

## SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC AGENCIES

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### ABSTRACT

Marketing has been applied to the public sector with considerable success. The present study expands consumer satisfaction research to include public agencies. It was found that there were differing levels of satisfaction between agencies depending upon agency function, importance of the agency to the reporting firm, and whether the firm was a manufacturer or in the service sector.

### INTRODUCTION

The business climate in California has been viewed by many firms to be increasingly inhospitable in recent years. The state has been criticized for its stringent business and environmental regulations, taxes, and fiscal problems that translate into inefficiencies among myriad government agencies processing permits and providing services. A survey in 1990 by the California Business Round-table found "that 14% of companies polled planned to leave the state" while another 41% expected to expand outside California.

Since the scope of marketing has been broadened to the non-profit services sector, this study investigates a significant area previously untouched in the discipline, government. To accomplish this task, exploratory research was done to examine business satisfaction with selected government agencies, including utilities. The authors consider this a timely issue given the current recession-related problems in this and other states wherein state governments are forced to take long, hard looks at existing programs for possible cut-backs.

### METHODOLOGY

In order to further investigate the issue of satisfaction with public agencies, a survey was undertaken. A questionnaire was developed that explored the attitudes and opinions of California business managers with respect to these public agencies. Fifteen agencies were used, ten were state-wide agencies, one was a county agency, and the remaining four were local public utilities regulated by the state. An attempt was made to chose those agencies and utilities that would likely have

the greatest impact on business decisions and profitability based on published comments of local business executives.

The authors used a convenience sample of 300 working MBA students currently enrolled in the college's MBA program. Most of these students have responsible managerial jobs and are pursuing their MBA degree on a part-time basis. It was felt that those students, with managerial jobs, would be able to accurately provide information about the level of satisfaction their firms have with each of the agencies in the study. Potential respondents without managerial job experience were excluded from the study.

### RESULTS

A total of 61 usable responses were obtained. 65% of the respondents were male whereas 35% were female. The average age of the respondents was 29 and they had 4.3 years of experience with their current employer. Respondents classified the types of organizations represented in the study as: Manufacturing 36%, Service 33%, Wholesaling 7%, Retailing 5%, and Other (mainly government or education) 19%.

Differing levels of overall satisfaction were found with the different agencies. In general, it was found that service agencies such as transportation or sanitation had higher levels of satisfaction than did regulatory agencies such as AQMD (Air Quality Management District).

Females respondents had higher overall satisfaction levels than did males but also reported that their firms were not affected as much by the various agencies compared to the firms of male respondents.

### FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any exploratory study, the current research raises more questions than it answers. The authors are now working on a follow-up study using a larger and more controlled sample in order to identify some of the reasons for the results obtained in the present study.