



Service Quality in Indian Railways

KEYWORDS

Service quality, network, food quality, passengers

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ABSTRACT Starting in 1853 in a modest way Indian Railway today has grown as the largest network of transportation in the world under single management. It has 11000 trains to carry passengers in various types of trains AC/Non AC/Superfast covering a distance of 64000 route km. and touching 8000 railway stations. Service quality in running trains is a matter of great concern for Indian railway and the management is under great stress to improve service quality in running trains. Coaches of the trains welcome passengers with stinking bathrooms and unsatisfactory cleanliness. Quality of food is poor and a matter of great concern for travellers. The main goal of this research is to know the satisfaction of passengers travelling in AC coaches of train no.12716 Sachkhand superfast express running between Amritsar and Hazur Sahib Nanded about the quality of various services provided in AC coaches. The study shows that most of the passengers are not satisfied with the food quality and other services and recommendations for the improvement have been made so as to offer improved quality of services to the passengers travelling in the trains.

Introduction

It was sixteenth day of April 1853 and the time – 25 minutes to four in the evening The air was rent with loud salute of 21 guns men, women and small kids gazed in wonder India's first train set out on its maiden journey from Bombay to Tannah (now thane)The great Indian Peninsula railway ran this train select 400 guests travelling in the 14 carriages could scarce have known what a historical and momentous event they were participating in or how the 33.81 k.m. long journey accomplished in 57 minutes would change the very face of India.

Railway in India is one of the most important elements of travel and tourism and provides the principle mode of transportation for public and tourists. It brings together people and tourists. It brings together people from farthest corners of the country and makes possible to tourist sightseeing pilgrimage and education. The Indian railways have been a great integrating force of industry agriculture and tourism. Today Indian railway have grown in to a vast network of approximately 8000 stations spread over route length of 64000km with a fleet of 9549 locomotives 55399 passenger service vehicles 6560 other coaching vehicles and 239321 wagons as on 31 march 2012

The growth of Indian Railway in the 150 years of its existence is thus phenomenon. Indian railway today runs a variety of trains AC Premium express trains, Duronto, Yuva, Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Sampark kranti trains. It also runs superfast and express trains. Railway also runs ordinary passenger trains and double decker trains. There are about 11000 trains of which only 2000 are premium and superfast trains and rest are passenger trains.

Indian railways carry 14 lakh passengers daily and are the largest rail network in the world under single management. It has 1,406,430 employees to man this system. Indian railway is owned by the Govt. of India and is administered by railway board, under the Ministry of Railways. Service quality in Indian railway has always been a matter of debate and is a major issue for administration. Indian railway has miserably failed to maintain its railway coaches clean. Railway coaches generally look dirty with stinking bathrooms on most of the routes. Food service in running trains

through pantry car is so poor that railway has to bear the brunt of media almost daily because of poor quality of food which is offered to the passengers. However with the new railway minister railway hopes to clean its image and services. Indian Railway is under great pressure to improve its quality of service in running trains. General public, politicians and frequent rail travellers all blame Indian railway for its poor service quality in trains.

Sachkhand express and the Present Study

The train is named after Sachkhand Sahib Gurudwara situated in Nanded.Sachkhand Superfast Express was started in the year 1995 by Indian Railway as a weekly train between Amritsar and Nanded later on due to demand the train was declared to be daily operational. The present study relates to service quality only in AC Coaches of train no.12716 Sachkhand superfast express train running between Amritsar and Hazur Sahib Nanded. This is a daily train which leaves Amritsar by 5.00A.M.and reaches Hazur Sahib Nanded the next day by 4.00P.M..The composition of the train consists of 3A, 2A, SL and Ordinary coaches. This train carries three coaches of 3A(AC Third Class), two coaches of 2 AC(AC Second Class), 14 coaches of sleeper class and 3 coaches of Second Class unreserved and One Pantry Car and covers a distance of about 1993 km. from Amritsar to Hazur Sahib Nanded. This train was introduced in 1995.

Review of Literature

There are three groups involved in the provision and receipt of service management, staff and consumers. Each may have independent view points and different perceptions about the quality of service provisions (Saleh and Rayan1991). Basically service quality is perceived as a consumer's subjective interpretation of his/her experience (Lehtinen & Lehtin 1991).

Quality is conformance to customer specifications. It is customer's definition of quality not management's that counts (Berry Parasuraman & Zeithaml 1988). Gronroos (1984) supported the view point that perceived service is the result of the consumer's perception of the service and Zeithaml (1988), defined perceived service quality as the customers assessment of the overall excellence or superiority of the

service.

Bojanic(1996), has distinguished perceived quality from objective quality pointing out that perceived quality is function of objective quality as well as certain other intrinsic and extrinsic attributes which are often subjective and difficult to analyze. Finally Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml(1988) believe that customers assess service quality by comparing what they want or expect to what they actually get or perceive they are getting where human performance plays a major role in customer perceptions of service quality.

Dimensions of Service Quality

Researchers have classified service quality into different dimensions (Swan and Comb 1976 cited in Gronroos 1984) divide perceived service into instrumental performance(end product of service perfection) which is fundamental and expressive performance(interaction between buyer seller the various resources and activities) which should not be separated from instrumental performance(Gronroos 1984) views perceived service as a result of a customer's view of a bundle of service dimensions including both technical(what customers get) and functional(how customers get) parts These two quality dimensions are interrelated acceptable technical quality while functional quality in some cases even more important may be excused if the functional quality is good enough. Similarly from the consumers point of view Lehtinen and Lehtinen(1991) have divided the dimension of service quality into process quality which is judged by consumers during a service and output quality which is judged after a service is performed. This is known as a higher level and obstruct two – dimensional approach.

Consumer satisfaction – “consumers fulfillment response” consumers satisfaction has been considered as one of the most important constructs(Morgan et al 1996 Mc Quitty et al 2000) and one of the main goals in marketing(Erevellers and Levitt 1992)Satisfaction plays a central role in marketing because it is a good predictor of purchase behavior(Repurchase purchase intentions brand choice and switching over) (Oliver 1993, Mc Quitty et al 2000, Fornell, 1991) defines satisfaction as overall evaluation after purchase Oliver(1997) offered deeper definition of satisfaction stating that satisfaction is the consumers fulfillment response .Kotler (1997) defines satisfaction as follows:

“Satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a products perceived performance in relation to his/her expectation

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the satisfaction level of passengers travelling in AC coaches of Sachkhand superfast train from Amritsar to Hazur Saheb Nanded on various factors like catering, cleanliness, functioning of AC, tangibility in coaches, behavior of catering and railway staff and punctuality of trains and to know the deficiencies in service quality.
2. To find out any differences in satisfaction level among Gender on various factors of catering, cleanliness, functioning of AC, tangibility in coaches, behavior of catering and railway staff, punctuality of trains, linen and overall satisfaction of quality

Hypothesis of the study

On the basis of the framed objectives, the following null hypothesis has been framed. This hypothesis is subjected to appropriate statistical tests to enlighten the objective of

the study.

H01: There is no significant difference between various independent variables (Gender, CC= Coach Cleanliness, BR = Bathroom Cleanliness, WS = Water supply in coaches ,AC = Functioning of AC in the coaches, FOOD = Food quality served in the coaches, CS = Service by Catering staff, CSB = Catering staff behavior, TTE = TTE and other staff behavior, TRP = Train Punctuality, ELECT = Functioning of Electrical points in the coaches, Linen = Quality of Linen supplied, Overall = Overall satisfaction of Quality)

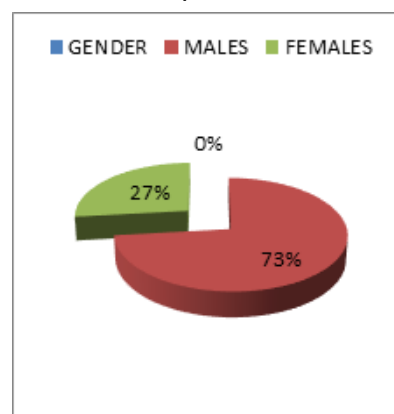
Research Methodology

This is an exploratory and descriptive research. Primary data was collected from the passengers travelling in 2A, 3A coaches of train no.12716Sachkhand superfast express running from Amritsar to Hazur Saheb Nanded. This train has one 2A and 3 3A coaches with a capacity of 240 passengers 2A coach has a capacity of 48 passengers and 3A coach accommodates 64 passengers. Consisting total 240 passengers of all AC coaches as population, a sample size of 150 passengers who had to travel up to next day has been taken randomly. Questionnaires were distributed to 150 long journey passengers and they were requested to return the questionnaire with 12 items and 142 questionnaires duly filled in were received back from passengers. 8 questionnaires were not found suitable due to unfilled responses The statistical significance of this hypothesis has been tested with the help of Pearson Chi-square test at 5% level of significance

Research Instrument

To measure the service quality a structured questionnaire with 12 items was developed through extensive literature review and discussions with the passengers who travel frequently on this train Summated scale (or Likert type of scale) with 1-5 level was developed to measure all responses. Level of customer satisfaction has been measured by rating 1-5 level where level 1 indicated strongly satisfied, 2 indicated satisfied, 3 indicated slightly satisfied, 4 indicated unsatisfied and 5 indicated strongly unsatisfied

Profile of the respondents



Out of the total respondents Males were 104 and Females were 38

Results and Discussions

Respondents Opinion about various factors pertaining to services offered in the train

TABLE 1. Shows Mean and STD Deviation of various factors in the questionnaire

| FACTORS | MEAN | STD-VP | STATE-MENT |
|---|------|--------|--------------------|
| • CC = Coach Cleanliness | 3.43 | 0.59 | Slightly satisfied |
| • BR = Bath- room Cleanliness | 3.78 | 0.86 | Slightly satisfied |
| • WS = Water Supply | 3.26 | 0.56 | Slightly satisfied |
| • AC = Func- tioning Of AC | 2.66 | 0.86 | Slightly satisfied |
| • FOOD = Quality Of Food | 4.27 | 0.62 | Not satisfied |
| • CS = Service By Catering Staff | 3.55 | 0.53 | Not satisfied |
| • CSB = Catering Staff Behavior | 3.11 | 0.58 | Slightly satisfied |
| • TTE = Traveling Ticket Examiner & Other Staff Behavior | 2.33 | 0.48 | Satisfied |
| • TRP = Train Punctuality | 2.54 | 0.64 | Slightly satisfied |
| • ELEC = Functioning Of Electric Points | 2.55 | 0.56 | Slightly satisfied |
| • LINEN = Quality Of Linen Supplied | 2.81 | 0.56 | Slightly satisfied |
| • OVERALL = Overall Satis- faction Of Quality | 3.43 | 0.48 | Slightly satisfied |

The above table shows that most of the passengers were slightly satisfied with the services provided in Sachkhand Superfast train from Amritsar to Nanded except not satisfied with the **quality of Food** and **Service by the catering staff** which clearly states that Railways need to put in extra efforts for the overall quality satisfaction of services especially the catering services and food quality which is the indispensable part of the services provided in the train during a long journey.

Framed Hypothesis Testing

Table 2 shows results for Pearson Chi Square test

| Factors | Value | Df | P Value |
|---|--------|----|---------|
| • CC = Coach Cleanliness | .745a | 2 | .689 |
| • BR = Bath- room Cleanliness | .270a | 3 | .966 |
| • WS = Water Supply | 3.373a | 2 | .185 |
| • AC = Func- tioning Of AC | 4.436a | 4 | .350 |
| • FOOD = Quality Of Food | 5.650a | 3 | .130 |
| • CS = Service By Catering Staff | 1.380a | 2 | .501 |
| • CSB = Catering Staff Behavior | 3.193 | 2 | .203 |
| • TTE = Traveling Ticket Examiner & Other Staff Behavior | 1.449a | 2 | .485 |
| • TRP = Train Punctuality | 8.936a | 3 | .030 |

| | | | |
|---|--------|---|------|
| • ELEC = Functioning Of Electric Points | 4.683a | 3 | .197 |
| • LINEN = Quality Of Linen Supplied | 2.889a | 3 | .409 |
| • OVERALL = Overall Satis- faction Of Quality | 1.526a | 3 | .676 |

| TRP=Train Punctuality | | | Strongly Satisfied | Satisfied | Slightly satisfied |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| GEN- DER | MALE | Count | 1 | 50 | 26 |
| | | Ex- pected Count | .6 | 44.8 | 33.9 |
| | FEMALE | Count | 0 | 24 | 30 |
| | | Ex- pected Count | .4 | 29.2 | 22.1 |
| Total | Count | 1 | 74 | 56 | |
| | Ex- pected Count | 1.0 | 74.0 | 56.0 | |

*TRP = Train punctuality factor had a significant variance among Gender where Female passengers count was just half of the males count who were slightly satisfied with the train punctuality.

Findings

Through data analysis it was found that there is no significant difference among Gender on all factors because P-value of all the variables is >0.05 except in the case of TRP = Train Punctuality where P-value is <0.05 there is a slight difference on opinion among gender exists on Train punctuality. As shown in Table no. 3 that majority of Male respondents are satisfied with the timings whereas female respondents were slightly satisfied with the train timings

Conclusion

Majority of the passengers were not fully satisfied about cleanliness of coaches. They were however unsatisfied about maintenance of bathrooms. Quality of food was disliked by a big majority of passengers. However they were satisfied about the behavior of TTE and other railway employees. Passengers were also not fully satisfied with pantry car employees behavior .Passengers were also satisfied about the functioning of AC in coaches they were satisfied to some extent about the train punctuality. Railway may, therefore take steps to maintain bathrooms cleanliness; cleanliness in the coaches may be improved. Railway must improve the quality of food served by pantry coach to passengers and instruct pantry staff to be courteous and responsive towards passengers.

Limitations of the study

1. The study is confined to AC coaches of train no.12716 only
2. The study cannot be applied on other trains of Indian Railways
3. Bias if any by the respondents cannot be ruled out

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