



MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY GAP OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORPORATION IN SALEM REGION

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ABSTRACT

In India, usage of public transport has been reduced over the recent years due to the various problems, i.e. traffic, congestion, air and noise pollution, climate change. Over the last few years Government of India has been involved in a process of deep transformation of public transport through different policy initiatives to attract more passengers against using public transport. In order to retain the existing passenger as well as new ones who currently use other modes of transport, to the public transport sector have to provide better service quality to meet the passenger expectations. In this paper, the researcher focuses the service quality gap in the public transport sector in Salem region.

KEYWORDS : Servqual, Satisfaction, Quality, Transport Corporation

Introduction

Accordingly, the road transport act 1950 enabled states and central governments to take the initiative to form the road transport corporations. Similarly, the motor vehicles act 1950 was subsequently amended to make special provision for state transport undertakings (STUs). This act was further amended in 1969 for promoting state monopoly in passenger road transport service. The public sector passenger transport corporation service to the general public are higher than those of the private passenger transport in Tamilnadu. SERVQUAL model focuses on the difficulty in ensuring high quality service for all passengers in all situations. SERVQUAL is an analytical approach for evaluating the difference between passenger perception and expectations of service quality. It is expected that the passenger gets better service, lower fares and higher reliability because of the competition of public transport service. The passenger satisfaction is more likely to be treated as attitude, which is an extended valuation of goods or services. Some scholars also describe satisfaction as an evaluation of an emotion, suggesting that it reflects the degree to which a passenger believes that using a service evokes positive feelings. Because satisfaction with a service provider is considered to be an emotion-based response to a service. PZB defines service quality as the comparison results of both expected and perceived services. In this study, the researcher adopts service quality scale of the public transportation system to evaluate quality concepts and movements of the service of the public transport

Definition

Service quality is the result of customer competition between expected services and the perception how those services were performed. If the expectations are greater than the performance, customers are less likely to feel satisfied about the quality of services delivered by the organization. The most commonly used definition of service quality is the organization's ability to meet and exceed the customer expectations.

Review of Literature

Gronroos (2007) in the current marketing literature, much attention on the issue of service quality as related to customers' attitudes towards services has focused on the relationship between customer expectations of a service and their perceptions of the quality of provision. This relationship known as perceived service quality.

Sultan Singh (2008) in her study has found out that the level of customer service and satisfaction is influenced by the factors such as location of the branch and lay out, differentiated services, system and procedures, delegation and decentralization, mechanization and computerization, complaint redressal; and skills, attitudes and responses of the employees.

Nana Owusu- Frimpong (2008) conducted an empirical study to ascertain customers' utilization level and perception about the image of rural community banks (RCBs) in Ghana. This research also probes whether women and men differ in their levels of satisfaction

and expectation about the banks' services. Men and women are slowly imbibing the banking culture. Both sexes perceive the quality of financial advice, communication and service delivery as areas that require a lot of improvement. There are no significant differences between both genders with regard to perceptions and expectation of the banks' services.

Zeithaml (2008) Thus, the key to managing perceived service quality is to minimize this gap. He Defined perceived service quality as the customers' assessment of the overall excellence of the service. Bolton and Drew (1991) described service quality as a form of attitude that results from the comparison of expectations with performance. Berry et. Al (1990) pointed out that since customers are the "Sole judge of service quality", an organization can build strong reputation for quality service when it can constantly meet customer service expectations.

Parasuraman, A (2009) recast the 10 determinants into five principal dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Following their works, other researchers have adopted this model for measuring service quality in various service industries. Amongst them is Blanchard (1994), Donnelly et. Al (1995), Angur (1999), Lassar (2000), Brysland and Curry (2001), Wisniewski (2001) and Kang et. Al (2002). Application of this model to measure the quality of service in the banking industry was conducted by Newman (2001).

William Young et al., (2009) in their study entitled, "Sustainable consumption: green consumer behavior when purchasing products", concluded that, the green consumers "decision-making processes when buying a technology-based product. The most common green criteria that our interviewees mentioned when they were deciding which consumer electronics products to purchase were mainly what could be classified as: 1. Product environmental performance (energy efficiency, durability, water consumption, LPG conversion, fuel type, fuel consumption and energy ratings); 2. Product manufacturing (recycled material content, chemical content, and reparability); 3. Second hand availability.

Importance of The Study

The survival of any service industry depends on how well they serve and satisfy their passenger. A satisfied passenger is always the biggest asset of any service industry, especially with the advent of private and global players in this market. The competition has become still stiff. Therefore, Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation improves its service in order to satisfy the passenger.

Statement of the Problem

The passenger has the various problems like time keeping, convinces, bus fare, safety and reliability service towards the public transport sector. Transport sector occupies a place of the pivotal role in Indian economy. The tremendous growth in the transport sector has expanded trade, commerce and industries phenomenally. Technological advancement has resulted in newer vehicles with advanced features in

the bushes. The burgeoning gap between expectation of passenger and existing level of facilities and convinces offered in the buses have a definite bearing on the service quality in the bus transport sector. The bus fare in Tamil Nadu has been reduced manifold, the service quality of public transport corporation is said to be far from satisfactory, while long distance private operators attract the passenger by inviting heavily on various physical features in the buses, thereby registering a handsome profit. Hence profitable operation of buses under the fold TNSTC assumes significance. If the corporation knows the service gap it can fine tune the service to the satisfaction of passenger.

Objective of the Study

1. To know about the service quality gap of the public sectors.

Methodology of the Study

For the study, the researcher collects the data from 200 passengers in Salem Region through framed questionnaire which was developed by Parasuraman et al (1985). The convenience sampling technique is adopted for the study. The secondary data was collected from the various publications and from the various books, journals and websites etc.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The average mean score for 5 dimensions and 22 statements of the Passenger's expectation and perception and their gap is shown in table 1.

Table-1 Service Quality Gap of Transport Sector

Dimension	Expectation E	Perception P	Gap (E-P)
Tangibles	4.90	4.19	-0.71
Reliability	4.68	4.82	0.14
Responsiveness	4.49	4.40	-0.09
Assurance	4.56	4.08	-0.48
Empathy	4.31	3.98	-0.33

Minus value indicates expectation is higher than the perception

The table reveals that the average mean score of expectation and perception for Tangibles are found to be 4.90 and 4.19. Similarly the negative gap is identified in the dimension Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy i.e. negative score indicates that the expectation exceeds the perception. Further, the service quality gap is found for each dimension and the service quality gap for service dimension Tangibles is (-.071), Reliability (0.14), Responsiveness (-0.09), Assurance (-0.48) and Empathy (-0.33). Here the negative gap is very high in case of Tangibles and Assurance dimensions.

Findings of the Study

From this study, it is found that there is a huge gap in Tangible aspects, i.e. Employees' neat appearance, modern facilities, visual appearance of the bus and also, there is a negative gap in responsiveness dimensions i.e. willing to help of customers, service performed, time keeping of the bus. I.e. similarly the negative gap is found in the assurance such as lack of safety travel, confidence travel. Further, there is a negative gap such as less individual attention, specific needs and convenient travel in the empathy dimension.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made based on the findings of the study:

- The transport sector should concentrate the physical facilities like appearance, cleanliness, etc.
- The employee should provide their promised service.
- the employees should inform the passengers regarding the timekeeping of the bus, reasonable bus fare, and reason for late arrival of the bus and when services will be performed. Otherwise passenger may get emotional, worries and lack of confidence.
- The employees of the public sector should take care individual attention during night travel.

Conclusion

In this article a structural equation model has been proposed to show the relationship between passenger satisfaction on bus services and the attributes of the services supplied this study aims to diagnose the service quality based on the difference between the customers' expectation of quality services and their perception of the services received. It is found that there is a huge gap on reliability, responsiveness and tangibility services. The results reveal that the

state-run transport corporation is able to provide better quality of service as compared to the private operators.

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