Customer Satisfaction and Complaint Resolution in the Indian Banking Sector: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

In order to determine the main factors driving consumer unhappiness and how they affect complaint filing, this study examines customer dissatisfaction and complaint filing behaviour in the Indian banking industry. To investigate satisfaction levels, complaints made, and their frequency in both public and private sector banks, information was gathered from 300 bank clients. According to the report, the main causes of discontent include things like poor customer service, transaction problems, fraud and security difficulties, unanswered complaints, and insufficient customer support. While private sector banks like Axis and HDFC also had significant complaint submissions, public sector banks like SBI, PNB, and Canara Bank had greater complaint rates. According to the results, a large number of respondents complained more than once, suggesting that their discontent was persistent. The report highlights how important it is for banks to enhance customer security, communication, complaint resolution procedures, and service quality. According to managerial implications, managing complaints well and finding quick solutions can increase client loyalty and satisfaction. The report also makes recommendations for further investigation into the effects of online banking services and how demographic characteristics influence consumer expectations. In addition to offering helpful suggestions for enhancing the customer experience in the Indian banking industry, this study includes insightful information about customer discontent.

Keywords: Customer dissatisfaction, Complaint filing, Banking sector, Service quality, Complaint resolution

1. Introduction

The remarkable evolution of the Indian banking sector has been typified by technological advancements and regulatory modifications aimed at enhancing the calibre of service provision. Customer satisfaction, a key performance indicator in the banking industry, gauges how well a bank's products or services meet or surpass its customers' expectations. Growing competition in recent years, especially between public and private banks, has led to a stronger emphasis on customer-centric practices. Banks must focus on efficient complaint handling in addition to service delivery because customer expectations have evolved with financial services (Choudhury & Singh, 2021).

Despite these advancements, the volume of customer complaints continues to rise. Complaints, which often stem from technical problems, inefficient grievance handling, service delays, and inequities in financial transactions, have a direct effect on customer satisfaction. The emergence of digital banking has created additional challenges that lead to client dissatisfaction, including cybersecurity threats, transaction problems, and ineffective customer service, particularly when the resolution process is inadequate or delayed (Rani & Malhotra, 2021). A robust complaint resolution mechanism is consequently essential for maintaining client trust and loyalty, as unresolved complaints might result in customer attrition. The distinction between public and private sector banks in India has also had an impact on variations in customer satisfaction and complaint handling. Public sector banks typically face challenges such as staff shortages, laborious processes, and outdated infrastructure since they cater to a larger segment of the population. This leads to slower service and higher complaint rates. However, although being often commended for their efficient use of cutting-edge technology and customer service, private sector banks are critiqued for issues like hidden fees and pushy sales tactics, which also result in complaints and dissatisfaction (Patil & Deshmukh, 2021). Studies show that whereas public

sector banks are usually criticised for their operational inefficiencies, private banks face issues like unethical business practices and a lack of transparency.

Customer dissatisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors, including transaction transparency, bank employee behaviour, service quality, and the ease of acquiring financial services. Additionally, effective grievance redressal processes can turn an angry customer into a loyal one if they are carried out correctly. Banks that prioritise quick complaint resolution often find higher levels of customer retention since research has shown a direct link between client loyalty and efficient complaint processing (Rao & Kulkarni, 2018). This study intends to examine customer happiness and dissatisfaction in India's banking sector, with a focus on the kinds and amounts of complaints received by banks in the public and private sectors. By analysing the factors that lead to customer dissatisfaction and the efficiency of complaint resolution processes, the study aims to provide insights into how Indian banks may improve the quality of their services. The study's comparison of customer experiences in public and private sector banks offers a comprehensive understanding of the industry's dynamics. This makes it clear how banks may enhance client experiences by handling grievances and offering better services (Jain, 2021).

2. Review of Literature and Research Gap

Over the years, there has been a great deal of research on customer satisfaction and complaint resolution in the banking industry, with an increasing emphasis on service quality, customer loyalty, and the procedures used to handle complaints. In order to trace the development of research in this area, this study offers a summary of 20 important works in chronological order. The SERVQUAL model, created by Parasuraman et al. (1988) in their groundbreaking study, became a standard instrument for evaluating service quality in a variety of sectors, including banking. The five main categories that the study identified—tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and reliability—have been frequently used in other studies on consumer satisfaction. Levesque and McDougall (1996) emphasised the importance of service quality in the banking sector and the substantial impact that poor service has on client satisfaction. It was mentioned that prompt complaint response improves consumer perceptions and increases loyalty. Bitner et al. (1994) looked at how customer satisfaction is affected by service interactions, particularly how complaints are handled. They discovered that clients are more likely to stick with a service provider if they believe that complaints are handled fairly. Blodgett et al. (1997) investigated how customers' loyalty and satisfaction are affected by their opinions of how fair service recovery is. They discovered that client retention is greatly impacted by procedural fairness, especially in the banking industry.

The "Service Profit Chain" model developed by Heskett et al. (1997) shown a clear connection between customer pleasure, service quality, and financial performance in banking and other industries. The survey underlined how crucial it is to effectively address consumer complaints in order to preserve profitability. According to Colgate and Hedge's (2001) analysis of bank complaint handling procedures, consumers' opinions about how attentive a bank is to their grievances have a significant impact on their level of satisfaction. The survey highlighted how important it is to resolve complaints effectively in order to keep clients. Johnston (2001) identified major service shortcomings in the banking industry by examining the connection between customer happiness and complaint management. He pointed out that prompt resolution, an apology, and payment all play a big role in retaining customers.

Yavas et al. (2004) investigated how customer satisfaction and loyalty relate to one another in the banking sector, with a particular emphasis on complaint resolution as a crucial component. They discovered that satisfaction levels are significantly impacted by how quickly complaints are resolved. In the banking industry, Michel (2004) looked into how service recovery tactics affected client loyalty and satisfaction. He discovered that if the recovery process is managed effectively, customers are more likely to overlook service outages. In their 2005 study on the emotional components of managing complaints, Chebat and Slusarczyk demonstrated how customers' perceptions of the bank's service quality and future loyalty are influenced by emotional reactions like relief or anger. Stauss and Seidel (2007) discovered that customer satisfaction in the banking industry is significantly impacted by the perception of justice, transparency, and communication throughout complaint resolution procedures. In Greek banks, Lewis and Soureli (2006) investigated the connection between customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and service quality. To avoid discontent, they underlined the necessity of proactive complaint handling techniques. Effective complaint management can result in improved client connections and long-term retention, according to Lymperopoulos and Chaniotakis' (2008) analysis of the impact of complaint resolution on customer loyalty in the banking sector. In South Africa, Boshoff (2009) conducted study on service recovery tactics and how they affect client satisfaction in the banking sector. He discovered that when banks promptly and equitably address concerns, consumer happiness rises. Customer satisfaction and loyalty were shown to be

significantly influenced by complaint resolution and service quality, according to Ndubisi's (2010) investigation on customer loyalty in the Malaysian banking industry. The study underlined how crucial relationship management is when dealing with grievances. In order to increase customer satisfaction, Choudhury (2013) conducted a study on the Indian banking industry and discovered that both public and private banks needed to upgrade their complaint resolution procedures. The survey emphasised how crucial consumer trust and service quality are. The impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Greek banks was the main emphasis of Santouridis and Trivellas (2014). They came to the conclusion that, especially in markets with intense competition, complaint resolution greatly enhances consumer satisfaction.

In their 2019 study on digital banking, Kumar and Sinha discovered that technological interruptions frequently result in disgruntled customers in Indian banks. They underlined how important it is that banks have strong digital complaint-handling systems. The difficulties Indian banks encounter in addressing consumer grievances pertaining to digital services were investigated by Rani and Malhotra (2021). They discovered that keeping customers satisfied required prompt resolution of issues pertaining to digital services. Mehta and Kapoor (2022) looked on the connection between customer loyalty and complaint handling in Indian banks. They discovered that better customer satisfaction results in increased retention rates and favourable word-of-mouth.

There are important gaps in the current literature on customer satisfaction and complaint resolution in the banking industry that need to be filled. The association between customer happiness and service quality was established by seminal research like those conducted by Levesque and McDougall (1996) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988). However, there has been a shift in client expectations that is still poorly understood as a result of the banking industry's rapid technical improvements, especially the emergence of digital banking. There is currently a dearth of thorough study investigating how these changes affect consumer dissatisfaction and complaint filing patterns, particularly across public and private sector banks, despite Kumar and Sinha's (2019) observation that digital banking has a revolutionary effect on customer behaviour. A large portion of previous research, such as Johnston (2001) and Colgate and Hedge (2001), concentrated on traditional banking services, leaving a knowledge gap regarding the unique difficulties and grievances associated with digital services. More recently, Rani and Malhotra (2021) have only partially addressed this issue. Even while these studies are insightful, they don't give a thorough comparison of how public and private sector banks manage complaints, particularly in the digital age where technology integration is crucial. Furthermore, while scholars such as Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (1997) and Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) have highlighted the significance of fairness and emotional considerations in the resolution of complaints, the types and frequency of particular complaints, such as fraud issues, transaction failures, and service delays, in the contemporary banking environment have received little attention. Furthermore, the impact of demographic variables including age, income, and education on complaint behaviour in both public and private sector banks has rarely been studied. Even though Mehta and Kapoor (2022) and Boshoff (2009) emphasised the importance of efficient complaint resolution in building customer loyalty, there is still a significant lack of empirical research explicitly looking at the long-term impacts of these mechanisms on customer retention and word-of-mouth advertising in the context of Indian banking. Therefore, this study intends to close these research gaps by investigating how digital banking affects customer dissatisfaction, contrasting public and private banks' approaches to complaint resolution, examining the kinds and volume of complaints from a range of customer demographics, and evaluating how effective complaint resolution contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Indian banking sector. By using this thorough methodology, the study will offer a detailed view of how the banking industry is changing as well as insightful recommendations for enhancing customer happiness and complaint handling.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To assess the level of customer satisfaction with banking services in India.
- To analyze the factors influencing customer dissatisfaction and complaint filing in the banking sector.
- To study the frequency and nature of complaints registered by customers across public and private sector banks.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This study's empirical research technique focusses on gathering and analysing primary data directly from bank customers in order to evaluate customer satisfaction and complaint handling. Based on a thorough assessment of the literature, a structured questionnaire was created that addressed a number of topics related to customer happiness, complaint

behaviour, and discontent in the banking industry. In order to guarantee a thorough grasp of customer experiences across various banking environments, the sample comprised 300 bank customers who were selected from both public and private sector banks. In order to minimise biases and guarantee correct responses, data was gathered in person. After the gathered data was coded and imported into Microsoft Excel, it underwent a rigorous screening procedure to look for any irregularities or discrepancies. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 23) software, which used inferential statistics and descriptive statistics to summarise demographic information. This approach guaranteed a solid data gathering procedure and an exhaustive analysis, offering insightful information about customer satisfaction and complaint handling in the Indian banking industry.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socioeconomic and demographic profiles of the study participants offer a useful summary of their traits. Regarding gender, women made up 34.0% of the respondents as mentioned in table 1, while men made up the majority (66.0%). In terms of marital status, 43.3% of respondents were married, while 56.7% of respondents were single. According to the age group distribution, the highest percentage of respondents (58.3%) were between the ages of 18 and 30. Next in line were those aged 40 to 60 (24.0%), 30 to 40 (14.3%), and over 60 (3.3%).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency (n=300)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	198	66.0%
	Female	102	34.0%
Marital Status	Single	170	56.7%
	Married	130	43.3%
Age group	18 to 30 years	175	58.3%
	30 to 40 years	43	14.3%
	40 to 60 years	72	24.0%
	Above 60 years	10	3.3%

Socioeconomic profile in table 2 depicts that the majority of respondents (52.7%) had post-graduate education, followed by graduate education (25.7%), undergraduate education (15.3%), and professional education (6.3%). These findings are indicative of the socioeconomic profile. With 30.0% working in the private sector, 27.7% in government employment, 20.0% as students, and smaller numbers in other sectors including self-employed (8.7%), businessman (7.3%), and housewife (3.0%), the respondents' occupations were varied. The majority of respondents (59.7%) resided in urban regions, with those from semi-urban areas (12.7%) and rural areas (27.7%) following closely behind. Lastly, according to the annual income distribution, 45.3% of respondents made up to Rs. 2.5 lakh, 29.0% made between Rs. 5 lakh and Rs. 10 lakh, 17.3% made over Rs. 10 lakh, and 8.3% made between Rs. 2.5 lakh and Rs. 5 lakh. The sample population's diverse demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds are reflected in this thorough breakdown, which is crucial for comprehending their views and behaviours in light of the study.

Table 2: Socioeconomic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency (n=300)	Percent (%)
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	46	15.3%
	Graduate	77	25.7%
	Post-graduate	158	52.7%
	Professional	19	6.3%
Occupation	Government job	83	27.7%

	Private job	90	30.0%
	Retired person	10	3.3%
	Self-employed	26	8.7%
	Businessman	22	7.3%
	Student	60	20.0%
	Housewife	9	3.0%
Resident	Urban	179	59.7%
	Rural	83	27.7%
	Semi-urban	38	12.7%
Annual Income	Upto Rs. 2.5 lakh	136	45.3%
	Rs. 2.5 to 5 lakh	25	8.3%
	Rs. 5 lakh to 10 lakh	87	29.0%
	Rs. 10 lakh and above	52	17.3%

Important information about the distribution of bank accounts and the associated complaint filing rates for public and private sector banks can be found in Table 3. With the largest percentage of accounts (59.7%) and complaints (49.2%) among public sector banks, SBI is followed by PNB and Canara Bank, which have respective complaint rates of 36.5% and 37.5%. The Central Bank of India (CBI) had no complaints, indicating either strong customer satisfaction or a lack of complaint procedures, whereas the Bank of Baroda (BOB) stands out with a 100% complaint rate despite having only 3.7% of accounts. For public sector banks, the overall complaint rate is 47.0%. Nevertheless, despite having fewer accounts, private sector banks such as HDFC and Axis Bank have higher complaint rates (55.1% and 80.9%, respectively), suggesting a comparatively higher degree of discontent (37.28% of all respondents). The complaint rates of other private sector banks, including Bandhan, IDBI, and IndusInd, are lower; Bandhan has the lowest at 20.0%. Remarkably, "Other Private Sector Banks" accounts for 95.2% of complaints despite only making up 7% of responses, indicating a high level of discontent among smaller bank clients. The overall percentage of complaints in both sectors is 50.6%, which emphasises the necessity for banks in the public and private sectors to raise customer satisfaction and strengthen complaint resolution procedures in order to foster client loyalty.

Table 3: Bank Account of Respondents and Complaints Filed

Bank Name	Bank Account Count (n=300)	Bank Account Percentage (%)	Complaint Count	Complaint Percentage (%)
Public Sector Banks				
SBI	179	59.7%	88	49.2%
PNB	52	17.3%	19	36.5%
Canara Bank	16	5.3%	6	37.5%
BOB	11	3.7%	11	100.0%
BOI	10	3.3%	6	60.0%
CBI	21	7.0%	0	0.0%
Other Public Sector Banks	39	13.0%	24	61.5%
Total Public Sector	**328**	**62.72%**	**154**	**47.0%**
Private Sector Banks				
HDFC	69	23.0%	38	55.1%

Bank Name	Bank Account Count (n=300)	Bank Account Percentage (%)	Complaint Count	Complaint Percentage (%)
ICICI	18	6.0%	6	33.3%
AXIS	47	15.7%	38	80.9%
Bandhan Bank	15	5.0%	3	20.0%
IDBI	12	4.0%	3	25.0%
IndusInd Bank	13	4.3%	3	23.1%
Other Private Sector Banks	21	7.0%	20	95.2%
Total Private Sector	**195**	**37.28%**	**111**	**57.0%**
Grand Total	**523**	**100%**	**265**	**50.6%**

According to the data in table 4, all respondents who were unhappy with bank services complained, with 48.0% doing so once, 32.3% doing so frequently, and 19.7% doing so twice. This shows that unhappy consumers file complaints somewhat frequently, indicating that unhappiness is frequently not resolved with a single complaint and necessitates several submissions.

Table 4: Customer Satisfaction, Complaint Filing, and Frequency of Complaints Registered

Satisfaction with Bank Services	Complaint Filed?	Number of Times Complaints Registered	Frequency (%)
No	Yes	Twice	19.7%
		Once	48.0%
		Many times	32.3%
Yes	No	N/A	0.0%

The fact that zero percent of delighted customers complained shows that there is a direct correlation between customer contentment and complaint filing—happy consumers are less likely to file complaints. These results highlight the necessity for banks to concentrate on effectively and pro-actively addressing problems in order to lower consumer discontent and the frequency of recurring grievances, which will enhance client loyalty and retention.

Table 5: Factors Influencing Customer Dissatisfaction

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Service Quality	3.7	1.16	6.67%	10.00%	16.67%	40.00%	26.67%
Transaction Issues	3.6	1.12	3.33%	13.33%	20.00%	40.00%	23.33%
Lack of Communication	3.8	1.10	5.00%	11.67%	15.00%	36.67%	32.33%
Fraud or Security Concerns	4.0	1.05	1.67%	6.67%	16.67%	36.67%	38.33%
Unresolved Complaints	3.9	1.08	4.00%	9.33%	18.33%	35.00%	33.33%
High Service Charges or Fees	3.5	1.20	6.00%	15.00%	18.33%	35.00%	25.67%
Inadequate Customer Support	3.7	1.13	3.33%	13.33%	16.67%	40.00%	26.67%

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Product/Service Misrepresentation	3.6	1.15	2.67%	10.67%	16.00%	40.00%	30.67%
Negative Word of Mouth	3.8	1.09	5.00%	8.33%	13.33%	36.67%	36.67%
Complicated Complaint Resolution Process	3.7	1.11	3.33%	6.67%	16.67%	40.00%	33.33%

The elements affecting customer discontent are shown in Table 5, which also includes the distribution of responses on a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," as well as the mean scores and standard deviations. The components' mean scores, which fall between 3.5 and 4.0, show that most people believe they contribute to unhappiness. With 38.33% of respondents strongly agreeing, "Fraud or Security Concerns" had the highest mean (4.0), underscoring the substantial influence of security-related problems on customer discontent. Likewise, 33.33% of respondents strongly agreed with "Unresolved Complaints" (mean = 3.9) and 32.33% strongly agreed with "Lack of Communication" (mean = 3.8), indicating the significance of efficient communication and prompt complaint resolution. With 40% of respondents agreed, "Transaction Issues" (mean = 3.6) and "Product/Service Misrepresentation" (mean = 3.6) also had significant roles. However, despite having the lowest score (mean = 3.5), 25.67% of respondents strongly agreed that "High Service Charges or Fees" was a serious problem. These findings highlight how important elements like communication, security, service quality, and complaint resolution procedures are in determining consumer unhappiness, indicating that banks should focus on these areas to increase client loyalty and satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

With an emphasis on both public and private sector banks, this study investigated the variables influencing consumer discontent and complaint filing in the Indian banking industry. According to the findings, a number of variables, including poor service quality, transaction problems, poor communication, worries about fraud or security, and unresolved complaints, are major contributors to discontent. Customer dissatisfaction is further exacerbated by the volume of complaints and the difficulty of the complaint resolution procedure. According to the report, more than half of consumers have complained, and many of them have done so more than once, highlighting the significance of efficient complaint handling procedures. The results have important managerial ramifications for the banking industry. Banks must prioritise enhancing service quality and guaranteeing effective transaction procedures in order to increase consumer satisfaction. Dissatisfaction can be considerably decreased by addressing fraud and security issues with improved procedures and open communication. To avoid escalation, banks should also place a high priority on rapidly and effectively resolving concerns. According to the survey, banks should think about lowering service fees and enhancing customer care in order to build stronger bonds with their customers. Managers should concentrate on improving complaint resolution procedures, making them easier to use and more accessible, and making sure that clients feel appreciated and heard. Future studies should examine other elements that affect client retention and loyalty in the banking industry, especially the function of digital banking services and how they affect customer satisfaction. Analysing how well complaint resolution practices work for various banks and how they affect consumer confidence may also yield insightful information.

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