Chapter 64

Relationships among Information Technology, Service Quality, and Overall Satisfaction of the Customers in Life Insurance Corporation of India

Partha Sarathi Choudhuri
University of Burdwan, India

ABSTRACT

At present, customers are fully aware of their needs and requirements, expectations, and information technology-enabled services. Based on the several factors, customers are evaluating the quality of perceived services offered by their service providers as well as estimating their overall satisfaction with their service providers. As customer satisfaction has now become the ultimate goal of the different service providers, considering different factors, organizations are trying to move their focus from product to the customers. Like any other sector, in life insurance sector the insurance companies are trying to provide better quality of services to their customers with the help of information technology not only to satisfy them but also to retain them in the competitive insurance market. In this chapter, the author studies the significant relationships among the information technology, service quality, and overall satisfaction of the customers in Life Insurance Corporation of India in Burdwan.

INTRODUCTION

In 21st century information technology (IT) has become the backbone of every industry, especially for the service industries, all over the world where service quality plays an important role in the customization process of service delivery, improvement of the productivity and profitability of the organizations as well as in the satisfaction process of the customers of the organizations. Satisfaction of the customers comes only when their needs and wants are fulfilled. Rust and Oliver (1994) explained the customer satisfaction as “a summary of cognitive and affective reaction to

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a service incident (or sometimes to a long-term service relationship). Satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) results from experiencing a service quality encounter and comparing that encounter with what was expected”. Considering the various needs and requirements of customers, organizations are now concerned in providing quality of services to their customers in order to meet the expectations of the customers. Due to the effect of the several factors of the globalization, customers’ socio-economic culture have already been changed and become very much dependent on the information technology. Realizing this, the service industries are now trying to get competitive advantage over their competitors through the use of information technology and information technology enabled services (ITES). After liberalization, Indian insurance market has undergone a dramatic change and also influenced the financial sector as a whole. Along with one and only public sector company namely Life Insurance Corporation of India (LICI), many other private life insurance companies performing their operations in Indian insurance market and offering various types of products to their customers. After the entrance of private and foreign insurance companies in the Indian insurance market, the customers’ perception of quality of services from the insurance companies has also changed. From the very early age of the business, the largest public life insurance company in India namely LIC has not only implemented information technology in their operations and providing various ITES to their customers but also adopted various strategies to modernize their present IT infrastructure. In order to survive in the future and to achieve maximum growth in the present competitive insurance market, life insurance companies are now dedicatedly involved in the development of new strategies for the purpose of the customer satisfaction through the proper improvement of service quality with the help of information technology in the efficient manner. In the present context, the current study has been conducted on the customers of all the 17 branches of the LICI located in the district of Burdwan to observe the significant relationships among the information technology, service quality and overall satisfaction of these LIC customers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Service quality may be defined as “a global judgement or attitude relating to a particular service; the customer’s overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services. Service quality is a cognitive judgement” (Fogli, 2006). In life insurance industry high quality service (defined as exceeding “customers’ expectations”) is rare but increasingly demanded by the customers (Sherden, 1987). Arora and Stoner (1996) asserted that in obtaining insurance perceived service quality has a significant effect on the attitude as well as on the customer satisfaction (Durvasula et al., 2005). In insurance industry, the study on service recovery analysis identified that for the survival of insurers the quality of service and customer satisfaction and loyalty are fundamental (Taylor, 2001). Most of the companies have equivalent offerings and the only way of differentiating itself from the others may be establishing the better service quality in the life insurance sector (Siddiqui & Sharma, 2010). Zeithaml et al. (1993) revealed that customers are likely to place a high value on their agent’s integrity and advice. Chow-Chua and Lim (2000) mentioned that the decisions of purchasing life insurance policies are significantly affected by the factors of the company and agent’s service quality as well as the recommendations of friends. So, quality should be the basis of all the activities which are going in the insurance industry (Toran, 1993) and Joseph et al. (2003) pointed out that insurance agents should constantly monitor the level of satisfaction among his / her customers to keep themselves close to the customers for fulfilling their needs. According to Pointek (1992), customers want more responsive agents with better