



**PASSENGERS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS THE SERVICES IN SOUTHERN
RAILWAY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VIRUDHUNAGAR**

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ABSTRACT

Indian Railways are the principal mode of transport for both goods and passengers, unifying the country economically, politically and culturally. In the passenger business, the performance of the Indian railways has been impressive. The Indian railway transportation network has played a key role in weaving India into a nation. This network has not only integrated markets but also people across the length and breadth of the country. It has clear the fiscal life of the country and helped in accelerating the growth of trade and agriculture. The growth of Indian Railways, since 1853, is thus phenomenal. Virudhunagar Railway station is one of the busiest railway stations in Virudhunagar. It serves as a major transportation hub for both passengers and goods, connecting Virudhunagar with the rest of India. The total number of trains that pass through Virudhunagar Junction VPT (Station Code) is 80. Hence, an attempt has been made to study the passenger's satisfaction towards Indian railway station specifically in Virudhunagar.

Keywords: Passenger, Railway station, Virudhunagar, Services.

INTRODUCTION

From the modest beginning in 1853, when the first train steamed off from Mumbai to Thane, covered a distance of 34 Kilometers. Indian railways contribute

substantially to the growth of the economy. The passengers carried are enormous and the quantities of goods moved are massive. It has played a vital role in the economic, industrial

and social development of the country. The station offers a broad variety of facilities for the convenience of passengers, including ticket counters, waiting rooms, food stalls and restrooms. It also has 4 platforms for the various trains that pass through the station, as well as a separate platform for long-distance trains. The station is strong connected to the rest of the town and the state through a network of buses and taxis. There are also parking facilities available for those who decide to drive to the station. The station is a branch of the Madurai railway division of the Southern Railway zone. It enhances connectivity to major stations: Madurai, Kanniyakumari, Rameswaram, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Trichy. This is the only way to connect Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Sengottai from Chennai, otherwise it has to travel around Kerala. Virudhunagar railway station is developing under the Amrit Bharat station Scheme.

Passengers are expecting a lot of services from the Indian railways, but the railway provides some of the services of good quality and several of its services are not good. Once the Indian Railway does not fulfill the passenger prediction, the passengers are directly switched over to another mode of transportation service. So, the Indian Railway has to develop their service into world-class,

because passengers expect more services from service providers.

One of the most preferred means of conveyance in the state is the railway. The railway is the most suitable mode of transportation for reaching long distances compared with road transportation in the state. It is because road transportation in Tamil Nadu creates more problems due to undeveloped road systems. The railway provides cheaper transportation charges as compared with other modes of transportation in the state. Therefore, people prefer to travel on trains. Though the railway authorities promise so many facilities for passengers every year, it is an open truth that they are not getting any of these things in their full sense. Under such a context, it is better for us to know the real facts about the passenger's opinion towards railway services.

The following published articles were reviewed by the researcher to identify the research gap for this study. Sheeba and Kumuthadevi (2014) have assessed that punctuality in traveling time as the most influencing factor and passengers' preferred factor for choosing the rail journey as it has the maximum regression coefficient. Vimal Kumar and Jitin (2015) find out the problems faced by daily passengers and has examined the service quality could be improved through

effective and proper maintenance. The attitude of the passengers should be considered while framing policies and executing the plans. Transportation infrastructure assumes a great in the developing countries because each sector depends on the suitable transportation. Anbupriya and Subadra (2016) highlighted that the main objective of this study is to identify the most important travel factors influencing the passengers traveling on southern railways. It shows that in response to measured positivity, there would be a strong connectivity between the railways and passengers. Maheswari and Dinesh kumar (2016) have analyzed the profile of Indian Railways and the facilities offered to them by the railway. The result of the study shows that suitable measures have been taken to solve the problems faced by passengers. Kumutha Devi (2019) have examined the service quality level of the Indian railways at only a medium level, and known whether the component variables of the facility value, namely, Reality, Trustworthiness, Awareness, Responsiveness, and Declaration are medium or high. After analysis, the facility level of South Indian railways is medium. Rajeev Kumar and Ranjan *et al.*, (2020) found that the most important factors affecting passenger satisfaction were the cleanliness of the

lavatory, the condition of the train's passenger windows, the cleanliness of the train's interior and the effectiveness of the fan and air conditioning system within the train.

As Virudhunagar is the main junction which connects the important cities like Madurai, Thoothukudi etc., the present study is to find out the demographic profile of the passengers, evaluate the perception of service quality, whether the passengers are satisfied with the services provided by the Railway particularly in the division of the Southern Railway, assess whether the service was adequate and effectively maintained or not and offer suitable suggestions to improve the level of satisfaction of the rail passengers in Virudhunagar.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research includes methods of data collection, sampling design, statistical tools used for data analysis, and area of the study. The study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from 110 respondents of railway passengers on Virudhunagar southern railways. As the population was large and the time period was limited, it was decided to choose convenience sampling techniques. The primary data was collected from the railway passengers in Virudhunagar

through a well-structured questionnaire for the period from February 2024 to March 2024 who departure from Virudhunagar Railway station were selected. The collected data was edited, tabulated and analyzed for the purpose of presentation. Percentage analysis and Rank analysis have been applied to analyze the data. The secondary data was collected from research publications, standard journals and periodicals, books, websites, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The importance of evaluating consumer reactions cannot be ignored. In all developing countries, transport modes have come to compete with each other and one of the problems being encountered is to achieve inter-model coordination in the overall interest of the economy. In doing so the inherent advantages of road transport, which is the main competitor, have to be matched by constant endeavors towards greater customer satisfaction. The passengers’ satisfaction may be influenced by the socio-economic profile of the respondent. The details such as age, education, occupation, monthly income and marital status have to be collected and tabulated in Table 1.

The table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents are Male 63% use the railway premises and 37% of the respondents are of female, Regarding the age group, 42% are of

below 20 and 34% of the respondents are in between the age group 21-30 and 13% are above 40 and the remaining 11% are the age group of 31-40.

Table 1: Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

Category	Particular	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender wise	Male	69	63
	Female	41	37
Age wise	Below-20	46	42
	21-30	38	34
	31-40	12	11
	Above –41	14	13
Educational wise	No formal education	2	2
	Higher secondary	23	21
	Graduates	75	68
	Professional	10	9
Occupational level	Private employee	22	20
	Government employee	7	6
	Professional	4	4
	Student	62	56
	Unemployed	9	8
	Proprietor	6	5
Monthly Income	Below 10000	69	63
	10001-20000	22	20
	20001-30000	10	9
	30001-40000	9	8
Marital Status	Married	33	30
	Unmarried	77	70

In concerning the marital status, the majority of the respondents, 70% are of unmarried and 30% of the respondents are of married. The educational qualification of the respondents revealed that the majority of the

respondents, 68% are of graduated and 21% respondents have completed Higher secondary and 9% of the respondents are of Professional and 2% of the respondents are of no formal educational qualification. The data on occupation status highlighted 56% are of students and 20% of the respondents are of private employee and 8% of the respondents are of unemployed and 6% of the respondents are of government employee and 5% of the respondents are of proprietor and 4% of the respondents are of professional. Regarding the income, 63% of the respondents are of income below Rs.10000 and 20% are of in between Rs.10001-20000, 9% of the people getting Rs. 20001-30000 and 8% of the respondents are of income Rs.30001-40000.

As the rail transport system is one of the best public transport systems in India, an attempt has been made to examine passengers' opinions on the services of Indian Railways. The table 2 shows that out of 110 respondents surveyed, the opinion of the respondents about Virudhunagar Railway Station is described below.

The table 2 shows that, 46% of the respondents use Virudhunagar Railway Station for the purpose of having Vacation, 20% are for Educational trip or usage, 14% are for Work process, 11% are for Goods and Cargo transportation, 6% are for Business trip

or Business purpose and 3% are use the station premises as a Receiver of Client or Neighbours.

Table 2: Opinion of the Respondents about Railway Station

Category	Particular	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Purpose of station Usage	Business	6	6
	Education	20	20
	Work	14	14
	Goods transport	11	11
	As a receiver	3	3
	Vacation	46	46
Usage of Railway Station	Daily	4	4
	Weekly once	8	8
	Monthly once	20	20
	At sometimes	68	68
Ticket Types	Seasonal ticket	11	11
	Reservation ticket	46	46
	Open ticket	43	43

Majority of the respondents 68% prefer the train for their travelling and use the railway station, 20% uses monthly once, 8% are of Weekly once and 4% are of use it for Daily. About the type of tickets for travelling, 46% are preferred Reservation Ticket and 43% using Open Ticket and 11% of the respondents prefer Seasonal Ticket.

Service quality is a powerful tool to analyze passenger satisfaction in railway stations. The table 3 shows that out of 110 respondents surveyed, the level of satisfaction of Service Quality in Virudhunagar Railway Station is described below.

Table 3: Service Quality in Virudhunagar Railway Station (Values are represented as in percentage)

Service Quality	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	No Opinion
LED Information Board	29	47	15	5	4
Cleanliness of Platform and Station Premises	32	42	20	5	1
Availability of Assistance	18	46	25	10	1
Refreshment	14	46	30	9	1
Medical Service(first aid)	21	43	22	7	7
Handicap Accessories	23	44	21	6	6
Service of Platform Vendors	26	46	20	6	2
Service in Train	24	47	20	7	2
Wi-Fi facility	35	18	42	2	3
Usage of waiting room	26	20	49	3	2

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with good performance on LED information Board Service (47%), cleanliness in platform(42%), Availability of first aid(43%), Refreshment (46%), Handicap Accessories services (44%), service of Platform Vendor (46%). All these services are provided by the railway sector for the benefit of its passengers. These services enable the passenger to know more about their train, its real time updates and coach position as per the latest instruction issued by Railway Board from time to time. Moreover, other

services also availed by the passengers and satisfied and the service on trains is excellent as the majority of the respondents (47%) are satisfied with good performance and 24% are with excellence.

To compete with other modes of transport, it is crucial to meet passenger needs and satisfaction. The table 4 shows that out of 110 respondents surveyed, the level of satisfaction of respondents with the facilities offered by the railway station in Virudhunagar is described as follows.

Table 4: Respondents satisfaction level about the facilities provided by the Railway Station

Facilities	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Total score	Mean Score	Rank
Parking Facility	140	104	69	54	6	373	3.39	V
Toilet Facility	80	140	135	16	6	377	3.42	IV
Waiting Room Facility	70	172	120	18	4	384	3.49	III
Water Facility	55	220	51	20	5	351	3.19	VI
Light and Fan Comfort ability	110	216	72	12	4	414	3.76	II
Police Protection	195	184	45	10	5	439	3.99	I

The passenger given their opinion about their facility offered by the railway station was quantified with the help of Likert's five point scaling technique. Mean score analysis has been used to analyze the data and the results were tabulated in Table 3.

From the results, it is clear that most of the respondents gave the highest response to the 'Police Protection facility', securing first rank with the mean score of 3.09 followed by 'Light and fan comfort ability', securing second rank with the mean score of 3.76, the waiting room facility, secures third rank with the mean score of 3.49, the toilet facility secures fourth rank with the mean score of 3.42, the parking facility secures fifth rank with the mean score of 3.39 and the Water facility secures sixth rank with the mean score of 3.19.

The passenger's satisfaction level in terms of service quality provided by the Southern Railways and also to identify the passengers' experience of the service quality offered by the Southern Railways. Quality food and cleanliness have to be managed properly. The result of the present study, including output results of ranking of railway stations and platforms, toilet facilities, secure first rank is similar to the result of Kalaivani and Sharmili P (2023). In this present study, the Police Protection facility secured first rank

with the mean score of 4.09. Even though the police protection facility can be availed, people must be aware of thefts while travelling.

On the basis of the findings of the study, some suggestions are offered. From the passenger point of view, the parking facility and water facility have the least ranking. Hence, the necessary steps to be taken by the railway to increase the satisfaction level of passengers by improving the existing services on railways. To implement effective and qualified services to the customers and should maintain factors like basic facilities, hygiene and safety-security, which are considered important factors to determine the satisfaction of the customers (Kalaiselvi *et al.*, 2017). This present study focuses on the fact that a few passengers are less satisfied with the refreshment, handicap accessories, and cleanliness of the platform. Passengers expect that it would be better if there were some more facilities at the railway station. The facilities are escalators, security, a hygienic atmosphere and a pure drinking water facility. So, the railway management considered these factors, and then the customers can be satisfied, which is important for its growth.

Indian railway transportation is gaining importance day by day. "A study on

passenger's satisfaction towards Railway Services in Kerala", shows that the perception of the service quality of railways in Kerala authorities have not taken any initiative to maintain or develop its services in these areas to satisfy them. The passengers would not avoid the train journey. This is because railways provide a safe and economical service. In this situation, the Railways would strictly be focused on core areas where their services have really been lapsed to fulfill and try to deliver the quality of services to the passengers as reported by Kumutha Devi (2019). The present study also comes to conclude that the service offered by Indian railways is vital for its growth and development. The satisfaction of the passengers is important to compete with other modes of transport. On the basis of this study some suggestions have been made. If the suggestive measurements have been considered by the Indian Railways, it is hope that the Indian Railways will shine and bring magnificence to our country in the near future.

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