

A STUDY ON PASSENGER'S SATISFACTION TOWARDS SOUTHERN RAILWAYS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THANJAVUR JUNCTION

Dr. U.PRIYA.

M.Com., M.Phil., DCAcc., Ph.D., Asst. Professor of Commerce,
Bon Secours College for Women, Vilar Bypass Road, Thanjavur.

Abstract-The enlargement of the service sector is an increase in urbanization, privatization and more demand for transitional and final consumer services. Services encompass mostly a set of economic activities like transport, trade, tourism, communication, banking, insurance, real estate, public administration and defence. The activities under the purview of the service sector are quite diverse. The infrastructures including trading, transportation and communication, financial, real estate and business services, community, social and personal services come within the strategy of the service industry.

Transport is an important infrastructure in the economy of India. It assumes a greater role in developing countries since all the sectors of the development are closely dependent upon the existence of suitable transportation network. The whole structure of industry and commerce rests on the well laid foundation of transportation. Thus, an effective transport system is a pre-requisite for economic development of a country. The evident economic growth in India over the last two decades has increased demand for all transport services, particularly land transport through road and rail. The development of railways is one of the landmarks in the progress of human civilization. Therefore, researcher made an attempt to conduct investigation of passenger's satisfaction towards southern railways with special reference to Thanjavur junction.

Key words : Service sector, transportation, communication, economic,

Introduction

Transport or transportation is the movement of people and goods from one location to another. A transport is the solution of displacements of individuals and goods in both time and space. Transports create time utility as well as place utility. Transport is performed by modes, such as air, rail, road, water, cable, pipeline and space. The field can be divided into infrastructure, vehicles, and operations.

Customer satisfaction is a key to the future development of public transport, both in theory and practice. Customer satisfaction has the potential to highlight and explain the link between what a government and company does (in terms of the products and services it offers) and the customer reactions to that. Customer satisfaction relate to how passengers respond to the quality of service that the operator gives them.

Statement of the problem

Railway is one of public transport mode of land transportation. Railways have a key position in society. They are a very old and important phenomenon in the transport system. They also played an important role in the industrialization and development of the modern world. Railways as mass public transport mode have unique characteristics. It can carry passengers in the amount of mass at a relatively less expensive cost. It is also energy efficient, land saving, high safety level, environmentally friendly, comfortable, adaptive to technology development, and free from traffic jam. Those characteristic makes railway primary public transportation.

Customer care and customer service are the subjects being given a lot of importance in the present competitive market in all customer related services. Similarly, the Railways are also equally concerned since the "customer care" is a very important tool in enhancing the image of the organization and thus the market share. The present study highlights the provision of passenger amenities by Indian Railways and passengers perception about it.

In India the population is increasing day by day. So the people are needed transportation to move from one place to another place. So most of the people prefer railway transportation. The railway passengers are facing a lot of problems. The research goes a ride on the problems faced by the passengers.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyses the factors influencing the satisfaction level of the railway passengers
2. To know the passengers' level of satisfaction towards railway service in Thanjavur Junction.
3. To explore the problem faced by the selected sample respondents in Passenger satisfaction under the study area.
4. To analyze the opinions of selected sample passengers of Thanjavur junction on various amenities provided by Southern Railways
5. To suggest such measures and strategies that would go a long way in improving passenger amenities in Thanjavur Junction in particular and Southern Railways in general.

Significance of the study

The importance of evaluating the consumer reactions in transport service cannot be ignored. In all developing countries, transport modes have come to compete with each other and one of the problems being encountered is to achieve inter-model coordination in the overall interest of the economy.

The relationship between the Railways and the consumer is complex in nature and it encompasses not only a large number of rules, but also the various tiers of functioning. The lack of adequate emphasis on meeting the passenger demands is one of the main reasons for the very unsatisfactory conditions of travel experiences in trains. Even in reserved accommodation, there are many defects.

The general areas of complaints are: overcrowding in trains, difficulty in getting reservations for berth and seats, want of cleanliness of compartments and stations, unsatisfactory catering services, overcrowding of platforms, damage and loss of luggage in transit. Along with this, it can be mentioned that the Railways do not have any system of conducting surveys and finding out the complaints and demands of the passengers. If opinion surveys are conducted, and the demands of passengers are understood, it will be possible to meet many of the demands and this would be a step forward in improving the image of the Railways.

In the light of above description the present study is carried out in evaluation of amenities provided by Indian Railways on board the trains and at station in Thanjavur Junction.

Sources of data

The validity of any research depends upon the reliability of the data. The study used both the primary and secondary data.

Sampling techniques and sample size

The researcher is adopted stratified random sampling methods and selected 150 sample from the universe. This study is using Convenience sampling technique.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated based on the objectives of the study.

Null Hypothesis(H₀)

That there is no significant difference between purpose of journey and Type of train.

Alternative

That there is a significant difference between purpose of journey and type of train.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is mainly focused on the satisfaction level of the passengers from the services offered by southern railways.

Every aspect related to railway service like ticket availability, quality of travel, staff behaviour, safety, timing etc are studied at different level of the research.

The sample population is chosen from Thanjavur Junction. The research is mainly conducted to obtain the quality of the service proving by the southern railways.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pedro Cantos, Jose Manuel Pastor and Lorenzo Serrano (2012) analyzed the impacts of the deregulating and restructuring measures in the European Railway sector. They estimate efficiency levels (using a sample with information of 23 European national rail systems from 2001 to 2008) using alternative approaches. They also estimate the effects of the reforms on inefficiency levels and found that the rank obtained are similar, and that the best way to foster an increase in efficiency is always by combining vertical and horizontal reforms in the rail industry.

Johan Holmgren (2013) evaluates the efficiency of public transport operations undertaken in Swedish countries using stochastic frontier analysis with annual data from 1986 to 2009 for 26 Swedish countries. He observed that the cost efficiency as the ratio of minimum cost to observed cost, the overall (average) cost efficiency for the industry fell from 85.7 per cent in the eighties to 60.4 per cent for the period from 2000 to 2009. Possible explanations for the development include increased emphasis on route density as well as higher environmental and safety requirements.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table - 1
OPINION BASED ON PREFERENCE OF RAIL SERVICES

Opinion	Strongly Agree		Agree		Natural		Disagree		Strongly Agree		Total mean value	Mean score	Rank
	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M			
Low Fare	56	280	68	272	24	72	2	4	-	-	628	125.6	1
Comforts	30	150	74	296	46	138	-	-	-	-	584	116.8	3
Speed	36	180	50	200	60	180	4	8	-	-	568	113.6	4
Security	32	160	36	144	56	168	22	44	4	4	520	104	5
Reliability	26	130	54	216	60	180	8	16	2	2	588	117.6	2

• The above table shows that low fare in the majority (125.6 mean score Rank 1) preference for rail service followed by reliability, comfort, speed and security in order.

Table - 2
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS METHOD GETTING TICKETS

S.NO	METHOD OF GETTING TICKETS	NO.OF.RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
1	Ticket Counters	88	58
2	E-Ticketing	52	35
3	Post Office	6	4
4	Vending Machine	4	3
TOTAL		150	100

- Majority 58% of the respondents getting tickets from ticket counters.

Table - 3
OPINION BASED ON DIFFICULTY IN E-TICKETING

S.NO	E-TICKETING	NO OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
1	Services charge	7	27
2	Automatic cancellation of waitlisted tickets	6	23
3	Change in name and boarding station	4	15
4	Connectivity problems	9	35
TOTAL		26	100

- 35% of the respondents opined that the connectivity problem is the difficulty in e-ticketing

Table - 4
OPINION BASED ON THEIR SATISFACTION

Opinion	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Moderate	Dissatisfied	Highly Satisfied
Availability of seats in tatkal	22	54	44	28	2
Reservation counter	36	54	36	20	4

- 36% of the respondents stated that they satisfied the availability of Seats tatkal.
- 36% of the respondents stated that they satisfied the no. of. reservation counters.

Table - 5
OPINION BASED ON PLATFORM AND FACILITIES AT STATION

Opinion	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor	Total	Rank
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	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	Mean Value	Mean score	
Waiting Rooms	22	110	34	136	78	234	14	28	2	2	510	102	3
Cleanliness On Platforms	14	70	62	248	50	150	16	32	8	8	508	101.6	4
Security At Stations & Platform	12	60	36	144	64	192	34	68	4	4	468	93.6	10
Drinking Water Arrangements	20	100	50	200	42	126	38	76	-	-	512	102.4	2
Seating, Fans & Lighting Facility	8	40	58	232	68	204	16	32	-	-	508	101.6	4
Retiring Rooms & Cloak Rooms	4	20	44	176	82	246	20	40	-	-	482	96.4	9
Pay & Use Toilet	4	20	24	96	34	102	58	116	10	10	334	66.8	12
ATM Facility	18	90	42	168	60	180	30	60	-	-	498	99.6	6
Refreshment Food Plazas	6	30	44	176	52	156	44	88	4	4	454	90.8	11
Touch Screen System	12	60	40	160	80	240	18	36	-	-	496	99.2	7
Signage & Coach Indication Board	30	150	26	104	90	270	4	8	-	-	532	106.4	1
Television & Audio	28	140	48	192	32	96	24	48	18	18	494	98.8	8

The above table shows that (majority 106.4 mean score rank 1) of the respondent stated that signage and coach indication boards facilities in the platforms, followed by drinking water arrangements, waiting rooms, cleanliness on platform, and security, fans and lighting facility, ATM facility, touch screen system, television and audio, retiring rooms and clock rooms, security at station and platform in order.

Table – 6
OPINION BASED ON FACILITIES IN TRAIN

Opinion	Excellent		Good		Satisfactory		Poor		Very poor		Total mean value	Mean score	Rank
	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M			
Cleanliness in trains	22	110	38	152	58	174	26	52	6	6	494	98.8	2
Proper maintenance Coaches	12	60	42	168	74	222	18	36	4	4	490	98	3
Security in trains	10	50	38	152	62	186	38	76	10	10	474	94.8	4
Watering arrangements	18	90	32	128	56	168	36	72	8	8	466	93.2	6
Catering services	12	60	22	88	48	144	56	112	12	12	416	83.2	10
Availability of ladies coaches	20	2	20	80	72	216	38	76	-	-	472	94.4	5
Medical assistance during emergencies	6	30	28	112	66	198	42	84	8	8	432	86.4	9
Mobile charging facilities	24	120	16	64	54	162	46	92	10	10	448	89.6	7
Recreation facilities	8	40	24	96	76	228	32	64	10	10	438	87.8	8
Facilities for physically challenged persons	34	170	30	120	68	204	14	28	4	4	526	105.2	1

From the above table it is inferred that majority (105.2 mean score of rank 1) the respondents stated that facilities for physically challenged in trains, followed by cleanliness in trains, proper maintenance of coaches, security in trains, availability of ladies coaches, watering arrangements, mobile charging facilities, recreation facility, medical assistance during emergencies, and catering service in order.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ The numbers of general compartments have to increase in order to reduce the overcrowding in the trains.
- ❖ Increase in the price of ticket will switch the passengers to other mode of transport. So authority has to take necessary step to cut down ticket price.
- ❖ Authority has to provide training and tries to improve the behaviour of the railway staffs so that they has to be more responsive to the passenger
- ❖ Increasing in price of tickets of upper class compartments will make them switch to other alternative say airlines.

CONCLUSION

Customer care means a customer should get a feeling that he/she is being taken care of a part from normal service for which he has paid the charges. It does not mean a mere transport of passenger or goods from one place to another by Railways, but also needs to involve an extra care and concern. The researcher strongly believes that if all the suggestions offered are carried out, the Southern Railways may become an effective instrument of development for the economic welfare of the country. To improve the customer care in Railways, the role of user public and their co-operation play a vital role. The image of Railways depends on its personality, perceptions of the passengers and the quality of the products or services offered.

In the present scenario there are many facilities available to develop the railway junction and also a railway department. So the researcher found that the most of the respondents are interested to given valuable suggestions and ready give support to the railway department to develop their service provide to their passengers. Finally, the researcher concludes that the railway department and railway authorities should take a necessary action to develop and rectifying the problems faced by the passengers.

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