



"An Empirical Study on Assessing Public Awareness and Understanding of RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme"

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Abstract:

Purpose: This empirical study aims to assess the level of public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It also seeks to identify the factors influencing public awareness and understanding and evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the scheme. The research aims to provide recommendations for improving awareness, understanding, and utilization of the scheme among the general public.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study utilized a survey method, employing convenient sampling to select 110 participants. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data in person. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and measures of variability, were employed to analyze the data. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Independent Samples T-tests, One-Way ANOVA, and Kruskal-Wallis tests. A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also performed.

Findings: The study revealed a significant lack of public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. A considerable portion of respondents reported being unfamiliar with the scheme, and many had not encountered information about it in the past year. Similarly, respondents demonstrated limited understanding of the purpose, scope, and benefits of the scheme. Media channels, public education campaigns, clear communication from the RBI, and active participation of financial institutions were identified as important factors influencing awareness and understanding. The effectiveness of communication channels varied among different demographic groups.

Practical Implications: The findings emphasize the need for enhanced efforts to promote and disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. Public education campaigns, collaboration with financial institutions, and targeted communication strategies tailored to different demographic groups are recommended to improve public awareness and understanding. Strengthening communication channels, particularly through social media, is crucial for effective information dissemination.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical insights into the public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme in the context of the RBI. The findings offer valuable information for policymakers, regulators, and financial institutions to enhance public knowledge and engagement with the scheme. The study's methodology and comprehensive analysis provide a foundation for future research in this area.

Keywords: Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, public awareness, understanding, communication channels, financial grievances, RBI.

Introduction

The Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is a mechanism designed to address grievances and complaints from customers of banks and other financial institutions. The scheme aims to provide a fair and efficient resolution process for disputes between customers and financial service providers, thus enhancing consumer protection and confidence in the banking sector. While the scheme has been in operation for a certain period, the level of public awareness and understanding of its existence, purpose, scope, and benefits remains uncertain.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) created the Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) - 2021 to make it easier to resolve customer complaints against regulated companies (REs). The plan serves as a single point of contact for disputes, making certain that all REs is aware of compliance requirements. With the financial system becoming more digitalized and its customer base expanding, it is essential to institutionalize an increasingly effective grievance redressal mechanism to boost user confidence and shield them from procedural delays, technological obstacles, and uninformed staff members.

The IOS has sped up the processing of complaints because they can now be made directly or through a designated representative. Customers who have experienced service deficiencies as a result of a RE's actions or inactions may make a complaint under the IOS either directly or through a designated representative. Depending on the demonstrated lack of service, the ombudsman may grant compensation for any direct perceived loss or consequential loss a complainant experience, up to Rs. 20 lakhs, along with up to Rs. 1 lakh for the complainant's lost time, incurred expenses, and harassment or mental anguish.

As a result of the RBI's decision to include Credit Information Companies (CICs) in the RB-IOS, many small and large borrowers who were having trouble getting adjustments made to rating information now have relief. In order to provide goods and services, CICs gather and analyze information regarding loans and credit available to both individuals and businesses. When a person or business asks for a loan or credit facility from a RE, the lender gets in touch with its CIC to find out the applicant-borrower's credit score. The credit score shared by the CIC will be used in the lender's credit evaluation.

The borrower's credit score will have an impact on how much the loan will cost and how much risk premium will be loaded. The loan policies of the REs are also determined by the lender's risk tolerance and credit score trends. The most well-known CICs, who are responsible for providing the credit rating, are CIBIL, EQUIFAX, EXPERIAN, and CRIF High Mark Credit Information Services.

The numerous customer complaints against CICs may be tracked down, addressed, and regulated by adding them. They will be made aware of the need for proper information storage and retrieval in order to generate current data-based credit ratings. The potential borrower must currently contact each CIC separately to request the rectification of their data, which may or may not be successful. To relieve users of REs and guarantee that credit ratings accurately represent the borrower, both current and potential, the RB-IOS's expanded scope is a positive development.

Research Problem: The primary concern of this empirical study is to assess the level of public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI. The research problem can be framed as follows:

To what extent are the general public aware of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI, and how well do they understand its purpose, scope, and benefits? Additionally, what factors influence public awareness and understanding of the scheme, and how effective are the existing communication channels in disseminating information about the scheme?

Significance of Study: The significance of this study lies in its potential to shed light on the current state of public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI. By conducting an empirical assessment, the study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of communication strategies employed to disseminate

information about the scheme. The findings will enable policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders to identify gaps and make informed decisions to enhance public awareness, understanding, and utilization of the scheme.

Scope of Study: The study's scope encompasses a wide range of stakeholders, including customers of banks and financial institutions, as well as the general public at large. By examining factors that influence public awareness and understanding, such as demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, educational background, and media consumption habits, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The evaluation of communication channels will encompass both traditional methods, such as print media and television, as well as digital platforms, including websites, social media, and mobile applications.

Objectives

1. To measure the level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of RBI.
2. To assess the understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public, including its purpose, scope, and benefits.
3. To identify the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.
5. To provide recommendations for improving the awareness, understanding, and utilization of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public.

Research Hypothesis

1. H0: There is no statistical significance difference between demographic factor and level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of RBI.
2. H0: There is no statistical significance difference between demographic factor and the understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public
3. H0: There is no statistical significance difference between demographic factor and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme
4. H0: There is no statistical significance difference between demographic factor and the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

Review of Literature

Suvarna, H., & Kayarkatte, N. (2021). The study shows that the Customer happiness is essential in the cutthroat banking industry of today. Customers who are dissatisfied with a bank's services can complain to the bank's grievance cell. However, banks frequently deal with legal issues and subpar complaint handling. India established the Banking Ombudsman Scheme in 1995 to address this problem and handle complaints in a fair and efficient manner. Customers are unaware of the issue despite an increase in complaints. The situation has improved as a result of the RBI and Banking Ombudsman's popularity campaigns. Using information from RBI bulletins, this study intends to examine the role played by the Banking Ombudsman in resolving complaints brought forth by clients of different banks. The study aims to comprehend how complaints are received and disseminated, the types and methods of complaints that are received, how complaints are covered, and the trend of complaints declining.

Shankar, V. (2020). According to the research by putting in place procedures, the Reserve Bank of India has always sought to foster the growth of a customer-centric financial sector. Through improved customer relations, the RBI and the Government of India have consistently worked to provide the banking industry with quick, efficient, fair, and courteous service. They have always made an effort to align product requirements with customer needs. Despite this, the number of complaints grows yearly. The current research makes an effort to examine the nature of complaints, types of complaints (based on population, bank group, and type), and methods for handling complaints.

Malyadri, P., & Sirisha, S. (2015) as per the research study the Bank Ombudsman Scheme was established by the Reserve Bank of India in 1995 to give clients a quick and affordable forum to address concerns about subpar banking services. The programme tries to connect with clients who have exhausted all other avenues for redress. In terms of complaints received regarding deposits, loans, ATM debit cards, credit cards, pensions, non-observance of fair practises, overall complaints, and complaints broken down by region, the paper assesses the performance of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006. According to the survey, while the overall number of complaints against foreign banks has reduced, complaints against banks have been rising in places like Patna, Kanpur, Bhubaneshwar, Guwahati, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. In the future, the plan is anticipated to become more well-known and have a favourable impact on banks' level of customer service.

Rupani, R., & Ali, S. (2022). Researcher are of view that for the banking industry to gain public trust and to advance financial inclusion, customer satisfaction is essential. To handle complaints regarding bank services, India's 1995-introduced Banking Ombudsman Scheme was updated in 2002. With a descriptive research approach, this paper examines the scheme's performance utilising secondary data from the RBI's annual reports from 2015–16 to 2019–20. The Ombudsman scheme is an important avenue for resolving complaints about banks and services, and the swiftness and effectiveness of its resolution are crucial components of customer satisfaction. The RBI should raise the number of Ombudsmen proportionately to the rise of financial transactions and new payment methods. Although BO's offices have begun outreach initiatives to increase customer knowledge, more stringent procedures are required, especially in remote areas.

Tamragundi, A.N., & Badiger, S. (2022). In the views of the researcher by utilising technology and the globalised market, banks are always working to improve their services. As the main provider of financial services, banks must perform better than their rivals to remain competitive. Since there is fierce rivalry among banks and a diverse population, banks must offer high-quality services that live up to client expectations. The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Banking Ombudsman Scheme is an essential tool for resolving complaints and assisting individuals who follow RBI regulations. By making sure banks offer top-notch services, they can draw in clients and preserve a solid reputation in the industry.

Ghosh, D. (2012). The Banking Ombudsman was initially established under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 1995, which was created in accordance with Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. The main goal of adopting this Scheme was to establish a prompt, effective, and affordable venue for the resolution of complaints over subpar banking services. In contrast to the prior systems of 2002 and 1995, and in light of established case law, the researcher has attempted to thoroughly analyse the 2006 Banking Ombudsman Scheme. The researcher will make an effort to propose some suggestions that may enhance the performance of the current system and that have received support in numerous survey results. Finally, he aims to present his assessment of the scheme's effectiveness for the reader to decide.

Ahmad, F., & Konnakattil, N. (2017). The state and its institutions must be run effectively for them to function, especially in the banking industry. The Banking Ombudsman Scheme (BOS) was announced by the Reserve Bank of India in 1995 to offer a well-organized structure for resolving stakeholder complaints and guaranteeing better customer service. Accountability, transparency, dependability, predictability, openness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the system are key components of good governance. Accountability is a big deal in organisations because it ensures objectivity by holding people and institutions accountable for their choices and deeds. The same institution/organization creates policies and oversees their implementation for the current system, calling objectivity into question. It is essential to have independent and diverse entities oversee policy implementation in order to improve public delivery. Customers can report problems with the banking industry to the Banking Ombudsman, an outside organisation. The independence, scope of authority, public accessibility, and productivity of the institution are just a few examples of the aspects that affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the banking Ombudsman.

Kumar, A.S. (2012). The resolution of customer complaints has been increasingly important in recent years, and the RBI is constantly introducing laws to ensure that banks operate efficiently and that customers' complaints are resolved. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established the Banking Ombudsman Scheme in 1995 to quickly address

complaints from bank clients. In 2002 and 2006, the Scheme underwent revisions, respectively. Given that this is a new field of study and there is little existing literature on it, the book "Banking Ombudsman Scheme in India: A Critical Analysis" is particularly pertinent to the current situation. This publication paints a realistic picture of public understanding of the Banking Ombudsman institution. The author's recommendations for the effective implementation of the Scheme are impressive.

Jain, M.P., Naz, S.S., & Mathur, T. (2016). Businesses must put the needs of their customers first in the competitive financial climate of today by providing prompt and efficient services. By giving clients a way to file complaints, the Banking Ombudsman Scheme of the Reserve Bank of India seeks to address customer issues. In the Jaipur district of Rajasthan, a poll of 100 customers revealed that many customers are dissatisfied with bank services as a result of service delays. Only a few people, nevertheless, really register complaints with the Ombudsman. The programme must be made known to customers by banks since it will definitely gain popularity and improve the level of service.

Methodology:

This study used a survey method to investigate on An Empirical Study on Assessing Public Awareness and Understanding of an Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI. Convenient sampling was used to select 110 as participants. Structured questionnaires were prepared to collect data from participants in person.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the collected data, including frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and measures of variability. For testing the Hypothesis Independent T-test, One Way Anova, and Kruskal Wallis test was used by using the SPSS 26 version software

A Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated for the Perception towards Banking Ombudsman scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was evaluated using the guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2018) where $> .9$ excellent, $> .8$ good, $> .7$ acceptable, $> .6$ questionable, $> .5$ poor, and $\leq .5$ unacceptable.

Table 1: Reliability Table

Scale	No. of Items	α
Level of public awareness	2	.768
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	2	0.825
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	3	0.766
Effectiveness of communication channels	2	.703

To ensure ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. The study also adhered to ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human subjects

Result & Finding:

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Counts	% of Total
Female	56	50.9 %
Male	54	49.1 %

The provided data presents the demographic characteristics of the surveyed population. In terms of gender, the survey had slightly more female respondents (50.9%) compared to male respondents (49.1%).

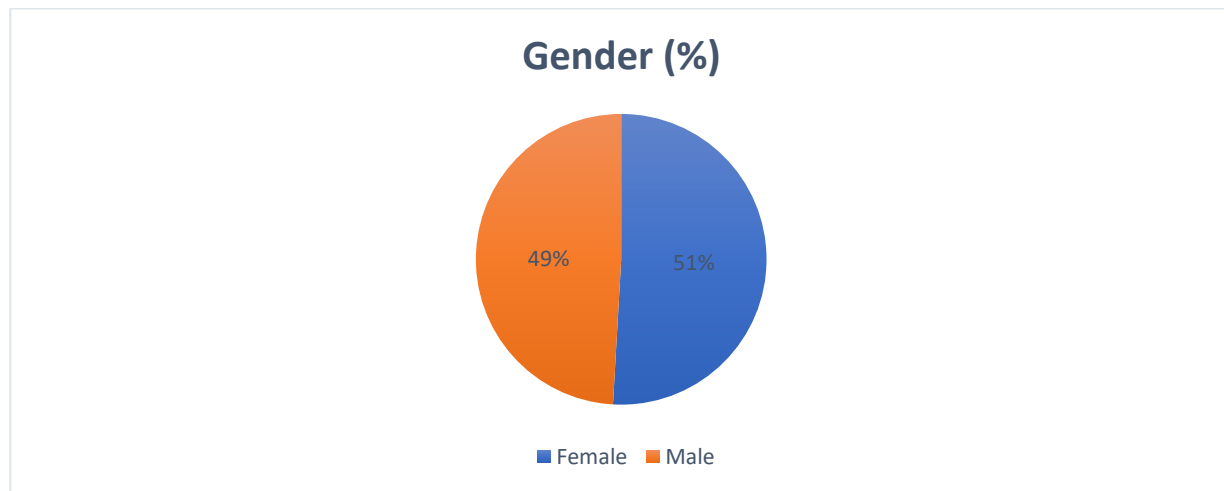


Figure 1: Gender

Table 3: Age

Age	Counts	% of Total
18-24 years	68	61.8 %
25-34 years	12	10.9 %
35-44 years	22	20.0 %
45-54 years	8	7.3 %

When examining age distribution, the largest group consisted of individuals aged 18-24 years, comprising 61.8% of the total respondents. The 25-34 years age group accounted for 10.9% of the respondents, while the 35-44 years and 45-54 years age groups represented 20.0% and 7.3% respectively.

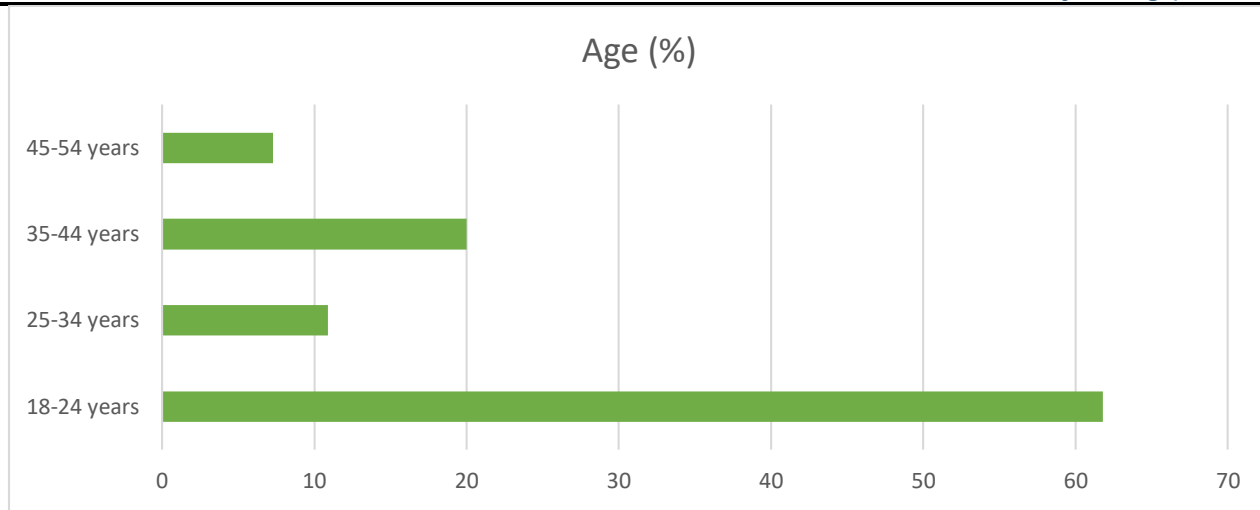


Figure 2: Age

Table 4: Occupation

Occupation	Counts	% of Total
Employed	46	41.8 %
Student	58	52.7 %
Unemployed	6	5.5 %

Looking at occupation, the survey encompassed a diverse range of individuals. The largest occupational group consisted of students, making up 52.7% of the respondents, followed by employed individuals at 41.8%. The remaining respondents identified as unemployed, constituting 5.5% of the total.

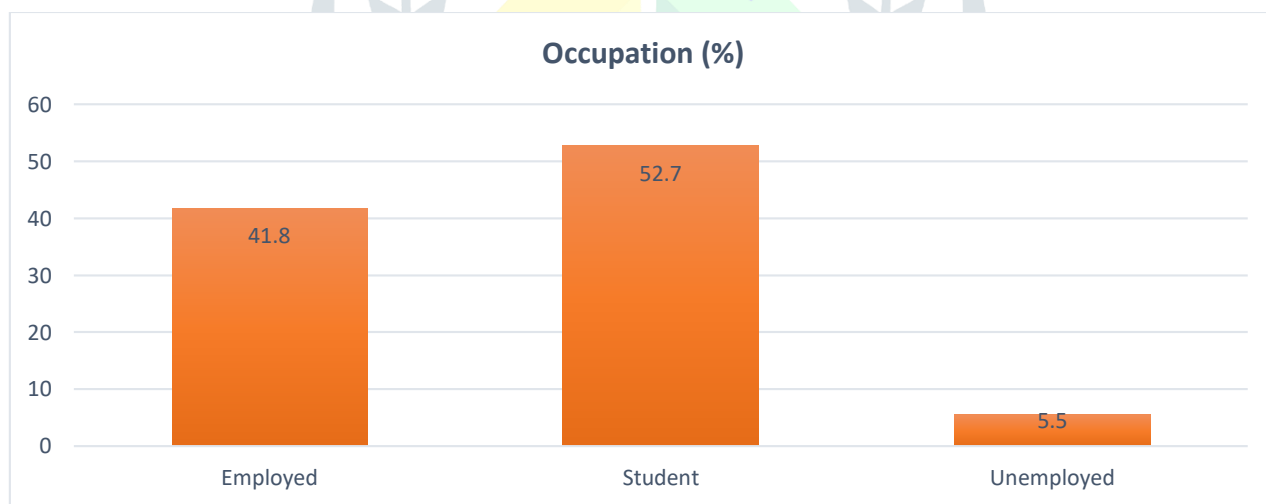


Figure 3: Occupation

Table 5: Educational Qualifications

Educational Qualifications	Counts	% of Total
Bachelor's Degree	14	12.7 %
Doctorate or higher	12	10.9 %
Higher Secondary	46	41.8 %
Master's Degree	36	32.7 %
Primary	2	1.8 %

Considering educational qualifications, the majority of respondents had attained a Higher Secondary qualification (41.8%), followed by Master's Degree holders (32.7%). Bachelor's Degree holders represented 12.7% of the respondents, while individuals with a Doctorate or higher qualification accounted for 10.9%. A small percentage (1.8%) of respondents had completed Primary education.

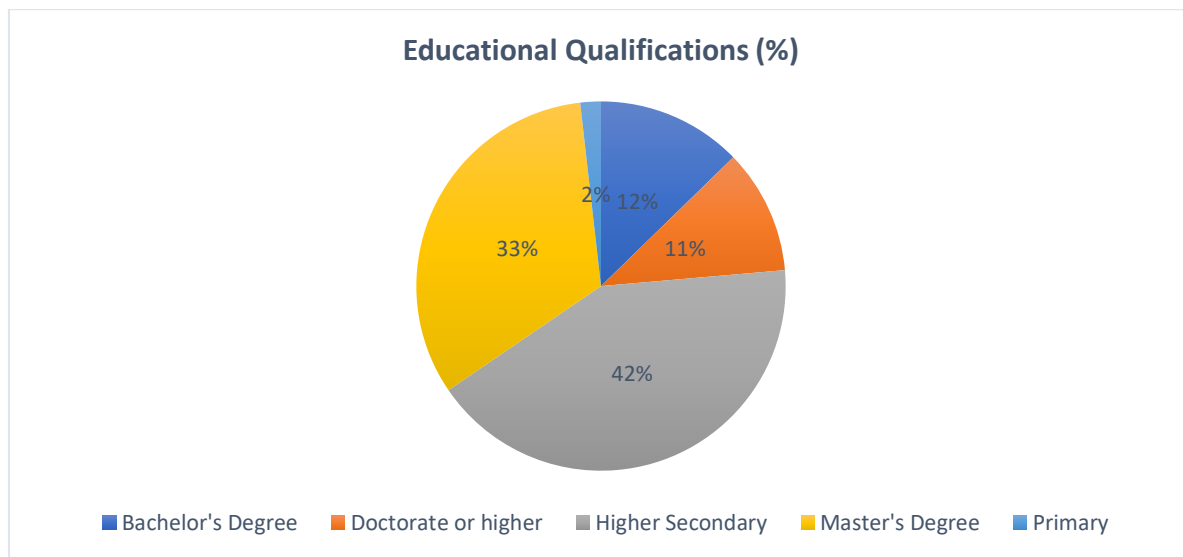


Figure 4: Educational Qualifications

Table 6: To measure the level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI.

How familiar are you with the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme launched by RBI?	Counts	% of Total
Extremely familiar	6	5.5 %
Moderately familiar	16	14.5 %
Not familiar at all	50	45.5 %
Slightly familiar	26	23.6 %
Very familiar	12	10.9 %
How often have you come across information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme in the past year?	Counts	% of Total
Never	58	52.7 %
Occasionally	26	23.6 %
Rarely	24	21.8 %
Very frequently	2	1.8 %

Table 6 presents the data related to the level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The first question asks respondents about their familiarity with the scheme, while the second question examines how often they have come across information about it in the past year.

Regarding familiarity with the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, the data reveals that a significant portion of the respondents (45.5%) reported not being familiar with it at all. Approximately 23.6% of the respondents stated that they were slightly familiar with the scheme, while 14.5% reported being moderately familiar. Only a small percentage (10.9%) claimed to be very familiar with the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, and an even smaller proportion (5.5%) indicated that they were extremely familiar with it.

When asked about encountering information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme in the past year, the majority of respondents (52.7%) reported never coming across such information. Approximately 23.6% stated that they occasionally encountered information about the scheme, while 21.8% reported encountering it rarely. A mere 1.8% of respondents indicated that they came across information about the scheme very frequently.

In conclusion, the data suggests that there is a considerable lack of awareness among the surveyed population regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of RBI. A significant percentage of respondents reported not being familiar with the scheme at all, and a majority had never come across information about it in the past year. These findings highlight the need for increased efforts to promote and disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme to enhance public awareness and understanding of its purpose and benefits.

Table 7: To assess the understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public, including its purpose, scope, and benefits.

How well do you understand the purpose of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	Counts	% of Total
Moderately	16	14.5 %
Not at all	34	30.9 %
Quite well	10	9.1 %
Somewhat	42	38.2 %
Very well	8	7.3 %
Rate your understanding of the scope of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.	Counts	% of Total
Excellent understanding	4	3.6 %
Good understanding	6	5.5 %
Limited understanding	36	32.7 %
Moderate understanding	18	16.4 %
Very limited understanding	46	41.8 %
How aware are you of the benefits provided by the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	Counts	% of Total
Highly aware	4	3.6 %
Moderately aware	22	20.0 %
Not aware at all	66	60.0 %
Slightly aware	16	14.5 %
Very highly aware	2	1.8 %

Table 7 presents data aimed at assessing the understanding of the general public regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, including its purpose, scope, and benefits.

In terms of understanding the purpose of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, the data indicates that a significant portion of respondents (30.9%) reported not understanding it at all. Approximately 38.2% stated that they somewhat understood the purpose, while 14.5% reported a moderate understanding. Only a small percentage (9.1%) claimed to understand the purpose quite well, and an even smaller proportion (7.3%) indicated a very well understanding.

Regarding the understanding of the scope of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, the data shows that a majority of respondents (41.8%) had a very limited understanding. Around 32.7% stated they had limited understanding, while 16.4% reported a moderate understanding. A smaller percentage (5.5%) indicated a good understanding, and only 3.6% claimed to have an excellent understanding of the scheme's scope.

When assessing awareness of the benefits provided by the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, the data reveals that a significant majority of respondents (60.0%) reported not being aware of the benefits at all. Approximately 20.0% stated they were moderately aware, while 14.5% indicated slight awareness. Only a small percentage (3.6%) claimed to be highly aware of the benefits, and an even smaller proportion (1.8%) reported very high awareness.

In conclusion, the data highlights a significant lack of understanding and awareness among the general public regarding the purpose, scope, and benefits of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. A substantial percentage of respondents reported limited or no understanding of these aspects. These findings emphasize the need for enhanced education and communication efforts to improve public knowledge and comprehension of the scheme. It is crucial to provide clear and accessible information about the purpose, scope, and benefits of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme to ensure its effectiveness in addressing grievances and protecting the rights of individuals in the financial sector.

Table 8: To identify the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

How did you first learn about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	Counts	% of Total
Through financial institutions (banks, NBFCs, etc.)	10	9.1 %
Through friends or family	28	25.5 %
Through media channels (newspapers, television, radio, etc.)	42	38.2 %
Through official government channels (websites, notifications, etc.)	30	27.3 %

Which of the following factors do you think contribute to the level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	No (%)	Yes (%)
Public education campaigns	12.7	87.3
Clear communication from RBI	12.7	87.3
Active participation of financial institutions	18.2	81.8
Media coverage	25.5	74.5
Word of mouth	23.6	76.4
Other	25.5	74.5

Table 8 provides insights into the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

Regarding the source of initial awareness about the scheme, the data indicates that the most common source was media channels, with 38.2% of respondents learning about the scheme through newspapers, television, radio, etc. Friends or family played a significant role in disseminating information, as 25.5% of respondents first heard about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme through them. Official government channels, such as websites and notifications, were the source for 27.3% of respondents, while 9.1% learned about the scheme through financial institutions such as banks and NBFCs.

When respondents were asked to identify the factors contributing to the level of public awareness, the data reveals that public education campaigns and clear communication from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) were recognized by a majority of respondents, with 87.3% considering them as contributing factors. Active participation of financial institutions was perceived as a contributing factor by 81.8% of respondents, while media coverage and word of mouth were seen as influential factors by 74.5% and 76.4% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, a significant percentage (25.5%) of respondents identified "other" factors as contributors to public awareness.

In conclusion, the data suggests that media channels play a significant role in initially informing the public about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. However, the results also highlight the importance of various factors in promoting public awareness. Public education campaigns, clear communication from the RBI, active participation of financial institutions, media coverage, and word of mouth were all recognized as influential factors. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive and multi-faceted strategies to enhance public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, including effective communication, collaboration with financial institutions, and

public outreach initiatives. Such efforts can help ensure that individuals are aware of their rights and have access to the appropriate channels for addressing grievances in the financial sector.

Table 9: To evaluate the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

How effective do you find the communication channels used to provide information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	Counts	% of Total
Extremely effective	18	16.4 %
Moderately effective	20	18.2 %
Not effective at all	14	12.7 %
Slightly effective	22	20.0 %
Very effective	36	32.7 %
Which communication channel do you find most helpful in understanding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?	Counts	% of Total
Internet/websites	28	25.5 %
Newspapers/magazines	10	9.1 %
Other	6	5.5 %
Social media	50	45.5 %
Television	16	14.5 %

Table 9 presents data that evaluates the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme and identifies the most helpful communication channel for understanding the scheme.

Regarding the effectiveness of communication channels, the data shows that a significant percentage of respondents found the communication channels to be effective. Approximately 16.4% of respondents rated them as extremely effective, while 18.2% found them moderately effective. Around 20.0% of respondents considered the communication channels slightly effective, and 32.7% rated them as very effective. A smaller proportion of respondents (12.7%) reported that the communication channels were not effective at all.

When asked about the most helpful communication channel for understanding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, the data reveals that social media was perceived as the most helpful by 45.5% of respondents. Internet/websites were considered helpful by 25.5% of respondents, followed by television (14.5%). A smaller percentage of respondents found newspapers/magazines (9.1%) and other communication channels (5.5%) to be the most helpful.

In conclusion, the data suggests that the communication channels used to provide information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme are generally perceived as effective by the respondents. A significant majority found them either extremely, moderately, or very effective. Among the communication channels, social media was identified as the most helpful in understanding the scheme, followed by internet/websites and television. These findings highlight the importance of utilizing a variety of communication channels, including social media platforms, to effectively disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme and enhance public understanding. By leveraging these channels effectively, the RBI and relevant authorities can ensure that individuals have access to the necessary information and resources to engage with the scheme and address their financial grievances.

Testing of hypothesis

1. **H0: There is no statistical significance different between demographic factor and level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of RBI.**

Result:

The hypothesis being tested is that there is no statistical significance difference between demographic factors and the level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of RBI. The analysis includes independent samples t-tests to examine the relationship between various demographic factors and different aspects of public awareness.

The results indicate the following:

1. Level of public awareness: The t-test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.01$) between gender and the level of public awareness. The mean score for males (4.3) is higher than that of females (3.36), suggesting that males have a higher level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.
2. General understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme: The t-test does not show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.516$) between gender and general understanding. Both males (mean = 6.11) and females (mean = 5.75) have similar levels of general understanding.
3. Factors influencing public awareness and understanding: The t-test indicates no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.763$) between gender and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding. Both males (mean = 13.59) and females (mean = 13.71) have similar perceptions of the factors influencing awareness and understanding.
4. Effectiveness of communication channels: The t-test shows no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.989$) between gender and the effectiveness of communication channels. Both males (mean = 5.85) and females (mean = 5.86) perceive the communication channels to be similarly effective.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals a statistically significant difference in the level of public awareness between genders. Males tend to have a higher level of public awareness regarding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme compared to females. However, there is no significant difference between genders in terms of general understanding, factors influencing public awareness and understanding, and the effectiveness of communication channels. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender-specific communication strategies and initiatives to improve public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among females.

		Statistic	df	p		
Level of public awareness	Student's t	-2.6247	108	0.01		
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	Student's t	-0.6516	108	0.516		
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	Student's t	0.3025	108	0.763		
Effectiveness of communication channels	Student's t	0.014	108	0.989		
Group Descriptive						
	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Level of public awareness	Female	56	3.36	2	1.83	0.245

	Male	54	4.3	5	1.92	0.261
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	Female	56	5.75	5	2.99	0.399
	Male	54	6.11	5	2.82	0.384
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	Female	56	13.71	15	2.29	0.305
	Male	54	13.59	14	1.91	0.26
Effectiveness of communication channels	Female	56	5.86	7	1.96	0.262
	Male	54	5.85	6	2.01	0.274

2. H0: There is no statistical significance different between demographic factor and the understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public

Result:

The hypothesis being tested is that there is no statistical significance difference between demographic factors and the understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public. One-Way ANOVA (Welch's) tests are conducted to examine the relationship between demographic factors and different aspects of understanding.

The results indicate the following:

1. Level of public awareness: The One-Way ANOVA test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between age groups and the level of public awareness. The mean scores for different age groups show that the 35-44 years age group (mean = 5.36) has the highest level of public awareness, followed by the 45-54 years age group (mean = 4.75) and the 25-34 years age group (mean = 4.83). The 18-24 years age group (mean = 3.03) has the lowest level of public awareness.
2. General understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme: The One-Way ANOVA test indicates a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) between age groups and general understanding. The mean scores show that the 35-44 years age group (mean = 8) has the highest general understanding, followed by the 45-54 years age group (mean = 6.5) and the 25-34 years age group (mean = 7). The 18-24 years age group (mean = 5) has the lowest general understanding.
3. Factors influencing public awareness and understanding: The One-Way ANOVA test does not show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.098$) between age groups and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding. The mean scores indicate that all age groups have similar perceptions of the factors influencing public awareness and understanding.
4. Effectiveness of communication channels: The One-Way ANOVA test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.016$) between age groups and the effectiveness of communication channels. The mean scores show that the 18-24 years age group (mean = 6.12) perceives the communication channels to be the most effective, followed by the 45-54 years age group (mean = 6.25) and the 35-44 years age group (mean = 5.64). The 25-34 years age group (mean = 4.5) perceives the communication channels to be the least effective.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences in understanding the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among different age groups. The 35-44 years age group tends to have the highest level of public awareness and general understanding, while the 18-24 years age group tends to have the lowest. There are also variations in the perceived effectiveness of communication channels among different age groups. These findings suggest the importance of tailoring communication strategies and educational initiatives to effectively reach

and engage different age groups, particularly targeting younger individuals to improve their understanding and awareness of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

	F	df1	df2	p	
Level of public awareness	16.8	3	21.7	< .001	
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	7.58	3	21.8	0.001	
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	2.37	3	22	0.098	
Effectiveness of communication channels	4.21	3	23.3	0.016	
Group Descriptive					
	Age	N	Mean	SD	SE
Level of public awareness	18-24 years	68	3.03	1.61	0.195
	25-34 years	12	4.83	1.27	0.366
	35-44 years	22	5.36	1.33	0.283
	45-54 years	8	4.75	2.96	1.048
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	18-24 years	68	5	2.53	0.306
	25-34 years	12	7	1.91	0.55
	35-44 years	22	8	2.93	0.624
	45-54 years	8	6.5	3.74	1.323
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	18-24 years	68	14	2.12	0.257
	25-34 years	12	13.83	1.85	0.534
	35-44 years	22	12.82	1.84	0.393
	45-54 years	8	12.75	2.43	0.861
Effectiveness of communication channels	18-24 years	68	6.12	2.07	0.251
	25-34 years	12	4.5	1.31	0.379
	35-44 years	22	5.64	1.71	0.364
	45-54 years	8	6.25	2.05	0.726

3. H0: There is no statistical significance different between demographic factor and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

Result:

The hypothesis being tested is that there is no statistical significance difference between demographic factors and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. One-Way ANOVA (Welch's) tests are conducted to examine the relationship between different demographic factors and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding.

The results indicate the following:

1. Level of public awareness: The One-Way ANOVA test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.002$) between occupations and the level of public awareness. The mean scores show that employed individuals (mean = 4.74) have a higher level of public awareness compared to students (mean = 3.14) and unemployed individuals (mean = 3.33).

2. General understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme: The One-Way ANOVA test indicates a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.023$) between occupations and general understanding. Employed individuals (mean = 6.96) have a higher general understanding compared to students (mean = 5.14) and unemployed individuals (mean = 5.67).
3. Factors influencing public awareness and understanding: The One-Way ANOVA test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.002$) between occupations and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding. Employed individuals (mean = 13.35) perceive more factors influencing awareness and understanding compared to students (mean = 14.24) and unemployed individuals (mean = 10.33).
4. Effectiveness of communication channels: The One-Way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between occupations and the effectiveness of communication channels. Employed individuals (mean = 5.65) perceive the communication channels to be more effective compared to students (mean = 6.17) and unemployed individuals (mean = 4.33).

In conclusion, the analysis reveals statistically significant differences in the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among different occupational groups. Employed individuals tend to have higher levels of public awareness, general understanding, and perceive more factors influencing awareness and understanding. They also perceive the communication channels to be more effective compared to students and unemployed individuals. These findings suggest that occupation plays a role in shaping public awareness and understanding of the scheme. Tailoring communication strategies and educational initiatives to target specific occupational groups can help enhance their awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

	F	df1	df2	p	
Level of public awareness	9.76	2	14.9	0.002	
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	4.96	2	14.7	0.023	
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	10.62	2	13.8	0.002	
Effectiveness of communication channels	15.62	2	33	<.001	
Group Descriptive					
	Occupation	N	Mean	SD	SE
Level of public awareness	Employed	46	4.74	1.914	0.282
	Student	58	3.14	1.691	0.222
	Unemployed	6	3.33	1.366	0.558
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	Employed	46	6.96	3.062	0.451
	Student	58	5.14	2.592	0.34
	Unemployed	6	5.67	2.251	0.919
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	Employed	46	13.35	1.923	0.284
	Student	58	14.24	1.885	0.248
	Unemployed	6	10.33	2.066	0.843
Effectiveness of communication channels	Employed	46	5.65	1.779	0.262
	Student	58	6.17	2.137	0.281
	Unemployed	6	4.33	0.516	0.211

4. H0: There is no statistical significance different between demographic factor and the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

Result:

The hypothesis being tested is that there is no statistical significance difference between demographic factors and the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. The Kruskal-Wallis test is conducted to examine the relationship between different educational qualifications and the effectiveness of communication channels.

The results indicate the following:

1. Level of public awareness: The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between educational qualifications and the level of public awareness. Different educational qualification groups have different mean ranks, suggesting variations in the level of public awareness among them.
2. General understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme: The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.005$) between educational qualifications and general understanding. The mean ranks of different educational qualification groups differ, indicating variations in general understanding across the groups.
3. Factors influencing public awareness and understanding: The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.002$) between educational qualifications and the factors influencing public awareness and understanding. Different educational qualification groups have different mean ranks, indicating variations in the perceived factors influencing awareness and understanding among them.
4. Effectiveness of communication channels: The Kruskal-Wallis test shows a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.014$) between educational qualifications and the effectiveness of communication channels. The mean ranks of different educational qualification groups differ, suggesting variations in the perceived effectiveness of communication channels across the groups.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of communication channels among different educational qualification groups. Different educational qualification groups perceive the communication channels to be differently effective. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring communication strategies and channels based on the educational qualifications of the target audience. By doing so, the dissemination of information about the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme can be more effective and reach different educational qualification groups more efficiently.

	χ^2	df	p		
Level of public awareness	25.3	4	< .001		
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	14.8	4	0.005		
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	16.4	4	0.002		
Effectiveness of communication channels	12.4	4	0.014		
Group Descriptive					
	Educational Qualifications	N	Mean	SD	SE
Level of public awareness	Bachelor's Degree	14	4.57	2.06	0.552
	Doctorate or higher	12	5.33	1.78	0.512
	Higher Secondary	46	2.91	1.66	0.244

	Master's Degree	36	4.28	1.72	0.286
	Primary	2	2	0	0
General Understanding of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme	Bachelor's Degree	14	7.14	3.74	0.999
	Doctorate or higher	12	8.17	3.16	0.911
	Higher Secondary	46	4.74	2.03	0.299
	Master's Degree	36	6.33	2.83	0.471
	Primary	2	4	0	0
Factors influencing public awareness and understanding	Bachelor's Degree	14	14.14	2.32	0.619
	Doctorate or higher	12	12.83	1.11	0.322
	Higher Secondary	46	14.3	1.72	0.254
	Master's Degree	36	12.83	2.42	0.403
	Primary	2	15	0	0
Effectiveness of communication channels	Bachelor's Degree	14	6.43	2.65	0.709
	Doctorate or higher	12	6.5	2.15	0.622
	Higher Secondary	46	6.13	1.94	0.286
	Master's Degree	36	5	1.43	0.239
	Primary	2	7	0	0

Limitation of the study:

The study has several limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small and relied on a convenient sampling method, which limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, introducing the possibility of response bias and inaccuracies. The geographical scope was limited to a specific region, which may not capture variations in awareness and understanding across different areas. The study also relied solely on structured questionnaires, and using multiple data collection methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality or track changes over time. Moreover, the study focused on a few demographic factors, neglecting other important variables. Lastly, the study relied on participants' self-perceived awareness and understanding, which may differ from objective measures. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners, facilitating targeted strategies to enhance public knowledge of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. Future research should address these limitations to gain a more nuanced understanding of public awareness and understanding.

Discussion:

The results of the empirical study provide valuable insights into the public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (IOS) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The findings reveal important information about the level of public awareness, understanding of the scheme's purpose and benefits, factors influencing awareness and understanding, and the effectiveness of communication channels used to disseminate information about the scheme.

Regarding the level of public awareness, the study shows that a significant portion of the surveyed population is not familiar with the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. A substantial percentage of respondents reported not being familiar with the scheme at all, and the majority had never come across information about it in the past year. This indicates a need for increased efforts to promote and disseminate information about the scheme to enhance public awareness and understanding.

Similarly, the study highlights a lack of understanding among the general public regarding the purpose, scope, and benefits of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. A considerable percentage of respondents reported limited or no understanding of these aspects. This signifies the importance of education and communication initiatives to improve public knowledge and comprehension of the scheme's objectives and advantages.

The findings also shed light on the factors influencing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. Media channels, such as newspapers, television, and radio, were identified as the primary source of initial awareness about the scheme. Additionally, public education campaigns, clear communication from the RBI, active participation of financial institutions, media coverage, and word of mouth were recognized as influential factors. These results emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies that involve effective communication, collaboration with financial institutions, and public outreach initiatives to enhance public awareness and understanding.

The study further reveals variations in the effectiveness of communication channels among different demographic groups. The communication channels were generally perceived as effective, with social media being identified as the most helpful channel in understanding the scheme. However, the effectiveness of the communication channels varied across different educational qualification groups. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring communication strategies and channels based on the educational qualifications of the target audience to ensure effective dissemination of information about the scheme.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the empirical study provides significant insights into the public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of the RBI. The findings highlight a considerable lack of awareness and understanding among the surveyed population, indicating the need for enhanced efforts to promote and disseminate information about the scheme.

The study recommends several measures to improve the awareness, understanding, and utilization of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme among the general public. These recommendations include:

1. Increased promotion and awareness campaigns: Public education campaigns should be conducted to raise awareness about the scheme and its benefits. Clear and concise communication materials should be developed to explain the purpose, scope, and advantages of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.
2. Collaboration with financial institutions: Active participation of financial institutions is crucial in disseminating information about the scheme. Financial institutions should be encouraged to educate their customers about the scheme and promote its utilization for grievance redressal.
3. Strengthening communication channels: The findings suggest that social media is an effective communication channel for reaching the general public. The RBI should leverage social media platforms and other relevant communication channels to disseminate information about the scheme widely and engage with the public.
4. Tailoring communication strategies: Communication strategies should be tailored based on demographic factors such as gender, age, occupation, and educational qualifications. This will ensure that the information is effectively conveyed to different target groups, addressing their specific needs and preferences.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of enhancing public awareness and understanding of the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme. By implementing the recommended measures, the RBI can empower individuals to make informed decisions and avail themselves of the scheme's benefits for addressing financial grievances.

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