

## FONDNESS OF PASSENGERS TOWARDS SOUTHERN RAILWAYS WITH REFERENCE TO TIRUCHENDUR RAILWAY STATION

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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. Goods 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. Madurai 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 120 passengers in Tiruchendur of Madurai division of Southern Railway.

**Keywords:** Indian Railway, Passenger Satisfaction, Daily Passengers, Services

### INTRODUCTION:

Transport is the movement of people, goods, and animals from one location to another. Transport is vital one because it enables trade between persons, which is essential for the development of civilizations. Transport is a key necessity for specialization allowing production and consumption of products to occur at different locations. Economic growth has always been dependent on the increasing capacity and rationality of transport. Commerce requires the transport of people to conduct business, either to allow face-to-face communication for important decisions or to move specialists from their regular place of work to sites where they are needed.

### RAILWAY TRANSPORT IN INDIA

There are different modes of transport in the world like land ways, water ways, and airways. Railways and Roadways are the indispensable means of transportation over land. Railways have an advantage over roadways that they can carry many passengers as well as heavy loads to a long distance. Railways are ideally suited for long distance travel and movement of bulk commodities. Indian Railways, a historical legacy, is a vital force in Indian economy. Spanning nearly two centuries Indian Railways has been serving the country with utmost pride. Also, the journey by train is more comfortable and economical. India has a large network of railways throughout the country, and has trains from one corner to another corner of India.

Railways are also important of the country. In case of emergency the railways transport arms, ammunition and men from one part of the country to the other part. In case of famine, floods, epidemics and other disasters, the railways carry food and medicines quickly to the part of the country, where they are needed. Modern railways are a bottle green transport alternative when the trains and infrastructures

are heavily utilized. Generally, modern railways, which is more energy efficient, has substantially less ecological impacts on water and air, and is less expensive to build than other transport modes. Modern and well-run railways often offer significant environmental, land-use, and capital investment benefits. Modern railways are usually more energy efficient than road transport and much more environment friendly because they have lower emissions per traffic unit (passenger/kilometer or ton/kilometer) than nearly any other mode. It is always in forefront during national emergency. Many of the world's railways are electrified, which can reduce emissions associated with rail transport, depending on the energy source used to generate the electricity.

For one and a half century, the Indian Railways has been the principal mode of transport in India. Indian Railways (IR) has been the prime mover of the nation and has the distinction of being the largest railway system in Asia and the second largest railway system in the world under single management. Much more than that, it has become a part and parcel of the country's socio-economic life, impacting not only its culture and socio-economic activities but also largely influencing Indian art, history and literature besides unifying the people. The Indians have developed an abiding liking with the railways.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

According to Richard Oliver, "Satisfaction is the customer response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature or the product or service itself provides pleasurable level of consumption- related fulfillment.

In less technical terms, this definition can be interpreted to mean that satisfaction is the customer evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met the customer's needs and expectations failure to meet needs and expectations is assumed to result in dissatisfaction with the product or service.

Satisfaction can also be related to other types of feelings depending on the particular context or type of services. Satisfaction may also be associated with feeling of pleasure for services that makes the customer feel good.

Although the customer satisfaction tends to be measured at a particular point in time as if were static, satisfaction is a dynamic moving target that may evolve over time influenced by variety of factors. Particularly, when product usage of service experience takes place over time, satisfaction may be highly variable depending on whole in the usage or experience cycle one is focusing on.

Similarly in the case of very new service or service not previously experienced, customer expectations will solidify as the process unfolds and the customer begins to form his or her perceptions. Through the services cycles the customer may have a variety of different experience some good, some not good and each will ultimately impact satisfaction.

Still Indian Railways is a monopolistic organization, it has to increase its market share to the great extent through the satisfaction of passengers with good quality of services. Many facilities have been provided by the railways for the convenience and comfort of the passengers. Some trains have pantry cars. The facilities like waiting halls, toilets, and drinking water are provided at the railway stations. Tea, snacks, food, newspapers and magazines are also available at the stalls of the stations. Indian Railways also provides online services for the benefit of the passengers. Indian Railways want to satisfy the passengers by providing good quality of services.

### **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

On account of various transportations, many services are available in the world to carry people and goods and the public transportation service provides effective service to the people. Among the various public transportation services, Railways is one of the important modes of transport. The Indian Railways provides services both in onboard and at stations. There is a need to find out the expectations and perception of passengers about the service quality of Indian Railways and also online services

provided by it. Indian Railways tries to provide the better quality of services and try to satisfy the passengers in many ways.

Hence, the following questions emerged in the mind of the researcher.

- Why do people prefer Railways?
- What do people expect from the Indian Railways?
- Has Indian Railways created awareness among the people about its services?
- What is the perception of passengers about online Railway services?
- Whether the passengers are satisfied with the services offered by the Indian Railways? Is the Rail Transport best?

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Among the various modes of transport, Railways are one of the biggest modes of passengers' transport in the World. The railway passenger services face long term competitive threats from airlines, luxury buses, personalized transport and improved public transport. Low-cost airlines are giving stiff competition to upper class segments of the railway passenger service. Though there are competitions from various modes of transport, the railways have its own unique features and provide more services to the passengers. It is essential for the Railway Authorities to know about the opinion of the passengers regarding the services offered to them in order to make future service plans and frame strategies to attract more passengers. Based upon the opinion of the passengers, their satisfaction level could be decided.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the demographic profile of the passengers using the Railway services.
- To analyze the passenger's level of satisfaction towards services of Southern Railways.
- To identify the level of awareness among the respondents of various services offered by Southern Railways.
- To offer suggestions to improve the satisfaction of passengers of the rail system

### TOOL OF ANALYSIS

To analyze the data, percentage method, simple rank method, Garrett Ranking technique and five-point scale method are used. Most of the problems are based on the percentage method.

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study has the following limitations;

- This study is restricted to Southern Railways with special reference to Tiruchendur. Hence, the results of the study cannot be generalised to the whole India.
- The respondents may hesitate to disclose their personal and original details.
- Secondary data has been collected through different authorized sources; there may be a gap between those sources.

### REVIEWS

Respondents may travel in different kind of trains; facilities offered by trains may differ from one another.

**Athanassopoulos et al., (2001)** examined the service quality significance of service firms with customer satisfaction and the customers' behavioural consequences. The study found a strong impact of customer satisfaction on their decision to stay with the existing service provider; and restrain their negative behavioural intentions.

**Rust and Kannan (2003)** focused e-service is a customer-centric concept, and thus, the strategic and tactical components of an e-service orientation focus on increasing value defined at the customer level, and at the strategic level, e-service orientation calls for moving the emphasis from products and transactions to service and relationships, and building customer equity. They concluded that firms must take full advantage of net-based e-service opportunities, particularly in the transition of products to services, to garner long-term customer relationships and loyalty.

**Curry and Penman (2004)** reported that service quality is inevitable for differentiation to compare in the banking sector. They highlighted that the right service could retain the customers for long-term benefits. So, banks should maintain the level of services by proper allocation of resources to meet customer requirements. They indicated that financial institutions require reasonable procedures to evaluate the overall satisfaction of their customers.

A study by **Ghosh et al., (2004)** analysed e-service and found that it can be usefully conceptualized as an interactive information service. The study pointed out information provided by or collected from and about customers can be gathered and analyzed by the e-service provider, and used as the basis for the customization of the service that the organization offers to the customer. The study found that the online service experience integrates service delivery and marketing communications, both of which are achieved through exchange of information.

**Arpita Mukherjee and Ruchika Sachdeva (2004)** measured that the Railways investigated the developments in rail transport sector both globally and in India, in the context of GATS 2000 negotiations. Although IR have a public monopoly and there is limited scope for foreign investment, India is found to have export potential in maintenance and repairs of rail transport equipment and supporting services. The study suggested that India should therefore, offer liberalization commitments in these two subsectors of rail transport. The study emphasized on the need and urgency for restructuring rail transport services on commercial lines and suggest various reform measures, like demarcation between social responsibility and commercial operation, privatization of non-core activities and certain segments, tariff restructuring, transparent accounting practices and an independent regulator for better manpower management.

**Siddiqui M. Y. (2004)** stated a detailed account of the development of Indian Railways, its progress under the plans, improvement in rolling stock, policies for enhancing passenger amenities, safety and comfort. He pointed out that railways have become an instrument of social change and plays an important role in transport arena. He highlighted that the phenomenal growth of urban population has put great strain on road based public transport in major towns and cities. Rail based Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS) has been adopted by various countries at similar stages of development and urbanization.

**Yuanfeng Zhou et al., (2005)** analysed the method for measuring the passenger satisfaction by considering Passenger Satisfaction Index (PSI) as one of the most important indexes to evaluate management performance and services quality of passenger transport in China. They employed index system and fuzzy comprehensive evaluation method. They found that the concept of index weight matrix is highly effective to measure the passenger satisfaction.

## FINDINGS

Each and every respondent in this study are the passengers of railway in Tiruchendur station.

- Majority of the respondents 41% are between 20-30 age groups.
- Majority of the respondents 73.3% are male.
- It shows the fact that railway passenger services are preferred by married people than the bachelors.
- Majority of the respondents 39.2% are reserve their ticket one day before.

- Majority of the respondents 47.5% prefer to book their rail ticket in ticket booking counter in the railway station.
- Majority of the respondents 43.3% are strongly agree that the passengers can easily book a ticket for their journey in IRCTC.
- Majority of the respondents 47.5% prefer to reserve their ticket by online reservation
- Majority of the respondents 70.0% are prefer sleeper class.
- Majority of the respondents 52.5% are carry card ticket while travelling in train.
- Majority of the respondents 61.7% feels the parcel charges are moderate.

### SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above findings of the study, the researcher gives the following suggestions to enhance the quality of Southern Railway services. First three are the highly suggested measures for enhancing quality of Southern Railway Passenger service in the study area.

- The passengers need more protection from theft and pick pocketing. Therefore, the railway authorities must strengthen the safety and security system.
- The Railway authority has to run special trains frequently whenever needed or extra coaches to avoid over crowd. Cleanliness should be maintained in the trains and railway station.

### CONCLUSION

Transport plays a vital role in human life. Without transport, no one can move from one place to another place for any activity and hereby no development can be achieved in individual life and the economy of the nation. Though, we have many modes of transport in our country, majority of the people are used to travel by train and they felt that it is the safest and comfortable mode of transport. But these days the railway industry cannot be achieved the expected growth because of poor quality of service still it is unable to keep their customer satisfied, there certainly there exists some communication gap between Indian railway authorities and customers. Therefore, the Railway authority should be taken the necessary efforts to implement the suggestions which the researcher stated through this report to enhance the service quality during the following years. This leads to not only the development of railway industry but also the economy of the nation.

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