

# AN ANALYSIS OF PASSENGER SATISFACTION ON SERVICES QUALITY FOR SOUTHERN RAILWAYS

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## ABSTRACT

The economic prosperity of a country mostly hinges on the presence of enough infrastructure and construction within its vicinity. Substructures facilitate the connection between individuals and essential services, markets, and employment opportunities, hence promoting the well-being and productivity of individuals. Transportation is a crucial component of infrastructure that enables the movement of goods and individuals between different locations. The passengers have high expectations from Indian railroads, yet, the railroads only provide a limited number of services in good quality, while many of its services are subpar. When the Indian Railways fails to meet passengers' expectations, they are prepared to transition to an alternative form of transportation. In recent years, the passenger business earnings of Indian Railways have declined, with the railway freight services playing a significant part in contributing to the overall railway earnings. The current study aims to identify the various services offered by the Southern Railway and explore ways in which the railway may enhance its services to better meet the needs of its customers. This involves aligning the service offerings with the demands and preferences of rail users. The study examines the comprehensive range of services and amenities supplied by the Southern Railway (SR), as well as the degree of satisfaction among passengers and their suggestions for enhancing the services and facilities offered by the Southern Railway. The current study aims to identify the various services offered by the Southern Railway and explore strategies for enhancing these services to better meet the demands of customers and train users, aligning them with the railway's service offerings. Passenger satisfaction with the southern railway hinged on the quality of service and the quality of rail services.

**Keywords:** Passenger satisfaction, Southern railway, Service Quality

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The economic development of a nation is mostly contingent upon the presence of adequate infrastructure facilities. Infrastructure facilitates the connection between individuals and essential services, enabling them to lead healthy and productive lives. It facilitates economic activities such as agriculture, fishing, and commerce of products and services, while also aiding in the provision of health and education services. Transportation is a crucial component of infrastructure that enables the movement of goods and individuals between different locations. The Indian Railways, with a history spanning over 150 years, is renowned as one of the largest and oldest transportation networks globally. It is often referred to as the "lifeline of the Nation" by its people.

The introduction of railways in India occurred in 1853. By 1947, the year when India gained independence, there were a total of forty-two railway systems. In 1951, the many systems, many of which were already under government ownership, were consolidated into a single entity known as the Indian Railways. This transformation resulted in the creation of one of the largest railway networks globally. The railway network of India ranks as the fourth largest in the world, following the networks of the United States, Russia, and China. The overall length of track in the Indian Railways network is 114,500 km, covering a route of 65,000 kilometres and serving 7,500 stations. On a daily basis, the railways transport more than 30 million people and 2.8 million tonnes of freight. The Railway company earned a total of 104,278.79 crore in the fiscal year 2011-2012. This amount was comprised of 69,675.97 crore from freight services and 28,645.52 crore from passenger services. The necessity arises from the fact that the Indian Railways operates a total of 10,000 trains on a daily basis. Indian Railways consistently strives to enhance passenger service during festivals and holidays by operating special trains to alleviate overcrowding.

Currently, numerous advancements have occurred in the transportation sector. Progress in the Southern Railway has also been swift. The Southern Railway (SR) has achieved a prominent position in the Indian Railway due to its modernization and technological advancements in its services. The Indian Railways (IR) is the most ancient service provider in India. The Indian railway is a prominent source of employment in India. The Indian railway system is referred to as the vital artery of the nation due to its extensive network that links all regions of the country. Investment in research (IR) plays a significant role in the Indian economic system. The majority of suburban residents utilised the infrared (IR) services.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parasuraman (1985) posited that the contentment of passengers is contingent upon the quality of services provided by service providers. The perception of services and the evaluation of service quality differ (Devi Prasad, 2010). Customer satisfaction is closely correlated with service quality, and this relationship has a significant and favourable impact on customer satisfaction (Venkateswaran et al., 2017). The construction industry achieves 100% client satisfaction through the provision of high-quality services (Venkateswaran et al., 2018).

Mahima Johnson (2019) The Southern Railway headquarters in Chennai, Tamil Nadu is among the earliest zones of the Indian Railways, as evidenced by their study. The aim of their study is to investigate the challenges encountered by daily railway commuters. Convenience The study employed random sampling and relied on the survey methodology. According to their current study, the following recommendations were made to enhance the services of the Indian Railways.

In their article, A. Kalaiselvi, D. Sandhya, and C.G Athira (2017) examined passenger satisfaction with train service at Coimbatore junction. The researchers determined that the presence of electricity, efficiency of train personnel, safety measures, digital signage, and personalised attention were identified as the most important factors contributing to passenger pleasure.

Dr. K. Vanitheeswari S. Nagaligam In a study conducted by S. Nagapriya K.Mathan Kumar (2017), it was found that six criteria out of a total of twenty were identified. These elements include technological progress, passenger amenities, comfort, safety, minimum fare, and greater infrastructure facilities. The identified factors had strong associations. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure revealed a strong correlation between the variables, which can be attributed to the influence of other variables. The researchers identified the characteristics that influence travellers' train travel.

Dr. Anbupriya and Dr. S Subadra (2016). The report highlights the crucial role of the Indian railway as a vital transportation system for the nation. The system operates continuously, without any breaks; it has been functioning incessantly for the past few decades. The aim of the study is to analyse the travel factors that influence the passengers of Southern Railways. The study employed non-probability sampling approaches, specifically adopting the convenience sampling method due to the uncertain sample size.

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Indian Railway system is the most energy-efficient and cost-effective means of transportation in India. In recent times, consumers have shown a strong preference for rail transit. However, despite this trend, the Indian Railway has experienced a decline in its market share in both the Freight and Passenger segments. This can be attributed to a lack of customer responsiveness and a negative public opinion. Provision of services for passengers. The passengers have high expectations from the Indian Railways, yet, the railway is only delivering a limited number of services in satisfactory quality, while many of its services are subpar. When the Indian Railway fails to meet passenger expectations, passengers promptly transfer to alternative modes of transportation services. In recent years, the passenger business earnings of Indian Railways have declined, with the railway freight services playing a more significant part in contributing to the overall earnings of the railway. The railway passenger revenue has been subpar in recent years. Indian Railways aims to enhance its services to a world-class standard in response to the increasing demands and expectations of passengers.

#### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- ✓ To determine the socioeconomic status of railway passengers.
- ✓ To assess the disparity between passengers' expectations and their perception of service quality.
- ✓ To propose methods for enhancing the level of service quality provided by Southern Railway..
- ✓

#### 5. METHODOLOGY

The study used a multistage sampling strategy to gather primary data. In the initial phase, all six divisions were chosen. For the study, the second stage involved selecting all the main stations from each division. During the final stage, a purposive selection method was used to choose modest samples of 50 passengers at each station for the study. To achieve this objective, the participants were selected using convenience sampling procedures. The study had a total of 300 respondents, but a handful of them only partially completed the schedule item. Consequently, they were excluded from the study.

#### 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table.1 – Profile of the Study**

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

This section displays the profile of the respondents based on their socio-economic parameters. The research analysis investigated the correlation between several characteristics such as age, gender, income, qualification, marital status, and occupation of the respondents. From the table above, it is evident that the age group below 25 years is being considered. Out of the respondents, 58 percent have an income below 10000, 4 percent have an income above 50000, and 31 percent have an income between 25001 and 50000 in the age group of 40 to 60 years. The table clearly indicates that a larger proportion of female respondents earn below 10000, while just 7 percent of female respondents earn beyond 50000. Based on the data shown in the table, it can be determined that 24 percent of the male participants have a moderate income, specifically falling within the range of 25001-50000. When comparing the respondents who are married with those who are single, it is evident that the married respondents utilise train services to a greater extent. Among the respondents at the school level, 52 percent utilise railway services. Only 5 percent of the respondents with a graduation degree make a salary beyond 50000. The remaining 30 percent of respondents, who have post-graduate degrees or are professionals, have a moderate income range of 25001-50000. The students and employees are increasingly utilising railway services.

**Table.2 – Passenger Satisfaction & Service Quality**

S.No	Service quality variables	Expected service Mean scores		Perceived service Mean scores		Exp - Per service score		Service gap score	't' statistics
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
1.	Tangibility	3.744	3.868	3.451	3.628	0.293	0.241	0.052	0.149
2.	Reliability	3.621	3.943	3.535	3.773	0.086	0.172	-0.086	-0.086
3.	Responsiveness	3.735	3.872	3.243	3.637	0.492	0.233	0.259	4.894*
4.	Assurance	4.016	3.939	3.315	3.732	0.701	0.207	0.494	8.051*
5.	Empathy	3.915	4.036	3.482	3.865	0.433	0.171	0.262	4.907*
6	Overall service quality	3.806	3.931	3.405	3.811	0.401	0.204	0.197	3.118*

Table 4.2 demonstrates that passenger satisfaction is strongly dependent on the SQ variables, specifically responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Additionally, the total service quality is statistically significant at a 5 percent level. The service gap was mostly attributed to a lack of assurance, empathy, and responsiveness. All service gap scores, except for the reliability score, are positive. This suggests that the passengers perceive the actual service to be lower than their expectations.



**Table.3 - passenger satisfaction on rail service quality (RAILQUAL) perceived**

S.No	RQ Variables	Expected service Mean scores		Perceived service Mean scores		Exp –Per. Service Mean scores		Service gap	‘t’ statistics
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
1.	Facility in the train	4.113	4.125	3.395	3.762	0.718	0.363	0.355	6.109*
2.	Online booking	4.083	3.889	3.395	3.622	0.688	0.267	0.421	7.014*
3	Safety & Security	3.892	3.734	3.203	3.457	0.689	0.277	0.412	6.938*
4	Ticket fare	3.673	3.989	3.341	3.553	0.332	0.436	-0.104	-1.482
5	Value added services	3.224	3.918	3.672	3.686	0.266	0.232	0.034	0.315
6	Overall rail service quality	3.679	4.105	3.517	3.554	0.5386	0.315	0.2236	3.931*

The assessment of the service quality gap in railway services is based on the disparity between customers' perceptions and expectations across different characteristics of service quality. Based on the computed scores for each dimension, it has been determined that the assurance dimension of Indian Railways passengers has to be addressed. All 25 criteria clearly demonstrated that the level of service did not meet the passengers' expectations. Passengers were largely dissatisfied with the limited services provided by Indian railways. Customers typically have higher expectations of service providers, including rail passengers who also anticipate superior and satisfactory service from Indian Railways. Therefore, Indian Railways must enhance its offerings to meet the demands of their passengers.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Customer satisfaction is a rapidly expanding field within market research. This is comprehensible even within the framework of the Indian market, where we are transitioning towards a market economy with the customer as the primary focal point. The empirical investigation study effectively achieves research objectives by conducting a comprehensive analysis to identify the competitive position of the railway in terms of its strengths and weaknesses among passengers. Indian railways should implement a system of regularly obtaining feedback from passengers on its trains, ideally every three to six months. There is a need for enhancement in the reservation systems and infrastructural facilities in both trains and railway stations. Railway personnel and attendants can be assigned to each coach to enhance the security system and meet the passengers' expectations. Therefore, the presence of human interaction is more necessary when comparing airline services, which is lacking in the

passenger services of Indian railways. By focusing on these areas, the performance of the company may be enhanced, resulting in higher levels of passenger satisfaction and establishing a prominent position in the minds of customers indefinitely.

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