that they will not get regular messages

6. CLASSIFICATIONS OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING SATISFACTION OF QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF GOODS SUPPLIED THROUGH PDS

Satisfactory level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly satisfied	5	10
Satisfied	10	20
Dissatisfied	35	70
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Based on the responses only 10% said that they are highly satisfied with the quality and quantity of goods supplied by the PDS . 70% of respondents are not satisfied

7. CLASSIFICATIONS OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING SATISFACTION ON DIGITALIZED PDS

Satisfaction of Digitalized PDS	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly satisfied	5	10
Reasonably satisfied	10	20
Indifferent	5	10
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	20
Dissatisfied	20	40
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Only 10% of respondents said that they are highly satisfied to the digitalized PDS 40% respondents are not satisfied, 20% somewhat dissatisfied and 10% does not have any opinion towards digitalized PDS

8. CLASSIFICATIONS OF RESPONDENTS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR OPINION ON DIGITALIZED PDS

Performance of digitalized of PDS	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very good	10	20
Good	20	40
Dissatisfied	20	40
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

40% of respondents are satisfied to the digitalized PDS only 10% said very good opinion about digitalized PDS and 40% are not satisfied with the digitalized PDS.

9. CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR CHOICE OF DIGITALIZED OR NON DIGITALIZED PDS

Digitalized or not digitalized PDS	Number of respondents	Percentage
Digitalized	45	90
Non digitalized	5	10
Total	50	100

(Source: Primary Data)

90% of respondents prefer digitalized PDS and only 10% prefer non digitalized PDS

10. CONSTRAINTS OF DIGITALIZED PDS (GARRETT'S RANKING METHOD)

Constraints	Garrett's Mean score	Rank
Poor technical knowledge	32.28	4
Connectivity problem	64.78	1
Biometric issues	53.25	2
Lack of training to dealers	48.44	3

(Source: Primary Data)

It is clear from the table that connectivity problems are the major constraint with mean score of 64.78 (rank 1) followed by Biometric issues with mean score 53.25(rank 2),lack of training to dealers with mean score 48.44 (rank 3) and Poor technical knowledge with mean score 32.28 (rank 4).

IX. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority of respondents are female
- Most of the respondent's age ranges between 40 – 49.
- Majority of respondents belong to the BPL category
- Majority of the respondents are fully aware of the digitalized PDS
- Majority of respondents receives regular notification from the PDS
- Majority of respondents are not satisfied with the quantity and quality of goods supplied by PDS
- 40% of the respondents are satisfied to the digitalized PDS
- Majority of respondents face connectivity problem at the time of purchasing goods
- Overall 90% of respondents prefer digitalized PDS when compared to non-digitalized.
- As the age increases, sometimes the machine cannot able to read the fingerprint of customer. This creates difficulty to the customer for getting ration.

X. SUGGESTIONS

- Some card holders are not aware of digitalization, so awareness classes on digitalized PDS should provide.
- Connectivity problems and biometric issues should be solved
- To check whether all customer receives regular messages relating with availability of goods and conduct a survey to find out whether there is change in phone number that is registered.
- Mostly the consumers with low income group prefer to purchase goods from ration shops, even though the goods distributed are of inferior quality. Whereas, the consumers with above poverty line commonly avoid purchasing goods at ration shops, as goods distributed at ration shops are of inferior quality or not up to their expectations. Therefore, in order make wealthy persons to utilize the PDS facilities, quality of the goods distributed at ration shops may be improved with the intention to improve the satisfaction level among the beneficiaries.

XI. CONCLUSION

PDS is primarily a social welfare and anti-poverty program of Government of India PDS provides rationed amount of basic food products and non-food products and other non-food products at below market prices to consumers through a network of fair price shops. The PDS is evenly spread over the whole state without any distinction between urban or rural. As a part of digital India PDS has been digitalized to increase its efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency.

This study is an attempt to find the impact of digitalization of PDS in West Kochi. Digitalization have been accepted by majority of respondents and it place a very important role in the family welfare of people

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