

Service Quality and Passengers Satisfaction of Southern Railways by ServQual Model

¹J.Priyadarshini and ²M.Selladurai,

¹Associate Professor &Head, Department of Commerce, AJK College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

²Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Periyar E.V.R. College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

Abstract: The economic growth of a country is mostly depends on the infrastructure and construction available in their area. Substructure link the peoples to services, markets and jobs and helps people to live healthy and productive lives. Transport facility is an important aspect of infrastructure facilitating mobility of goods and people from one place to another place. The passengers expect huge services from Indian Railways, but the railways providing few of the service in good quality and many of its services are not good. When the Indian Railways is not fulfil the passenger's expectation, they are ready to switch over to another mode of transportation service. So, Indian railways to go down passenger business earning, in recent year the railway freight services only to contribute major role in Railway earnings. The railways passenger earnings were not good in past few years. Indian railway has to improve their services to world class. The main aim of the study is to identify the socio economic background of railway passengers and to analyse the gap between passenger's expectation and perception of service quality.

Keywords: Indian Railways, Servqual, Passenger Satisfaction, Rail Industry, Southern Railways

I. INTRODUCTION

The economic growth of a country mainly depends on the infrastructure facilities available. Infrastructure links people to make services and helps people to live healthy and productive lives. It supports economic activity such as agriculture, fishing and the trade of goods and services, and assists with the delivery of health and education services. Transport facility is an important aspect of infrastructure facilitating mobility of goods and people from one place to another place.

The Indian Railways more than 150 years old, is among one of the largest and oldest systems in the world, fondly called by people as the "lifeline of the Nation". Railways were first introduced to India in 1853. By 1947, the year of India's independence, there were forty-two rail systems. In 1951 the systems (many of which were already government-owned) were nationalized as one unit, the Indian Railways, becoming one of the largest networks in the world. Indian Railway has the world's fourth largest railway network after those of the United States, Russia and China. Indian Railways has 114,500 kilometres of total track over a route of 65,000 kilometres and 7,500 stations. The railways carry over 30 million passengers and 2.8 million tons of freight daily. In 2011-2012 Railway earned ₹104,278.79 crore which consists of ₹69,675.97 crore from freight and ₹28,645.52 crore from passengers service. The need is due to the fact that the Indian Railways runs 10,000 trains daily. Indian Railways always to providing better service to the passengers during the festival time and holidays to avoid the crowded the special trains are operated.

Southern Railway, in its present form, came into existence on 14th April 1951 through the merger of the three state railways namely Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway,

the South Indian Railway, and the Mysore state railway. Headquartered at Chennai, the Southern Railway comprises of the following six divisions such as Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Palaghat, Trivandrum, and Salem.

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Bag (2012), has quoted that the majority of the respondents avail the metro services for reaching the ultimate destination of office, so it should be need smoother and better system of ticketing and information regarding the arrival and departure of trail. It is also important to improve the quality of security at the time of journey to reduce pick pocket and others.

Barabino (2012), has studied the possibility to implement a SERVQUAL approach abiding by the requirements set by the EN 13816. The results illustrate a high degree of importance placed on attributes such as on-board security, bus reliability, cleanliness and frequency, with these latter three characterized by the widest negative gaps between perceptions and expectations.

Devi Prasad (2010), has conducted an empirical study at Secunderabad railway station of South Central Railway, India. Valid responses from the questionnaire are statistically analyzed by using factor analysis. He identified the attributes to evaluate the quality of Railway Passenger Services and develops a comprehensive instrument "RAILQUAL", which can be used by the Railways for collecting feedback from passengers.

A. Statement of the Problem

Indian Railway provides the most energy efficient and economical mode of transportation in India. Now days peoples are mostly to prefer the rail transport but, in spite of this, Indian Railway lost its market share in Freight and Passenger segment due to lack of customer responsiveness and poor public perception Passenger service. The passengers expect a lot services from the Indian Railways but the railway providing few of the service in good quality and many of its service not good. When the Indian Railway is not full fill the passenger expectation, the passengers are immediately switch over to another mode of transportation services. So Indian railway to go down passenger business earning, in recent year the railway freight services only to contribute major role in Railway earnings. The railway passenger earnings were not good in past few years onwards. Indian railway is to improve their service in world class, because the passenger expectation more services from service providers.

B. Objectives

1. To identify the socio economic background of Railway Passengers.
2. To analyze the gap between Passenger Expectation and Perception of Service Quality.
3. To suggest the ways to improve the service quality offered by Southern Railway.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive research was applied in the research methodology of the study work. The study aims at evaluating the railway passenger's satisfaction and service quality of Indian Railways using SERVQUAL model, which is a universal model and contains the common elements. However, specifically regarding to railway passenger service, it should be adjusted accordingly. Through the interviews with some passengers, railway officers were established 25 items about passenger's expectation of railway passenger's service quality based on the five service elements. The original five SERVQUAL dimensions are assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles.

To collect the primary data for the purpose of the study multistage sampling method is adopted. At the first stage entire six divisions were selected. In the second stage all major stations of each division were chosen for the study. In the final stage the each of the stations modest samples of 50 passengers were selected on the purposive basis for the study. For this purpose, the respondents were included for convenience sampling techniques. On the basis the total respondents of the study have been 300 but few of the respondents to fill the item of schedule were partially completed. Hence they were eliminated from the study.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 – Demographic Profile

Factors	Categories	Income Level								Total	%
		Below 10000	%	10001-25000	%	25001-50000	%	Above 50000	%		
Age	Below 25	43	58	21	28	7	9	3	4	74	28
	25 - 40 Years	33	28	43	36	34	29	9	8	119	45
	40 - 60 Years	9	15	18	31	18	31	14	24	59	22
	Above 60	1	7	8	53	4	27	2	13	15	6
Sex	Male	59	29	75	36	49	24	24	12	207	78
	Female	27	45	15	25	14	23	4	7	60	22
Marital Status	Single	53	49	30	28	18	17	7	6	108	40
	Married	33	21	60	38	45	28	21	13	159	60
Education Qualification	School level	15	52	8	28	3	10	3	10	29	11
	Graduation	35	31	43	38	29	26	6	5	113	42
	Post Graduation	27	33	25	30	18	22	12	15	82	31
	Professionals	7	19	12	33	10	28	7	19	36	13
	Others	2	29	2	29	3	43	0	0	7	3
Occupation	Student	31	69	8	18	3	7	3	7	45	17
	Business	9	28	12	38	8	25	3	9	32	12
	Employee	33	21	62	39	45	28	18	11	158	59
	Others	13	41	8	25	7	22	4	13	32	12

Source: Primary Data

This section represents the profile of the respondents on the basis of socio economic factors of the respondents. The correlation between different variables like age, gender, income, qualification, marital status and occupation of the respondents were considered for the research analysis. It could be observed from the above table in the age group of below 25 years 58 percent of the respondents earn below 10000, 4 percent of the respondents earn above 50000 and 31 percent of the respondents earn 25001-50000 in the age group (i.e., 40-60) years. This table clearly shows that more female respondents earn only below 10000 and only 7 percent of the female respondents earn above 50000. From the above table we come to know 24 percent of the male respondents have middle income (i.e., 25001-50000). While comparing the married respondents with the unmarried respondents, the married respondents use more railway service. In the school level 52 percent of the respondents are using railway services, only 5 percent of the Graduation respondents earn above 50000, the other 30 percent post-graduation respondents and professionals have middle income (i.e.,) 25001-5000. The students and employees are utilising railway services more.

V. GAP ANALYSIS OF PASSENGERS EXPECTATION & PERCEPTION

Table 2 - GAP on Tangibility

S.No	Factors	Expectation Mean Score	Perception Mean Score	GAP
1	Seating Arrangements, Sanitation, Fan and Lighting facility in train	4.26	3.29	0.97
2	Catering service in the train	3.94	3.02	0.93
3	Medical facility in the train	3.73	2.41	1.33
4	Visualization of Confirmation charts & Time table	4.07	3.29	0.78
5	Clarity of announcements & display boards in station	4.17	3.62	0.55
6	Availability of booking counters and Refreshment	4.10	3.27	0.82

	stalls in station									
7	Arrangements of cloak room and lift facilities in platform	3.88	2.93	0.96	16	Availability of railway staffs on train & ticket counter	3.93	3.00	0.93	
8	Cleanliness & Modern appearance of platforms in stations	3.94	2.71	1.23	Total GAP					3.72
Total GAP										

The above table shows that, a huge gap on the tangibility dimensions, particularly in the 'medical facility in the train' a gap mean score of 1.33 and the low gap on the tangibility dimensions 'clarity of announcements and display boards in station' the gap value of 0.55. Indian railways should make necessary actions to avoid these problems.

Table 3 - GAP on Reliability

S. No	Factors	Expectation Mean Score	Perception Mean Score	GAP
9	Frequency of Train schedule, Arrival and departure of train are on Time	4.04	3.22	0.82
10	Updated information about status of train during travel	4.01	3.15	0.86
11	The attitude and helpfulness of the railway staff in handling your service problems	3.90	2.86	1.04
12	Timely provision, Complaints handling & Staff sincerity in service	3.79	2.78	1.01
Total GAP		3.73		

From the above table, the gap on reliability dimensions in 'the attitude and help fullness of the railway staff in handling service problems' a gap mean score of 1.04 and the minimum gap of this dimension in 'frequency of train schedule, arrival and departure'. Indian railways should make necessary actions to evade these kind of issues.

Table 4 - GAP on Responsiveness

S. No	Factors	Expectation Mean Score	Perception Mean Score	GAP
13	Railway staff easily understanding your needs & willing to help when you make inquiries.	4.04	2.98	1.06
14	Promptness in satisfying the request	3.79	2.97	0.83
15	Railway staff are too busy to respond	3.77	2.87	0.90

The above table shows that, the information about the gap on responsiveness dimension, the maximum gap on this dimension 'Railway staff are willing to help when you make inquiries' and the minimum gap on the responsiveness dimensions 'promptness in satisfying the request'. Indian railways should make necessary actions to avoid these problems.

Table 5 - GAP on Assurance

S. No	Factors	Expectation Mean Score	Perception Mean Score	GAP
17	Ease of Courtesy & Communication with Railway staff	3.94	3.00	0.94
18	The railway is trust worthy & Personal safety during station & journey	4.13	3.19	0.94
19	Knowledgeable staff to answer your questions	3.98	3.19	0.79
20	Providing information about the delays & changes in the itinerary	3.94	3.11	0.83
Total GAP				3.51

The above table reveals that, the gap on assurance dimensions, the high gap of this dimension two attributes like 'Courtesy and communication with railway staff, Railway trust worthy and personal safety during stations and journey' it's got more gap between customer expectation and satisfaction and also the low gap of this dimension is 'knowledgeable staff to answer your questions'. Indian railways should make necessary actions to evade these kind of issues.

Table 6 - GAP Analysis of Empathy

S. No	Factors	Expectation Mean Score	Perception Mean Score	GAP
21	Prompt service to the passengers	4.04	2.99	1.04
22	Paying individual attention & customers best interest to all types of passengers	3.96	2.70	1.26
23	Availability of coach attendant/helper in the train	3.87	2.59	1.27
24	Understanding the needs of the passengers	3.88	2.61	1.26

25	Railway operations are convenient to all passengers.	4.01	2.96	1.06
Total GAP			5.90	

Above table reveals that, gap on empathy the lowest gap for this dimension is 'prompt service to the passengers' and highest gap on the empathy dimensions is 'Availability of coach attendant or helper in the train'.

The service quality gap is assessed with the difference between the customers' perception and expectations' on various dimensions of service quality in railway services. On the basis of score calculated for individual dimensions, it is found that assurance dimension of railways passengers' Indian Railways which need to be taken care. All the 25 attributes indicated that quality of service fell short of the passengers' expectations; passengers were generally not satisfied with the few services of Indian railways. Generally the customers expect more services from service providers such as the rail passengers are also expect more as well as quality service from the Indian railways, so it Indian railways need to improve their face to satisfy their passengers.

CONCLUSION

A customer satisfaction is one of the fastest growing areas of market research. This is understandable even in the context of the Indian market where we are moving towards market economy with customer as the central focus. The empirical investigation study is able to accomplish research objectives, by thoroughly analysing and identifying competitive position of railway strength and weakness among the passengers. Indian railways should follow getting the periodical feedback from the passengers in their respective trains at least three to six month once.

The reservation systems and infrastructure facilities in both trains and railway stations has to be improved. The railway staffs and attendant or helper can appoint for each coach and improved security system towards the passenger's expectations. Hence the human touch is more required as we compare airlines services which we missing in Indian railway passenger services. In this aspects further improve its performance in the satisfaction levels of the passengers and occupy a leading position among the customer mind in everlastingly.

References

- [1] Bag, Sudin, and Somasankar Sen. "Kolkata Metro railway and customer satisfaction: An empirical study." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 2.3 (2012): 165-176.
- [2] Barabino, Benedetto, Eusebio Deiana, and Proto Tilocca. "Measuring service quality in urban bus transport: a modified SERVQUAL approach." *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* 4.3 (2012): 238-252.
- [3] Chidambaram, Vijayabhanu, Surulivel Sangeli Thevar, and Amudha Ramachandran. "A study on efficacy of induction training programme in Indian Railways using factor analysis." *Verslas: teorija ir praktika* 2 (2013): 140-146.
- [4] Gupta, Sumana, and Rabindranath Datta. "Prioritizing service attributes for quality up-gradation of Indian railway stations." *The TQM Journal* 24.2 (2012): 167-180.
- [5] Prasad, M. Devi Prasad M. Devi, M. Devi Prasad, and B. Raja Shekhar. "Development of Railqual: A Service Quality Scale for Measuring Indian Railway Passenger." *Management Science and Engineering* 4.3 (2010): 87-94.
- [6] Prasad, M. Devi, and B. Raja Shekhar. "Impact of service Quality management (SQM) Practices on Indian Railways-a study of south Central Railways." *International Journal of Business and Management* 5.9 (2010): 139.
- [7] Priyadarshini J, Selladurai M. "A Study on High Speed Rails in India." *International Journal of Trend in Research and Development* 3.3 (2016): 494-497.
- [8] Rajaram, RPCS, VP Sriram, and SK Dhanalakshmi. "Problems faced by the Customer on Rail Freight Traffic in Salem Division."
- [9] Rajeshwari, G., and N. Tamilchelvi. "Passengers' Attitude towards Retention Strategies Adopted By the Indian Railways: A Study in Salem Division of Southern Railways."
- [10] Randheer, Kokku, Ahmed A. Al-Motawa, and Prince J. Vijay. "Measuring commuters' perception on service quality using SERVQUAL in public transportation." *International Journal of Marketing Studies* 3.1 (2011): 21.
- [11] Shainesh, G., and Mukul Mathur. "Service quality measurement: The case of railway freight services." *Vikalpa* 25.3 (2000): 15-22.
- [12] Vanniarajan, T., and A. Stephen. "Railqual and passengers satisfaction: An empirical study in Southern railways." *Asia Pacific Business Review* 4.1 (2008): 64-75.
- [13] Vishnuvarthan, S., and A. Selvaraj. "Railway Passengers' Satisfaction: A Study in Salem Division of Southern Railway." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* ISSN (2012): 2278-6236.
- [14] Vishnuvarthan, S., and A. Selvaraj. "Factors Influencing the Passengers to Select Train Travel: A Study in Salem Division of Southern Railway." *International Journal for Scientific Research and Publications* 2.10 (2012): 79-85.