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A STUDY ON “STUDY ON CUSTOMER (PASSENGER) SATISFACTION TOWARDS VANDE BHARAT EXPRESS IN HYDERABAD”

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ABSTRACT :

The Vande Bharat Express is one of the prestigious and modern trains run and managed by the Indian Railways. It is considered a semi high speed train, which is the second fastest train in India. Vande Bharat is also known as Train 18 and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi in 2019. This paper tries to study the satisfaction level passengers travelled by the Vande Bharat Express. Key Words: Vande Bharat Express, Customer Satisfaction. The survey focuses on assessing overall satisfaction levels service quality, amenities, ticket pricing, infrastructure, food services, on boarding, staff behaviour and likelihood of recommendation. The interview component delves deeper into the reasons behind satisfaction or dissatisfaction, exploring aspects such as travel experience, facilities, and pricing issues. This research contributes to the understanding of Passenger behavior and satisfaction in the context of safety and lavish journey experience , providing insights for railway department, customers, and other stakeholders to promote the widespread adoption of use of Vande Bharat Services

INTRODUCTION

Vande Bharat Express is truly one of the most modern types of trains that are proudly owned by India. It is purposely given an airplane look from the inside to match its upscale aesthetics. Vande Bharat Express harbours rotatable seats which make travel even more customizable. There are large windows in each coach which makes sightseeing a wonderful experience. Moreover, the catering service of the Vande Bharat Train is phenomenal. Other prominent amenities include automatic doors, smoke alarms, surveillance, odour control system, bio vacuum toilets, sensory taps, etc. many people travelled by Vande Bharat express now a days. This study examines the satisfaction level of the passengers travelled by Vande Bharat Express. This study examines the satisfaction level of the passengers travelled by Vande Bharat Express . Vande Bharat Express is truly one of the most modern types of trains that are proudly owned by India. Vande Bharat Express offers rotatable seats which make travel even more customizable. There are large windows in each coach which makes sightseeing a wonderful experience. Moreover, the catering service of the Vande Bharat Train is phenomenal. Other prominent amenities include automatic doors, smoke alarms, surveillance, odour control system, bio vacuum toilets, sensory taps, etc. many people travelled by Vande Bharat express now a days. The proposed research aims to investigate the factors influencing consumer satisfaction towards Vande Bharat train journey and the amenities provided By focusing on the comprehensive experience from booking to destination arrival, businesses and service providers can identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement. This research not only helps in refining the current offerings but also in innovating future services to meet evolving customer.

THEORIES AND MODELS OF CONCEPT

- **SERVQUAL Model:** Developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, the SERVQUAL model is a widely recognized tool for measuring service quality. It assesses service quality across five dimensions: Tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel), Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence), and Empathy (caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers). This model can be adapted to assess the specific service quality aspects of the Vande Bharat Express.
- **The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory:** This theory suggests that satisfaction is the result of the difference between expected service and perceived service. If the service meets or exceeds expectations, the customer is satisfied; if it falls below expectations, dissatisfaction occurs. This theory is particularly useful in transportation services where passengers have pre-travel expectations set by service promises, previous experiences, and word of mouth.

- **The Zone of Tolerance Model:** This model focuses on the range of service quality between what a customer deems "adequate" service and what the customer considers "desired" service. The zone of tolerance is the range within which customers are willing to accept variations in service quality. Analyzing where the Vande Bharat Express's service quality falls within this zone can help in identifying areas of service delivery that require improvement.
- **Kano Model:** The Kano Model, developed by Professor Noriaki Kano, categorizes customer preferences into three types: Must-be (basic needs that cause dissatisfaction when not fulfilled, but do not increase customer satisfaction when they are fulfilled), Performance needs (needs that increase satisfaction when fulfilled and cause dissatisfaction when not fulfilled), and Delighters (features that can greatly increase customer satisfaction when present, but do not necessarily cause dissatisfaction when absent). This model can help in understanding different passenger expectations and experiences in relation to the Vande Bharat Express's service features.
- **Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) Models:** Various regions and industries use adaptations of Customer Satisfaction Index models, such as the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which provide a method to measure overall customer satisfaction with the services offered by a company or public service. These indices typically evaluate elements such as customer expectations, perceived quality, and perceived value.

NEED OF THE STUDY

- **Enhancing Service Quality:** The need to continuously improve service quality is a fundamental driver of this study. Understanding how passengers perceive the services provided by the Vande Bharat Express—ranging from the efficiency of operations to the comfort provided during travel—is essential for making iterative improvements. Feedback from passengers will help pinpoint specific areas of strength and those requiring attention, thereby allowing service providers to prioritize improvements in a targeted manner.
- **Benchmarking Against Global Standards:** With the Vande Bharat Express being a flagship initiative in the modernization of Indian Railways, evaluating its performance against international standards of similar semi-high-speed trains is crucial. This study will help ascertain if the train meets, exceeds, or falls short of global benchmarks, and will provide insights into areas where Indian Railways can enhance its offerings.
- **Customer-Centric Approaches:** The rail industry, like many other sectors, is increasingly moving towards a customer-centric approach. By understanding passenger satisfaction, Indian Railways can align its services more closely with passenger needs and preferences. This alignment is essential for increasing ridership, ensuring passenger loyalty, and enhancing the overall reputation of the rail service.
- **Economic and Strategic Implications:** Hyderabad, being a major junction, holds strategic importance in the connectivity provided by Indian Railways across the region. Studying passenger satisfaction here helps understand the economic and social impacts of introducing advanced train services like the Vande Bharat Express. This understanding is pivotal for planning future expansions, not only in Southern India but across the entire network.
- **Feedback Loop for Continuous Improvement:** Regular feedback is a cornerstone of service improvement. By regularly assessing passenger satisfaction, Indian Railways can establish a robust feedback loop that informs ongoing enhancements in service delivery. This is particularly important for a new service like the Vande Bharat Express, where early feedback can lead to quick adjustments that significantly enhance the passenger experience.
- **Policy and Investment Decisions:** Insights from this study are vital for policymakers and stakeholders in making informed decisions regarding further investments in railway infrastructure and technology. Understanding passenger satisfaction can guide decisions on where to allocate resources effectively to yield the best returns in terms of service quality and passenger satisfaction.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH

Despite significant advancements in India's railway services, understanding passenger satisfaction with the introduction of semi-high-speed trains such as the Vande Bharat Express remains a critical challenge. As these services aim to modernize rail travel and enhance the passenger experience, it is essential to assess whether the Vande Bharat Express meets the expectations of passengers, particularly in key areas such as service quality, amenities, staff professionalism, and ticket pricing. Hyderabad, a major hub in the railway network, serves as an ideal focal point for this evaluation. The primary concern is to determine how well the Vande Bharat Express is performing in terms of passenger satisfaction in this region and identify areas where improvements are necessary to align the service with both passenger expectations and international benchmarks.

Research Objective:

The objective of this study is to investigate consumer satisfaction towards Vande Bharat passengers in Hyderabad. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Identify the key factors influencing consumer satisfaction with Vande Bharat express service quality, amenities, infrastructure, ticket pricing , food quality, and staff behaviour.
- Assess the level of satisfaction among Vande Bharat passengers who are arrived to Hyderabad from different destinations
- Explore the relationship between consumer satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending Vande Bharat express to others.

Research Methodology:

The study will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide both statistical breadth and in-depth individual insights. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of passenger satisfaction by quantifying data for broader generalization while also exploring specific passenger experiences and suggestions in greater detail.

Sampling:

A purposive sampling method will be used to select Vande Bharat passengers arrived to Hyderabad from different destinations. The sample size will be determined based on the principles of saturation, where data collection will continue until no new information or themes emerge.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Analysis: Use statistical software to analyze survey data. Descriptive statistics will provide a clear summary of the data, while inferential statistics will be used to make generalizations about the passenger satisfaction towards the Vande Bharat Express.

Qualitative Analysis: Apply thematic analysis to interpret data from interviews and focus groups. Coding responses to identify common themes and patterns will enable an in-depth understanding of qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations :

Ensure all participant information is kept confidential and that participants are fully informed about the purpose of the study. Obtain informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences
Reporting

Compile the findings into a comprehensive report that includes graphical representations of data, discussions on the findings, conclusions drawn from the data, and recommendations based on the study's outcomes.

This methodological framework ensures a robust approach to examining and understanding passenger satisfaction with the Vande Bharat Express in Hyderabad, providing valuable insights for stakeholders and decision-makers in enhancing rail services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the overall level of satisfaction among passengers of the Vande Bharat Express in Hyderabad with regard to their travel experience
- To assess the level of consumer satisfaction with different aspects of Vande Bharat such as service quality,ticket pricing,amenities,food quality,staff behaviour and infrastructure.
- Assess the level of satisfaction among Vande Bharat passengers who are arrived to Hyderabad from different destinations
- Explore the relationship between consumer satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending Vande Bharat express to others.

Assess Overall Passenger Satisfaction

- To evaluate the overall level of satisfaction among passengers of the Vande Bharat Express in Hyderabad with regard to their travel experience.

2. Measure Perceptions of Service Quality

- To measure passenger perceptions of the quality of service provided by the Vande Bharat Express, including punctuality, reliability, and consistency of service.

3. Evaluate Amenities Offered

- To assess passenger satisfaction with the amenities provided on the Vande Bharat Express, such as seating comfort, cleanliness, food service, and on-board facilities like Wi-Fi and entertainment options.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

- (H1): Passengers' perceptions of the reliability and punctuality of the Vande Bharat Express positively influence their overall satisfaction with the service.
- (H2): The quality and variety of amenities available on the Vande Bharat Express significantly affect passenger satisfaction levels.
- H3: Positive interactions with train staff (including ticketing agents and onboard service personnel) are significantly correlated with higher passenger satisfaction.
- H4: Passengers' perceptions of ticket pricing as reasonable are strongly associated with higher satisfaction regarding the perceived value for money.
- H5: There are significant differences in satisfaction levels based on passenger demographics such as age, gender, and travel frequency.
- H6: The service quality of the Vande Bharat Express meets international standards for semi-high-speed trains in terms of passenger satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Sheeba. A. A and Dr. K. Kumuthadevi(2013), studies that identifying different factors of service quality of Indian railways. The major findings of this study enables that the most important factors determining satisfaction of passengers in train are serially comes as basic facilities, hygiene, safety & security, catering, health care service, punctuality, behavior towards passengers. V. Rajeswari and K. Santa Kumari (2014), this paper aims to study the passenger's perception about the service quality of rail transport system in India. Margaret Divya and Nandhinidevi (2020), they examined that the various services provided by the Indian Railways along with the objectives to evaluate the passengers' preferences, satisfaction, limitations, and perceptions towards the same. Magheswari Gopal, Vasanthi Soundrarajan, Nishad Nawaz, Vijayakumar Gajendran and Satyanarayana Parayitam (2023), they examined that the customer satisfaction on cleanliness and other service quality dimensions in Indian Railways.
- Gomadheeswaran and Sivakumar (2014)¹ entitled study on 'passengers' satisfaction towards railway services with special reference to Coimbatore junction'. The main objectives of study are to analyze the passengers' satisfaction of various services provided by the Indian railways. There are 100 respondents have been used this study. ANOVA, coefficient of correlation and simple percentage are the statistical tools used in this study. The study concludes or reveals that the respondents totally dissatisfied the railway service in Coimbatore junction. Such as unauthorized vendor, beggars, cleanness of compartment and food etc
- Vimal kumar and Jitin (2015) ² in their study, A study on passenger satisfaction towards Railway services with reference to Coimbatore Junction tells that transport is the movement of people, animals and goods from one location to another location. Transportation infrastructure assumes a great in developing countries because every sector depends on the suitable transportation. The main objective of the study is to explore the problem faced by the daily passengers. There 100 respondents have been in this study with the help of convenient random sampling.
- D. Anbupriya, Dr. S. Subadra (2016)³ entitled study on "Passengers satisfaction towards railway services. Objective of the study is to identify the travel factors influencing the passengers of southern railways. There are 400 out of 460 respondents have been used this study satisfaction of service quality were analyzed using various tools and ANOVA was used to identify the significant difference concludes or reveals that the totally responds considered positivity, that would be a strong environment to the passengers and railways.
- Maheswari and Dinesh kumar (2016)⁴ entitles study on „amenities provided by southern railways“. The objective of the study is to know the profile of Indian Railways and the facilities provided to them by the railway. The sample size decided for the study was 200 and

analyzed using statistical tools like chi-square. The result of the study reveals that proper measures have been taken for the problems faced by the passengers.

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background for a study on passenger satisfaction towards the Vande Bharat Express in Hyderabad encompasses several key theories and frameworks from the fields of marketing, service management, and consumer behavior. Here are some theoretical foundations that can inform and guide the study:

Service Quality Theory

Description: Service Quality Theory, popularized by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in the SERVQUAL model, posits that service quality is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. It identifies five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

Application: This theory can be applied to assess passengers' perceptions of the quality of service provided by the Vande Bharat Express, including factors such as punctuality, cleanliness, staff professionalism, and overall customer service.

Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory

Description: The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory suggests that customer satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. If perceived performance exceeds expectations, satisfaction increases; if it falls short, satisfaction decreases.

Application: This theory can help understand how passengers' pre-travel expectations of the Vande Bharat Express influence their satisfaction levels and overall perception of the service.

Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) Models

Description: Customer Satisfaction Index models, such as the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), provide a standardized method for measuring customer satisfaction across various industries and services. These models typically consider factors such as perceived quality, perceived value, and customer expectations.

Application: Adopting a CSI model can facilitate the measurement and benchmarking of passenger satisfaction with the Vande Bharat Express against industry standards and competitors, providing actionable insights for improvement.

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Previous Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Existing surveys conducted by Indian Railways or independent research organizations that assess passenger satisfaction with different aspects of rail travel, including service quality, amenities, staff interaction, and ticket pricing.

Surveys specific to semi-high-speed trains or premium train services in India, which may offer insights into passenger expectations and experiences comparable to those of the Vande Bharat Express.

RESEARCH GAP

Vande Bharat express are the trains recently introduced by Indian railways ,with latest features and premium pricing these are promoted by highlighting the world class interior and best services . In addition to this the time is also reduced

The previous research papers were explained the lack of services rendered by the railway transportation. This study focus on satisfaction of passenger of Vande Bharat Express, and journey experience. Additionally there is need explore the problems faced by the passengers. So this research will provide valuable insight towards the passenger satisfaction awareness in Vijayawada

The existing literature on passenger satisfaction towards Vande Bharat Express lacks a comprehensive analysis that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture overall understanding of consumer attitudes, behaviors, and challenges. While previous studies have addressed various factors influencing passenger satisfaction, such as service quality, comfort, and amenities, there remains a remarkable gap in understanding the nuanced interplay between these factors and consumer perceptions. Additionally, there is limited research on the specific challenges faced by passengers of Vande Bharat Express and how these challenges impact overall satisfaction. Thus, there is a need for a more thorough investigation that combines quantitative surveys or observations to provide a deeper insight into the factors influencing passenger satisfaction and its implications for Vande Bharat Express . The proposed research aims to fill a crucial knowledge gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of passenger satisfaction with Vande Bharat Express train and its potential implications for enhancing train journey experiences.

A research gap is a question or a problem that has not been answered by any of the existing studies or research within your field. Sometimes, a research gap exists when there is a concept or new idea that hasn't been studied at all. Sometimes you'll find a research gap if all the existing research is outdated and in need of new/updated research. The previous research papers were explained the lack of services rendered by the railway transportation. This study focus on satisfaction of passenger at railway station, platforms and ticketing process. Additionally there is need explore the problems faced by the passengers. So this research will provide valuable insight towards the passenger satisfaction awareness in Hyderabad.

Research Methodology:

- Survey Questionnaire: Conducting surveys among electric passengers arrived to Hyderabad from different destination on vande Bharat express to gather data on their satisfaction levels, preferences, and demographic information.
- Secondary Data Analysis: Analyzing existing data and studies related to passenger satisfaction towards Vande Bharat express to gain insights and validate findings.
- Conjoint Analysis: Using conjoint analysis to understand consumer preferences and trade-offs regarding different quality features and amenities of Vande Bharat express such as ticket pricing, onboarding , service quality.
- Regression Analysis: Conducting regression analysis to identify the factors that most significantly influence consumer satisfaction towards Vande Bharat express
- Case Studies: Conducting case studies of successful or innovative approaches to promoting

RESEARCH DESIGNS

This design outlines a method to investigate consumer satisfaction Vande Bharat expres

Research Objectives:

- Identify key factors influencing consumer satisfaction with Vande Bharat train journey
- Understand the relative importance of these factors for different passengers segments.
- Assess areas for improvement of journey experience in Vande Bharat and related services based on consumer feedback.

Research Methodology:

- Primary Data: Primary data collected from the passengers who use Vande Bharat Express for their journey through direct interaction and by using questionnaire.
- Secondary Data: Secondary data collected from different published resources, which were supportive to the original data. Primary data collected from 150 respondents randomly from Hyderabad
- Survey Questionnaire: Conducting surveys among passengers of Vande Bharat train and gather data on their satisfaction levels ,preferences and demographic information

Variables:**Independent**

- Service Quality
- Amenities
- Staff Behaviour
- Food services
- Accessibility
- Ticket pricing
- On boarding process

Data Collection Methods**Primary Data Questionnaires:**

Design: Structured questionnaire with:

- Likert-Scale Questions: 5-point scale (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied) to measure satisfaction on:
- Comfort (seating, air-conditioning, leg space)
- Amenities (Wi-Fi, charging ports, catering, toilets)
- Punctuality (adherence to schedule)
- Safety (Kavach system, CCTV, emergency features)
- Staff behavior (responsiveness, empathy)
- Overall experience and likelihood to recommend
- Open-Ended Questions: For suggestions or specific experiences.

Distribution:

- Onboard surveys during Hyderabad-Tirupati journeys.
- Station-based surveys at Kacheguda and Secunderabad platforms.
- Digital surveys via QR codes linked to Google Forms for convenience.

Duration: 10–15 minutes per respondent to ensure completion without disrupting travel.

Interviews:

- Type: Semi-structured interviews with 10–15 passengers for qualitative insights.
- Focus: Detailed feedback on specific aspects (e.g., catering quality, unique experiences).
- Method: Conducted at stations or post-travel via phone/video calls with consent.

Secondary Data

Sources:

- IRCTC feedback portals (e.g., RailMadad) for passenger complaints and ratings.
- Social media posts on X about Vande Bharat experiences in Hyderabad (e.g., catering issues reported in 2023 on Visakhapatnam-Hyderabad route).
- Indian Railways reports on Vande Bharat occupancy and performance (e.g., >100% occupancy in South Central Railway).
- Existing studies on Vande Bharat satisfaction in other regions (e.g., Tirunelveli-Chennai, Delhi-Varanasi) for benchmarking.
- Purpose:
- To contextualize primary findings and identify common satisfaction trends.

5. Data Collection Tools

- Questionnaires: Printed forms or digital (Google Forms/SurveyMonkey) for scalability.
- Interview Guides: Pre-designed question sets for consistency in qualitative data.
- Statistical Software: SPSS or MS Excel for quantitative analysis (e.g., percentage analysis, chi-square tests).
- Qualitative Tools: NVivo or manual coding for thematic analysis of interview responses.

6. Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive Statistics: Calculate mean, median, and standard deviation for Likert-scale responses to assess satisfaction levels.
- Inferential Statistics: Use chi-square tests to explore relationships between variables (e.g., satisfaction vs. passenger type).
- Graphical Representation: Bar charts, pie charts to visualize satisfaction across parameters.
- Thematic Analysis: Identify recurring themes (e.g., food quality, staff behavior) from interview and open-ended responses.
- Coding: Categorize responses into positive, negative, and neutral sentiments.

7. Variables

- Dependent Variable: Passenger satisfaction (overall and parameter-specific).
- Independent Variables:
 - Service quality (comfort, amenities, catering)
 - Operational efficiency (punctuality, travel time)
 - Safety features
 - Staff responsiveness
 - Demographic factors (age, gender, travel purpose)

8. Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent: Obtain verbal or written consent from participants, explaining the study's purpose and voluntary nature.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality: Ensure no personally identifiable information is collected or disclosed.
- Non-Intrusiveness: Conduct surveys/interviews at convenient times to avoid disrupting travel.
- Data Security: Store digital responses securely and destroy physical forms after digitization.

9. Limitations


- Sample Size: Limited to 100–150 due to time and resource constraints, potentially affecting generalizability.
- Response Bias: Passengers may provide socially desirable responses or be influenced by recent experiences.
- Time Constraints: Short study duration may restrict in-depth qualitative data collection.
- Regional Focus: Findings may not apply to other Vande Bharat routes.

10. Timeline

- Week 1: Finalize questionnaire, obtain permissions from railway authorities.
- Weeks 2–3: Collect primary data (surveys and interviews).
- Week 4: Gather secondary data, analyze quantitative and qualitative data.
- Week 5: Compile findings, prepare report.

11. Expected Outcomes

- A comprehensive assessment of passenger satisfaction with Vande Bharat Express in Hyderabad.
- Identification of key strengths (e.g., modern amenities, reduced travel time) and areas for improvement (e.g., catering quality).



Environmental concerns