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A Study on Customer Satisfaction towards Public Distribution System in Agasteeswaram Taluk

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ABSTRACT

Ration cards are mandatory to every citizen of the country. As it is also used as the proof and identification, it must have certain safety measures. Even though the State Government introduced the smart ration cards there are many malpractices in the system. The Public Distribution System was almost used by the people. So this research paper analyses the problems faced by the customers and their level satisfaction received from it.

Key words: Public Distribution System, Issue price

INTRODUCTION

India is facing a potential crisis in terms of food security. With the population growing at an alarming rate and the resources decreasing, a major problem of food security is seen to be arising. The biggest challenge is to provide nutritious, affordable and good quality food to the population of the country. In India, the food security system mainly focuses on the supply of food grains and other essential commodities through the Public Distribution System.

The ration distribution system is one of the largest Government's economic policies in India. The Public Distribution System is a joint programme run by the Central and State Government. The Central Government plays the major role in procuring food grains, store and allocate to the State Government through the central pools and the State Government plays the role in identifying eligible beneficiaries and distribute the entitlements through the fair price shops.

A public distribution system, also known as Fair Price Shop (FPS), is a part of India's public system established by the Government of India which distributes rations at a subsidized price to the poor. Locally these are known as Ration Shops and public distribution shop, and chiefly sell wheat, rice and sugar at a price lower than the market price called Issue Price. Other essential commodities may also be sold in these shops. To buy these items one must have a ration card.

State Governments in India issued different types of Ration Cards. They are provided according to the groups divided as Below Poverty Line ration cards, Above Poverty Line ration cards, Antyodaya ration cards. But now the Government changed the ration card and so the types

are PHH - Priority House Hold Ration Card, NPHH - Non Priority House Hold Ration Card, NPHHS - Non Priority House Hold Card for Sugar and NPHHNC – Non Priority House Hold Card for No Commodities

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main function of public distribution system is to deliver goods to ultimate beneficiaries at the right time, right place, right quality, quantity and right price. This is possible only with the effective support of both government and staff members of this system. As in private business concerns, staff members at this system have to initiate necessary steps for ascertaining customers' grievances and to take suitable steps for redressing their grievances, so that the customer satisfaction may be increased. Thus, in this study an effort has been made to ascertain level of satisfaction of consumers towards the services extended at fair price shops and factors influencing their satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To observe the role of public distribution system.
2. To identify the difficulties faced by the sample respondents.
3. To analyze the opinion of sample respondents towards public distribution system.
4. To give suggestions for further improvement.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature, based on the survey method. Primary data were collected from the customers in Agasteeswaram Taluk. The relevant secondary data were collected from different sources like books, journals, published papers and websites.

Primary data were collected by using a well structured questionnaire and for collecting data random sampling technique was used. Secondary data were collected from books, newspapers and websites.

SAMPLE SIZE

For the purpose of this study 60 Ration card holders were selected randomly from among the ration card holders in Agasteeswaram Taluk

CONSTRUCTION OF TOOLS

The tools used for analyzing the data collected are tables, per cents, mean score and ranking. Percentage was used to analyze demographic and general information like age, gender, residential status, marital status, number of family members, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, types of ration cards and awareness among the card holders about the ration cards, purpose of using the ration card, customer's opinion towards public distribution system and the problems faced by the customers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Basanta Kumar (2012)** made a study on "Public Distribution System in rural India: Implications for food safety and consumer protection" concluded that corruption in Public Distribution System in rural India is very high and the important reasons attributed to this are appointment of dealers on political lines, and no provision of margin to the dealers
2. **P.Kannan (2015)** made a study on "Smart Ration Distribution System" found that to overcome the problems in ration shop like material robbery, corruption, malpractices, long waiting time to collect material, low processing speed ration card is changed by smart card and send the stock details to Government head office and Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) module.

DIFFICULTIES FACED IN PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Now-a-days the drawbacks related to the Public Distribution System have increased. The respondents in the study area are asked to express difficulties they have faced under this system. The details are shown in Table1.

Table 1
Difficulties Faced in Public Distribution System

S. No.	Factors	Total score	Mean score	Rank
1	Delay in supplying goods	4800	80	I
2	Supplying inferior quality goods	4020	67	II
3	Irregularity in supply	2820	47	VI
4	Poor customer service	3600	60	III
5	Lack of information about the timing of the Fair Price Shops	1980	33	VII
6	Not interested in buying	1200	20	VIII
7	Shortage of cash while buying goods	3180	53	V
8	Shortage of stock	3500	58	IV

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 shows that 'Delay in supplying goods' has ranked first with the mean score of 80, 'Supplying inferior quality goods' has ranked second with the mean score of 67, 'Poor customer services' has ranked third with the mean score of 60. Therefore respondents feel that there should be quick supply of goods.

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF CUSTOMERS

The Public Distribution System supports a lot to the customers especially the people who came under below poverty line. The level of satisfaction of these customers is specified in Table 2.

Table 2
Level of Satisfaction

S. No	Level of Satisfaction	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Highly Satisfied	4	6.67
2	Satisfied	36	60
3	Neutral	12	20
4	Dissatisfied	8	13.33
5	Highly Dissatisfied	0	0
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reveals the level of satisfaction of the customers regarding Public Distribution System. It shows that 6.67 per cent of the sample respondents are highly satisfied and 60 per cent of the sample respondents are satisfied. 20 per cent of the sample respondents are neutral while 13.33 per cent of the respondents are dissatisfied.

OPINION ABOUT PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The opinion of the respondents is important to know the satisfaction level of the customers. The respondents in the study are asked to give their opinion with regard to various attributes of PDS. The result are given in the Table 3

Table 3
Opinion about Public distribution System

S. No.	Attributes	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	Regular of supply of goods	225	3.75	V
2	Quick and prompt customer service	877	14.62	II
3	Terms and condition not rigid	623	10.38	IV
4	Availability of the employees	1163	19.38	I
5	Supplied quality goods	746	12.43	III

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows that 'Availability of the employees' has ranked first with the highest mean score of 19.38, 'Quick and prompt customer service' has ranked second with the mean score of 14.62 and 'Quality of goods supplied has ranked third with the mean score of 12.43.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, following suggestions have been offered.

- ❖ Accurate electronic weighing machine must be given to Fair Price Shops by the Government.
- ❖ To avoid over crowd, token system or time slot may be allotted to the customers.
- ❖ The inventory level of goods and goods to be distributed are to be displayed in the notice board.
- ❖ The Fair Price Shops are to be located at a place, which are easily accessible to consumers, so that they may avail goods to a maximum extent.
- ❖ The Public distribution employees should maintain punctuality in opening the Public Distribution Shops.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to assess the performance of Public Distribution System and satisfaction of the customers regarding Public Distribution System. Cardholders prefer to acquire goods on right time, right quality and right quantity. But they face various problems like over crowd at the Fair Price Shops, supply of poor quality and wrong quantity of goods, poor service rendered by the employees of Public Distribution System, adulteration etc. To overcome these problems the government should take steps like supply of good quality goods, appointment of employees who can offer the customers valuable services. Thus, the Government motto "to eradicate poor" can be attained and the customers will also be satisfied.

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