

Awareness of Passengers Towards Online Ticketing Services of Indian Railways – A Study With Reference To Erode City



Commerce

KEYWORDS : Indian Railways, Online Ticketing, Passenger Awareness.

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ABSTRACT

Railways and Roadways are the only means of transportation over land. Railways have an advantage over roadways that, they can carry many passengers as well as heavy loads to a long distance. Railways are ideally suited for long distance travel and movement of bulk commodities. It is considered better than road transport in terms of energy efficiency, land use, environment impact and safety and it is always in forefront during national emergency. Indian Railways, a historical legacy, are a vital force in our economy. Spanning nearly two centuries Indian Railways has been serving the country with utmost pride. Also the journey by train is more comfortable and economical. India has a large network of railways throughout the country, and has trains from one corner to other corner of India. Indian Railways and Catering Tourism Corporation pioneered internet-based rail ticket booking through its website, as well as from the mobile phones via GPRS or SMS. In addition to e-tickets, it also offers I-tickets that are basically like regular tickets except that they are booked online and delivered by post. Online ticket booking is one of the most emerging concepts which is used by the people. Hence this study attempts on the awareness of general public on online ticket booking service of Indian Railways. The data were collected through the questionnaire from the people residing in Erode City. It is confined to convenience sampling method. The sample size of the study is 75. The data have been analysed through percentage method, Chi-square analysis, Henry Garrett ranking method and factor analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Transport is the movement of people, goods and animals from one location to another. Transport is vital one because it enables trade between persons, which is essential for the development of civilizations. Transport is a key necessity for specialisation, allowing production and consumption of products to occur at different locations. Economic growth has always been dependent on the increasing capacity and rationality of transport. Rail transport is commonly used mode of long-distance transport in India. Almost all rail operations in India are handled by Indian Railways, a state-owned organization of the Ministry of Railways. India has some of the lowest train fares in the world. Until the late 1980s, Indian Railway ticket reservations were done manually. In late 1987, the Railways started using a computerised ticketing system. The entire ticketing system went online in 1995 to provide up to date information on status and availability. Today the ticketing network is computerised to a large extent, with the exception of some remote places. Computerized tickets can be booked for any two points in the country. Tickets can also be booked through the internet and via mobile phones.

ONLINE TICKETING

Indian Railways is known for changing the face of railway ticketing in India. It pioneered internet-based rail ticket where railway tickets can be booked through the website of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd., and also through mobile Phones via GPRS and SMS. Tickets booked through this site are categorised into iTickets and eTickets. iTickets are booked by a passenger online and then printed and delivered to the passenger by post for carrying during journey. eTickets are printed by the passenger and carried while travelling. While travelling on an eTicket, one must carry one of the authorised valid Photo Identity Cards. Cancellation of eTickets is also done in online, without the requirement for the passenger to go to any counter. Seeking to make it easier to book e-tickets, it launched a scheme called Rolling Deposit Scheme (RDS). RDS is a hassle-free e-ticket booking scheme allowing passengers to reserve seats against advance money kept with the corporation. It has also added flights and hotels booking facilities to their line of online reservation services.

Benefits of online booking systems

1. Stress-free, hustle free booking of tickets
2. Easy payment options
3. Various additional schemes also can avail on this booking. Simply when the passengers have an account of site from where he can do booking.
4. Passengers can have various options while choosing their tickets.
5. It helps to speed up cash flow.
6. No need to lose out on potential business.
7. Be open 24/7 for bookings - very good support for passengers.
8. It reduces the amount of time for passengers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rust and Kannan (2003) focused e-service is a customer-centric concept, and thus, the strategic and tactical components of an e-service orientation focus on increasing value defined at the customer level, and at the strategic level, an e-service orientation call for moving the emphasis from products and transactions to service and relationships, and building customer equity. They conclude firms must take full advantage of Net-based e-service opportunities, particularly in the transition of products to services, to garner long-term customer relationships and loyalty.

A study by **Ghosh et al., (2004)** analysed how e-service can be usefully conceptualized as an interactive information service. The study pointed out information provided by or collected from and about customers can be gathered and analyzed by the e-service provider, and used as the basis for the customization of the service that the organization offers to the customer. The study found that the online service experience integrates service delivery and marketing communications, both are achieved through exchange of information.

Gabriel John S. and Babu Suresh M. (2005) analysed the passenger reservation system as an important service of Indian Railways. They suggested that with increase in rail passengers the facility has also improved and brings forth the fact those Railways are the only organizations providing maximum passenger reservation services efficiently and effectively.

Jennifer Rowley (2006) made an attempt to gather conceptual perspectives on the role and nature of e-service, and the e-service

experience. The study pointed out recent advances in technology has created a surge in technology-based self-service or e-service, and there is an increasing recognition of its role in differentiation and customer interfaces. The study conclude, to understand e-service experiences it is necessary to go beyond studies of e-service quality dimensions and to also take into account the inherent characteristics of e-service delivery and the factors that differentiate one service experience from another.

Jamie & Aron (2010)⁷ examined the relationships among e-service quality, consumer satisfaction, attitudes towards the web site and behavioural intentions in the context of content driven web sites. They suggested that positive evaluations of e-service quality influences positive levels of consumer satisfaction, consumer attitudes towards the web site and behavioural intentions within the specific service context of content-driven professional sports web sites. With the increase of e-service adoption in business field, the importance of measuring and monitoring e-service quality in the virtual world has been recognized.

According to **Sangeetha Sahney (2010)**⁸ E-ticketing is widely popularized due to advanced technology, consumer behaviour (both psychographic and demographic) and also of its user-friendliness and computer proficiency. She concluded that techn-know-how people and those who want to avail the related tourism services go for e-ticketing.

Arpita Khare and Meenakshi Handa (2011)⁹ conducted a research to study customer experience of the online reservation system of the Indian railways. The purpose of the study is to understand the customer's perception regarding technology deployment in improving services. The study indicated that though the service is gaining acceptability in the country, there still exists considerable scope for improvement in customer experience with regard to the various service quality dimensions for the online reservation system. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for improvement in various aspects of the service are stated.

G. Rajeshwari and Dr. D. Elangovan (2014)¹⁰ tried to find out the level of satisfaction on services offered by the rail system using SERQUAL instrument in Salem Division of Southern Railway Zone. They have been taken total of 500 respondents by applying stratified random sampling method and analysis of variance is used to test the hypotheses. Their findings of the study reveal that the passengers are fairly satisfied with the services offered by the rail system.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the demographic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To examine the awareness level of the respondents towards online railway services.
3. To analyze the factors which influence the respondents to prefer online railway services.
4. To identify the problems faced by the respondents regarding online railway services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection and size of sample

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 75 passengers in Erode City with the help of framed questionnaires and secondary data were collected from various books, articles and websites. This study is based on convenience sampling method. This study covered the period from January to April 2016.

Statistical analysis

To arrive at certain conclusions regarding the hypothesis in the present investigation, the following statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square test, Henry Garrett ranking method and factor analysis were employed for the analysis of data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

**TABLE NO. 1
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

S.No	Demographic factors	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	46	61
		Female	29	39
		Total	75	100
2.	Age	Below 25 Years	21	28
		26 - 35 Years	22	29
		36 - 45 Years	20	27
		Above 45 Years	12	16
		Total	75	100
3.	Monthly Income	Below Rs.10,000	19	25
		Rs.10,000 – 20,000	26	35
		Rs.20,001 – 30,000	18	24
		Above Rs. 30,000	12	16
		Total	75	100
4.	Educational qualification	No formal Education	17	23
		School level	32	42
		Graduation	26	35
		Total	75	100
5.	Occupation	Business	21	28
		Employed	24	32
		Job seekers	14	19
		Housewife	9	12
		Others	7	9
		Total	75	100
6.	Awareness level of using online services	Aware and using	35	47
		Aware but not using	25	33
		Unaware	15	20
		Total	75	100

It is seen from the above table that majority 61% of the respondents are male where as 39 % of them are female. When the age of the respondents are concerned, 29% of the respondents are in the age group of 26-35 years, 28% of them falls in below 25 years category and 27% of them in 36-45 years and 16% of them are in above 45 years. It is observed that nearly 35% of the respondents belong to the income group of Rs.10,000-20,000 per month, 25% of them belong to below Rs.10,000 and 24% of them belong to range between Rs.20,001 – 30,000. About 16% of the respondents fall in to the category of more than Rs. 30,000 per month. According to the education of the respondents are concerned, 42% of the respondents have school level education, 35% of them having Graduation and 23% of them not having formal education. Around 47% of the respondents are aware of online railway services and using it, 33% of the respondents are aware but not using and 20% of them are quite unaware of online railway services.

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

Chi-square analysis has been used to find the relationship between demographic variables and awareness level of the respondents about online railway services.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND AWARENESS LEVEL TOWARDS ONLINE RAILWAY SERVICES

Ho: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables and awareness level towards online railway services.

H1: There is a significant relationship between demographic variables and awareness level towards online railway services.

TABLE NO. 2
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND AWARENESS LEVEL

S.No	Particulars	Value	DF	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Significant level	Result
1	Gender	5.121	1	0.015	Significant	Rejected
2	Age	0.417	2	0.617	Not Significant	Accepted
3	Income	0.687	2	0.709	Not Significant	Accepted
4	Qualification	5.527	2	0.061	Significant	Rejected
5	Occupation	4.223	2	0.013	Significant	Rejected

From the above table it is cleared that there is a significant relationship between gender, educational qualification and occupation of the respondents and awareness level towards online railway services. Age and income level of the respondents are not having relationship with awareness level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted for the age and income variables, whereas null hypothesis is rejected in respect of gender, qualification and occupation variables.

HENRY GARRETT RANKING

Garrett's ranking technique is used to find out the problems of the respondent to prefer online services.

TABLE NO. 3
PROBLEMS IN ONLINE SERVICES

S.No	Problems	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total	Score	Rank
1	Lack of online payment facility	23	14	15	13	10	75	7302	4
2	Expensive	27	13	13	11	11	75	7309	3
3	Complex system	25	16	14	10	10	75	7311	2
4	Very busy network	30	15	10	11	9	75	7321	1
5	Risk of wrong ticket	20	15	15	15	10	75	7295	5

The above table shows that 'Very busy network' was ranked as a first problem with a score of 7321 Garrett points. 'Complex system' was ranked as a second problem with a score of 7311 points. 'Expensive' was ranked as a third problem with a score of 7309 points. 'Lack of online payment facility' was ranked as a fourth problem with a score of 7302 points. 'Risk of wrong ticket' was ranked as a fifth problem with a score of 7295 points.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors. Factor analysis searches for such joint variations in response to unobserved latent variables.

TABLE NO. 4

Rotated Component Matrix ^a			
Variables	Component		
	1	2	3
Clear and authenticated information	.931	-.294	-.128
Fastest communication	.922	-.260	.104
Less time consumption	-.351	.876	-.318
Reserve ticket easily	.327	.828	.101
Know the seat availability easily	-.072	.784	.332
Reduce transportation time	.246	-.104	.940
Economy	.507	-.108	.855

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Interpretation

In order to know the reasons for preferring online railway services among the public, the factor analysis has been applied. There are seven variables considered for the study which have influenced them to prefer online railway services. With the help of the measured variables, three important factors are extracted through the factor analysis and are named as Information and Communication followed by Time and Convenient and Cost efficient reservation.

FINDINGS

Majority of the male respondents are using online services.

There is no significant relationship between level of awareness with respect to age and income of passengers towards online ticket booking services.

Majority of the respondents register that very busy network is the major problem in Online ticket booking.

In factor analysis, researcher identifies that priority factors in online ticketing were Information and Communication followed by Time and Convenient and Cost efficient reservation

SUGGESTIONS

1. Indian Railways has to take necessary steps to conduct awareness programme frequently to update the knowledge of passengers about online ticket booking.

2. Railway authority should take remedial measures to reduce the traffic of online ticketing to prevent very busy network.

3. Indian Railways should make an announcement quite often regarding the online services and amenities available to the passengers.

4. Railway authority should take steps to avoid malpractices while booking online tickets.

5. Indian Railways has to consider and reducing the price of upper class online ticket to avoid shifting to other alternative mode of transport.

CONCLUSION

Indian Railways is a premier transport organisation of the country, owned by the Government of India. It has the largest rail network in Asia and the world's second largest organization under single management. The development of technology in the services industry forced Indian Railways to refocus their strategy on technological innovations in order to enhance their competitiveness. Indian Railways and Catering Tourism Corporation pioneered internet-based rail ticket booking through its website. The various dimensions of online ticket services identified in this research will improve railway services thereby the satisfaction of passengers can be enhanced.

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