

Understanding Customer Satisfaction Levels in Medium-Sized Service and Manufacturing Enterprises: A Comprehensive Study

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How to cite this article: Anindita Tamuli, Sinmoy Goswami, Vibhuti Jha (2024). Understanding Customer Satisfaction Levels in Medium-Sized Service and Manufacturing Enterprises: A Comprehensive Study, 44(3), 1334-1341.

ABSTRACT:

Customer satisfaction means the to what extend customers' expectations are met or exceeded by the products, services, or experiences provided by an organization. The Medium Enterprises play a substantial role in modern economies for their flexibility and capability to innovate. The need for continuous improvement to become part of organizational culture is highly desired in Medium Enterprises. The study, therefore tries to ascertain the level of customer satisfaction amid the Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises of Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam. Data was acquired by way of a survey of 600 customers belonging to 65 service-based and 77 manufacturing-based medium enterprises in both these districts using the convenience sampling technique. Descriptive research design was applied for gathering data from the sample subjects using a survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test and One-way ANOVA was exercised for statistical analysis of data. Results specified that management should focus on the female customers. This could involve enhancing the quality of products and services provided to them. The manufacturing-based enterprises should enhance professionalism and technical competence while dealing with male customers. Customers' marital status also has a dynamic role in influencing their perception of satisfaction with the commitment in meeting their expectations.

KEYWORDS: Customer satisfaction, perception, service-based, manufacturing-based, medium enterprises

INTRODUCTION:

Customer satisfaction means the to what extend customers' expectations are met or exceeded by the products, services, or experiences provided by an organization (Yaacob, 2014). Satisfaction of customer is vital for the success of any business. Satisfied customers possibly continue doing business with an organization, make repeat purchases, and gives recommendation to others. (Hawa, 2015; Nassar, Yahaya and Shorun, 2015).

To achieve customer satisfaction, organizations need to understand and anticipate customer expectations, deliver superior products and/or services, offer exceptional customer service, and continually seek feedback to recognize areas for enhancement (Idris, Suhaimi and Ahmad, 2014). Effective communication, responsiveness, reliability, and consistency are critical factors in satisfying customer needs and building long-term relationships (Ullah, Ajmal and Aslam, 2016). Providing high-quality products and/or services is crucial for customer satisfaction. This includes aspects such as product quality, reliability, ease of use, timely delivery, and attentive customer service (Noori, 2021).

The Medium Enterprises have a notable position in modern economies for their flexibility and capability to innovate. The need for continuous improvement to become a part of organizational culture is highly desired in Medium Enterprises. The study, therefore tries to ascertain the level of customer satisfaction amid the Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises of Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Idris, Suhaimi and Ahmad (2014) determined the impact of team management and service operations flexibility on customer focus. Team management influences customer focus through intermediating role of operations flexibility practice. Yaacob (2014) discussed the benefits of customer focus on organizational performance. The study demonstrated the significant effect customer focus has on employees' satisfaction, innovation and customer satisfaction. According to the researcher, customer focus is the result of indirect relationship between customers' and employees' satisfaction, innovation and cost benefits.

Chiguvu (2015) sought to identify service quality attributes indigenous supermarkets should invest to improve customer satisfaction. Responsiveness and reliability have substantial noteworthy effect on customer satisfaction. Nassar, Yahaya and Shorun (2015) identified certain external factors that effects customer satisfaction like lack of commitment of management, poor training and education of staff, low infrastructural development, lack of modern facilities and high rate of staff turnover.

Hawa (2015) examined the importance of customer orientation and investigated the outcome of service quality on client satisfaction. There is a substantial effect of customer orientation and service quality followed by tangibility, assurance, reliability, and empathy which are the dimensions of service quality. According to Ogbe (2016) unsatisfied customers damage the reputation of the business that results to loss of customers. This leads to reduction of revenue that ultimately affects the financial position of the company.

Ullah, Ajmal and Aslam (2016) explored the relationship between quality culture and organizational performance with the mediating effect of competitive advantage and moderating effect of human resource in the telecommunication organizations. The researchers found that customer focus and performance of the company supported positive results and customer focus had a good contribution in companies' performance. The researchers also found that slight change in customer focus can significantly make an incremental change in the companies' performance.

RESEARCH GAP:

The review of literature showed that numerous studies have been performed on customer satisfaction. However, none of them have specifically focused on the service and manufacturing- based medium enterprises operating in Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam in North East India. The present study, therefore, aims to discourse this significant gap. This also involved a comparative analysis amongst the two types of enterprises. This was executed to identify the similarities and dissimilarities in the degree of customer satisfaction in these enterprises.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

➤ To understand the level of customer satisfaction in the Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises of Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research strategy adopted was exploratory and descriptive. Here, the researchers adopted quantitative research methods encompassing primary and secondary information. The population included all the 65 service-base and 77 manufacturing-based Medium Enterprises operating in the Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam. The respondents this study included the customers of these enterprises. Primary data was acquired through a survey of 600 respondent customers from each of service-based and manufacturing-based medium enterprises. Due to the absence of an appropriate sampling frame covering the above-mentioned respondents in most of these enterprises, convenience sampling method was implemented to select them from the above study population.

Data was obtained using a structured questionnaire by a survey involving personal interviews of respondent customers. This questionnaire involved the use of a five-point Likert scale to rank the perceptions of respondents on their level of satisfaction. The above scale was represented as '1', '2', '3', '4' and '5' for *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*, respectively. Content validity test was executed with the expert judgment of 4 experts on degree of relevance and degree of clarity of each item to the measured domains. Content Validity Index (CVI) values for the questionnaire indicated satisfactory level of content validity (1.00) and hence it was valid and could be accepted.

Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaires concerning owners and employees also indicated satisfactory reliability (0.762 and 0.724, respectively). Hence both were accepted.

Secondary information was assembled from the District Industries and Commerce Centre, Guwahati (Kamrup (Rural) District) and District Industries and Commerce Centre, Mirza (Kamrup (Metropolitan) District). Relevant research theses, journal articles, books, magazines etc. were also studied for secondary information.

After gathering the responses, data was systematized, tabularized, examined, and analyzed involving careful comparisons between those pertaining to service and manufacturing based medium enterprises. The respondents' demographic profile was thereafter examined using frequencies and percentages.

From the literature review, relation of responsiveness, professionalism, technical support, product quality, delivery, competitiveness, quality and timeliness of the enterprise with gender, age and marital status of respondent customers were considered for the study.

These relations were duly tested using Independent Sample t-test and One-way ANOVA at a significance level of $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05). This helped in indicating which of these variables required high emphasis by the management of these enterprises to achieve high customer satisfaction (Malhotra, 2004; Chawla and Sondhi, 2011). In both the tests, parameters leading to customer satisfaction was treated as dependent variable and variables comprising of respondent customers' profiles (their gender and marital status) was taken as the independent variable.

Hypothesis Testing: This study involved testing of the following hypotheses involving responses of the respondent customers from each of service-based and manufacturing-based medium enterprises:

1. **Hypothesis-1:** There is significant difference between the means of customers' perception regarding satisfaction across their gender.

Symbolically, $[\mu_m]_{cs} \neq [\mu_f]_{cs}$

Where, $[\mu_m]_{cs}$ and $[\mu_f]_{cs}$ represent mean of customers' perception regarding their level of satisfaction regarding those who are male and female, respectively.

2. **Hypothesis-2:** There is significant difference between the means of customers' perception regarding satisfaction across their marital status.

Symbolically, $[\mu_s]_{cs} \neq [\mu_m]_{cs} \neq [\mu_w]_{cs}$

Where, $[\mu_s]_{cs}$, $[\mu_m]_{cs}$ and $[\mu_w]_{cs}$ represent mean of customers' perception regarding their level of satisfaction regarding those are single, married and widowed, respectively.

In the above analyses, all points (relating to customer satisfaction) wherein the above null hypotheses $[(H_0)_1]$ and $[(H_0)_2]$ were rejected (p -value less than $\alpha=0.05$) were noted. Thereafter, from descriptive statistics, the highest mean and the corresponding group concerning the customers was found out. This specific group of customers exhibit highest sensitivity to the above points related to customer satisfaction. Hence, this group of respondents warrants greater emphasis for the success of service-based and manufacturing-based medium enterprises in satisfying customers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Gender of the Customers of Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises:

It was seen 60.67% customers of service based medium enterprises were female (refer to Table 1). Also, it was observed that 39.33% of the aforementioned respondents were females. Similarly, majority of the respondent owners of manufacturing based medium enterprises were males (73.67%) with few females (26.33%).

Table 1 Gender of the Customers of Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises

Gender	Service		Manufacturing	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	118	39.33	221	73.67
Female	182	60.67	79	26.33
Total	300	100	300	100

Source: Field survey

2. Marital Status of the Customers of Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises:

In table 2 it was seen that 68.67% respondent customers were married in service based medium enterprise and 58.67% in manufacturing based medium enterprise. In the service based medium enterprises, 29.33% and in the manufacturing based medium enterprises, 39.33% customers were single. 2% were widowed in both the cases.

Table 2 Marital Status of the Customers of Service and Manufacturing Medium

Marital Status	Service		Manufacturing	
	Number	of Percentage	Number	of Percentage
Single	88	29.33	118	39.33
Married	206	68.67	176	58.67
Widowed	6	2	6	2
Total	300	100	300	100

Source: Field survey

3. Perception of respondent customers across their gender:

Results of independent sample t-test indicated that the null hypothesis asserting there exists significant difference between the means of the perception of respondent customers regarding their satisfaction while dealing with the enterprise in terms of professionalism of the enterprise, their technical competence, and quality of the products and/or services across their gender can be rejected (p-value less than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)). This was pertaining to the manufacturing based medium enterprises. This implies presence of above-mentioned significant differences. In case of perception regarding professionalism and technical competence of the enterprise, results of descriptive statistics showed that mean was higher in case of male respondent customers. This illustrates that they are more sensitive regarding the above perception. However, in case of perception regarding quality of the products and/or services, the mean was higher in case of female respondent customers. This indicates females are more susceptible as compared to males.

In service based medium enterprises, results of independent sample t-test indicated that the null hypothesis asserting that there exist significant differences between means of perception of respondent customers regarding their satisfaction in quality of products and/or services across their gender can be rejected (p-value less than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)). Descriptive statistics exhibited that mean was higher for female customers as compared to the male customers. This means that the female customers are more sensitive regarding the above-mentioned perception. Hence, management should focus on satisfying the female customers with the quality of the products and/or services provided by them (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011) (refer Table 3).

Table 3 Means of Gender of customers across their satisfaction while dealing with the enterprise

Satisfaction Parameters	Service based Medium Enterprises					Manufacturing based Medium Enterprises				
	Male		Female		p-value	Male		Female		p-value
	N	Mean	N	Mean		N	Mean	N	Mean	
Responsiveness of the enterprise	118	1.86	182	1.86	0.57	221	1.82	79	1.84	0.06
Professionalism of the enterprise	118	1.86	182	2.01	0.78	221	1.88	79	1.82	0.02
Technical competence while obtaining	118	1.88	182	1.96	0.86	221	1.97	79	1.82	0.03
Response time while obtaining	118	1.69	182	1.71	0.52	221	1.74	79	1.66	0.16
Performance of the products and/or	118	1.67	182	1.68	0.96	221	1.81	79	1.78	0.49
Quality of the products and/or services	118	1.69	182	1.83	0.005	221	1.74	79	1.91	0.008
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying needs	118	1.66	182	1.71	0.16	221	1.71	79	1.69	0.83
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying expectations	118	1.72	182	1.64	0.91	221	1.67	79	1.68	0.37
Quality of the products and/or services	118	1.61	182	1.72	0.31	221	1.76	79	1.67	0.12
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying expectations	118	1.75	182	1.79	0.3	221	1.75	79	1.79	0.62
The stated delivery time in meeting	118	1.75	182	1.69	0.51	221	1.78	79	1.7	0.38
Commitment in meeting delivery	118	1.83	182	1.79	0.29	221	1.79	79	1.69	0.2
Competitiveness of the products	118	1.77	182	1.77	0.32	221	1.77	79	1.82	0.69
The products and/or services representing best value for total cost of	118	1.83	182	1.86	0.59	221	1.67	79	1.77	0.23
The enterprise's approach towards quality management in ensuring	118	1.7	182	1.67	0.22	221	1.73	79	1.66	0.74
Timeliness regarding delivery of the products and/or services	118	1.67	182	1.71	0.65	221	1.71	79	1.58	0.65

Results of Hypothesis Testing concerning gender of customers:

As regards gender of the respondent customers, the results of hypothesis testing are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4 Results of Hypothesis Testing concerning gender of customers

Satisfaction Parameters	Difference between Service and Manufacturing based Medium Enterprises based on analysis results	Status of Null Hypothesis ((H ₀))
Responsiveness of the enterprise	Absent	Not rejected
Professionalism of the enterprise	Present	Rejected
Technical competence while obtaining technical support	Present	Rejected
Response time while obtaining technical support	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying needs	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
The stated delivery time in meeting delivery expectations	Absent	Not rejected
Commitment in meeting delivery expectations	Absent	Not rejected
Competitiveness of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
The products and/or services representing best value for total cost of lifetime ownership	Absent	Not rejected
The enterprise's approach towards quality management in ensuring complete customer satisfaction	Absent	Not rejected
Timeliness regarding delivery of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected

4. Perception of respondent customers across their marital status:

Results of One-way ANOVA indicated that the null hypothesis affirming that there exist significant differences amongst the means of perception of respondent customers regarding their satisfaction in relations to commitment of the enterprise in meeting their expectations across their marital status can be rejected (p-value less than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)). This was regarding service based medium enterprises. This implies that the above significant differences exist. Descriptive statistics exhibited that the above-mentioned mean was highest for married customers. This set of respondents are more susceptible to the above-mentioned satisfaction parameter.

The test of homogeneity of variances disclosed that equal variances could be assumed (p-value more than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)) in case of service based medium enterprises (refer to Table 6). Results of Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests inferred that there exist significant differences between married and widowed respondents. This denotes that other groups can be considered as being equal.

In case of the manufacturing based medium enterprises, results of One-way ANOVA indicated that the null hypothesis stating that there exist significant differences amongst the means of perception of respondent customers regarding timeliness of delivery of products and/or services across their marital status can be rejected (p-value less than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)). Descriptive statistics revealed that the above-mentioned mean was highest for married customers. This group of respondents are more susceptible to the above-mentioned satisfaction parameter.

Again, test of homogeneity of variances signified that equal variances could not be assumed in this case (p-value less than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05)) (refer to Table 7). Therefore, the outcome of Games-Howell Post-hoc test indicated the presence of significant differences between single and married. This implies that the other groups can be treated as being equal. These findings require thorough emphasis by the management of the above enterprises.

Similar null hypothesis (H₀) could not be rejected in case of other as p-value of ANOVA in each such case was more than $\alpha=5\%$ (0.05) (refer to Table 5). This implies that customers' marital status scarcely has notable influence on their above perception (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011).

Table 5 Means of Marital Status of customers across their satisfaction while dealing with the enterprise

Satisfaction Parameters	Service based Medium Enterprises						Manufacturing based Medium Enterprises							
	Single		Married		Widowed		Single		Married		Widowed		p-value	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Responsiveness of the enterprise	88	1.78	206	1.89	6	1.83	0.34	118	1.79	176	1.84	6	2	0.7
Professionalism of the enterprise	88	1.91	206	1.97	6	2	0.76	118	1.91	176	1.84	6	1.67	0.45
Technical competence while obtaining technical support	88	2	206	1.88	6	2.33	0.09	118	1.91	176	1.96	6	1.5	0.2
Response time while obtaining technical support	88	1.71	206	1.71	6	1.33	0.15	118	1.72	176	1.71	6	1.83	0.87
Performance of the products and/or services	88	1.77	206	1.63	6	1.67	0.14	118	1.78	176	1.83	6	1.67	0.61
Quality of the products and/or services	88	1.68	206	1.81	6	1.63	0.17	118	1.86	176	1.73	6	1.67	0.12
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying needs	88	1.68	206	1.7	6	1.5	0.66	118	1.63	176	1.75	6	2	0.11
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying expectations	88	1.65	206	1.68	6	1.67	0.91	118	1.72	176	1.64	6	1.83	0.35
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying needs	88	1.68	206	1.68	6	1.33	0.29	118	1.68	176	1.76	6	2	0.29
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying expectations	88	1.78	206	1.78	6	1.5	0.53	118	1.74	176	1.77	6	1.83	0.84
The stated delivery time in meeting delivery expectations	88	1.75	206	1.77	6	1.83	0.93	118	1.72	176	1.78	6	1.83	0.67
Commitment in meeting delivery expectations	88	1.74	206	1.85	6	1.17	0.01	118	1.83	176	1.74	6	1.5	0.21
Competitiveness of the products and/or services	88	1.71	206	1.79	6	2	0.43	118	1.78	176	1.78	6	2	0.68
The products and/or services representing best value for total cost of lifetime ownership	88	1.78	206	1.87	6	2	0.43	118	1.74	176	1.67	6	1.83	0.55
The enterprise's approach towards quality management in ensuring complete customer satisfaction	88	1.66	206	1.71	6	1.17	0.06	118	1.69	176	1.72	6	1.67	0.91
Timeliness regarding delivery of the products and/or services	88	1.78	206	1.65	6	1.83	0.14	118	1.57	176	1.76	6	1.33	0.007

Table 6 Results of Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests in case of Service based Medium Enterprises- Commitment in meeting delivery expectations (dependent variable) and Marital Status (Independent Variable)

(I) Marital Status	(J) Marital Status	Mean Difference (I-J)
Single	Married	-.12
	Widowed	.57
Married	Single	.12
	Widowed	.68*
Widowed	Single	-.57
	Married	-.68*

Note: * The mean difference is significant at 0.05

Table 7 Results of Games-Howell Post Hoc Tests in case of Service based Medium Enterprises- Timeliness regarding delivery of the products and/or services (dependent variable) and Marital Status (Independent Variable)

(I) Marital Status	(J) Marital Status	Mean Difference (I-J)
Single	Married	-.19*
	Widowed	.23

Married	Single	.19*
	Widowed	.43
Widowed	Single	-.23
	Married	-.43

Note: * The mean difference is significant at 0.05

Results of Hypothesis Testing concerning marital status of customers:

As regards marital status of the respondent customers, the results of hypothesis testing are indicated in Table 8.

Table 8 Results of Hypothesis Testing concerning Marital Status of customers

Satisfaction Parameters	Difference between Service and Manufacturing based Medium Enterprises based on analysis results	Status of Null Hypothesis ((H ₀) ₂)
Responsiveness of the enterprise	Absent	Not rejected
Professionalism of the enterprise	Absent	Not rejected
Technical competence while obtaining technical support	Absent	Not rejected
Response time while obtaining technical support	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
Performance of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying needs	Absent	Not rejected
Quality of the products and/or services in satisfying	Absent	Not rejected
The stated delivery time in meeting delivery expectations	Absent	Not rejected
Commitment in meeting delivery expectations	Present	Rejected
Competitiveness of the products and/or services	Absent	Not rejected
The products and/or services representing best value for total cost of lifetime ownership	Absent	Not rejected
The enterprise's approach towards quality management in ensuring complete customer satisfaction	Absent	Not rejected
Timeliness regarding delivery of the products and/or services	Present	Rejected

CONCLUSION:

The study aimed to ascertain the level of customer satisfaction in Service and Manufacturing Medium Enterprises of Kamrup (Rural) and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts of Assam. The analysis implicated that the management should focus on improving satisfaction of female customers. This could involve enhancing product and service quality provided to female customers. Identifying specific needs and preferences of female customers and tailoring offerings accordingly. For service-based enterprises, ensuring that the quality of services meets or exceeds the expectations of female customers is crucial. This may implicate staff training, customer feedback mechanisms, and ongoing evaluation of service delivery (Nguyen and Nagase, 2016). The manufacturing-based enterprises should enhance professionalism and technical skill when dealing with male customers. This could involve improving communication, technical support, and overall customer experience for male customers (Ogbe, 2016).

Customers' marital status also has a bearing on their perception with the commitment in meeting their expectations. Recognizing and addressing the unique needs and sensitivities of married customers can contribute to the development of effective strategies. This will enhance overall customer satisfaction in this specific dimension (Raseed, 2019).

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