A Study on Customer Satisfaction Towards Services Offered by Akshaya Centres with Special Reference to Mala Panchayath, Thrissur District, Kerala

Rupini T.S
Guest Faculty, St Joseph's College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda
Email: rems_s@rediffmail.com
Remya S
Assistant Professor, St Joseph's College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda
Andrea Varghese
Guest faculty,St Joseph's College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda

Abstract

Akshaya is an innovative project implemented in the state of kerala aimed at bridging the digital divide, addresses the issues of ICT access, basic skills sets and availability of relevant content. As the population continues to grow in developing countries like India, more and more people will get isolated to the group of digital 'have-nots' unless Governments work together to dramatically expand access to information and knowledge. In order for e-government to be more inclusive, it must reach out to all segments of the population with e-services that meet the needs of the digitally disadvantaged by bridging the digital divide. In this study an attempt has been made to study the customer's opinion of Akshaya centres and services offered by them. The various factors influencing customers to avail services from Akshaya centres and their level of satisfaction is also analysed. The sample size is 50. Both descriptive and analytical research is used for the study. The primary data has been collected through questionnaire and secondary data from journals and websites. The project deals with the customer satisfaction towards the services provided by Akshaya centres with special reference to Mala panchayat. It begins with the introduction about Akshaya centre and then states three objectives. The main objective is to know the satisfaction level toward the various services offered by Akshaya centres. The tools used for the analysis are simple percentage analysis, Ranking and likert scale. The available literature can be divide in to two empirical literature and conceptual literature. Simple percentage method is used to represent raw streams of data as a percentage. Table and figures are used for getting a better understanding of collected data. The ranking method is used to ascertaining the factors influenced for availing services from Akshaya centres. The likert scale is used to ascertaining the users satisfaction level toward the services offered by Akshaya centres.

Keywords: Akshaya, customers, e-government, population, services.

INTRODUCTION

Akshaya is an innovative project implemented in the state of kerala aimed at bridging the digital divide, addresses the issues of ICT access, basic skills sets and availability of relevant content.

As the population continues to grow in developing countries like India, more and more people will get isolated to the group of digital 'have-nots' unless Governments work together to dramatically expand access to information and knowledge. In order for e-government to be more inclusive, it must reach out to all segments of the population with e-services that meet the needs of the digitally disadvantaged by bridging the digital divide.

Kerala is the first State in India to take initiative for the mass transformation of ICT by the implementation of district-wide e-literacy project 'AKSHAYA' in 2002, with an intention of 'Empowering Kerala'. The venture paved the way for the migration of Kerala to the first e-literate state.

Akshaya, an ambitious endeavor of the State of Kerala was inaugurated by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, on November 18, 2002. The Government's focus on digitization of the State has entailed a revolution in the design and operation of public services through the reinvention of service delivery channels. Emergence of digital organizations to create services led to better opportunities to meet citizens' needs directing to increased social inclusion.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today is the era of Information Technology. With the growing computerization and increasing internet connectivity, all the activities are carried out through computers. Akshaya centre provides a variety of online services and are able to influence a wide range of development to the extent to which the information and communication is important to individual users. It is in this context that this study has been carried out find out the customer satisfaction towards Akshaya Centre.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study customer opinion towards Akshaya Centre services.

2. To study the factors that influence a customer to avoid service from Akshaya Centre.

3. To know the satisfaction level of customer toward existing services factors of Akshaya centres.

4. To study various services offered by Akshaya Centers

RESEARCH   METHODOLOGY

This study is under taken to describe the customer satisfaction towards satisfaction towards the services of Akshaya e-centres with special reference to Mala panchayat.

SAMPLE SIZE

The study was conducted among 50 respondents in Mala (panchayat)

SOURCES OF DATA

Primary   data : In this study primary data has been collected through questionnaire.

Secondary data : Secondary data has been collected through books and websites.

TYPE OF RESEARCH

Both descriptive and analytical Research.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Percentage analysis is one of the main tool used for analysis the data. Analytical tools are also used for analyzing the data.

TOOLS FOR PRESENTATION

Tables and various charts and graphs like Bar diagrams, Pie Charts, Doughnuts etc have been used.

Unique Features of Akshaya

1. Public – private partnership:
2. Focus on capacity building:
3. Generating employment:
4. IT literacy:
5. ICT for development:

Benefits of Akshaya
The major benefits of Akashaya are as follows:
- Easy access to information.
- Training and services to citizen.
- Efficient and transparent services delivery by government.
- Commercial transaction and business knowledge for entrepreneurs and business community.

Expected Direct benefits:

- At least one computer literate person in every home in the state.

- Network of 6000 modern community information centres across the state.

- Convenient access for the common man to information services within two kilometers.

- Social and economic empowerment of the local community.

- Generate over 50000 direct employment opportunities in three years.

- Generate locally relevant content.

Expected indirect benefits:

- Cheaper communication through internet telephony, email, chats etc.

- Enhanced information and communication technology (ICT) demand in telemedicine/e-commerce/e-education.

- Enlarged marketing opportunities for agriculture/traditional products.

- Improved delivery of public services.

- Catalyzing all sectors of the IT industry.

- New information and communication technology(ICT) based services such as e-education,e-health.

Services provided to the citizens

The sole objective of Akshaya programme is to provide government services online and make the people e-literate. An Akshaya centre serves the people in all means through its various services which are readily accessible and functions as a medium between the government and the people.
Some of the services provided are:

Aadhar enrollment:
Akshaya is one of the unique identification number (UID) agencies under the government of Kerala. Akshaya centres are the enrollment agencies for the rural Kerala.

E-grants:
Application for the post metric scholarship of scheduled caste/scheduled tribe category.
Online application for ration cards:Department of civil supplies has launched the facility to submit online application for ration card through Akshaya centres. People can apply for ration card by visiting their nearby Akshaya centres. They need not visit the supply office.

E-payments:
The government of Kerala has implemented Akshaya centres under Kerala IT mission for collecting bills of Kerala State Electricity Board(KSEB),BSNL, Kerala water authority etc in the entire district. Inter banking facility of State Bank of India are used for transferring funds. The details of bill remitted at Akshaya centres consolidated on district level at FRIENDS Janasevana Kendram under Kerala state IT mission

E-manal:
It involves online registration for sand dealing for construction purpose.

E-filing:
Tax return by traders of Kerala for sale tax departments has also been introduced through Akshaya centres. Tax return is a form on which a taxpayer makes an annual statement of income and personal circumstances, used by the tax authorities to access liability for tax.

E-ticketing:
Akshaya centres also provide online ticket reservation services.
E-district:
An integrated, online delivery of citizen services at the district level. Caste certificate, community certificate, possession certificate, etc also provided through Akshaya centres.

E-vidya:
It gives practical oriented training in Microsoft Excel, internet, Malayalam word processor, World wide web and operating system.

Kiosks banking:
Banking services to the public through kiosks. Akshaya centre has facilitated the opening of over 70 banking kiosks in the selected villages in the regions. This is to cater to the needs of the villagers residing in areas where there is less number of banks. The kiosks will function with the support of leading banks in the private, public, and cooperative sectors.

Malayalam computing:
Akshaya centres impart training to common man on how to enable and use Malayalam in computers. The primary objective is to help the common man to benefits from various internet services like e-mail, chat, and blog.

E-krishi:
E Krishi is the service offered for the farmers to provide online agriculture trading and information portal. E-Krishi is a novel initiative of the state IT mission to address the gap in agriculture information flow and transaction management

Literature Review

Gomez and Gould (2010) (1) observed in his study " The cool factor of public access to ICT user's perception of trust in libraries, telecentre , and cyber cafes in developing countries" that users are satisfied with the services offered in the centres, because it links them and their communities to wider audiences, facilitates external communication and promote knowledge of computer technology among local community.**Shyni K.G (2014) (2)** in her study " Use and service of Akshaya Community Information centre in Kerala" has found that Akshaya centre become socially relevant when they provide services in accordance with the needs of local community. So it is necessary to add more content based service to make people easy to access information and services by new technology. She analysed that the most demanded service includes intellectual training programmed, e-literacy programmers through Akshaya centres.**Nissar P and Dr Yakkob C (2014) (3)** revealed in their study " Study on Awareness of E-governance Services provided through Akshaya centre in Kerala" that Akshaya has been trying to make government service more accessible to villages, which attempts to reduce the time and money spent, trying to communicate with public officials and to provide immediate, transparent access to local government data and documentation. They also analysed that the centre needs to satisfy what users except from them, so that they are deemed relevant.**Aswani Krishna and Sreehari KG (2015) (4)** asserts in their study "A study on E-governance and user satisfaction through Akshaya centres in Kerala ; with special reference to Marangattupilli Panchayath in Kottayam District " that most of the people in the district of kottayam are not aware about the various services provided by Akshaya centres. Akshaya is only for the citizen to provide e-governance services and provide computer education to the people especially those from rural areas. The lack of awareness of Akshaya centre creates a gap between this initiative and public. There by

they are unaware of the people friendly services provided through Akshaya centers. However the study also identifies that majority of the users are satisfied with the Akshaya centre and its services.**Ramzeena Azeez (2016) (5)** in her study "Customer satisfaction of Akshaya centre a study in Azihikode Grama panchayath Kannur district Kerala " analysed that Akshaya centre offers wide variety of services which satisfies most of its customers. Providing services at reasonable price is another advantage. Now a days most of the government services are provided through online and e-filing. Akshaya services are capable of fulfilling the urgent needs of customers and computer literacy is the main reason of its popularity**K.C. Raja, Sharma, Uma, and R. Shashikala (2006) (6)** in their article entitled,"Measuring Customer Satisfaction among Mobile Handset End Users: An EmpiricalStudy" have stated that customer satisfaction is a concern for any business throughout the world. They have discussed customer/customer satisfaction in the context of perceived values of the mobile commerce, service attributes, product quality, service support, product distribution, service personnel, information about the service and corporate brand equity are the underlying factors of customer satisfaction.

Table no : 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1.Gender of Respondent		
Male	30	60
Female	20	40
Total	50	100
2.Occupation of Respondent		
Business	1	2
Government employee	2	4
Retired	0	0
Private sector	22	44
Others	25	50
Total	50	100
3.Annual Income level of Respondent		
Below 1 lakh	23	46
1 lakh – 3 lakh	16	32
Above 3 lakh	11	22
Total	50	100

From the above table sit is clear that about 30 of the respondents are male and remaining are female. In the second table 22 respondents belongs to private sector and 25 respondents belong to other categories. From the third table it is clear that 39 respondents are having annual income below three lakhs and remaining 11 respondents are having annual income above three lakhs.

Table no : 2

Source of information about Akshaya centre

Source	No of respondents	Percentage
Media	18	36
Friends	15	30
Relatives	15	30
Others	2	4
Total	50	**100**

From the above table it is clear that about 18   respondents gets to know about Akshaya centre through media, 15 respondents gets to know about Akshaya from their friends, 15 respondents from their relatives and the remaining 2 respondents comes under other category.

Figure no : 2

Source of information about Akshaya centre
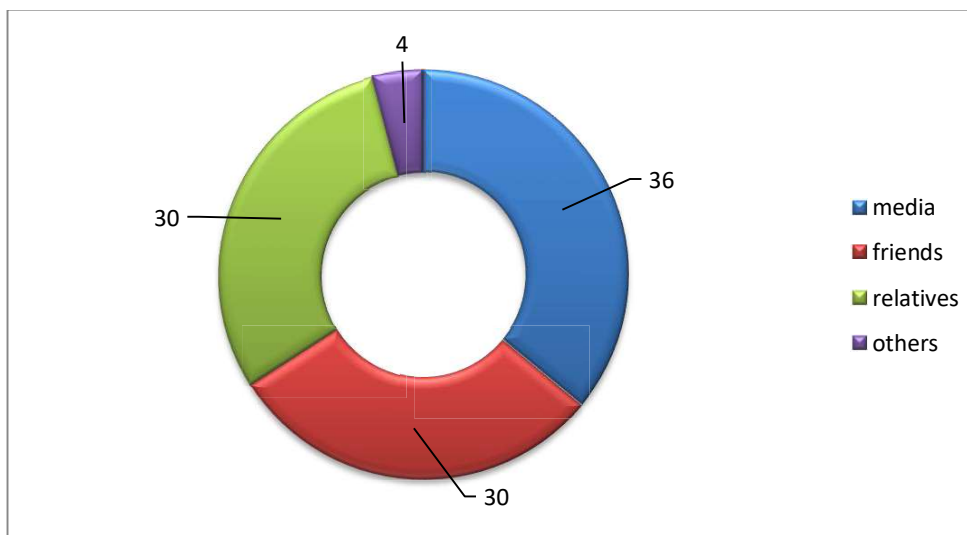
The above figure reveals that about 36 percentage of the respondents gets to know about Akshaya centre through media, 30 percentage of the respondents from their friends, 30 percentage from their relatives and the remaining 4 percentage falls under other category.
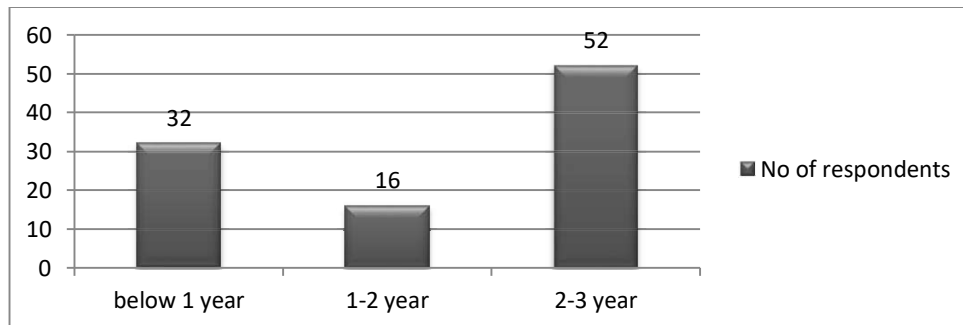
Period of using Akshaya centre services

Period	No of respondents	Percentage
Below 1 year	16	32
1-2	8	16
2-3	26	52
Total	50	100

From the above table, it is clear that about 26 respondents are using Akshaya centre service for a period between 2-3 year, 16 respondents are using Akshaya centre services for a period which is below 1 year, and remaining 8 respondents are using Akshaya centre service for a period between 1-2 years

Figure no : 3

Period of using Akshaya centre services

From the above figure it is clear that about 52 percentage are using the service for period between 2-3 years. 32 percentage of the respondents are using Akshaya centre service for the period below 1 year, and remaining 16 percentage of the respondents are using the service for a period in between 1-2 years.

Table no : 4

Factors Influencing Customers to Avail Services from Akshaya Centre

Particulars	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total Weight	Mean Weight	Rank
Quality										
Frequency	5	3	2	8	9	12	11	50	3.14	VII
Weight	35	18	10	32	27	24	11	157		
Less service charge										
Frequency	10	15	4	7	3	6	5	50	4.68	I
Weight	70	90	20	28	9	12	5	234		
Transparency										
Frequency	10	1	19	6	4	8	2	50	4.5	II
Weight	70	6	95	24	12	16	2	225		
Convenience										
Frequency	2	10	14	13	3	2	6	50	4.3	III
Weight	14	60	70	52	9	4	6	215		
Reliability										
frequency	9	8	5	6	12	5	5	50	4.22	IV
Weight	63	48	25	24	36	10	5	211		
Quick delivery										
Frequency	12	7	3	2	4	9	13	50	3.84	V
Weight	84	42	15	8	12	18	13	192		
Security										
Frequency	2	6	3	8	15	8	8	50	3.32	VI
Weight	14	36	15	32	45	16	8	166		

There are 7factors that influences a customer to availing services from Akshaya centres. From the above selected factorsLess service charge is the most influencing factor for availing Akshaya centre services. Last rank is given to the factor Quality.

Table no : 5

Table showing Satisfaction Level of Respondent towards Existing Service Factors

Particular	Weight	5	4	3	2	1	Total Weight	Mean Weight
Quality of Service Delivered	F	6	29	13	2	0	50	3.78
	FX	30	116	39	4	0	189	
Amount Charged	F	10	28	6	4	2	50	3.8
	FX	50	112	18	8	2	190	
Qualification and Skills of Employees	F	4	19	18	6	3	50	3.3
	FX	20	76	54	12	3	165	
Infrastructure Facilities	F	4	21	17	7	1	50	3.4
	FX	20	84	51	14	1	170	
Transparency	F	9	23	15	2	1	50	3.74
	FX	45	92	45	4	1	187	
Reliable Service	F	8	30	7	2	3	50	3.76
	FX	40	120	21	4	3	188	
Timely Delivery of Service	F	5	24	13	8	0	50	3.52
	FX	25	96	39	16	0	176	

The above table shows that respondents are highly satisfied with the Amount charged by Akshaya centres and the respondents are highly dissatisfied in the qualification and skills of the employees.

Findings

❖ 36 percentage of the respondents known about Akshaya centres through Media.

❖ 52 percentage of the respondents are using Akshaya centre services for the period of 2-3 years and 16 percentage of the respondents are using Akshaya centre services for a period of 1-2 years.

❖ 54 percentage of the respondent visit Akshaya centre for Aadhar service and none of the visit for E-ticketing and Application for Ration Card.

❖ 76 percentage of the respondent are in the opinion that the service provided by Akshaya are good and 6 percentage of the respondent are in the opinion that the service provided by Akshaya are poor.

❖ 54 percentage of respondents are in the opinion that the technical and management skill of the employees are good and 6 percentage of respondents are in the opinion that the technical and management skill of the employees are poor.

❖ 64 percentage of respondents perception about the overall quality of service is neutral, and 4 perception about the overall quality of service is low.

❖ 44 respondents have given that the problem they are facing is Connectivity problem and 12 respondents have given that the problem they are facing is lack of infrastructure.

❖ 68 percentage of the respondents are satisfied with the Akshaya centre services and none of the respondent is neither highly dissatisfied nor dissatisfied

❖ 70 percentage of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of service delivered and none of the respondents are highly dissatisfied

❖ 76 percentage of the respondents are satisfied with the amount charged for the service and 12 percentage of the respondents are dissatisfied

❖ 46 percentage of the respondents are satisfied in the qualification and skill of the employees in the Akshaya centre18 percentage of the respondents are dissatisfied.

❖ 50 percentage of the respondents are satisfied with the infrastructure facilities and 16 percentage of the respondents are dissatisfied.

❖ 64 percentage of respondents are satisfied in the transparency of the service delivered, and 6 percentage of respondents are dissatisfied .

❖ 76 percentage of the respondents are satisfied on the reliability of the service delivered and 10 respondents are dissatisfied.

❖ 58 percentage of the respondents are satisfied in the timely delivery of services and none of the respondent are highly dissatisfied.

❖ 78 percentage of the respondents states that Akshaya centre have met their expectation and 22 percentage of the respondents states that Akshaya centre have not met their expectation.

❖ 52 percentage of the respondents will recommend Akshaya centre service to others and 46 percentage of the respondents will not recommend.

❖ Less Service charge is the most influencing factor for availing Akshaya centre services.

❖ Respondents are highly satisfied with the Amount charged by Akshaya centres and the respondents are highly dissatisfied in the qualification and skills of the employees.

Suggestions

❖ Proper steps should be taken to reduce the problems associated with infrastructural facilities.
❖ Necessary steps has to be taken to wipe out the problems associated with connectivity problems.

Conclusion

From the study it is understood that most of the users of Akshaya centres are well literate while are not aware about the various services offered by Akshaya centres. The study gives an overall idea about the users satisfaction level toward the services offered by Akshaya centres. The project commenced by setting the objectives and then samples were collected accordingly. Around 50 samples have been collected from the population and analyses have been done to get the result All the objectives fixed at the beginning of the project have been achieved.

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