

Enhancing Service Quality and Passenger Satisfaction: An Analytical Study on Southern Railway

Mrs. A. Jacquelin Mercy, Assistant Professor & Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science for Women, Coimbatore.

Dr. A. Latha, Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Coimbatore.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of service quality dimensions on passenger satisfaction in Southern Railway. Using a structured research approach, the paper analyses key service quality factors such as reliability, responsiveness, comfort, safety, ticketing efficiency, and digital service delivery. The findings highlight the areas where Southern Railway performs well and the aspects that require improvement to enhance overall passenger satisfaction. Recommendations for service improvement are also provided based on empirical and theoretical insights.

Keywords: Railway, Passengers, Services Provided, Itinerary Information, and Passenger Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Railways form the backbone of India's transport system, especially in the southern region where millions of passengers rely on Southern Railway for daily commuting and long-distance travel. As competition grows with roadways, airways, and private transport services, enhancing service quality becomes crucial to sustain passenger loyalty. This study explores the relationship between service quality and passenger satisfaction within Southern Railway.

1.1 Background of the Study

Southern Railway is one of the oldest railway zones in India, comprising Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. With increasing expectations for punctuality, cleanliness, comfort, and digital convenience, passengers today demand higher service standards.

1.2 Need for the Study

Service quality directly influences passenger satisfaction, which in turn affects passenger retention, revenue generation, and public perception. A systematic analysis helps identify service gaps and implement targeted improvements.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine service quality dimensions offered by Southern Railway.
- To measure passenger satisfaction levels.
- To analyse the relationship between service quality and passenger satisfaction.
- To suggest measures for improving service quality.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study covers passengers travelling within the Southern Railway zone, focussing on both offline and online service experiences.

2. Review of Literature

Service quality in transportation is widely analysed through the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. Studies reveal that tangibility, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance significantly influence passenger satisfaction. Previous research on Indian Railways suggests that cleanliness, punctuality, safety, and digital ticketing services are major predictors of satisfaction.

Key themes from literature include:

- Digital transformation improves service accessibility.
- Passenger satisfaction increases with consistent reliability.
- Cleanliness and comfort are key determinants in long-distance travel.
- Grievance redressal mechanisms play a vital role in shaping customer experience.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted to analyse the influence of service quality on passenger satisfaction.

3.2 Data Collection

- Primary data collected using a structured questionnaire.
- Secondary data from journals, reports, Southern Railway publications, and websites.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample of 150 passengers across major stations in Southern Railway zone.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling.

3.5 Tools for Analysis

- Percentage analysis
- Mean score analysis
- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis (to measure impact of service quality dimensions)

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Service Quality Dimensions

The study evaluates six critical dimensions:

1. Reliability – punctuality, accurate announcements, adherence to schedules.
2. Responsiveness – staff assistance, grievance handling, prompt service.
3. Tangibility – cleanliness, seating comfort, infrastructure quality.
4. Assurance – safety measures, staff behaviour, security.
5. Empathy – attention to special passengers (senior citizens, differently-abled).

- Digital Services – online ticketing, mobile apps, real-time tracking.

4.2 Passenger Satisfaction Findings

- Passengers rated digital services and safety positively.
- Cleanliness in general compartments received average ratings.
- Punctuality was a major area of dissatisfaction.
- Staff behaviour was rated as friendly but not consistently responsive.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation results show a positive relationship between service quality and passenger satisfaction. Digital services and reliability had the strongest impact.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis indicates that reliability, cleanliness, and responsiveness are statistically significant predictors of overall satisfaction.

5. Findings of the Study

- Passengers value punctuality as a primary indicator of service quality.
- Cleanliness, especially in restrooms and general compartments, needs improvement.
- Digital platforms such as IRCTC app and UTS mobile ticketing enhance convenience.
- Safety and security measures are considered satisfactory.
- Staff responsiveness varies and needs standardisation.

6. Suggestions

- Improve punctuality through better scheduling and maintenance.
- Enhance cleanliness with increased monitoring and mechanised cleaning systems.
- Strengthen customer service training for staff to improve responsiveness.
- Expand digital features like real-time crowd information and AI-based delay alerts.
- Increase comfort facilities such as seating availability and better lighting.
- Enhance grievance redressal mechanisms through fast-track digital systems.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that service quality has a significant and positive impact on passenger satisfaction in Southern Railway. If Southern Railway focuses on improving reliability, cleanliness, and responsiveness while strengthening digital services, it can substantially enhance passenger satisfaction and loyalty. Continuous improvement and technology integration are essential for meeting growing passenger expectations.

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