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INSURANCE BUSINESS IN INDIA - AN OVERVIEW

VENKATESH BABU S ASST. PROFESSOR GOVERNMENT FIRST GRADE COLLEGE BHARAMASAGARA

ABSTRACT

Insurance has been the back bone of society. For country like India, insurance does serve the need as social security practices that are not present in India compared to some foreign nations. There is no support from the government agencies to the ailing families of India, who have lost their bread winner in past, which resulted in weakening the economic front of the family The origin of Insurance can be dated in 18th century when for the need of some European sailors the idea of Insurance was discussed and brought in light for the mutual benefit. With emergence of Life Insurance Act in 1912 and provident fund Act, gave the regulation to the business. Many Insurance companies flourished in India and started their operations. Mal Practices became rampant as on every corner new "Insurance Shops" were opened. In 1999, the IRDA was set up under Companies Act., aspiring to carry on insurance and reinsurance business in India. Insurance business in India is growing at the rate of 15.20% annually India's insurance sector is to show an unprecedented progressive growth of more than 200% by the period of 2010-11 the business of insurance is expected to reach at Rs.2000 billions in coming 2 years from the present level of Rs. 500 billion-. With new insurance company coming in India, increase in awareness about Insurance in India and good marketing and advertising campaigns carried out by the marketers will give rise and will grow the Insurance market in future. The tendency and dependency in the product is surely benefitting the industry to achieve its growth targets that they are expecting. With more companies coming up every day and the growing demand of the industry the markets are becoming very Competitive. Until and unless the existing companies makes a mark and create their very own brand name it would be quite tough to sustain their position in the market. There is also a probability of big companies taking over the new emerging companies. With new Distribution channels emerging for the markets, creating and crafting the products for these new intermediateries, surely will cater the Insurance need of the end customer. Fuelled competition, increased awareness will bring the customers on the centre- stage. More Customer awareness, more regulatory frame work and ethical sales practices will be one to look forward in the Insurance Business. This paper discusses the present scenario of Insurance industry, the future developing channels and the perceptions and expectations of end users toward Insurance Industry.

KEYWORDS

Insurance industry, services.

INTRODUCTION

he Insurance sector in India governed by Insurance Act, 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 and General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) Act, 1999 and other related Acts. With such a large population and the untapped market area of this population Insurance happens to be a very big opportunity in India. Today it stands as a business growing at the rate of 15-20 per cent annually. Together with banking services, it adds about 7 per cent to the country's GDP. In spite of all this growth the statistics of the penetration of the insurance in the country is very poor. Nearly 80% of Indian populations are without Life insurance cover and the Health insurance. This is an indicator that growth potential for the insurance sector is immense in India. It was due to this immense growth that the regulations were introduced in the insurance sector and in continuation "Malhotra Committee" was constituted by the government in 1993 to examine the various aspects of the industry. The key element of the reform process was Participation of overseas insurance companies with 26% capital. Creating a more efficient and competitive financial system suitable for the requirements of the economy was the main idea behind this reform. Since then the insurance industry has gone through many sea changes .The competition LIC started facing from these companies were threatening to the existence of LIC .since the liberalization of the industry the insurance industry has never looked back and today stand as the one of the most competitive and exploring industry in India. The entry of the private players and the increased use of the new distribution are in the limelight today. The use of new distribution techniques and the IT tools has increased the scope of the industry in the longer run.

As of now today India is having 23 Life Insurance company serving the need of customers in all parts of India. These are:

LIST OF LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES IN INDIA TILL 2011

- 1. Life Insurance Corporation of India
- 2. MetLife India Life Insurance
- 3. ICICI Prudential
- 4. Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance
- 5. Max New York Life Insurance
- 6. Sahara Life Insurance
- TATA AIG Life Insurance
- 8. HDFC Standard Life
- 9. Birla Sunlife
- 10. SBI Life Insurance Company Limited
- 11. Kotak Life Insurance
- 12. Aviva Life Insurance
- 13. Reliance Life Insurance Company Limited Formerly known as AMP
- 14. ING Vysya Life Insurance
- 15. Shriram Life Insurance
- 16. Bharti AXA Life Insurance Co Ltd
- 17. Future Generali Life Insurance Co Ltd
- 18. IDBI Fortis Life Insurance
- 19. AEGON Religare Life Insurance 1
- 20. DLF Pramerica Life Insurance
- 21. Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance
- 22. Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co. Ltd.
- 23. India First Life Insurance Company

These companies are not only able to create the awareness about the Insurance in country but also are able to create a good competitive environment needed for any business to flourish. With better Corporate Governance, fair business practices and transparency in business they are now able to beak the monopoly of single Insurance provider in Life Insurance business in India.

Sanmar LIC

THE INDIAN INSURANCE MARKET

REGULATION OF BUSINESS

With changing economies and open trade barriers, there was also a need for regulation of business is concern. With this need arising a regulator was formalized for the Insurance sector. In 1999, Insurance regulatory development authority (IRDA) was set up under Companies Act. Any Company aspiring to do business either in Life or in Non-life Insurance arena need to register itself with IRDA. They not only look at regulative frame work but also prohibit 100% foreign ownership of an Indian Insurance Company. An Indian Promoter is require to invest either wholly or team up with a foreign insurer, which can own not more than 26% of the shares in a venture. With 26% share capital with the foreign partner and remaining 74% with the Indian player.

MAJOR PLAYERS AND GROWTH

The Insurance market of India, especially Life Insurance was mainly dominated by Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). With other players coming into the market provided a competitive environment to the Industry. LIC (Life Insurance Corporation of India) still remains the largest life insurance company accounting for 64% market share in 2010. Its share, however, has dropped from 74% a year before, mainly owing to entry of private players with innovative products and better sales force. In private players ICICI Prudential Co Ltd is the biggest private life insurance company in India. It experienced growth of 58% in new business premium. In line with expectations, life Insurance industry's new business volumes in the individual new business segment remained strong, growing 36% Y-o-Y and 23% M-o-M, in year 2010.

INSURANCE PENETRATION AND DENSITY IN INDIA

Year	Density (USD)	Penetration (% age)
2001	9.1	2.15
2002	11.7	2.59
2003	12.9	2.26
2004	15.7	2.53
2005	18.3	2.53
2006	33.2	4.10
2007	40.4	4.00
2008	41.2	4.00
2009	47.7	4.60

Source: Swiss Re, Various Issues.

Insurance density is measured as ratio of premium (in US Dollars) to total population. Insurance penetration is measured as ratio of premium (in US Dollars) to GDP (in US Dollars). With the data, it can be seen that in business arena, the estate owned insurer LIC is still holding its base and position as number one Life Insurance Company in India. At the same way the private players are also leading an upward direction. Due to the competitive environment the awareness, and also due to the marketing activity of all insurers together has surely helped to increase the penetration and increase in the insurance density in India.

PRODUCTS IN INSURANCE MARKET

Insurance market today consists of multiple products. To have a classification of products they can be mainly classified as;

TERM PRODUCT

ENDOWMENT PRODUCTS, ANNUITY (PENSION) PLANS

Though today Insurance is projected as an investment product to the customer, the avenues of these investments can be into traditional markets (Been tagged as a traditional products which gives fixed Guaranteed returns) and Unit linked products (Investment made in capital market). Along with need generation new product lines were introduced by many insurers and eveloped products like children products, short duration products, single payment products, limited period products and many more. With recent societal change also gave rise to products like "Reverse Mortgage "by these insurers. They are now able to developed and market the products depending upon the need and demands of customers. This has indeed helped the customer in form of customization of products at their disposal.

FOREIGN COMPANY INFLUENCE

Several global insurers are today operating in Indian soil with the Indian partner. Prudential of United Kingdom, Aviva plc the major British insurer, AIG the America, Dutch insurance firm AEGON, French firm AXA and many more has entered the market and are earning now major share in the insurance market. With vast experience about the insurance business and cash rich Pockets these companies have changed the total way of business in India. With expertise in their work they have designed best products and best management practices have helped the customers to have these products at their end. The competition by large has provided an equal opportunity employability in India. With global business practices the cultural changes in working place has been able to seen in India. Best management styles of working today have helped to create best process not only the front end process but also the backed technological driven process. With customer relationship management (CRM) coming into picture the data storage and information sharing became must easier for all the insurers.

CUSTOMER CENTRIC

A consumer remains the most important centre of the insurance sector. After the entry of the foreign players the industry is seeing a lot of competition and thus improvement of the customer service in the industry is been seen and is also been practiced. Customers have tremendous choice from a large variety of products from pure term (risk) insurance to unit-linked investment products. Customers are offered unbundled products with a variety of benefits as riders from which they can choose. More customers are buying products and services based on their true needs and not just traditional money back policies, which is not considered very appropriate for long-term protection and savings. There is lots of saving and investment plans in the market. Insurance industry is a data-rich industry, and thus, there is a need to use the data for trend analysis and personalization. With increased competition among insurers, service has become a key issue. Moreover, customers are getting increasingly sophisticated and tech-savvy. People today don't want to accept the current value propositions, they want personalized interactions and they look for more and more features and add ones and better service The insurance companies today must meet the need of the hour for more and more personalized approach for handling the customer. Today managing the customer intelligently is very critical for the insurer especially in the very competitive environment; customer gone is gone forever and will never ever come back to the same insurer. Companies need to apply different set of rules and treatment strategies to different customer segments. With educating the customers by Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDA) and the steps taken by them has been able to help the customers to know many things about the insurance. Also the detailed about their policy, the investment patterns, the charges applied, the expected returns on the policy the benefits and all fine prints about the policy has been provided by the regulator and also by the insurer to the customer, hence making customer a real "King" and keeping him at the center stage. Proper process for his queries, provision of district, state and nation form to clear the ambiguities and anything related by law are now addressed properly by the process came into picture. This has not only safeguarded the interest of the customer but also his involvement in the business by telling him his rights as a customer and the privilege he owns by giving the business to the insures across India.

DISTRIBUTION AND INTERMEDIARIES

The insurance agents still remain the main source through which insurance products are sold. With growing competitiveness and good marketing strategies has given rise to other is attribution channels. The present channels for insurance sale in India available are:

Direct Agents

- Direct Selling
- Group Selling
- Bank assurance
- Brokers
- Cooperative Societies

These new channels apart from the direct agents are able to penetrate the market much deeper than the traditional way of selling insurance through the agents. The channel partners are also been benefited by this as more value is generated in their business by adding one more product and customer also gets benefited of their valuable and professional advice. These partners for insurance companies have been the major benefit for increase in sale of their products. Also with their wide reach in market and better customer relationship skills has widen the horizon of their business as they are able to get another product at their end to sell to their valued and loyal customers. Thus enhancing their relationships with the customers.

FUTURE PLAY

Insurance industry has witnessed major changes over period of time. The regulator has been keen over the proper functioning of the business, with keen watch over the business capital to be invested with advancement in business also keen over creating awareness about unfair business practices nurtured by the insurer. Not only it has safe guarded the interest of the customer but has also played a keen role in educating the customer. With constant competitive environment the business delivery has been niche and constantly working toward been excellent. The best are the one to survive in the business. We may see big companies taking over the troubled one. Fuelled competition, increased awareness will bring the customers on the centre stage. Customer will be the single most important factor driving change in the life insurance business. Customer experience will be the key differentiator. Service will focus on enhancing the customer experience and maximizing the customer convenience. Apart from the new distribution channels evolved, internet will be another effective media to sell the insurance by effective comparison shopping. Technology will be playing a crucial role in delivering the highest standard of service to both, the end customer and also to the intermediary.

REGULATORY FRAME WORK

The regulator till date has been firm tightening the business. Same would be seen from there end in coming future. While the regulator authority has done a superb job in putting place a framework, it needs to focus now to maintain consistency in the regulations applicable to each provider so as not to create a disadvantageous position for any one provider.

SIMPLIFICATION OF LAW

Another cause of concern is the delay in the formulation of unified Act for issues relating to the insurance. Also with new modules coming in the financial planning arena, it is again necessary to frame out some laws to control the activities in future. With fee regime coming slowly into the market, regulating and controlling over the same will be require as a need of hour.

RISK MANAGEMENT

India has seen an exit of one insurer (AMP Sanmar). The role of regulator in monitoring the risk profile of each participant will be crucial to maintain the good health of the sector. Insurers will need to take appropriate risk mitigation measures to minimize risk, while the regulator will need to strengthen their armory of risk measuring tools.

THE RURAL MARKET

Insurance companies have established a presence and extended coverage in the rural areas as well, but there a lot more that needs to be done. The insurance companies need to design products that meet their need. Service delivery mechanisms will be crucial to success in rural areas. Mainly lesser premium a year will be required to explore the market.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)

One of important reform the industry is looking for. Lobbing has been done for implementing the 49 per cent FDI in insurance sector. This will not only helped the sector but also helped the Indian partner in a big way. The precautionary measures have to be taken for safeguarding the existence of Indian partner if at all it is allowed in the sector.

PENSION FUND

An important area of business which has been a key segment for insurers worldwide and will be critical to the growth and development of the insurance industry of India. Been a pensions fund at most care has to been taken for implementation as will affect many senior citizens.

MODERN MARKETING APPROACH

Marketing strategies for insurance in the emerging scenario could be understood in terms of the following steps:

Having done market research and finalizing on segmentation, targeting and positioning the strategy would focus on the marketing mix namely, Product, Price, Place and Promotion. While determining the implementation methodology, the four characteristics viz. Intangibility, Inseparability, Perish ability and Variability gives rise to certain unique requirements that deserve careful attention while formulating the marketing strategy for insurance. After implementation, the insurers should concentrate on the effective control that would enhance their business.

In India, Insurance is sold and not bought. The agents / Advisors by using various strategies sell the product by convincing the customers. Moreover, they push Policies with the highest premium to pocket a higher commission. The consultative approach to selling is the modern approach, which helps customers and prospects to buy. A consultant makes calls and sells just like any other sales person. The difference is in their attitude, their approach and their commitment. Here, the customer is seen as a person to be served and not a person to be sold. It helps the purchaser to make an intelligent decision. The four-step process includes:

- Need discovery
- Selection of the product
- Need satisfaction presentation, and
- Serving the sale

This approach to selling their products requires understanding of concepts and principles borrowed from the fields of psychology, communications, and sociology and needs a lot of personal commitments and self – discipline from the seller.

The commitments referred are:

- Finding and understanding the needs of the customers.
- Partnering with the customers.
- Helping the customers to achieve his business and other objectives by the purchase of the product or service.
- Believing that your products / services are a great fit with your customer's needs, and

Believing in yourself and your ability to help the customers in solving their problems.

CONCLUSION

Since the opening of insurance sector to private players there has been many significant developments like product innovations, introduction of riders, new channels of distribution i.e., banks, corporate agents, group insurance business etc. While these changes are most welcome and will benefit the growth of the industry and the customers, there are some key issues that need to be addressed immediately namely regulating framework, simplification of insurance laws, risk management, the rural market and the pension and role for insurance companies. This market has the potential to grow into one of the largest markets in the world within the foreseeable future. However, if appropriate steps are not taken now to get the structural aspects right, this industry will face many challenges that affect the growth.

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