

A STUDY INVESTIGATING CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS ONLINE TRAIN TICKET BOOKING IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study investigates customer perspectives towards online train ticket booking in the Thoothukudi district, focusing on user experiences, satisfaction levels, and the factors influencing their choices. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and interviews with local residents who frequently use online platforms for train ticket purchases. The findings reveal that while convenience and accessibility are primary motivators for using online booking systems, issues such as payment failures, customer service, and the accuracy of information significantly impact user satisfaction. The study concludes with recommendations for improving online ticketing services to enhance customer experiences in Thoothukudi.

Key words: IRCTC, E-Ticket, Train ticket

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the transportation sector, particularly in the realm of online ticket booking. In India, the railway system has adapted to this digital shift, allowing passengers to book train tickets through various online platforms. This study focuses on the Thoothukudi district, where the adoption of online ticket booking is increasing. Understanding customer perspectives in this context is crucial for service providers to enhance user experiences and address potential challenges. By examining factors such as convenience, payment options, customer service, and the reliability of information, this research aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of online train ticket booking systems in Thoothukudi.

Review of Literature

Previous research has highlighted various factors influencing customer satisfaction in online ticket booking systems. According to Bhatti (2020), convenience and ease of use are critical determinants of user satisfaction in online services. Similarly, a study by Kumar and Singh (2019) emphasizes the importance of reliable payment systems and customer support in enhancing user experiences. Furthermore, Gupta and Sharma (2021) found that accurate and timely information significantly affects customer trust and satisfaction in online ticketing. These studies underscore the need for service providers to address technical issues and improve customer service to foster a positive user experience. The literature suggests that understanding customer perspectives is essential for developing effective online ticketing solutions that meet user needs.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing popularity of online train ticket booking, customers face significant challenges that can hinder their overall satisfaction and usage of these services. Issues such as technical glitches, payment failures, inadequate customer support, and misinformation regarding train schedules and availability can lead to frustration among users. This study seeks to identify and analyze these problems from the perspective of customers in Thoothukudi, aiming to understand how these factors influence their booking experiences and overall satisfaction with online ticketing platforms.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the experiences and perspectives of train passengers in Thoothukudi who use online ticketing services. The research encompasses a diverse demographic, including different age groups, income levels, and educational backgrounds. It investigates various aspects of the e-ticketing process, from user interface and transaction security to customer support and issue resolution. The study aims to provide comprehensive insights that can guide the enhancement of the online train ticketing system.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the impact of demographic variables on customer perceptions of online train ticketing.
2. To identify common issues and challenges faced by users during the e-ticketing process.
3. To evaluate the perceived security of online transactions for train ticket bookings.
4. To gather customer suggestions for improving the e-ticketing experience.

Null Hypothesis H0

- ✓ There is no significant relationship between gender and satisfaction factors
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between gender and faced any issues while booking train tickets online
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between age and factors influence your decision to book traintickets online
- ✓ There is no significant relationship between occupation and improvements would you like to see in online trainticketing services

Methodology:

Designing a suitable methodology and selecting analytical tools are important for a meaningful analysis of any research problem. This section shows the choice of the study area, sample design, collection of data, and tools of analysis used in the study. Keeping the objectives of the study in mind, the researcher constructed the questionnaire to elicit information from the customer. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 90 respondents selected at convenience using the sampling method given in the time frame within which the researcher was meant to complete it. Data collection is the process of obtaining information from the respondents. In the present study, both the primary data and secondary data have been used. The study is largely based on primary data. The required primary data have been collected through a well-structured questionnaire both by visiting the houses of the respondents, online reservation centre and public places. Necessary secondary data have been collected from various secondary data have been collected from various sources like newspaper, magazines and websites. The questionnaire schedule thus filled up is thoroughly examined to ensure accuracy, consistency and completeness. The Collected data are then edited and tabulated for analysis. The data collected from the primary source are analysed with reference to each of the objectives by applying appropriate statistical tools.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**TABLE NO: 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Below 20years	8	8.9
21years - 30years	50	55.6
31years - 40 years	24	26.7
41years - 50years	5	5.6
Above 50years	3	3.3
Gender		
Male	48	53.3
Female	42	46.7
Educational Qualification		
Up to school level	3	3.3
Under graduation	44	48.9
Post – Graduation	20	22.2
Professional qualification	23	25.6
Occupational status		
Student	9	10
Private Employee	45	50
Government Employee	9	10
Professional	15	16.7
Traininess	12	13.3
Monthly Income		
Below Rs.10000	11	12.2
Rs.10000 - Rs.20000	40	44.4
Rs.20000 - Rs.30000	20	22.2
Rs.30000 - Rs.40000	10	11.1
Above Rs.40000	9	10
Total	90	100

(Source: Primary data)

From the table, it is clear that out of 90 respondents, 8.9 % of the respondents are between the age group below 20, 55.6 % are between the age group 21-30, 26.7 % are between the age 31-40, 5.6 % are between the age 41 – 50 and the rest 3.3 % above 50. Hence, the majority of the respondents are between the age group of 21-30. 5.3 % are male and 46.7 % are female. Hence, the majority of the respondents are Male. 3.3 % of the above respondents are Up to school level, 48.9 % of them are Undergraduate level, 22.2 % are Post graduate, and the rest 25.6% are Professionals. Hence, the majority of the education qualifications of the respondent's Undergraduate holders. 10 % of the respondents are doing students, 10 % are government employees, 50 % are private employees and the rest 13.3 % are Traininess. Hence, the majority of the occupational status wise respondent's Private employees. 12.2 % of the above

respondent's monthly income is less than Rs.10000, 44.4 % respondent's monthly income is between Rs.10000-20000, 22.2 % respondent's monthly income is between Rs.20000-30000, 11.1% respondents' monthly income between Rs. 30000 – 40000 and rest 10 % respondents is above Rs. 40000. So, the majority of the respondent's monthly income is Rs.10000-20000.

Platforms do you use for online train ticketing

Table No: 2

S. No	Factors	Frequency	Percent
1	IRCTC Mobile App	39	43.3
2	IRCTC website	39	43.3
3	Third party apps	12	13.4
Total		90	100

(Source: Primary data)

The data presents the distribution of user preferences for online bus ticketing platforms among a sample of 90 respondents. Both the IRCTC Mobile App and the IRCTC website are equally preferred, with each chosen by 39 respondents, accounting for 43.3% of the total responses. This indicates a strong inclination towards using IRCTC's official platforms for booking tickets, suggesting that users value the reliability and familiarity associated with these services. In contrast, third-party apps are significantly less favored, with only 12 respondents (13.4%) selecting them as their preferred option. This disparity highlights a clear preference for the official IRCTC channels over third-party alternatives, which may be attributed to factors such as trust, user experience, and perceived service quality. Overall, the results indicate that users in this sample predominantly rely on IRCTC's mobile app and website for their online ticketing needs.

There is no significant relationship between gender and satisfaction

Independent Samples Test										
Factors		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Ease of use	Equal variances assumed	.002	.969	.973	88	.333	.16071	.16524	-.16766	.48909
	Equal variances not assumed			.961	80.249	.339	.16071	.16724	-.17208	.49351
Website/App interface	Equal variances assumed	.004	.952	.673	88	.503	.12202	.18129	-.23826	.48231
	Equal variances not assumed			.673	86.209	.503	.12202	.18140	-.23858	.48263
Ticket availability	Equal variances assumed	.000	.993	1.439	88	.154	.2887	.2006	-.1099	.6873

	Equal variances not assumed			1.420	79.220	.160	.2887	.2033	-.1159	.6933
Pricing	Equal variances assumed	.418	.520	1.157	88	.250	.24405	.21087	-.17502	.66311
	Equal variances not assumed			1.155	85.505	.252	.24405	.21138	-.17620	.66430
Payment options	Equal variances assumed	.822	.367	.108	88	.914	.02083	.19263	-.36198	.40365
	Equal variances not assumed			.107	83.333	.915	.02083	.19397	-.36494	.40660
Customer support	Equal variances assumed	.962	.329	.973	88	.333	.16071	.16524	-.16766	.48909
	Equal variances not assumed			.956	76.839	.342	.16071	.16806	-.17394	.49537
Cancellation Charges	Equal variances assumed	5.069	.027	1.659	88	.101	.36012	.21707	-.07127	.79151
	Equal variances not assumed			1.634	78.017	.106	.36012	.22041	-.07869	.79892

(Source: Primary data)

The independent samples test results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in user perceptions across various factors related to online bus ticketing. For ease of use, the t-test shows a t-value of 0.973 with a p-value of 0.333, suggesting that users do not perceive significant differences in ease of use between the groups. Similarly, the website/app interface factor has a t-value of 0.673 and a p-value of 0.503, indicating no significant differences in user satisfaction with the interface. The ticket availability factor also yields a t-value of 1.439 and a p-value of 0.154, further supporting the lack of significant differences. For pricing, the t-value is 1.157 with a p-value of 0.250, and for payment options, the t-value is 0.108 with a p-value of 0.914, both indicating no significant differences. The customer support factor shows similar results with a t-value of 0.973 and a p-value of 0.333. Lastly, while the cancellation charges factor has a t-value of 1.659 and a p-value of 0.101, it still does not reach statistical significance. Overall, these results suggest a consensus among users regarding their perceptions of these factors, with no significant differences identified in their experiences with online bus ticketing services.

There is no significant relationship between gender and faced any issues while booking train tickets online

Independent Samples Test										
Factors		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Website/App crashes	Equal variances assumed	.185	.668	.047	88	.963	.00893	.19125	-.37114	.38899
	Equal variances not assumed			.047	86.403	.963	.00893	.19126	-.37125	.38911
Payment failures	Equal variances assumed	.077	.782	.591	88	.556	.11607	.19648	-.27439	.50654
	Equal variances not assumed			.599	87.649	.551	.11607	.19390	-.26928	.50143

Booking errors	Equal variances assumed	1.888	.173	.972	88	.334	.19940	.20511	-.20822	.60703
	Equal variances not assumed			.973	86.697	.333	.19940	.20494	-.20795	.60676
Delayed refunds	Equal variances assumed	1.407	.239	1.710	88	.091	.32440	.18969	-.05257	.70138
	Equal variances not assumed			1.700	83.903	.093	.32440	.19080	-.05504	.70385
Poor customer service	Equal variances assumed	.000	.993	-.364	88	.717	-.06548	.17980	-.42279	.29184
	Equal variances not assumed			-.365	87.184	.716	-.06548	.17934	-.42192	.29096
Incorrect information	Equal variances assumed	.408	.525	1.566	88	.121	.30655	.19577	-.08251	.69561
	Equal variances not assumed			1.568	86.782	.121	.30655	.19555	-.08215	.69524

(Source: Primary data)

The independent samples test results for various factors related to online bus ticketing indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in user experiences regarding issues such as website/app crashes, payment failures, booking errors, delayed refunds, poor customer service, and incorrect information. For website/app crashes, the t-test shows a t-value of 0.047 with a p-value of 0.963, indicating that users do not perceive significant differences in this area. Similarly, payment failures yield a t-value of 0.591 and a p-value of 0.556, suggesting no significant differences in user experiences. The booking errors factor has a t-value of 0.972 and a p-value of 0.334, further supporting the lack of significant differences. For delayed refunds, the t-value is 1.710 with a p-value of 0.091, which is close to significance but still not statistically significant. The poor customer service factor shows a t-value of -0.364 and a p-value of 0.717, indicating no significant differences in perceptions of service quality. Lastly, the factor of incorrect information has a t-value of 1.566 and a p-value of 0.121, also indicating no significant differences. Overall, these results suggest a general consensus among users regarding their experiences with these issues, with no significant differences identified across the factors assessed.

There is no significant relationship between age and factors influence your decision to book train tickets online

ANOVA						
Factors		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Convenience	Between Groups	1.053	4	.263	.404	.805
	Within Groups	55.347	85	.651		
	Total	56.400	89			
Discounts and offers	Between Groups	1.755	4	.439	.631	.642
	Within Groups	59.145	85	.696		
	Total	60.900	89			
User reviews and	Between Groups	2.127	4	.532	.635	.639

ratings	Within Groups	71.162	85	.837		
	Total	73.289	89			
Payment flexibility	Between Groups	5.255	4	1.314	1.712	.155
	Within Groups	65.245	85	.768		
	Total	70.500	89			
Customer service	Between Groups	3.944	4	.986	.901	.467
	Within Groups	93.045	85	1.095		
	Total	96.989	89			
Recommendations from friends/family	Between Groups	1.922	4	.481	.408	.802
	Within Groups	100.133	85	1.178		
	Total	102.056	89			

(Source: Primary data)

The ANOVA results for various factors influencing online bus ticketing reveal that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups for any of the assessed factors. Specifically, the factors of convenience ($F = 0.404$, $p = 0.805$), discounts and offers ($F = 0.631$, $p = 0.642$), user reviews and ratings ($F = 0.635$, $p = 0.639$), payment flexibility ($F = 1.712$, $p = 0.155$), customer service ($F = 0.901$, $p = 0.467$), and recommendations from friends/family ($F = 0.408$, $p = 0.802$) all demonstrate p-values well above the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates a lack of significant variation in user perceptions across different groups for these factors, suggesting a general consensus among users regarding their importance in the online ticketing experience. Overall, the findings imply that users perceive these factors similarly, regardless of their demographic or experiential differences.

There is no significant relationship between occupation and improvements would you like to see in online train ticketing services

ANOVA						
Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Better user interface	Between Groups	2.667	4	.667	1.095	.364
	Within Groups	51.733	85	.609		
	Total	54.400	89			
More payment options	Between Groups	4.256	4	1.064	1.147	.340
	Within Groups	78.867	85	.928		
	Total	83.122	89			
Improved customer service	Between Groups	3.972	4	.993	1.101	.361
	Within Groups	76.650	85	.902		
	Total	80.622	89			
Faster refunds	Between Groups	1.500	4	.375	.555	.696
	Within Groups	57.400	85	.675		
	Total	58.900	89			
Accurate real-time information	Between Groups	4.728	4	1.182	1.379	.248
	Within Groups	72.872	85	.857		
	Total	77.600	89			

More discounts and offers	Between Groups	.294	4	.074	.107	.980
	Within Groups	58.606	85	.689		
	Total	58.900	89			

(Source: Primary data)

The ANOVA results for factors influencing user preferences in online bus ticketing indicate that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups for any of the assessed factors. Specifically, the factors of better user interface ($F = 1.095$, $p = 0.364$), more payment options ($F = 1.147$, $p = 0.340$), improved customer service ($F = 1.101$, $p = 0.361$), faster refunds ($F = 0.555$, $p = 0.696$), accurate real-time information ($F = 1.379$, $p = 0.248$), and more discounts and offers ($F = 0.107$, $p = 0.980$) all yield p-values significantly above the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that users have a consistent perception of these factors, with no significant variations in their importance across different groups. Overall, the findings imply a general consensus among users regarding the value of these enhancements in the online ticketing experience, indicating that improvements in these areas may not lead to differing user satisfaction levels among the groups surveyed.

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical factors influencing customer perspectives towards online train ticket booking in Thoothukudi district. While the convenience of online booking is a significant advantage, challenges such as payment issues, customer service inadequacies, and the need for accurate real-time information remain prevalent. Addressing these issues is essential for enhancing user satisfaction and encouraging more customers to utilize online platforms for train ticket purchases. The findings suggest that service providers should focus on improving technical reliability, expanding payment options, and ensuring effective customer support to foster a more positive booking experience. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can better meet the needs of customers and promote the continued growth of online train ticket booking in the region.