

A Study on Passengers' Satisfaction towards Railway Services in Kerala

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ABSTRACT: *We live in a fast growing world, where the means of travelling is also developing in a speedy way. In all parts of the world, travel operators are competing with each other for giving better facilities to their passengers. Indian Railway is one of the largest rail networks in the world. It was the world's second largest transport organization under one management. It provides the most convenient and economical mode of transportation to millions of people in the country. Freight transport is the area where railways reap huge amount of income. Operations of Indian Railways have direct impact on passengers as it directly affects the income generation. Thiruvananthapuram division is a passenger oriented division and earns greater revenue through passenger transit. In order to provide customized services, it is essential to understand the expectations and perceptions of the passengers with regard to quality of services offered by the rail system. Thus, this study takes into account the satisfaction of daily passengers towards the various services offered by the Indian Railway. The primary source includes data collected through structured questionnaire from 100 passengers in Mavelikkara of Thiruvananthapuram division of Southern Railway.*

KEYWORDS: *Indian Railway, Passenger Satisfaction, Daily Passengers, Services.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Transport or Transportation is the movement of people, animals and goods from one location to another. The different modes of transport include air, rail, road, water, cable, pipeline and space. Transport infrastructure consists of the fixed installations including roads, railways, airways, waterways, canals, pipelines and terminals such as airports, railway stations etc. Transportation infrastructure assumes a great in developing countries since all the sectors of the economy are closely dependent upon the existence of suitable transportation network. It contributes to the development and growth of the economy.

Indian Railways is a state owned enterprise, owned and operated by the Government of India through the Ministry of Railways. The rail transport in the country began in the mid 19th century. Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR) built the country's first railway. The first train in the Indian sub-continent ran over a stretch of 21 miles from Bombay to Thane. The first passenger train steamed out of Howrah station destined for Hooghly, a distance of 24 miles on 15th august 1854. Indian Railway was nationalized in 1951 making it as a monopolist in the country. In 2014-15, IR had revenues of 1634.50 billion, which consists of 1069.27 billion from freight, and 402.80 billion from passenger transit.

The Southern Railway headquartered at Chennai, Tamil Nadu is one of the earliest zones of Indian Railways. It was formed in 14 April 1951 by merging three state railways. It has the following divisions: Chennai, Madurai, Thiruchirappalli, Salem, Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram. Southern zone covers the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry & small portions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The UNESCO's world heritage site i.e. Nilgiri Mountain Railway is under this zone. Kerala's major railway stations are TVC, Quilon Junction, Kayamkulam Junction, Chengannur, Kottayam, Ernakulam Junction & Town, Calicut, Shornur Junction, Kannur, Palakkad Junction, Thrissur, and Alappuzha. Thiruvananthapuram Central (TVC) is the busiest station in the state.

Services Provided In Indian Railways

- (i) Reservation/Booking and Refunding of Tickets.
- (ii) Enquiry and Dissemination of information.
- (iii) Catering Services
- (iv) Passenger Amenities
- (v) Public Grievances Redressal
- (vi) Assistance & Compensation in case of Accidents & Unusual Occurrences

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The studies conducted by various persons and their valuable findings and suggestions are included here:

Anand K Sharma & Mathew J Manimala (2007)¹ outlined that there were external as well as internal causes for the declining performance of Indian Railways through their study named, Sustainability of the Indian Railways Turnaround: A Stage Theory Perspective. They found that the competition from the road and air was increasing and the financial support from the central Government is not adequate.

Vimal Kumar & Jitin P (2015) in their study, A Study on Passengers' Satisfaction towards Railway services with reference to Coimbatore Junction concluded that the service quality could be enhanced through proper and effective maintenance. The perception of the passengers should be considered while formulating policies and implementing the plans.

Christoph Wolff (2001) summarized that the areas of manufacturing and catering have to separate from its core business of freight customers and passenger services and thereby IR can concentrate more on the passengers.

Nick Thijs and Patrick Staes (2008) suggests that a good platform is required for the exchange of views, experiences and good practices to improve the performance, competitiveness and quality of Indian Railway.

Arpita Mukherjee and Ruchika Sachdeva (2004) suggest framing a National Railway Policy in order to restructure the sector and thereby the existing unutilized resources are able to put to its full potential. In their study named, Trade in Land Transport Services: Railways – the study found that India has enormous export potential in maintenance and repair of rail transport equipment and supporting services.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

We live in a fast growing world, where the means of travelling is also developing in a speedy way. In all parts of the world, travel operators compete each other for giving better facilities for their passengers. It was because in the present world the customers are treated as King. Therefore, the travel operators try their level best to satisfy their customers. Service quality is the perception of customer towards a product or service delivered by a firm. "Quality in a product or service is not what you put into it, it is what the client or customer gets out of it" – Peter F Drucker. India's transport industries have structured with a mixed pattern of public & private sector ownership. Indian Railway is the monopoly of the Government of India. The railway network in India is the largest one in Asia. Indian Railway passenger services were one of the largest passenger services in the world. The aim of which is to serve the public by providing maximum comfort during the journey.

The Southern Railway headquartered at Chennai, Tamil Nadu is one of the 16 zones of Indian Railway. Thiruvananthapuram division is a passenger oriented division & earns greater revenue through passenger transit. In Kerala, the relationship between the railway & the growth of IT sector is inevitable, especially in the cities of Ernakulam & Trivandrum. However, in most of the times passengers are struggling very hard to reach their destination because of the irresponsibility, which comes from the side of railway authorities. It is essential for an organization to know where they stand in terms of customer perception in order to make necessary changes to be efficient and competitive. Customer satisfaction is what guarantees the future of Indian Railways & it is achievable only by matching the rail passengers' needs with the service. This project takes into account the problems faced by daily passengers' rather than occasional passengers. To offer customized services, it is essential to understand the expectations & perceptions of the passengers with regard to quality of services offered by the rail system. The project study entitled 'A Study on Passengers' Satisfaction towards Railway Services in Kerala' is an attempt to find passengers' satisfaction on services offered by the rail system.

Objectives Of The Study

- (i) To analyze the factors influencing the satisfaction level of the daily railway passengers.
- (ii) To know whether the passengers are satisfied with the services provided by Railway particularly in Thiruvananthapuram Division of Southern Railway.
- (iii) To explore the problems faced by the daily railway passengers.
- (iv) To offer suggestions to improve the level of satisfaction of the rail passengers in Kerala.
- (v) To review the facilities provided to the passengers.
- (vi) To assess the service were adequate and effectively maintained or not, from the point of passenger satisfaction.

Significance Of The Study

Kerala is one of the most advanced states in India. One of the most preferred means of conveyance in the state is Railway. Railway is the most suitable mode of transportation for reaching long distances as compared with the road transportation in the state. It was because that the road transportation in Kerala creates more problems due to undeveloped road systems. Many of the times, political & religious celebrations also

create traffic unrest in the roads. Road transport is a major source of air pollution that harms human health & the environment. Vehicles' emit a range of pollutants including nitrogen oxides & particulate matter. The level of these pollutants in the atmosphere is high in urban areas due to the increasing number of vehicles. Thus, the urban populations are exposed to various breathing problems. Railway provides cheaper transportation charges as compared with other modes of transportation in the state. Therefore, the people prefer to travel in trains. Though the railway authorities promise so many facilities for the passengers every year, it is an open truth that they are not getting any of these things in its full sense. Under such a context, it is better for us to know the real fact about the passenger's opinion towards railway services.

Scope Of The Study

The study mainly focused on the satisfaction level of the daily passengers from the services offered by southern railways. Daily passenger is someone who travels for various purposes by train every day. Every aspect related to railway services like ticket availability, quality of travel, staff behavior, safety, timing etc is analyzed at different levels of the research. This study is therefore to obtain the satisfaction of the customers towards the railway services.

Methodology

This is an empirical research based on survey method. The present study is restricted to Thiruvananthapuram Division of Southern Railway. The data is obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data: The primary source includes the data collected from 100 passengers through structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data: It includes the data collected from – IRTC website, Research Papers, Online Journals, Newspaper and Internet.

Sampling Technique

Convenient random sampling method is used in this study. By using this technique, data be obtained from 100 respondents.

Universe

The population for the study is daily passengers from the Thiruvananthapuram division in Kerala. Sample of 100 respondents from Thiruvananthapuram division have selected by using convenience-sampling method.

Period Of Study

The study was conducted across Thiruvananthapuram division during November 2015 to February 2016.

IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The opinion of the passengers' is collected through a structured questionnaire. The respondents gave their responses on a five point- Likert Scale.

TABLE 1 Age & Gender wise classification of Respondents

| | | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| AGE | Below 30 | 38 | 38% |
| | 30 -39 | 26 | 26% |
| | 40 – 49 | 19 | 19% |
| | 50 – 59 | 12 | 12% |
| | 60 & Above | 5 | 5% |
| | TOTAL | 100 | 100% |
| GENDER | Male | 56 | 56% |
| | Female | 44 | 44% |
| | TOTAL | 100 | 100% |

TABLE 2 Opinion Regarding Ticket Fares

| | | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| Opinion regarding ticket fare | Very high | 12 | 12% |
| | High | 0 | 0 |
| | Moderate | 16 | 16% |
| | Low | 52 | 52% |
| | Very low | 20 | 20% |

TABLE 3 Opinions about Punctuality of Trains

| Factor | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Moderate | Dissatisfied | Highly Dissatisfied |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| Punctuality of Trains | 4% | 8% | 16% | 20% | 52% |

TABLE 4 Opinion Regarding Trains

| Sl. No. | Factors | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Moderate | Dissatisfied | Highly Dissatisfied |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1 | No. of unreserved coaches in trains | 0 | 20% | 28% | 36% | 16% |
| 2 | Adequacy of no. of trains | 4% | 12% | 24% | 40% | 20% |
| 3 | Fare in relation to comforts | 8% | 15% | 20% | 41% | 16% |

TABLE 5 Opinion Regarding Basic Amenities at Railway Station

| Sl. No. | Basic Amenities | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Moderate | Dissatisfied | Highly Dissatisfied |
|---------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Cleanliness | 6% | 8% | 18% | 48% | 20% |
| 2 | Security | 0 | 12% | 28% | 32% | 28% |
| 3 | Drinking Water Facility | 4% | 16% | 24% | 26% | 30% |
| 4 | Waiting Room | 4% | 20% | 32% | 16% | 28% |
| 5 | Pay & Use Toilets | 0 | 0 | 16% | 52% | 32% |

TABLE 6 Opinion Regarding Amenities in Trains

| Sl. No. | Amenities | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Moderate | Dissatisfied | Highly Dissatisfied |
|---------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Cleanliness | 0 | 4% | 12% | 52% | 32% |
| 2 | Maintenance of Coaches | 0 | 4% | 16% | 52% | 28% |
| 3 | Catering Service | 0 | 16% | 48% | 20% | 16% |
| 4 | Water Facility | 0 | 8% | 16% | 52% | 24% |
| 5 | No. of Ladies Coaches | 0 | 12% | 16% | 40% | 32% |
| 6 | Facilities for Physically Challenged | 0 | 12% | 20% | 40% | 28% |
| 7 | Mobile Charging Facility | 0 | 0 | 24% | 44% | 32% |

V. FINDINGS

The major findings of this study are as follows:

It was found that around 56% of the respondents are travelling in the train for employment purposes and about 72% of them are using passenger trains for the journey. It was clear from this that the people prefer rail services to other modes of transport due to the low-ticket fares. Among this people prefer passenger trains to superfast and express trains.

52% of the passengers are highly dissatisfied with the punctuality of trains as they are not able to reach their destination timely. With accelerating pace in modernization, a traveler expects enhanced amenities from Railways. However, in reality it was found that people are dissatisfied with the amenities available at the station and in trains. Around 48% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the cleanliness in the station & 52% in the train. 30% of the respondents are of the opinion that the drinking water facility both at the station and in the train is not sufficient. The facilities of waiting room for the passengers are moderate (32%). The condition of pay & use toilets is very pathetic. 52% are dissatisfied with the facility as in most of the stations it was poorly maintained. 40% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the number of women coaches in train. The facilities available for the physically challenged passengers are not sufficient and about 40% are dissatisfied with it.

Apart from this, the respondents also gave their opinion regarding handling of complaints and behavior of railway employees. 52% of the respondents suffered from public nuisance in the train & 48% of them suffered from seat cornering. All the affected persons have lodged complaints through various modes. The authorities acknowledged 35% of the complaints and the corrective actions have taken in respect of it. About 36% of the respondents are of the opinion that the behavior of the railway employees is moderate.

VI. SUGGESTION

Based on present study, the following suggestion had made to improve the services of the Indian Railways. It is found that majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the services provided by the Indian Railway. The Ministry of Railways has to initiate various measures to improve the services by properly scrutinizing the grievances of the passengers regularly. It must take necessary steps to increase the number of unreserved compartments during peak times. The trains must be punctual and the construction works should be carried out without affecting the timing of trains especially during day times. Speakers must be installed properly at the platforms. Toilets should be properly maintained both at the station and in the train. Further steps

should adopt to ensure cleanliness at the station & in the trains to maximize the satisfaction level of passengers. The introduction of more ticket vending machines at the busiest station relieves the passengers' rush in the platform.

Limitations Of The Study

- The time of the study is limited.
- The research area is also limited.
- The number of respondents was limited to 100.

VII. CONCLUSION

The contribution of this study is the identification of factors that determine passenger satisfaction with the quality of services provided by the southern railways.

With increasing demand of service, the railway authorities had failed to take necessary initiatives for the betterment of the passengers as well as in the improvement of services to the passengers. Although huge number of passengers of different income groups has depended on this sector for travel purposes, there is an urge for further improvement of the overall services, so that more passengers may be attracted to this service. Customers are the real kings in the present world. Study had conducted to know their perception and opinions. It had found that customers are not highly satisfied with the services in the Indian Railways. If the suggestions had considered positively, then it would create a healthy environment to the passengers and Indian Railways too.

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