

**An Assessment Of Relativity Status Between Passengers'
Pre-Travel Expectations and Satisfaction Level Towards Bus Transport Service
Quality
(With Special Reference To Chennai District, Tamil Nadu)**

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ABSTRACT

This research mainly concentrating on Pre-travel expectations of the passenger are the main cause of passenger's level of satisfaction. The researcher collected primary data for this study through the research questionnaire and also from secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines, government annual reports and official websites of SETC, TNSTC and Private Omni buses. The researcher, by himself collected the data with the assistance of trained people at CMBT bus terminus and Private Omni bus terminus operated at Koyambedu, Chennai. The total duration taken for data collection is around two years, the data collection carried out during festival season, summer season, vacation period, slack season. The collected data properly analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools like Factor analysis, Cluster analysis, t-Test, Chi-square test and ANOVA to justify assumptions. Totally 10 pre travel expectations related variables are identified and by principal component method, the same was reduced in to 3 factors, the results were found through SPSS Version 22 and the same was clearly presented in this research study for the readers understanding and for their references. The results shown in this research article is entirely on the basis of opinion of the total respondents. 500 samples were taken out of that, on the basis of proportionate basis, the samples were taken from government and private sector bus transport service industries at Chennai district. 500 respondents were interviewed at various centers of service providers like boarding point, bus terminus, and passenger's leisure room and at bus terminus. The total research paper tries to justify the connectivity status between the pre travel expectation and passenger's level of satisfaction. This research is the first attempt in Chennai district in bus transport sector, effort contributed by the researcher and it is purely his original work. The researcher hopes that this research is going to encourage the other researcher in future in the different aspects of research work under the same area.

Keywords: Passengers' Pre-travel expectations, level of satisfaction, Level of comfort, Reliability status of passengers.

Introduction

No bus transport business can exist without passengers. So it is a necessary to maintain good relationship with the passengers. The service providers are also officially competing with each other to attract and offer maximum level of satisfaction to passengers at different levels. Thus passengers' satisfaction is an important term which is the outcome of good quality of service offered by various service providers. So it is the duty of the service providers to fulfill the level of expectations of the passengers' at all levels. Passengers' satisfaction is a conceptual term, the meaning of which will vary from person to person and services to services. Measurement of passengers' satisfaction is too difficult since it is related to the psychological state of mind. An attempt is made by the researcher in this study to have better understanding of passengers' pre travel expectations towards services provided by both public and private sector bus transport industries. In addition to this, a brief report is made about the connectivity status between pre travel expectations of the passengers and their level of satisfaction. The researcher identified 10 different variables which is connected with the pre-travel expectations of the passengers and the same variables grouped and reduced to 3 dependent factors by principle component method which enables the researcher to test the connectivity, influence status, combined

influence of independent variables on dependent factors. The main aim of this study is to compare the services provided by public and private sector bus transport industries and to evaluate their service quality, efficiency level. Also this study attempts to elicit the opinion of the passengers about the quality and types of services provided by SETC, TNSTC and Private Omni Buses.

In fact, an efficient service provider of bus transport sector will try to increase passengers' satisfaction and the same will also promote the bus transport business. The effective public bus transportation system is also an important factor for the economic growth of a particular state or country. Therefore, the improvements in public bus transport services offered by both public and private sectors transport industries will create satisfaction among passengers of different age and income group to some possible extent. The deficiencies and inadequacy of services may leads to loss of passengers and loss of business. Therefore it is mandatory for every bus transport service provider whether it belongs to government or private to know the level of expectations of the passengers. In addition to this, to persuade more people to avail services of public bus transport, it is necessary for the service providers to identify the levels of expectations, attitude , perception , taste and preferences of the passengers at all the levels. The research objectives of this study is to highlight the relativity status between pre travel expectations and level of satisfaction and association , influence and combined influence of independent variables on dependent factors of pre travel expectations.

Statement of the Problem

If any service sector business wants to increase its business status, especially bus transport sector, then it is compulsory for them to identify, understand and analyze the mindset which means the attitude, behavior, taste and preferences of the passengers and their level of expectations before travel is necessary to attract them in an optimal level. But on the other hand, the service provider concentrates to optimize their profit rather giving that much importance for the psychology of the passengers. There is a gap between the expectation level of the passengers and the given service, service quality of the service providers. In addition, there is an absence from the service providers to identify the passengers' pre travel expectations at different level. Therefore, in order to insist the importance of pre- travel expectation of the passengers, the researcher made this attempt to find the association, influence status of dependent factors of pre travel expectations of passengers with the independent variables.

Objectives of the Study

To identify Pre-travel expectation of the passengers of both government and private sector bus transport service industries.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in Pre-travel expectations of the passengers' between Public and Private sector bus transport service industries.

Research Methodology

The data collected for the present study is from primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected by way of distributing questionnaires to the passengers who commence their travel from CMBT and Private Omni bus terminus situated at Koyambedu, Chennai, and at different boarding points located at Chennai. Questionnaire includes Socio- economic factors, Pre-Travel Expectations of the passengers. Questionnaire includes both dependent and independent variables. 5 point Likert's scale is used which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree and the same 5 point Likert's scale is used in all sections of the questionnaire. The researcher hopes that it is his first attempt in Chennai District to carry out this research in bus transport sector at the first time. The researcher wishes to furnish the following details also for more clarity and better understanding of the research methodology.

Sources of data

The data collected from the passengers' survey constitute primary, and information gathered through books, journals, magazines, reports, dailies consist of secondary data. The data collected from both the sources are scrutinized, edited and tabulated. The data are analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer packages. Factor analysis is applied to find out the influencing factors of passengers' Pre-travel expectation and their opinion towards both Private and Public sectors bus transport service industries in Chennai district.

Sample size

Samples selected for the study covers only the Chennai district. Totally, 500 passengers of State Express Transport Corporations (SETC), Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporations (TNSTC) and Private Omni bus transport services are selected on simple random sampling method. Out of the total samples of 500, 109 samples are from SETC, 216 samples from TNSTC comprising a total of 325 samples of public sector bus transport service industries. The balance of 175 samples from the passengers of private sector Omni buses is chosen.

Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey

Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey has been carried out by the researcher to monitor bus passengers perceptions towards State Transport Units (Excluding Metropolitan Transport Corporation) were taken which includes only long distance buses such as State Express Transport Corporation (SETC), Tamil Nadu State Express Transport Corporation (TNSTC) and Omni Buses operated from Chennai district at different intervals of the period for 2 years. The data collected from different categories of passengers' at different levels, those who are capable to understand and able to answer questionnaire. This is a public survey carried out to record passenger satisfaction with regard to public and private Sector transport units operated from Chennai district to other districts which covers 200 and more than 200 Kilometers.

Limitations of the Study

- This study is restricted to 500 samples questionnaire. Samples are taken only from the respondents of Chennai district.
- The total fleet of buses operated from government side in Chennai i.e. public sector bus transport services is 15030 and the total number of buses operated from the private sector is 466. Out of the total fleet of buses, the researcher selected the sample size in the ratio of 65:35 from public and private sector bus transport service industries.
- The present study includes only the long distance buses that are SETC , TNSTC and private Omni buses only. It excludes MTC (Metropolitan Transport Corporation) and other short distance buses from both government and private sector bus transport service providers operated in Chennai district.
- The researcher has not taken short distance buses from Chennai district for his study because only a few private buses are operated in Chennai district. So it is not possible to compare the unequal's (few private buses with larger number of government buses). Moreover, all these short distance buses are operated in and around and suburban areas of Chennai district only and not from Chennai to other districts of Tamil Nadu.

Literature Review

Some of the literature reviews are given as follows to identify the research gap between the present study and the earlier studies.

- Charles R. Weiser (1995) an employee of British Airways who served in customer relations department suggested 4 ways to retain customers. According to his observations and suggestions, a four-step process was incorporated into all the technical and human system. (a) Apologies and own the problem (b) Reply to the customer within a maximum of 72 hours (c)

Assure the customer that the problem is being fixed and (d) Do it by phone. He also insists on implementing CARES (Customer Analysis and Retention System), redesigning the customer service process, building interpersonal skills and encouraging customers to communicate with the organization to get speedy solution. Finally, the success of the customer retention strategy requires partnership between customer relations and internal customers i.e. Colleagues in other British Airways Departments. Due to the implementation of these steps, the customer retention has been doubled and the return on investment was also increased to 200 %.

- Meyer (2000) subdivided the indicators of performance into three broad categories. The first segment is characterized by common performance such as covered service area , vehicle kilometers , passenger trips. The second performance indicator is represented by determining effectiveness including service supply such as departures per hour; quality of service , availability of services like services among weekdays. The third category of the performance indicator includes measuring efficiency such as cost efficiency, operating expenses per hour; operating ratios i.e. difference between revenue and operating expenses, vehicle utilization, energy usage and fare.
- Carter and Lomax (1992) also measuring performance in six categories of indicators such as cost efficiency, cost effectiveness, service effectiveness, vehicle usage and efficiency, service quality and labor productivity. Performance and delivery of a transit service depends on passenger's perception. In general, cost efficiency and indicators of effectiveness can be considered as performance measures from the transit perspective. Many researchers consider that the customer's point of view is the most important aspect for evaluating transit performance.
- Berry et al. (1990) stated that "customers are the best judge to evaluate service quality". Passengers evaluate services in many ways, because measuring efficiency and effectiveness as collective indicators of service quality (Hensher, 2007). Therefore, according to berry, from the passengers' point of view, transit performance should be estimated by considering the indicators of service quality.
- Transit service quality can be calculated by a range of simple performance measures used for measuring the ability of the service providers to offer services that will satisfy customers' expectations. Service quality can also be evaluated on the basis of transit user judgment and opinion. Customer judgments can be expressed in terms of customers' expectations, which represent what customers expect out of the given service, and perceptions, which represent what the customers, actually receive (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Compared with the other studies, the present study is entirely different and it focusing on pre travel expectations of the passengers who adopt bus transport as their mode of transport to travel.

Based on the expectation level of passengers, the present research study carried out by the researcher in the following manner.

Results and Discussions

Table - 1
Crosstab between Pre-travel Expectations of the Passengers and their Age

Name of the Clusters	AGE				Total
	Below 20	21 -40	41 -60	Above 60	

Moderately Satisfied	Count(%)	80(25.3%)	188(59.5%)	40(12.7%)	8(2.5%)	316(100.0%)
Highly Satisfied	Count(%)	19(23.5%)	59(72.8%)	3(3.7%)	0(0.0%)	81(100.0%)
Dissatisfied	Count(%)	23(22.3%)	60(58.3%)	20(19.4%)	0(0.0%)	103(100.0%)
Total	Count(%)	122(24.4%)	307(61.4%)	63(12.6%)	8(1.6%)	500(100.0%)

Source: Computed Data

From table -1, it is found that 59.5% of moderately satisfied passengers are found in the age group of 21-40, 72.8% of highly satisfied customers are also found in the age group of below 20 years. It is found that only 19.4% of unsatisfied passengers are between the age group of 41 to 60.

Table - 2

Crosstab between Pre-travel Expectations of the Passengers and Passengers' Segmentation

Name of the Clusters		Passenger Segmentation						Total
		Student	Business People	Salaried Persons	Retired Persons	Self employed	Others	
Moderately Satisfied	Count(%)	86(27.2%)	19(6.0%)	171(54.1%)	7(2.2%)	9(2.8%)	24(7.6%)	316(100%)
Highly Satisfied	Count(%)	39(48.1%)	5(6.2%)	29(35.8%)	0(0.0%)	5(6.2%)	3(3.7%)	81(100%)
Dissatisfied	Count(%)	23(22.3%)	0(0.0%)	67(65.0%)	0(0.0%)	5(4.9%)	8(7.8%)	103(100%)
Total	Count(%)	148(29.6%)	24(4.8%)	267(53.4%)	7(1.4%)	19(3.8%)	35(7.0%)	500(100%)

Source: Computed Data

According to table - 2, it is found that out of the different passenger segmentations, 54.1% of moderately satisfied passengers are salaried income group. In addition to it, it is found that 48.1% of passengers are highly satisfied, and they come under the category of students. 65% and 22.3% of dissatisfied passengers belong to salaried persons and student community respectively.

Table - 3

Crosstab between Pre-travel Expectations of the Passengers and the Period of Usage

Name of the Clusters		Period of Usage				Total
		Less than 1 Year	Less than 2 Years	Less than 3 Years	3 Years & More than 3 Years	
Moderately Satisfied	Count(%)	25(7.9%)	79(25.0%)	45(14.2%)	167(52.8%)	316(100.0%)
Highly Satisfied	Count(%)	7(8.6%)	0(0.0%)	20(24.7%)	54(66.7%)	81(100.0%)
Dissatisfied	Count(%)	12(11.7%)	0(0.0%)	11(10.7%)	80(77.7%)	103(100.0%)
Total	Count(%)	44(8.8%)	79(15.8%)	76(15.2%)	301(60.2%)	500(100.0%)

Source : Computed Data

From the above table, it is observed that out of the first cluster, 52.8% of moderately satisfied passengers come under the category of period of usage and as per the collected data, it is observed that they lie under 3 and more than 3 years period of usage. Then it is found that out of the second cluster and the total respondents of the third cluster, 66.7% of highly satisfied passengers and 77.7% of the unsatisfied passengers also come under the category of 3 and more than 3 years of bus transport usage to travel to different destinations.

Table - 4
Crosstab between Pre-travel Expectations of the Passenger and the Level of Satisfaction towards SETC, TNSTC

Name of the Clusters		SETC		Total
		Yes	No	
Moderately Satisfied	Count (%)	244 (77.2%)	72 (22.8%)	316 (100.0%)
Highly Satisfied	Count (%)	40 (49.4%)	41 (50.6%)	81 (100.0%)
Dissatisfied	Count (%)	92 (89.3%)	11 (10.7%)	103 (100.0%)
Total	Count (%)	376 (75.2%)	124 (24.8%)	500 (100.0%)

Name of the Clusters		TNSTC		Total
		Yes	No	
Moderately Satisfied	Count (%)	217 (68.7%)	99 (31.3%)	316 (100.0%)
Highly Satisfied	Count (%)	35 (43.2%)	46 (56.8%)	81 (100.0%)
Dissatisfied	Count (%)	70 (68.0%)	33 (32.0%)	103 (100.0%)
Total	Count (%)	322 (64.4%)	178 (35.6%)	500 (100.0%)

Source: Computed Data

From the above table, it is observed that 77.2% and 49.4% in case of first and second clusters are moderately and highly satisfied with the service provider SETC. Similarly on the other hand 68.7% and 43.2% passengers are satisfied with the service provider TNSTC. But on the other side there is dissatisfaction among the passengers regarding the service quality of these service providers. That should also be considered to improve the status of service quality and to increase the level of satisfaction among the passengers. Through the structured survey questionnaire, it was observed that 100% passengers are satisfied with the service quality of Private Omni buses. So this point should be taken in to our consideration, even though the public sector bus transport service industry belongs to government and its purpose of it is also providing service to the public, it should try to take some important measures to improve it service quality to the considerable level.

Table – 5
Results of Chi-Square Test
The Association between Passengers’ Pre- Travel Expectations and Independent Variables @ 5 % Level of Significance

Independent variables	Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp.Sig. (2 sided)
Age	15.945	6	0.014
Gender	6.503	2	0.039
Marital Status	12.094	4	0.017
Passenger Segmentation	33.27	10	0.000
Level of Income	32.616	8	0.000
Period of Usage	62.235	6	0.000
Pattern of Usage (official Purpose)	28.891	8	0.000
Pattern of Usage (Business Purpose)	30.681	8	0.000
Level of Satisfaction (SETC)	42.805	4	0.000
Level of Satisfaction (TNSTC)	18.948	2	0.000

From the observations of Chi-square results, it is proved that there is a connection between the independent variables and pre travel expectations of the passengers. The concentration needed on independent variable to satisfy the needs and expectations of the passengers. Preference and priority should be given for these independent variables to attract different passengers with different age group, gender with marital status and also based on their level of income, usage pattern to increase their level of satisfaction as well.

Table - 6
Group Statistics for Factors of Pre-travel Expectation

Variable No	Service Provider	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
PTE-V-1	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.1754	1.19542	.06631	-0.119	0.905
	Omni Buses	175	3.1886	1.14665	.08668		
PTE-V-2	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.0308	.96176	.05335	-0.495	0.621
	Omni Buses	175	3.0743	.89067	.06733		
PTE-V-3	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.0462	1.05161	.05833	-0.880	0.379
	Omni Buses	175	3.1314	.99993	.07559		
PTE-V-4	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.0646	1.10504	.06130	-0.429	0.668
	Omni Buses	175	3.1086	1.06926	.08083		
PTE-V-5	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.0431	.96768	.05368	-0.673	0.502
	Omni Buses	175	3.1029	.91019	.06880		
PTE-V-6	SETC , TNSTC	325	2.8862	1.06398	.05902	-0.928	0.354
	Omni Buses	175	2.9771	1.01117	.07644		
PTE-V-7	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.1385	1.04641	.05804	-0.708	0.479
	Omni Buses	175	3.2057	.94867	.07171		
PTE-V-8	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.2800	1.06794	.05924	-0.873	0.383
	Omni Buses	175	3.3657	1.00743	.07615		
PTE-V-9	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.2031	1.13665	.06305	-0.963	0.336
	Omni Buses	175	3.3029	1.04207	.07877		
PTE-V-10	SETC , TNSTC	325	3.3600	1.16386	.06456	-0.267	0.789
	Omni Buses	175	3.3886	1.09223	.08257		

Source : Computed Data

From the above table, the mean value, t value and p value are found for the 10 variables of pre-travel expectations of the passengers and the found values for each variable are given in the following paragraphs. It is inferred that the calculated t and p values for the different dependent variables of pre travel expectation of the passengers are given as follows:

Reasonable bus fare (M = 3.1754, t = -0.119, p = 0.905), Reliability (M = 3.0308, t = 0.495, P =0.621) , Personal safety in bus (M = 3.0462, t = -0.880, p = 0.379) , Accessibility (M = 3.0646, t = -0.429, p = 0.668), Response of service personnel (M = 3.0431, t = -0.673, p = 0.502), Quality in driving (M = 2.8862, t = -0.928, p = 0.354), Less time consumption (M = 3.1385, t = -0.708, p = 0.479) , Availability of Luggage storage facility (M = 3.28, t = -0.873, p = 0.383) , Comfort in seating (M = 3.2031, t = 0.963, p = 0.336), In-built accessories like first aid boxes , television , DVD players , seats , lights , fan , air conditioning facilities, seat belt , air pillows etc., (M = 3.36, t = -0.267, p = 0.789). From the above table, it is also concluded that, there is no significant difference between the pre-travel expectations of both passengers of government buses and private Omni buses. It implies that both groups of passengers possess the same kind of pre-travel expectations towards the following factors such as Reliability, Level of Comfort , Responsiveness.

Table - 7
Results of ANOVA
Influence of Independent Variables on Pre-travel expectations related factors

Factors of Pre-travel expectations	AGE		Marital Status		Passengers Segmentation		Income	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Pre-travel Reliability	5.007	0.002	3.613	0.028	4.963	0.000	7.439	0.000
Pre-travel Level of Comfort	5.444	0.001	NI		5.15	0.000	4.485	0.001
Responsiveness	8.744	0.000	NI		5.441	0.000	3.967	0.004
Level of Influence	HIGH		LOW		HIGH		HIGH	

Source : Computed

NI – No Influence

Table – 7.1
Results of ANOVA
Influence of Independent Variables on Pre-travel expectations related factors (Contin...)

Factors of Pre-travel expectations	Period of Usage		Pattern of Usage (SETC)		Pattern of Usage (TNSTC)		Pattern of Usage (OMNIBUS)	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Pre – Travel Reliability	NI		NI		3.217	0.013	3.582	0.007
Pre-travel Level of Comfort	5.522	0.001	NI		5.541	0.000	4.675	0.001
Responsiveness	6.28	0.000	4.587	0.001	NI		2.438	0.046
Level of Influence	MODERATE		LOW		MODERATE		HIGH	

Source : Computed

According to table 7 and 7.1, it is observed that except few, most of the independent variables such as age, gender, income, passengers’ segmentation, period and pattern of usage towards the service provider are having influence on passengers Pre travel expectations related factors. Therefore it is proved that there is a influence of independent variables on factors related to pre travel expectations of the passengers.

Findings

- According to Analysis of variance (ANOVA) , it was revealed that all the predominant factors of pre-travel expectations of the passengers are influenced by all independent variables.
- It is found that there is an association between the pre- travel expectation and independent variables of the present study and with the level of satisfaction towards the service providers SETC, TNSTC and Omni buses. It explains that there is connectivity between the pre-travel

expectations of the passenger and age, sex, income, period and pattern of usage and level of satisfaction in making travel-related decisions towards SETC, TNSTC and Omni buses.

- It is found that the independent variables such as age, passenger segmentation, income are well-associated with factors of pre-travel expectations of the passengers of both bus transport sectors. The application of chi square analysis and analysis of variances clearly revealed that the above mentioned variables are well associated with clusters, creating more influence on maximum number of pre travel expectation related factors.

Conclusion

It is necessary for the bus transport service providers to identify taste, preferences, usage pattern, different levels of age, level of income of the passengers to assess their expectation level. Hence, this study tries to identify the change in the behavior, psychology, expectation and decision making process of passengers after their travel with a specific service provider for a comfortable travel with facilities and services. It is concluded that the passenger satisfaction and service quality are possible only when the bus transport sectors properly used the effort of their service personnel's at optimal level, by way of operating enough fleet of buses which should satisfy the needs of the passenger population in Chennai district at all times especially at the time of vacation, festival season and at night time. It is also concluded that during the dull seasons, it is necessary and advisable for the bus transport service providers to conduct intensive awareness programs by way of giving advertisements in various media or any other possible ways which are suitable to convey and cover the larger group of passenger population to increase the survival possibilities of the service providers to increase the bus transport businesses of service providers at larger level. Finally, it is concluded by the researcher that the effective time management system, service efficiency, supervision, comfort and safety, transport frequency, level of comfort, reliability, convenience, reasonable hike in bus fare, optimum level of response from service personnel's, proper maintenance of buses, effective grievance redressal forum are important factors. Periodical concentration and regular follow up of these factors will enable the bus transport sectors to increase their capacity for survival with the maximum passenger satisfaction and service quality and also to succeed to a larger extent in their business.

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