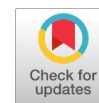


Communication Skill of Service Provider as the Principal Determinant of Customer Satisfaction: A Case of Doctors' Service



Indrani Majumder

Abstract: *Communication style is intensely influential on customers' purchase probability, trust, satisfaction, perceived service quality, and perceptions of brand affection, competence, and attachment. Social interaction models tell us that when consumers engage in service interactions, they rely largely on the communication style of the service personnel to develop their evaluations in which they have little knowledge of service issues. The frontline service personnel represent the image of the organization. The perception of customers towards the organization is influenced by their experiences at the frontline. A poor service delivery experience by a customer influences the image of the organization as the customer may share his/her bad encounters with other people. So, it is important that the organization ensure the quality of frontline services to secure a positive image of the organization. The study suggests the need for employers to provide training to the staff to improve their communication skills and develop favourable attitudes.*

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Perceived Service Quality, Communication Skills, Favourable Attitudes.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction can be connected to both goods and services. Customer satisfaction is a measurement that determines the happiness of the customers with a company's products and hereby the capabilities of the organizations are also obvious phenomena in the judgment of customer satisfaction. It is highly a personal assessment by the individual customer based on his or her expectations. It is an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers expect from the organization and what they are actually receiving from the organization. It is an overall customer attitude towards an organization. It's a well-known fact that no business can exist without customers. Customer satisfaction is essential to the survival as well as the excellence of any business organization. In the case of service marketing customer satisfaction occurs when the service meets or exceeds the expectations of the customers. A customer may be satisfied with the service, the service rendering person, the environmental aspects of the service station, or the product that is helping in the provision of service. In this context, we should mention that corporate and

individual customers may have widely differing reasons for purchasing a product or service and therefore any measurement of satisfaction will need to be able to take into account such differences. Today customers are not only interested in the product they are being offered but all the additional elements of service that they receive from the greeting they receive when they enter a service center. More and more companies are striving, not just for customer satisfaction, but for customer delight also, that extra bit of added value that may lead to increased customer loyalty.

II. EXTENDED MARKETING-MIX IN SERVICE MARKETING

In relation to the service industry, customer satisfaction is directly or indirectly related to the "seven P's" viz. product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process. In service marketing, the Product means the intangible service offered to the customers. Quality service and delivery on time lead to customer satisfaction which is very crucial for any service industry. Price is another important component in service marketing as many a time customers link the price of a product or a service with the quality. Thirdly, services cannot be normally stored or transferred like goods because of their intangibility nature and inseparability characteristic of services from the service providers. Hence, the distribution channel or Place of delivering a particular service differs from the distribution channel used in the marketing of goods. Promotion in relation to service is quite different from the promotion of goods. In service, customers would prefer more personal information and better communication with the service providers. Communication is therefore a vital aspect that leads to customer satisfaction. Proper communication is very important in the case of service. In 1987, Judd added People as the fifth element in service marketing. appropriate staff is the essential ingredient to successful service provision. Employees of a service organization or any professional service provider act as contact persons with the customers. They play a vital role in the marketing of services and to satisfy their customer. A good service provider provides not only customer satisfaction but also customer loyalty and customer retention. There are many factors that affect customer satisfaction which is directly related to the people in the service industry. These factors include friendly employees, courteous employees, knowledgeable employees, helpful employees, the accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, billing clarity, and quick service (Hokanson, 1995).

Manuscript received on 21 February 2023 | Revised Manuscript received on 27 February 2023 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 March 2023 | Manuscript published on 30 March 2023.

*Correspondence Author(s)

Dr. Indrani Majumder*, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Kanchrapara College, Kanchrapara, North 24 Pgs West Bengal, India.
E-mail: indrani.m09@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2754-2793>

© The Authors. Published by Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Communication Skill of Service Provider as the Principal Determinant of Customer Satisfaction: A Case of Doctors' Service

So recruiting the right staff and training them appropriately in the delivery of their service is essential if the organization wants to obtain a form of competitive advantage.

Physical evidence, i.e. the physical environment, facilities & atmosphere is an essential ingredient of the service mix. Consumers usually make perceptions based on their sight of the service provision. This element can make the service tangible. In this context, communication can also be used to make the service tangible by word-of-mouth or creative advice or providing other service guarantees. Process refers to the systems used to assist the organization in delivering the service. All Processes are concerned with the consistent creation and delivery of Customer Value. Processes must be continuously reviewed and coordinated to improve the customer experience & customer satisfaction & demonstrate customer consideration. Here, the activities like listening, questioning, understanding, and responding to what is being communicated by the present customers & the potential customers can lead to customer satisfaction & customer retention as well. A service provider must always pay attention to what he/she is communicating with the customers. To avail of any kind of service, the service provider & the customers have to be present & with that, there exists a communication procedure between them. Not only is the service provider but communication skills also important for the customers. When a customer can not be able to communicate properly with the service provider, then it will not at all possible for the service provider to serve the best service to the customers. So communication is not a one-way process rather it is a two-way process where the service provider & the customer plays more or less the same role.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies suggest that there is a fundamental difference between goods and services, namely it is the way they are produced and consumed (Grönroos, 1990, [1]); (Grönroos, 1998, [2]); (Edvardsson, 1997, [3]), (Bateson and Hoffman, 1999, [4]). The time period between service production and consumption is considerably shorter than for goods. Most of the services are produced “*on spot*” in an interactive process, in which customers and the service providers meet. Satisfaction with service quality depends on a large number of dimensions - both tangible and intangible attributes of the product-service offer. The impact of intangible dimensions on consumer satisfaction is of particular interest at this point. Many psychological studies even show that non-verbal behavior by the service provider greatly affects service evaluation (Gabbott Mark, 2000, [5]). For example, the quality of interaction between customer and service provider influences customers' perception on service quality. In services, a single employee may affect service efficiency and consequent customer satisfaction with the service (Barnard, 2002, [6]). Even customers own involvement and participation in the service delivery affect customer satisfaction (Kelly, Skinner et al., 1982, [7]). Due to the differences in production and provision of products and services, customers evaluate quality and attributes of material goods and services in different ways (Mathe and Shapiro, 1993, [8]).

According to Grönroos (1982, [9]), the quality of a service perceived by customers differs depending on what strategy the company chooses to deliver and promote that service. The service quality model by Grönroos holds that the quality of a service, as it is perceived by the customer, can be divided into technical quality and functional quality dimensions. The former denotes what the customer receives as the output of a service production process and the latter how the technical quality is produced and transferred to the customer during buyer-seller interactions. Grönroos posits that the technical quality is the “basic condition for a positively perceived total quality, but the functional quality is the one that adds competitive edge” (Gummesson, 1987, [10]). Furthermore, in the relationship marketing, the growth of the importance of functional quality in comparison to technical quality becomes a strategic one (Grönroos 1993, [11]). In service marketing, it is very much important to know the expectations of the customers. In the words of Parasuraman et al., (1985, [12]; 1988, [13]) service quality is determined by the differences between customers' expectation of service provider's performance and their evaluation of the services they received. Supporting the view of Louis & Booms, Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry “the only criteria that count in evaluating service quality are those defined by the customers”. In this context, they defined 10 criteria that customers use to judge the quality of the service. These 10 criteria are Reliability, Access, Security, Credibility, Understanding the customers, Responsiveness, Competence, Courtesy, Tangibles, and Communication. Communication with the other determinants, in this regard plays a very vital role in determining the service quality for any service. Here, communication means how well the service provider communicates effectively. Proper communication skill helps to lead to an effective quality service where the expected service of the customers and the perceived service delivered by the service providers may be more or less same. This efficient process may prevent arising of different service quality gaps and leads to a better customer satisfaction.

The distinction is also made between perceived and expected service quality and it is suggested that the quality is perceived subjectively. Grönroos (1988, [14]) further explored that in the case of a company, which extends goods with services, it is more appropriate to talk about total perceived quality. According to him, a high perceived quality is obtained when the experienced quality meets customer expectations, i.e. the expected quality. However, if the expectations are unrealistic, the total perceived quality will be low, even if high quality was experienced (Grönroos 1988, [14]). The expected quality is heavily influenced by market communication (advertising, sales campaigns, PR and direct mail), word-of-mouth, company image, and customers' needs. While a company directly controls market communication, the word-of-mouth and company image are outside its immediate reach. Grönroos concluded that the total perceived quality is not only defined by the level of technical and functional dimensions, but also by the gap between the expected and the experienced quality.

Thus, from the study by Gronroos, it can be said that the communication & customer satisfaction has a great influence on determining the service quality for any type of service. Many researchers have looked into the importance of customer satisfaction. Customers are the purpose of what we do and rather than them depending on us, we very much depend on them. The customer is not the source of a problem, we shouldn't perhaps make a wish that customers 'should go away' because our future and our security will be put in jeopardy". That is the main reason why organizations today are focusing on customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Zairi, 2000, [15]).

A person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product are perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations (Kotler, 2000, [16]). Satisfaction can be associated with feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2001, [17])

Customer satisfaction does have a positive effect on an organization's profitability. Satisfied customers form the foundation of any successful business as customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2001, [17]).

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Service especially professional service is mainly based on direct interaction between the service providers & the customers. It requires a physical presence of both the provider & the customer at the point of the service delivery. Communication in this situation plays a very vital role to satisfy the customers. Professional Service requires two way communication process— one from the side of service providers & another from the side of customer. Proper communication leads to a better service delivery, a complete customer satisfaction & customer retention also. Proper communication skill of the service provider may minimize the chances of losing customers if the other circumstances or conditions are not up to the expectations of the customers. In this backdrop the study has tried to give an emphasis on the following issues:

- i. To demonstrate the impact of the communication skill of the professional service provider (i.e. doctor) on the customer (i.e. patient) satisfaction.
- ii. To observe the importance of service quality in customer satisfaction & customer retention in case of professional service.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research study is to find out the importance of the communication skills of the service providers in customer satisfaction. To initiate the project work, the chosen category of service provider is the doctors. Their communication skill can be judged by distinct factors like their communication ability, professionalism, responsiveness, punctuality, discipline, & many other factors which have become the driving force for measuring customer satisfaction over the communication skill. To achieve a better understanding of the effect of communication skill exploratory design course had been chosen. [Table 1](#) is depicting the sources of data for the study.

Table 1: Sources of data (patients of the doctors)

Age Group	Gender	Qualification	Occupation	Annual income (INR)
21-30 31-50 >50	Male Female	Madhyamik Graduate Post-graduate	Govt. Employee Non-govt. Employee Businessman Student Retired Housewife	<60000 60001 to 12000 120001 to 240000 240001 to 400000 400000 >400000

Data collection was done with the help of a structured questionnaire containing some close-ended questions in order to obtain a perception of customer satisfaction with the communication skill of the professional service providers. Some scaling techniques have been adopted, such as the Likert scale, 5-point scale, semantic differential scale & rank order scale to convert the qualitative behavioral phenomenon into a quantitative format. A convenience sampling technique has been used for the selection of places and as the study was intended to measure customer satisfaction with the communication skill of the doctors, the sample was selected from different age categories from both genders with different educational backgrounds, with different occupational status & with various income levels as well.

VI. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Table 2: Demographic Scenario of the Respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Gender	No. of respondents
21-30	52	Male	80
31-50	24	Female	20
>50	24		
Total	100	Total	100

Educational Qualification	No. of respondents
Madhyamik	4
Graduate	64
Post- Graduate	32
Total	100

Table 3: Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents

Annual income	No. of respondents	Occupation	No. of respondents
<60000	36	Govt. Employee	8
60001-120000	16	Non-Govt. Employee	32
120001-240000	36	Business man	12
240001-400000	4	Student	20
>400000	8	Retired	16
		Housewife	12
TOTAL	100	TOTAL	100

Table 4: Frequency of visit to the doctor

Frequency of visit to doctor	No. of respondents	Percentage (%) of visits
Once in a month	8	8%
Once in a half year	20	21%
Once in a year	4	4%
When needed	68	68%
Total	100	100%



Communication Skill of Service Provider as the Principal Determinant of Customer Satisfaction: A Case of Doctors' Service

Enlightenment: The above tabular demonstration shows that the 68% of total respondents visit the doctors when needed & 20% of the respondents visit their doctors once in a half year. It depicts a scenario that the majority of the respondents are not habitual by a regular visit to the doctors, rather only 1% & 2% visit the doctors once in a year & once in a month respectively.

Table 5: Customer Satisfaction Concerning the Doctors' Chamber

Criteria regarding the doctor's chamber	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neutral	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
The environmental aspect of the doctors' chamber	32	24	44	-	-	100
Enrichment of required equipments	36	48	16	-	-	100
Level of satisfaction	48	52	-	-	-	100

Enlightenment: The above representation depicts that the majority of the total respondents that is 44% are **neutral** in giving their opinion about the Environmental aspect of the doctor's chamber. While, 48% of the respondents are **quite satisfied** about the Enrichment of the required equipments, and 52% of the total respondents are **neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (neutral)** in their overall Degree of satisfaction with the doctors.

Table 6: Satisfaction Concerning the Ease of Contacts the Doctor

Ease of contacting the doctor	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Very much easy	16	16%
Quite easy	56	56%
Neither easy nor difficult	24	24%
Quite difficult	4	4%
Very much difficult	-	-
Total	100	100%

Enlightenment: The above representation shows that it is **quite easy** to contact the doctors if any situation arises, because the majority, i.e., 56% of the total respondents have given their opinion over this statement. This concludes that it is quite easy to communicate with the doctors.

Table 7: Satisfaction of the respondents who admitted in any hospital/nursing home

Criteria	Fully satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neutral	Quite dissatisfied	Fully dissatisfied	Total
Satisfaction with the environment & staff assistance	12	28	8	0	0	48
Degree of satisfaction with the doctor at that place	28	20	0	0	0	48

Enlightenment: The above illustration depicts a positive opinion of the respondents who have admitted to hospital ever concerning the satisfaction with the environment & staff assistance and the degree of satisfaction with the doctor at the hospital. The majority of the respondents state that they are quite satisfied with the above mentioned factors.

Table 8: Satisfaction Level Concerning the Doctor's Service

Criteria	Fully dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite satisfied	Fully satisfied	Total
Satisfaction with the time	-	4	8	56	32	100
Satisfaction with the clarity of advice	-	0	0	40	60	100
Satisfaction with the enquiries over phone	-	16	32	40	12	100
Satisfaction with the problem resolving way	-	0	4	68	28	100

Enlightenment: The above table depicts that a majority (56%) portion of the total respondents are quite satisfied with the doctors regarding the time taken to respond to their problems. The next criterion is the clarity of advice given by the doctors where majority (60%) states that they are very much satisfied with the advice given by the doctors. The third & the fourth criteria are about the telephone enquiries dealt by the doctors and the way problems were resolved by the doctors respectively where the majority of the respondents i.e. 40% & 68% correspondingly are quite satisfied in both statements.

Table 9: Average Response Scenario for the doctor's service

Average Response Scenario for the asked question	Total	Average
Satisfaction with the time	31	1.24
Satisfaction with the clarity of advice	35	1.4
Satisfaction with the enquiries over phone	12	0.48
Satisfaction with the problem resolving way	31	1.24

Table 9 depicts an average scenario regarding the satisfaction level of the above said criteria of the respondents regarding the doctors' service.



Table 10: Probability of Visits to the Same Doctors

Parameters	No. of respondents
Definitely yes	72
Probably yes	20
Not sure	8
Probably not	-
Definitely not	-
Total	100

Enlightenment: Table 10 represents that the majority of the respondents (72%) have said that they will definitely go to the same doctors if situation arises. They are not so willing to visit any other doctor for future check up.

Table 11: The Frequency of the Respondents' Recommendation of the name of the Doctors to Others

Frequency of recommendation of the efficient doctors' name to others	No. of respondents
Always	52
Sometimes	48
Never	-
Total	25

Enlightenment: The above table makes a conclusion about the frequency of recommendation about the doctors' service. The frequency shows that a greater part (52%) of the total respondents will always recommend the names of the doctors with whom they are satisfied to others.

Table 12: The Environmental Drawbacks for the Efficiency of the Doctors:

Parameters	No of respondents
Strongly agree	20
Agree	60
Neutral	16
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	-
Total	100

Enlightenment: The above diagram represents that a greater part (60%) of the respondents are in favor of considering the environmental drawbacks (if any) for the efficient service of the doctors.

Table 13: Non-Recommendation About the Inefficient Service by The Doctors

Frequency	No. Of respondents
Always	6
Sometimes	5
Never	4
No response	10
Total	25

Enlightenment: The above table shows that majority of the respondents have not given their opinion for non-recommendation about the doctor's service to others. They think that the service of the doctors may differ from person to person. But, it is also observable that 24% of the respondents have said that they always oppose about the doctors with whom they are not satisfied at all.

Table 14: Satisfaction on the Attributes of Doctor's Service

Characteristics	Average (no. of respondents=100)
Professional	2.04
Enthusiastic	1.72
Communicative	2.2
Courteous	1.92
Patience	1.84
Responsive	2.12
Listen carefully	1.96
Sincerity	1.88
Total	15.68

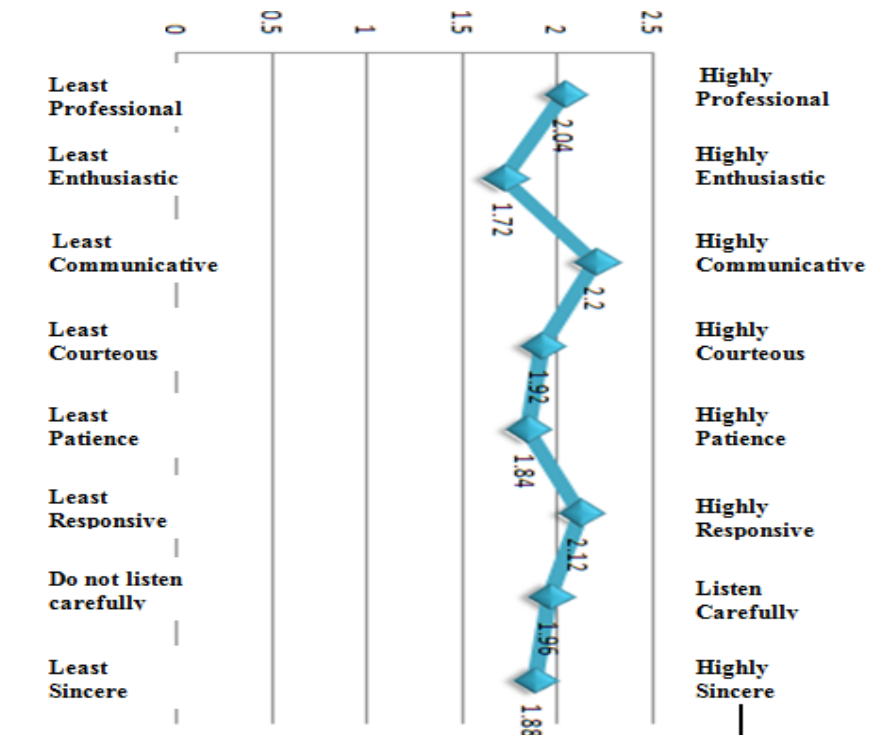


Figure 1: Outcome in Semantic Differential Scale



Communication Skill of Service Provider as the Principal Determinant of Customer Satisfaction: A Case of Doctors' Service

Enlightenment: The result shows that the communication skill of professional service providers plays a very vital role in determining customer satisfaction. But it is also very important to maintain the other determinants with it.

VII. CONCLUSION

The 5-point scaling indicates that the respondents have found it easy to contact the doctors. They are also satisfied with the service of the doctors. The degree of satisfaction is proved to be high when they have agreed to consider the environmental drawbacks for the efficient service of the doctors. Here, it can be mentioned that the customers are very much conscious about the communication skills & the service delivery systems of the providers and they are not prepared to sacrifice their satisfaction level with any type of inefficiency of the service provider's service. The respondents are ready to recommend others about the service of the doctors & lawyers through word-of-mouth communication if they are satisfied or not. This leads to a negative image for the respective service providers if the respondents circulate any negative word-of-mouth information among others. This study also highlights the effect of communication skills on the satisfaction level of the respondents. The semantic differential scale also suggests some characteristic opinions about the above-mentioned service providers. These characteristics helped to draw a clear conclusion about the service delivery system for the doctors. If the parameters are positive then it can be said that the service provider is better in their service delivery practice & the respondents are satisfied with them. Consequently, it can be said that the above-mentioned parameters directly or indirectly facilitate to the determination of the communication skill of the service providers and also assist to satisfy the customers to a great extent. In a nutshell, we may conclude that the communication skills of doctors are playing a decisive role in determining customer satisfaction. The communication skill of the above-said service provider is very crucial because the service providers & the customers have come into direct contact at the time of service delivery. So the service provider should always maintain good, effective, and understandable communication (two-way) with the customers for deriving enhanced customer satisfaction.

DECLARATION

Funding/ Grants/ Financial Support	No, I did not receive.
Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests	No conflicts of interest to the best of my knowledge.
Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate	No, the article does not require ethical approval and consent to participate with evidence.
Availability of Data and Material/ Data Access Statement	Not relevant.
Authors Contributions	I am only the sole author of the article.

REFERENCES

1. C. Gronroos, Service Management: A Management Focus for Service Competition, International Journal of Service Industry Management. 1(1)(1990)6-14. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

2. C. Gronroos, Marketing services: The case of a missing product, Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing. 13(1998)322-338. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
3. B. Edvardsson, Quality in New Service Development: Key Concepts and a Frame of Reference, International Journal of Production Economics. 52(1997)31-46. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
4. J. E. G. Bateson and K. D. Hoffman, Managing services marketing (4thed.), Chicago: The Dryden Press. (1999).
5. Gaabbott Mark, An Empirical Investigation of the Impact of Non-Verbal Communication on Service Evaluation, European Journal of Marketing. 34(3/4)(April, 2000)384-398. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
6. A. M. Barnard, Feedback Seeking in Customer Service Relationships, The Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University. (2002).
7. S. W. Kelley, J. H. Jr. Donnelly and S. J. Skinner, Customer participation in service production and delivery. Journal of Retailing. 66(3)(1990)315-335.
8. H. Mathe and R. D. Shapiro, Service and Strategic Direction, Cergy: CERESSEC. (1993).
9. C. Gronroos, An Applied Service Marketing Theory, European Journal of Marketing. (16)(1982)30-41. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
10. E. Gummesson, LIP Service-A Neglected Area in Services Marketing, Journal of Services Marketing. 1(1)(1987)19-23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
11. Christian Gronroos, A Service Quality Model and Its Marketing Implication, European Journal of Marketing. 18(4)(December, 1993)36-44. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
12. A. Parasuraman, V. A. Zeithaml, and L. L. Berry, A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and its Implications for Future Research, Journal of Marketing. 49 (Fall)(1985)41-50. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
13. A. Parasuraman, V. A. Zeithaml and L. Leonard Berry, SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality, Journal of Retailing. 64(1)(1988)16.
14. C. Gronroos, Service Quality: The Six Criteria of Good Perceived Service Quality, Review of Business. 9(1988)10- 13. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
15. M. Zairi, Managing Customer Dissatisfaction through Effective Complaint Management Systems, The TQM Magazine. 12 (2000)331-335. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
16. P. Kotler, Marketing Management: The Millennium Edition. Person Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River. (2000).
17. W. D. Hoyer and D. J. MacInnis, Consumer Behaviour. 2nd ed., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company. (2001)

AUTHORS PROFILE



Dr. Indrani Majumder is an Assistant Professor in Economics at Kanchrapara College, in the district of North 24 PGS in the state of West Bengal in India. She is an MA (Economics), MBA. She had been awarded Ph.D. in the year 2012 in the field of Rural Marketing Management. Dr. Majumder has over 21 years of teaching experience in the field of Economics and Marketing Management in different Degree Colleges

and two Universities in the State of West Bengal in India. Her research works include Consumer Behaviour, Service Marketing, and Brand Management etc. She had written more than 14 research articles in different national and international journals. She had also written chapters in some edited books. She had published one edited volume as the editor of the same.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP)/ journal and/or the editor(s). The Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP) and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.



Published By:
Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering
& Sciences Publication (BEIESP)
© Copyright: All rights reserved.