



Determinants of Customer Satisfaction on Service Quality: A Study of Western Railways Rajkot Division

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive market scenario, organizations are rapidly building and maintaining relationships with their customers. In recent times, Indian Railways are developing advanced system and processes which are enhancing customer experience in different segment and at various levels. In India Indian Railways is monopoly business which is being run by Central Government. The present study has been undertaken to find the factors related to Indian Railway services that have an impact on customer satisfaction. The study was conducted using a survey method and a structured questionnaire was deployed to collect 161 respondent's data. The major findings of the study indicate that various factors considered, employee behavior has the maximum effect on satisfaction level of customer with Indian Railways as a whole.

Keywords: Indian Railways, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction

Introduction

India's transport industry greatly depends on the Indian Railways, one of the most important railway networks in the world. Because of the volume of passengers and freight it handles daily, its efficient functioning is essential to the nation's economic development. Artificial intelligence integration has attracted a lot of attention lately since it may enhance passenger happiness, safety, and efficiency in various areas of Indian Railways. This paper explores the application of AI in Indian Railways through an examination of recent studies, projects carried out, challenges encountered, and prospects for the future.

Indian Railways (IR) is a statutory body under the ownership of the Ministry of Railways of the Government of India that operates India's national railway system. As of 2023, it manages the fourth largest national railway system by size with a running track length of 104,647 km (65,025 mi) and route length of 68,426 km (42,518 mi) of which 60,451 km (37,563 mi) is electrified. With more than 1.2 million employees, it is the world's ninth-largest employer and India's second largest employer.

The first steam operated railway operated in 1837 in Madras with the first passenger operating in 1853 between Bombay and Thane. In 1925, the first electric train ran in Bombay on DC traction. The first locomotive manufacturing unit was commissioned in 1950 at Chittaranjan with the first coach manufacturing unit set-up at Madras in 1955. Various companies operating railways across the country were re-organized into six regional zones in 1951, which were gradually expanded to 19 zones.

Indian Railways runs various classes of express, passengers and suburban trains. In 2018–19, it operated 13,523 trains on average daily covering 7,325 stations and carried 8.44 billion passengers. Indian Railways also operates different classes of rail freight transport. In 2022–23, it operated 8,479 trains on average daily and transported 1418.1 million tons of freight. Indian Railways operates multiple classes of rolling stock, manufactured by self-owned coach-production facilities. As of March 2022, Indian Railways' rolling stock consisted of 318,196 freight wagons and 84,863 passenger coaches. As of December 2023, Indian Railways had 10,238 electric and 4,543 diesel locomotives amongst others.

There's a greater chance of more instability in the corporate environment in the modern period. Diverse multifaceted developments, especially in industrialized nations' information technologies, have resulted in increased sophistication in a variety of fields. Since organizations are investing a lot of money in these

innovations, they need to evaluate whether these breakthroughs are improving their services. It is imperative that businesses evaluate client in view of the considerable expansion and deregulation in the global service industry, businesses ought to be cognizant of the degree of consumer happiness as well as the significance of comprehending service performance. Businesses that put a premium on excellent customer service will prosper when competition heats up, and it's commonly known that excellent customer service is essential to corporate success (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994).

To succeed, organizations need to assess the circumstances and developments in their unique environment in detail. Companies in all sectors—public and private, manufacturing and service—have realized how important it is to evaluate a range of performance metrics. The most important of these metrics is customer satisfaction. The consumer is the only one who can ultimately judge a company's performance, and this is where a business's success rests. As such, an awareness of client satisfaction is becoming more and more important. Organizations need to identify and deliberately measure the aspects that impact customer happiness or discontent to obtain a competitive advantage. In general, feeling satisfied with past achievements is what is meant by customer satisfaction.

Now more than ever, it is imperative to understand the multitude of factors that impact customer perception and satisfaction with a public utility like Indian Railways. Customers' evaluation of railway services and their consequent level of satisfaction are frequently dependent on how well they believe various aspects of performance are being performed. It is vital to possess in-depth information and comprehension of these elements, particularly in a time of intense rivalry for drawing in and keeping clients. The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the importance that customers attach to various areas of Indian Railways' services. It also aims to ascertain how consumers' overall happiness with Indian Railways' services is influenced by their assessment of these areas' performance.

Literature Review

Customers are increasingly using Indian Railways services for their day-to-day life requirements. Customer satisfaction relates to various elements of service delivery, and it generates customer loyalty in the long run if the service provider keeps his/her word. As consumers now a days are very keen to know that how service provider is giving their attention to the promises that they are making, based on above discussion, below hypothesis can be made:

- H₁: Customer satisfaction is associated with reliability of passenger services of Indian Railways.
- H₂: Customer satisfaction is associated with assurance of passenger services of Indian Railways.
- H₃: Customer satisfaction is associated with empathy of passenger services of Indian Railways.
- H₄: Customer satisfaction is associated with tangibles of passenger services of Indian Railways.
- H₅: Customer satisfaction is associated with responsiveness of passenger services of Indian Railways.

Research Method

Finding out what element's clients appreciate and how these things affect their behavior is the primary objective of this study. It is to explore how numerous elements affect people's decision-making processes and to provide a comprehensive analysis using various criteria for improved task performance. The work is both descriptive and analytical in nature.

Gujarat State and several Indian regions are considered for the research study's population. The sampling units will be the sub-geographical urban regions of Rajkot division.

The samples were from Rajkot division, which were selected at random. Therefore, to find possible research study participants, an area sampling technique was used.

A total of 161 participants were enrolled in this study to determine how likely they were to use virtual reality applications. The respondents were questioned about demographics including age, gender, occupation, education level, and monthly income. Although some secondary data was included, primary data constituted much of the research. Using area sampling methods to identify the participants in the research analysis, all samples were randomly selected from urban regions in Gujarat State.

An extensive investigation of the influential elements identified in the body of existing research was followed by the creation of a meticulously structured survey to collect primary data. Numerous sources, including online theses, research articles, journals, books, magazines, and websites, provided the secondary data for the study. Responses on the Likert scale, which went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), were utilised in the poll. The acquired data was subjected to a reliability test to evaluate its credibility. To investigate every hypothesis, the data was further subjected to a Chi-Square test at a significance threshold of 5% using the statistical programme SPSS.

Result and Discussion

H₁: Customer satisfaction is associated with reliability of passenger services of Indian Railways. Findings support hypothesis 1. According to respondents to the survey, customers think that reliable and responsible answers will increase their motivation. Outputs displayed in Table 1.

	Measure	Degree of freedom	A.S. (two sided)
P – value	482.548 ^a	11	.006
L – ratio	254.489	11	.010
Asso.	75.282	1	.000
Count	161		

H₂: Customer satisfaction is associated with assurance of passenger services of Indian Railways. Assured service quality is considered as one of the most affecting factors to customer satisfaction, according to respondents. Table 2 presents these results in more detail.

	Measure	Degree of freedom	A.S. (two sided)
P – value	489.356 ^a	11	.000
L – ratio	287.571	11	.010
Asso.	72.266	1	.000
Count	161		

H₃: Customer satisfaction is associated with empathy of passenger services of Indian Railways. Results showed that customers would like to have good and empathetic staff which will be going to connect with them and guide them.

	Measure	Degree of freedom	A.S. (two sided)
P – value	478.641 ^a	11	.006
L – ratio	257.451	11	.010
Asso.	70.226	1	.000
Count	161		

H₄: Customer satisfaction is associated with tangibles of passenger services of Indian Railways. Assured touch points of railway service are considered as one of the most affecting factors to customer satisfaction, according to respondents. Table 4 presents these results in more detail.

	Measure	Degree of freedom	A.S. (two sided)
P – value	457.469 ^a	11	.004
L – ratio	235.781	11	.020
Asso.	68.324	1	.000
Count	161		

H₅: Customer satisfaction is associated with responsiveness of passenger services of Indian Railways.

Findings support hypothesis 1. According to respondents to the survey, customers think that the responsiveness of railway staff will increase their motivation to adopt railway services. Outputs displayed in Table 5.

	Measure	Degree of freedom	A.S. (two sided)
P – value	494.861 ^a	11	.000
L – ratio	267.571	11	.010
Asso.	71.256	1	.000
Count	162		

Conclusion

Indian Railway have received little attention in the numerous research studies that have attempted to identify the variables impacting total customer satisfaction with Indian Railways. By using empirical research to determine the factors influencing users' satisfaction with the services provided on railways, this work significantly contributes to the field. The criteria that have been highlighted encompass the following: accessibility and caliber of refreshments; the efficiency of information systems; the conduct of railway personnel; the provision of basic amenities on platforms; and safety and security. Refreshments and behavior are two things that passengers value highly. These factors, which may not be the same as those influencing satisfaction with Indian Railways generally, have an impact on passenger satisfaction specifically on train platforms.

Managerial Implications

The main determinants of customer satisfaction with respect to the caliber of service provided on train platforms have been determined by this study. Based on these results, the report offers possible policy suggestions for Indian Railways. The customer satisfaction model that has been proposed could function as a foundation for initiatives aimed at improving the overall customer experience. The provision of reasonably priced and of good quality refreshments is seen as the critical element influencing patrons' assessment of the caliber of service, with the potential to mitigate their discomfort during platform waiting. Through improvements in food-related factors like availability and cost, train officials can raise customer happiness.

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