

A Study On Passenger Satisfaction Of Preference For Train Travel In Thoothukudi District

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Abstract

Indian rail transport is a well-organised system than any other form of transport. This research mainly focuses on the passenger satisfaction of preference for train travel in Thoothukudi district. The field study has the following objectives.

1. To study the socio-economic outline of the passengers.
2. To understand the purposes and preference of travel
3. To analyse the reasons for selecting train travel
4. To identify the awareness of timings of the trains and nature of train ticket booking and
5. To examine the satisfaction of preference for train travel

The source of study is based on primary data collected among 150 passengers in and around Thoothukudi district. The sampling design of the study is based on the random sampling method. The survey period covers from April 2019 to June 2019 for primary data collection. The secondary data are to be collected from published, unpublished reports, handbooks, action plan, pamphlets, journals, books, website and magazines have also to be used. The data to be collected from primary and secondary sources is to be analyse with the help of some statistical tools like average, percentages, standard deviation, 't' test, Garrett's ranking techniques etc. It reveals that a large number of travellers preferred train journey for employment, who constitute 40.00 per cent of total passengers who are closely followed by 18.00 per cent who travelled on account of personal reasons. Passengers constituting 15.33 per cent of the total expressed that business purpose and for 12.00 per cent of passengers the trip was education. This is clearly followed by 8.67 per cent of passengers to pleasure tourism that was their primary purpose and only six per cent of passengers were pilgrims. This study concluded the passengers feel comfortable in a train travelling totally this study was evaluating the passenger's satisfaction towards the railway. Passengers expect the quality of services from Indian Railways. Railways efforts in implementing enriched facilities for the passengers can be performed only through the knowledge of key factors having able to increase their satisfaction.

Keywords: Indian Railways, employment, national income, reliability, transport network.

INTRODUCTION

Indian Railways is the backbone of our nation's transportation. The Indian service sector has witnessed a major boom and is one of the major contributors to both employment and national income in recent times. According to Indian Railways (2010-11), 25 % of the GDP is contributed by the service sector (24.3%) (Raghuram and Rachana Gangwar, 2008).

In order to measure how customers perceive about the quality of public transport, there are some evidence from the literature that customers (passengers) perceive: that reliability, timing, frequency and fare, cleanliness and comforts, transport network and coverage which also includes the stoppages, safety issues and information system are considered to be important factors in order to evaluate the service quality (Tyrinopoulos, Y. and C. Antoniou, 2008).

Indian Railways is the best economical transportation that is suitable for long-distance travelling and movement of bulk cargos. Having said this, Southern Railways is considered to be one of the best zones in the Indian Railways. The Indian Railways are considered as central nerve system of our nation, plays an important role in the industrialization and development of the modern world.

From the inception of this service, customers are expected better service from the service providers. The utility is the wants satisfying factor, the railways are compelled to deliver what the services which are enriched and satisfying the customers' needs. The modern market is highly competitive, innovative and also customers are conscious of the market situation.

In this scenario, Indian railways are to be self-equipped to compete with the delivery of its services. Unfortunately, the customers are not satisfied with the quality and value of the services they received viz. the lack safety, late delivery, incompetent service personnel, inconvenience service hours, complicated procedures, long queues and host of other problems etc.

Indian rail transport is a well-organized system than any other form of transport. It offers fixed, regular routes and schedules. Passengers prefer this mode of transport on the ground that its safety, minimum accident rates. In order to meet the large volume of passengers, rail transportation is necessary and it stands for the overall development of our nation.

However, public transport still remains the primary mode of transport for most of the people and India's public transport systems are among the most heavily utilized in the world. This study mainly aims in understanding the passenger satisfaction of preference for train travel in terms of service offered by the Southern Railways in Thoothukudi district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The field study has the following objectives

1. To study the socio-economic outline of the passengers.
2. To understand the purposes and preference of travel
3. To analyse the reasons for selecting train travel
4. To identify the awareness of timings of the trains and nature of train ticket booking and
5. To examine the satisfaction of preference for train travel

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Thoothukudi city is known as the pearl city of India'. Thoothukudi city is a suitable place for the study due to the availability of people with all types of educational background. The source of study is based on primary data collected among 150 passengers in and around Thoothukudi district. The sampling design of the study is based on the random sampling method. Primary data and secondary data have been used for the study in order to understand the impact of service quality on passenger satisfaction towards the Southern Railways. The survey period covers from April 2019 to June 2019 for primary data collection. The secondary data are to be collected from published, unpublished reports, handbooks, action plan, pamphlets, journals, books, website and magazines have also to be used. The data to be collected from primary and secondary sources is to be analyse with the help of some statistical tools like average, percentages, standard deviation, 't' test, Garrett's ranking techniques etc.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nair. K. Sanal et al., (2014), mainly focused on the perception of passengers towards the level of satisfaction of services provided by Indian railways and determine the level to which passengers are satisfied with the service. To find out the significance of the association between the demographics and the variables F test was used. The experience varied significantly from one respondent to another which indicates their difference in experiences. The study concluded that Indian railways should not be privatized.

Vishnuvarthan S. and Dr A. Selvaraj (2012), suggested that provision of water vending machines, pay and use toilets, good retiring rooms with modern furniture, effective lightning, platform shelters at stations, enquiry counters and signage are to be provided effectively to fulfil the requirements of the railway passengers. The Indian Railway can satisfy their passengers when the services being offered are performed above their expectation. Mr P.Vimal Kumar, Mr Jitin.P (2014), found that there is a need for integration of passengers

concerns in the railway operations, planning and other processes that will have a good impact on the services offered. The study addressed that passenger concerns are to be handled effectively and monitor the maintenance and create good quality services.

Dr Kalpana Dabe (2012) reviews the ticket booking facilities provided to the passengers on trains. The survey assesses the facilities provided on trains were adequately and effectively maintained or not. It identifies the service priority areas so as to improvement are to be discharged thereby optimize passenger satisfaction. It also assesses the overall travel experience of the passengers in the Indian railways and their perception of the organization. Laura Eboli and Gabriells Mazzulla (2012) identified that passenger's service quality factors are better to understand the overall picture of railways performance. If not at all satisfy passengers, Railways will assess their satisfaction which helps in preparing better investment plans and improving service quality.

Rajeshwari and Tamilchelvi (2014) stated that railways as energy-efficient transport mode ideally suited for long-distance travel as well as perfectly suited for bulk mode of transport Indian railways offer many services; the preferences and needs of the passengers are dynamic.

Sheeba and Kumuthadevi (2015) stated in their article as passenger satisfaction is one of the influencing factors with regard to the service quality of southern railways. Compared to the other transportation, Indian railways are a convenient mode of transportation affordable etc. the passengers really depend on rail mode of transportation with many of reason of which safety, convenience and economy service factors of railways are prominent. The study analysed those facility factors including amenities provided south Indian railways and its variables to determine the satisfaction of the passengers.

Anuradha (2014) stated in their article that Indian railway system is suitable for the all (upper, middle, lower) class peoples because fair is moderate compared to other transport. Railways also provide services goods, vehicles transferred from one place to another place because people get more benefited.

Vimal kumar and Jitin (2015) stated in their article that Indian railway is one of the largest and busiest rail networks in the world, transporting sixteen million passengers and more than one million tons of freight daily. A study of the service quality address passengers concerns more effectively and at the same time it also effectively monitor the creation and maintenance of good quality services.

ANALYSIS OF DATA INTERPRETATION

The data collected are analysed and tabulated for easy understanding and good presentation. Tables, percentage, and averages, assist to analyse the data efficiently.

TABLE 1
GENDER DETAILS OF SAMPLE PASSENGERS

SL.NO	Sex	No of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Male	106	70.67
2.	Female	44	29.33
	Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary data

The above table 1 reveals that 70.67 percent of the sample passengers are males and 29.33 percent of the sample passengers are females.

TABLE 2
AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE PASSENGERS

SL.NO	Age in years	No of Passengers	Percentage
1.	20-29	36	24.00
2.	30-39	17	11.33
3.	40-49	25	16.67
4.	50 and above	72	48.00
	Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary data

The above table 2 reveals that 24.00 percent of the sample passengers are 20-29 age groups, 11.33 percent of the sample passengers are 30-39 age groups and 16.67 percent of the sample passengers are 40-49 age groups. 48.00 percent of the sample passengers are above 50 age groups.

TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE SAMPLE PASSENGERS

SL.NO	Education	No of Passengers	Percentage
1	Illiterate	21	14.00
2.	Primary	34	22.67
3.	High School	52	34.67
4.	College	29	19.33
5.	Technical	14	9.33
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

Out of the 150 beneficiaries, 21 persons (14.00%) are illiterate, 34 beneficiaries (22.67%) are completed their primary school level. 52 persons (34.67%) have completed their high school education, 29 persons (19.33%) have finished a degree and 14 people (9.33%) have finished technical level education.

TABLE 4
MARITAL STATUS OF SAMPLE PASSENGERS

SL.NO	Marital Status	No of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Married	118	78.67
2	Unmarried	32	21.33
	Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary data

The above table 4 shows that 78.67 percent of the sample passengers are married and 21.33 percent of the sample passengers are unmarried.

TABLE 5
OCCUPATION OF THE SAMPLE PASSENGERS

SL. No.	Occupation	No. of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Government employee	21	14.00
2.	Working private concern	39	26.00
3.	Self-employed professionals	16	10.67
4.	Own business	23	15.33
5.	Housewife/ Students	27	18.00
6.	Retired from service/ Unemployed	15	10.00
7.	Farmer	9	6.00
	Total	150	100

Source: Primary data.

It is inferred from Table 5 that 40.00 per cent of the passengers are from salaried class, followed by 18.0 per cent of the passengers who were from the housewives/student community whereas business class passengers constitute 15.33 per cent. Self-employed professionals, retired persons, farmers are mere 10.67 per cent, 10.00 per cent, and 6.00 per cent respectively. It unfolds that the salaried class passengers occupy the number one slot in utilizing the railway service among others.

TABLE 6
PURPOSES OF TRAVEL

S. No.	Purposes of Travel	No. of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Employment	60	40.00
2.	Business	23	15.33
3.	Personal	27	18.00
4.	Pleasure Tourism	13	8.67
5.	Education	18	12.00
6.	Pilgrimage	9	6.00
Total		150	100

Source: Primary data.

Table 6 reveals that a large number of travellers preferred train journey for employment, who constitute 40.00 per cent of total passengers who are closely followed by 18.00 per cent who travelled on account of personal reasons. Passengers constituting 15.33 per cent of the total expressed that business purpose and for 12.00 per cent of passengers the trip was education. This is clearly followed by 8.67 per cent of passengers to pleasure tourism that was their primary purpose and only six per cent of passengers were pilgrims.

TABLE 7
REASONS FOR SELECTING TRAIN TRAVEL

S. No.	Reasons for selecting train travel	Average Score	Rank
1.	Sleeping comfort	67.91	III
2.	Overall comfort	48.65	VIII
3.	Advance Reservation	50.09	VII
4.	Speed	54.63	VI
5.	Seating comfort	63.84	IV
6.	Station facility	45.62	IX
7.	Convenient travel	72.23	I
8.	Less frequency of accidents	61.79	V
9.	Low fare	69.55	II
10.	Disabled comfort	34.58	X

Source: Primary data.

Table 7 records the priority reasons for selecting train travel by the sample passengers. By using Garrett’s score the first rank assigned to convenient travel followed by the low fare. The third and fourth prioritised problems were sleeping comfort and seating relaxation. The

fifth rank was given to the reason of less frequency of accidents followed by speed, advance reservation, overall comfort, station facility and disabled comfort respectively.

TABLE 8
AWARENESS OF TIMINGS OF THE TRAINS

S. No.	Awareness of timings	No. of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Yes	94	62.67
2.	No	36	24.00
3.	No opinion	20	13.33
Total		150	100

Source: Primary data.

Table 8 shows that of the 150 passengers 94 who constitute 62.67 per cent of the total knew their train timings and 36 passengers constituting 24.00 per cent of the sample size were not aware of the train timings. Only 20 passengers who constitute a minimal percentage of 13.33 of the total had no opinion about the timing of their trains.

TABLE 9
NATURE OF TICKET BOOKING

S. No.	Nature of ticket booking	No. of Passengers	Percentage
1.	Booking counter	114	76.00
2.	By Agent	13	8.67
3.	Internet	10	6.67
4.	Booking counter and by Agent	6	4.00
5.	Booking counter and By Internet	5	3.33
6.	Booking counter, Agent and by Internet	2	1.33
Total		150	100

Source: Primary data.

From Table 9, it is understood that of the total 114 passengers who constitute 76.00 per cent of the sample passengers purchased their tickets across the counter. Only 13 passengers constituting 8.67 per cent had the habit of booking tickets through agents. Ten passengers (6.67%) preferred booking internet for train tickets.

TABLE 10
SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN SATISFACTION OF PREFERENCE FOR TRAIN TRAVEL BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

Marital status	N	Mean	S.D	't' Value	Interpretation
Married	118	32.59	13.57	0.5219	Not Significant
Unmarried	32	8.14	4.68		

Source: Computed from Primary Data

In order to find out the significant difference in satisfaction of preference for train travel among the sample passengers based on marital status, the 't' value calculated, and the calculated 't' value was found to be 0.5219 which is lower than the table value 1.97 which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is no significant difference in satisfaction of the preference for train travel between marital statuses of the sample passengers.

CONCLUSION

Railway has been an important role in the Indian travelling systems. It is suitable all passengers based on this study gender, age, marital status and occupation. This study concluded the passengers feel comfortable in a train travelling totally this study was evaluating the passenger's satisfaction towards the railway. Passengers expect the quality of services from Indian Railways. Railways efforts in implementing enriched facilities for the passengers can be performed only through the knowledge of key factors having able to increase their satisfaction.

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