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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PROBLEMS FACED BY CONSUMERS WHILE USING SERVICES OF INDIA POST AND PRIVATE COURIER SERVICE IN WESTERN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an academic attempt to compare the India post and Private courier services in Western Mumbai with reference to problems faced by consumer while sending and receiving mails. The study has concluded using frequency analysis and 'independent paired t test' that consumer faces fewer problems with India Post than private courier service provider. It further concludes that there is a stiff competition between India post and Private Courier services especially in western Mumbai.

KEYWORDS

India Post, Private Courier, Mail, Consumer.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. POST OFFICE: It includes every house, building, room, carriage or place used for the purposes of the Post Office, and every letter-box provided by the Post Office for the reception of postal articles;

1.2. POSTAL ARTICLE: It includes a letter, postcard, newspaper, book, pattern or sample packet, parcel and every article or thing transmissible by post:

1.3. PRIVATE COURIER AGENCY: It means a any person engaged in the door-to-door transportation of time –sensitive documents, goods or articles utilizing the services of a person, either directly or indirectly, to carry or accompany such documents, goods or articles; (Section 65(33) of the Finance Act, 1994).

1.4. INDIAN POST OFFICE NETWORK

India has the largest Postal Network in the world with over 1, 55,015 Post Offices (as on 31.03.2009) of which 1, 39,144 (89.76%) are in the rural areas. At the time of independence, there were 23,344 Post Offices, which were primarily in urban areas. Thus, the network has registered a seven-fold growth since Independence, with the focus of this expansion primarily in rural areas. On an average, a Post Office serves an area of 21.21 Sq. Km and a population of 7175 people

1.5. GLOBALIZATION IMPACTS IN INDIA POST IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS:

- a) A high rate of economic growth opens up opportunities for expansion and participation in the new economic activity. With growth of business transactions into and from India, the role of multinational firms as competitors to India Post poses a major challenge.
- b) It also opens up India Post's formerly protected internal market to competition from multi-national providers with international brand images, deep pockets and experience in modern and technologically driven methods of doing business.

1.6. ENTRY OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR– with the entry of private sector (for e.g. Shree Maruti Courier services, DTDC, Blue Dart, Vichare, The Professionals, The First Flight, etc.) in the traditional monopoly business of India Postal overplaying field needs to be established by legislative action. While the multi-national providers are providing high priced and speedy service in mail delivery, the low priced services offered by domestic couriers are undercutting India post's business. In this context legislative process will have to carefully ensure that its interests are not adversely affected while ensuring fair to rules and regulations for all providers.

1.7. RULES AND REGULATIONS LED DOWN BY INDIA POSTAL ACT FOR PRIVATE COURIER AGENCIES

Each year in India 16 billion items of post (mail) are sent. 7 billion of these items are delivered by private firms which employ over 1 million people. There are more than 2500 of these firms ranging from large multi-nationals to small local companies with a fleet of bicycles. The government, however, is keen to gain much of that business for its own postal service, India Post, and is intending to change the law governing the Indian postal industry. Others say that these changes are necessary as India Post is the world's biggest postal network with more than 155000 branches, 89% of which serve rural areas. Private firms operate largely in urban areas and India Post is left with the unprofitable task of delivering post in the rural areas where revenues can cover only 15% of the costs.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parthapratim Pal (2010) concluded in his study that with the department of posts facing competition in its traditional monopoly market from private players, the provision of a new postal bill, which is in the process of being drafted, can have a major impact on postal, courier and express delivery sectors. The bill is expected to define the USO in the Indian context, and will presumably discuss what privilege or special treatment the national post office will get for fulfilling the USO. It was concluded that it will not be an easy task to strike a right balance. There is a possibility that the bill will have strong political ramifications as it can have impact on livelihood of a large number of people involved in courier/EDS service.²

Adithya Krishna Chintapanti (2012) tried to explain in his studies that with the entry of private courier service providers and the gradual liberalization of the sector, jurisdictions across the world are grappling with the aspects of postal regulation. From a public policy perspective, the social, economic and developmental implications of the postal regulatory regime are significant. In this article the concern of service providers and consumers regarding the proposed draft post office bill, 2011. It recorded department rather ended elements for inclusion in the long awaited legislative overhaul to other of the postal sector, in the light of other jurisdictions and the regulatory architecture for other network industries. It also pointed out postal regulation under legislative options as Restructuring the GPSP, Defining USO, Recognition of CSP and formulation of service standards, Establishing sectoral regulator and Role of Department of post after restructuring. All the above changes should ensure a dynamic, organized and disciplined postal sector in greater consumer interest.³

Economic Survey of 2011-2012 (2012) highlighted some important points about India Post as it has the largest postal network in the world with 154886 post offices across country as on March 31, 2011. On average each post office serves 7814 persons with coverage of approximately 21.23 sq. km. As many as 139040 post offices are in rural areas and remaining in urban areas. In additions to its own network, the Department of Post also serves through 1155 franchisee outlets in areas where it is not possible to open post offices. Government has launched Project Arrow in 2008 to transform the existing India Post infrastructure across the country by upgrading key postal operations such as mail delivery, remittance, and banking services. Various other functions were assigned to post offices as

to disburse wages to beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act through 96895 post offices. The postal network is also being used by other government department/agencies to collect data like the rural consumer price index. The postal sector needs to keep pace with changing times as many of its services have become redundant with growth with technology and takeover by other players. Quick Decisions and actions to stay abreast of the times including switching over to new activities and downsizing could realize a lot of resources from this sector for use elsewhere.⁴

ArpitaMukherjee, ParthaPratimPal and RamneetGoswami, (2012) One of the core issues for India is that domestic regulation of postal services is evolving. India Post offers courier/EDS services. The Department of Posts is in the process of framing a new regulation that is likely to affect the courier/EDS industry. Based on a primary survey, this study found that the regulation should be transparent and fair; it should clearly define the reserved area and distinguish between Universal Service Obligation (USO) and competitive services. It should also mention how the USO will be funded. The regulation should encompass global best practices like removal of cross-subsidization and should facilitate competition. The need for a postal regulatory regime will arise if the public postal service provider is privatized. The regulator should be independent. The objective of the new regulation should be to lay down a form path for India Post and the primary role of the regulator should be to monitor the USO.⁵

Paul Dudley and Others (2009) found that, With liberalizing postal sector in UK (though not completely) since past four years, there is a considerable growth in volumes around over 20% of total inland addressed postal market and larger portions of the market for consumers sending large postings. It was evident that entrants have not much lead in total delivered volumes in UK. The margin set between end to end and an access product is an important element in this development. The ex ante price control is set keeping in mind appropriate level of margin. If it is set below, it will reduce the likelihood of entry and increase the prospect of an ex post investigation. If it is set above the level expected from ex post regulation promotes greater entry. High margins enabled entrants as compared to Royal Mail, UK to compete for customer's unsorted mails and to expand market beyond the bulk mail posting.⁶

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study signifies consumer behavior towards choosing mail service provider and it will also signify India post to develop new ways to serve better and to capture and to face competition in market.

4. PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The problem of the study is with the advent of private courier services in demand; demand for India post is declining. Thus, the present study is an academic attempt to find the problems faced by consumer using such services.

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To analyze the problems faced by consumer while sending and receiving their mails through India Post and Private Courier Service Provider.

6. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Null hypothesis :(H₀)

H₀: Respondent faces lesser problems while using/receiving services of Indian Postal Services than Private Courier Services.

Alternative hypothesis: (H₁):

H₁: Respondents faces more problems while using/receiving services of Indian Postal Services than Private Courier Services.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the above study and to achieve the objectives, the researcher has focused on primary and secondary data as a source of information. Primary data is collected from officials, employees of post offices and private couriers and from consumers using services from post offices and consumers using private courier's services in Mumbai. A survey was conducted from consumers to examine their satisfaction level. The survey is based on the structured questionnaire designed for the same. The secondary data for the study will be based on Annual Reports, Newspapers, Journals, Published and Unpublished Books, Dissertation, mimeographed, official reports, research papers and other sources.

8. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

For the present study, Researcher has collected data through structured questionnaire filled by 50 respondents from western Mumbai region. Respondents sample was chosen by deliberately random sampling technique. Table No.1 indicates detailed profile of respondents. Out of 50 respondent, 22 (44%) were Male, 24 (48%) were Female and 4 (8%) were Institutions such as Banks and Educational institutions. Distribution of respondents according to age wise, 5 respondents belongs to age group of 18 years to 24 years, 23 belongs to 25 years to 31 years, 17 belongs to 32 years to 38 years, 5 belongs to 39 years to 45 years and no respondents of age above 45. Educational level of respondents. 2(4%) respondents were Graduates, 38(76%) respondents were Post Graduates and 10 (20%) were Professionals. According to income (in Rs. per month). 13 Respondents were having income below Rs. 25,000; 23 were having between Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000; 7 were having between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000; no respondent has income between Rs. 75,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 and 7 respondent were having income above Rs. 1,00,000. According to occupation wise, 31 respondents are salaried, 2 were self employed, 6 were carrying their own business and 11 were professionals.

TABLE NO.1: DETAILED PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Point of Consumer Profile	Sub Points	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	22	44
	Female	24	48
	Institutions	04	8
Age	18-24	5	10
	25-31	23	46
	32-38	17	34
	39-45	5	10
	46 and above	0	0
Educational Level	Graduates	2	4
	Post Graduates	38	76
	Professional	10	20
Level of Income (in Rs.)	Below Rs. 25,000	13	26
	25,000 – 50,000	23	46
	50,000 – 75,000	7	14
	75,000 – 1,00,000	0	0
	1,00,000 & above	7	14
Occupation	Salaried	31	62
	Self-Employed	2	4
	Business	6	12
	Profession	11	22

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

Table No.2 indicates use of mailing services by the respondents as Individual, Business and both. It is known from the table, that 46% respondent uses mailing services as individual only, 18% as business only and 36% as both business and individual. Despite of technological development use of mailing services is still higher as individual.

TABLE NO. 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT REGARDING USE OF MAILING SERVICES

Respondent as	Number of respondents	Percentage
Individual	23	46
Business	9	18
Both	18	36
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table no.3 indicates preference of respondent while choosing mail service provider for sending mails. It was reveal from the table that only 4% respondent chooses only Indian Postal Services for sending mails, 46% chooses only Private Courier service provider for sending mail and 50% chooses both. Thus it is concluded that respondents choosing both switches from one service provider to other depending upon their need.

TABLE NO. 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING PREFERENCE OF MAIL SERVICE PROVIDER

Service Provider	Number of respondents	Percentage
Indian Postal Services	2	4
Private Courier Services	23	46
Both	25	50
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Hypothesis 1:

Null hypothesis :(H₀)

H₀: Respondent faces lesser problems while using/receiving services of Indian Postal Services than Private Courier Services.

Alternative hypothesis: (H₁)

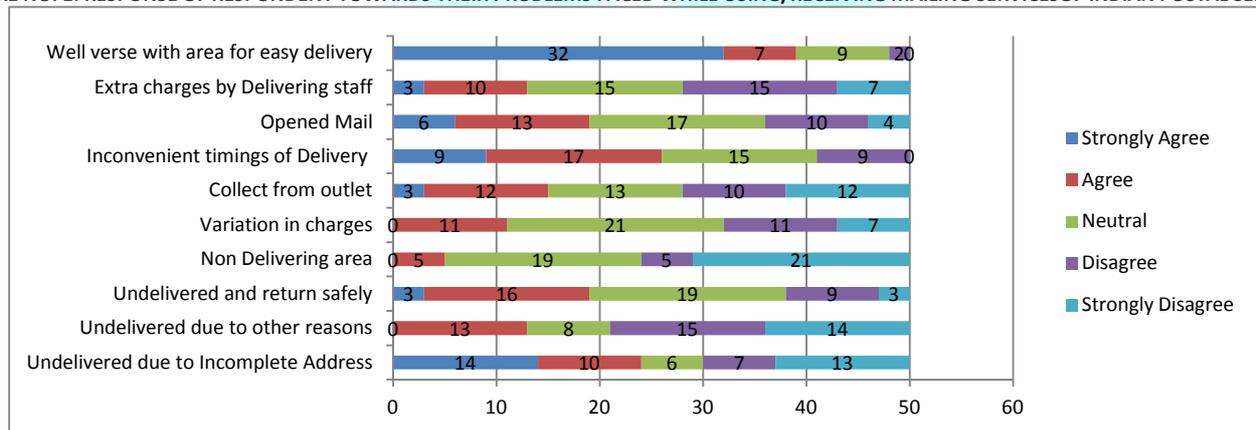
H₁: Respondents facesmore problems while using/receiving services of Indian Postal Services than Private Courier Services.

TABLE NO. 4: RESPONSE OF RESPONDENT TOWARDS THEIR PROBLEMS FACED WHILE USING/RECEIVING MAILING SERVICES OF INDIAN POSTAL SERVICES

Sr. No.	Particulars	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Average
1	Undelivered due to Incomplete Address	14	10	6	7	13	50	2.90
2	Undelivered due to other reasons	0	13	8	15	14	50	3.60
3	Undelivered and returned safely	3	16	19	9	3	50	2.86
4	Non Delivering Area	0	5	19	5	21	50	3.84
5	Variation in charges	0	11	21	11	7	50	3.28
6	Call from office to come and collect the mail from outlet	3	12	13	10	12	50	3.32
7	Inconvenient timings for receiving delivery	9	17	15	9	0	50	2.48
8	Already opened mail	6	13	17	10	4	50	2.86
9	Extra charges collected by delivering staff	3	10	15	15	7	50	3.26
10	Delivering staff well verse with area for easy delivery	32	7	9	2	0	50	1.62
	Over all Mean Score							3.02

Source: Primary Data

FIGURE NO. 1: RESPONSE OF RESPONDENT TOWARDS THEIR PROBLEMS FACED WHILE USING/RECEIVING MAILING SERVICESOF INDIAN POSTAL SERVICES



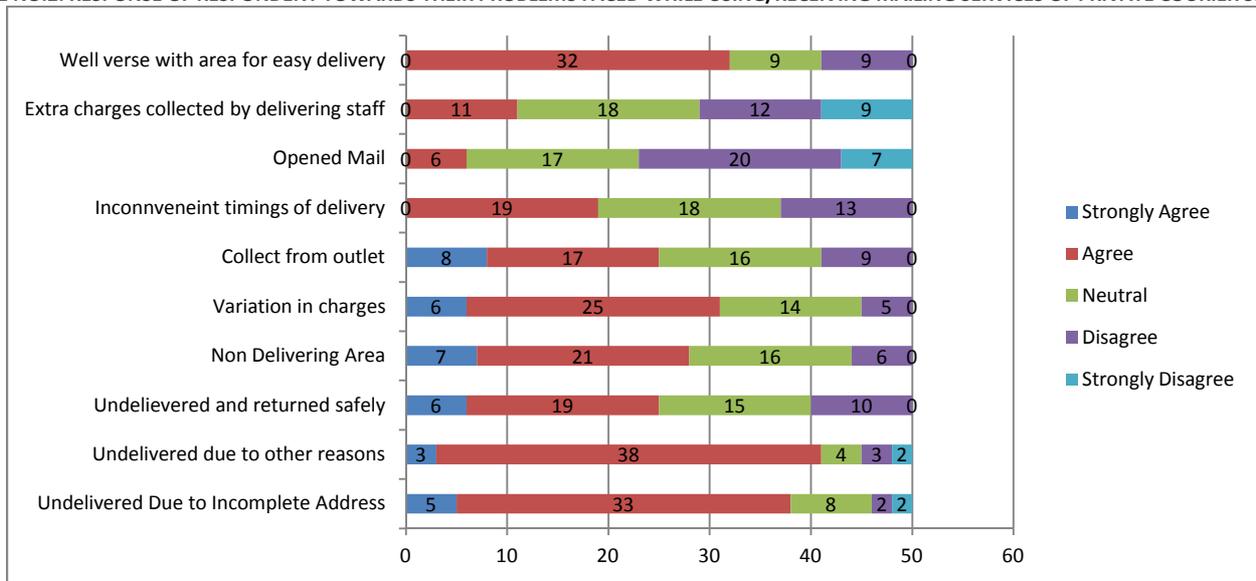
Source: Primary Data

TABLE NO. 5: RESPONSE OF RESPONDENT TOWARDS PROBLEMS FACED WHILE USING/RECEIVING MAILING SERVICES OF PRIVATE COURIER SERVICES

Sr. No.	Particulars	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Average
1	Undelivered due to Incomplete Address	5	33	8	2	2	50	2.26
2	Undelivered due to other reasons	3	38	4	3	2	50	2.26
3	Undelivered and returned safely	6	19	15	10	0	50	2.58
4	Non Delivering Area	7	21	16	6	0	50	2.42
5	Variation in charges	6	25	14	5	0	50	2.36
6	Call from office to come and collect the mail from outlet	8	17	16	9	0	50	2.52
7	Inconvenient timings for receiving delivery	0	19	18	13	0	50	2.88
8	Already opened mail	0	6	17	20	7	50	3.56
9	Extra charges collected by delivering staff	0	11	18	12	9	50	3.38
10	Delivering staff well verse with area for easy delivery	0	32	9	9	0	50	2.54
	Over all Mean Score							2.676

Source: Primary Data

FIGURE NO.2: RESPONSE OF RESPONDENT TOWARDS THEIR PROBLEMS FACED WHILE USING/RECEIVING MAILING SERVICES OF PRIVATE COURIER SERVICES



Source: Primary Data

To test above hypotheses, parametric paired 't' test was applied for data related to mean scores of satisfaction levels of service in Indian Postal Services & Private Courier services.

The result of the same is tabulated in following table no. 6.

TABLE 6: PARAMETRIC PAIRED 't' TEST APPLIED FOR DATA RELATED TO SATISFACTION LEVELS OF SERVICE

	Mean (weighted Average)	S.D.	n	Parametric paired 't' test value		
				d. f.	t value	p value
Indian Postal Services	149.9	41.615	10	9	-2.47	0.8766
Private Courier services	166.2					

INTERPRETATION

As p value is 0.8766 which is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$ (5% significant level) we failed to reject null hypothesis. It is also observed that calculated 't' value is -2.47 is more than - 2.764 (table value of at 1% significant level, upper tailed and d.f.9). Hence we failed to reject null hypothesis Ho.

9. FINDINGS

It is found through the study that though people faces less problems while using India Post but though they uses private courier services as it is convenient and more reliable.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

With the growing need of quick services in fast city like Mumbai, India Post has to take severe measures to improve the quality of services especially time lag in delivering mails. It has the biggest strength in terms of coverage and man power, it has to deploy it in such a way to reap more benefits and attract more consumers to serve better.

11. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Respondent faces lesser problems while using/receiving services of Indian Postal Services than Private Courier Services while sending or receiving mails.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study faces with the limitations of areas as it has covered consumers from the western Mumbai Region only. It also has limitations of educated respondents only. It also has limitations of number of respondents.

13. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

There is further scope of the present study with the development in India Post in order to compete healthily with private courier service provider and its impact on share of delivering mails across the country.

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ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE
PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME OF THE RESPONDENT: _____

Gender: 1. Male 2. Female 3. Institutions (Bank/Educational/Companies Offices).

Age: 1. Below 18 years 2. 18-24 3. 25-31 4. 32-38 5. 39-45 6. 46 and above.

Educational Level: 1. None 2. Below SSC 3. SSC 4. HSC 5. Graduates 6. Post Graduates 7. Professional

Income (in Rs. per month): 1. Less than 25,000 2. 25,000-50,000 3. 50,000-75,000 4. 75,000-1,00,000 5. 1,00,000 and above.

Occupation: 1. Unemployed 2. Salaried 3. Self Employed 4. Profession 5. Business

QUESTIONS ON BEHAVIOR OF USING MAILING SERVICES

1. Do you use mailing services for sending letters and documents? 1. Yes 2. No
 2. Which service provider do you use to send your mails (letters and documents)? 1. Indian Postal Services 2. Private Courier Services
 3. Both
 3. You use mailing services as: 1. Individual 2. Business 3. Both

RESEARCH RELATED QUESTION ON LEVEL OF PROBLEM FACED

4. Kindly rank both the service provider.

Indian Postal Services					Sr. No.	Problems faced	Private Courier Services				
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
While sending Mails											
					1	Undelivered due to Incomplete Address					
					2	Undelivered due to other reasons					
					3	Undelivered and return safely					
					4	Non Delivering area					
					5	Variation in charges					
					6	Collect from outlet					
					7	Inconvenient timings of Delivery					
					8	Opened Mail					
					9	Extra charges by Delivering staff					
					10	Well verse with area for easy delivery					

(1= Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

Thank you for your kind response and sparing valuable time.

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I am sure that your feedback and deliberations would make future issues better – a result of our joint effort.

Looking forward an appropriate consideration.

With sincere regards

Thanking you profoundly

Academically yours

Sd/-
Co-ordinator

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