

PASSENGER PERCEPTION AND SERVICE QUALITY OF KSRTC: A STUDY ON PUBLIC SATISFACTION AND EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the perception and satisfaction of passengers regarding the services provided by KSRTC. Using a one-sample t-test, it was found that passengers are generally not satisfied with key service areas such as punctuality, cleanliness, staff behaviour, comfort, safety measures, and ticketing transparency. All service quality factors scored significantly below the expected average. A correlation analysis was also conducted, which showed a strong and positive relationship between these service factors and overall passenger satisfaction. Among them, punctuality and staff behaviour had the highest influence on satisfaction. The study suggests that improving these areas can greatly enhance the travel experience and public image of KSRTC.

Keywords:- KSRTC, Service Quality, Passenger's satisfaction, Perception, Public transport.

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is one of the oldest and most important public transport services in the state. It connects different parts of Kerala, including cities, towns, and rural areas. Many people

depend on KSRTC buses for daily travel, work, education, and other purposes (Jose & Akkara, 2019). Over the years, it has played a vital role in providing affordable and accessible transportation to the public (Gunaseelan, 1998). However, with changing times and growing competition

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from private vehicles and other travel options, passengers have begun expecting better service quality. Factors such as punctuality, cleanliness, staff behaviour, comfort, safety, and convenience are becoming more important to passengers (Indu, 2015). If these expectations are not met, people may shift to private transport, leading to traffic congestion and more pollution. Understanding what passengers think about KSRTC services is very important for improving the system.

It helps the corporation to know what areas need attention and what improvements should be made. Gathering feedback from passengers also shows that their voices are valued, which can build public trust in the organization (M V et al., 2022). This study is focused on understanding passenger perception and measuring the quality of services offered by KSRTC. It will help identify the level of satisfaction among users and their expectations for better service (Vijayan, 2017). The findings can guide KSRTC in planning better routes, improving services, and increasing customer satisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

Even though KSRTC provides transport services to a large number of people in Kerala, many passengers are not fully satisfied with the quality of services. Complaints about poor bus conditions, delayed schedules, lack of cleanliness, and unfriendly staff are common. If these problems continue, it may lead to a decline in public trust and a fall in the number of passengers (Mohandas et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a need to study what

passengers truly feel about KSRTC's services and what improvements they expect.

Research Gap

While several studies have discussed the financial problems or operational challenges of KSRTC, very few have focused on what passengers think about the service quality (Chirakkal, 2024). There is limited research that captures the actual opinions and expectations of the public who use KSRTC buses daily. This study fills the gap by focusing on public perception and satisfaction, which is essential for improving service delivery.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it helps to understand how satisfied passengers are with the services provided by KSRTC (S & S, 2024). By identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the service, KSRTC can take steps to improve. The findings can help policy makers and transport authorities make informed decisions for better transport planning. It also highlights the voice of the public, which is key for building a reliable and people-friendly public transport system.

Scope of the Study

The study mainly focuses on the perception and satisfaction level of passengers using KSRTC services within Kerala. It includes opinions on areas such as punctuality, staff behaviour, comfort, cleanliness, safety, ticketing, and overall travel experience (Narayana D, 2024). The responses will be collected from a sample of regular passengers, including both urban and rural users. The study does not cover the internal financial or

administrative aspects of KSRTC, but strictly focuses on the user experience.

Objective of the Study

- To evaluate the perception and satisfaction level of passengers regarding the service quality of KSRTC buses.

Research Methodology

This study follows a descriptive research design to understand the opinions and satisfaction levels of KSRTC passengers. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected directly from passengers through a structured questionnaire using the Likert scale (1 to 5), where 1 indicates strong dissatisfaction and 5 indicates strong satisfaction. Secondary data were collected from KSRTC reports, official websites, and previous research studies.

The population for the study includes passengers who regularly use KSRTC bus services. A sample of 150 respondents was selected using convenient sampling method, considering various age groups, gender, and locations (urban and rural). The data were analyzed using statistical tools like mean score analysis and one-sample t-test to measure satisfaction levels, and correlation analysis to study the relationship between service quality factors and passenger satisfaction.

Data Analysis

Table 1 presents the results of a one-sample t-test conducted to analyse the perception and satisfaction levels of passengers regarding KSRTC services. The analysis was done on seven key service quality factors: punctuality,

cleanliness, staff behaviour, ticket availability and pricing, comfort, safety, and overall satisfaction. Each factor was rated on a Likert scale, and the test aimed to check whether the mean score for each factor significantly differs from the expected neutral value of 3, which represents an average or satisfactory opinion. A total of 150 respondents were considered for this test.

The null hypothesis states that there *is no significant difference between the passengers' perception and the expected average satisfaction score (Mean = 3)*. The results are presented below:

From the table, it is evident that the mean scores of all service quality factors are well below 3, indicating a general dissatisfaction among passengers. For example, the mean score for punctuality of buses is 1.96, showing that passengers find the service highly unsatisfactory in terms of timing. Similarly, cleanliness (1.97) and safety measures (1.96) also received low average scores, suggesting that passengers are not satisfied with the hygiene and safety provisions in KSRTC buses.

The t-values for all factors are strongly negative and significant at the 0.000 level, which means the observed mean is significantly less than the neutral value of 3. For instance, the t-value for "Overall Satisfaction" is -41.285, which is highly significant. This clearly implies that the overall perception and satisfaction of passengers regarding KSRTC services is poor. The significance value (p-value) being less than 0.05 for all variables leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis for each service factor.

Table 1
One-Sample t-test for Passenger Perception and Satisfaction on KSRTC Services

Service Quality Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Punctuality of buses	150	1.96	.785	-16.231	.000
Cleanliness of buses	150	1.97	.781	-16.209	.000
Staff behavior and helpfulness	150	2.08	.848	-13.294	.000
Ticket availability and pricing transparency	150	2.03	.794	-15.017	.000
Comfort and seating arrangements	150	2.04	.866	-13.576	.000
Safety measures followed	150	1.96	.802	-15.888	.000
Overall satisfaction	150	2.00	.295	-41.285	.000

Source: Primary Data

Among the factors, staff behaviour and helpfulness (mean = 2.08) and comfort and seating (mean = 2.04) were slightly better than other aspects, but still below average. This shows that although these areas are relatively better, they still do not meet passenger expectations. The consistently low satisfaction scores across all factors highlight serious service quality issues in KSRTC operations.

Correlation between Service Quality Factors and Overall Satisfaction

Table 2 shows the results of a correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between various service quality factors of KSRTC and the overall satisfaction of passengers. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships. The main aim of this analysis is to understand which specific service quality aspects are more closely associated with passenger satisfaction. The correlation values range from -1 to +1, where positive values indicate a direct relationship, and negative values indicate

an inverse relationship. The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant correlation between the service quality factor and overall passenger satisfaction with KSRTC services.*

From the table, it is clear that all service quality factors have a positive correlation with overall satisfaction, and the relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The strongest correlation is observed between punctuality of buses and overall satisfaction ($r = 0.431$), followed closely by staff behaviour and helpfulness ($r = 0.428$). This suggests that improving punctuality and staff behaviour can greatly improve overall passenger satisfaction.

Other important service aspects such as comfort and seating arrangements ($r = 0.380$), cleanliness of buses ($r = 0.321$), ticket availability and pricing ($r = 0.305$), and safety measures followed ($r = 0.308$) also show moderate and significant correlations with overall satisfaction. This means that passengers who rated these factors more positively were more likely to express higher overall satisfaction with KSRTC services.

Table 2
Correlation between Service Quality Factors and Overall Satisfaction

		Punctuality of buses	Cleanliness of buses	Staff behavior and helpfulness	Ticket availability and pricing transparency	Comfort and seating arrangements	Safety measures followed	Overall satisfaction
Punctuality of buses	Pearson Correlation	1	-.079	-.005	.023	-.096	.136	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.337	.949	.777	.241	.097	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Cleanliness of buses	Pearson Correlation	-.079	1	.004	-.042	-.048	-.099	.321**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.337		.961	.611	.563	.230	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Staff behavior and helpfulness	Pearson Correlation	-.005	.004	1	-.053	.023	-.084	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.949	.961		.519	.780	.306	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Ticket availability and pricing transparency	Pearson Correlation	.023	-.042	-.053	1	-.050	-.188*	.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.777	.611	.519		.540	.021	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Comfort and seating arrangements	Pearson Correlation	-.096	-.048	.023	-.050	1	-.075	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.241	.563	.780	.540		.362	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Safety measures followed	Pearson Correlation	.136	-.099	-.084	-.188*	-.075	1	.308**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.097	.230	.306	.021	.362		.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.431**	.321**	.428**	.305**	.380**	.308**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data

Some weak or negative correlations are seen between certain service quality factors themselves (e.g., cleanliness and punctuality at $r = -0.079$), but these are not statistically significant and do not impact the overall conclusions. Since all correlations with overall satisfaction are positive and significant, the null hypothesis is rejected in all cases, confirming that each factor does contribute to shaping passenger satisfaction levels.

Findings

1. The one-sample t-test shows that passenger satisfaction with KSRTC

services is significantly below average in all key service areas.

2. The lowest satisfaction levels were observed in punctuality, cleanliness, and safety measures, with mean scores below 2.
3. Even aspects like staff behaviour and comfort, which performed slightly better, still received below-average ratings.
4. The null hypothesis for each factor is rejected, confirming that the actual perception of passengers is

significantly different from a neutral or satisfactory level.

5. There is a significant positive correlation between all service quality factors and overall passenger satisfaction with KSRTC services.
6. The most influential factors are punctuality and staff behaviour, followed by comfort, cleanliness, and safety measures.
7. Weak or negative correlations between certain service dimensions (e.g., punctuality and cleanliness) suggest these factors may operate independently in passengers' minds.

Suggestions

1. Improve punctuality by streamlining schedules and reducing delays through better route planning and time management.
2. Enhance cleanliness and hygiene by ensuring regular cleaning and maintenance of buses, especially in high-traffic routes.
3. Train staff in customer service and communication skills to create a more helpful and respectful atmosphere for passengers.
4. Review ticketing systems to ensure transparent pricing and easy availability, including promoting digital payment options.
5. Upgrade safety measures, such as functioning emergency equipment, surveillance systems, and regular safety checks.
6. Increase seating comfort by replacing worn-out seats and improving ventilation, especially on long routes.

Conclusion

The analysis of passenger perception and satisfaction towards KSRTC services shows that most service quality factors are rated below average. From the one-sample t-test results, it is clear that passengers are generally unhappy with important aspects like punctuality, cleanliness, staff behaviour, ticketing, comfort, and safety. The mean scores for all these areas were significantly lower than the expected average score, and this difference was found to be statistically significant. This clearly shows that there is a gap between what passengers expect and what KSRTC is currently providing.

The correlation analysis further confirmed that all the service quality factors have a strong and positive relationship with overall satisfaction. Among them, punctuality and staff behaviour were found to have the highest influence. This means that when these factors are improved, passengers are more likely to feel satisfied with the service. Comfort, cleanliness, safety, and ticket transparency also play an important role in shaping overall satisfaction. The significant correlation between these service factors and satisfaction proves that improving service quality can directly enhance the public's perception of KSRTC.

Further, the findings highlight the urgent need for KSRTC to improve in key areas to meet passenger expectations. Focusing on better time management, cleaner buses, well-behaved staff, and safer travel will not only boost customer satisfaction but also help build a more positive image of the organization. If

these suggestions are seriously implemented, KSRTC can offer a much better travel experience and attract more passengers in the future.

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