



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION
TOWARDS KSRTC AND PRIVATE BUSES WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO KERALA.**

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ABSTRACT

The perception of passengers towards public transportation has gained importance these days because of the increased number of personal vehicles and air pollution. The objective of the study is to gain insights into impact of service quality on satisfaction levels of passengers, to know the overall satisfaction level of passengers and the major problems regarding these two modes of transportation. It encompasses various dimensions such as service quality, safety security. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to determine areas that need development and propose measures to enhance the public transportation experience in Kerala. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of customer perception towards Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and private bus services in Kerala, India.

Keyword: Satisfaction, Service quality, Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, Perception.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the nation's economy depends significantly on the transportation system. The term "transport" refers to the movement of people and products between locations as well as the numerous methods used to carry out such movement. The transportation facilitates better access for both individuals and businesses to various regions. Transport promotes the global border range of social

and economic nitration. Regular transport systems help people save time and money. Many people have career options because to the transport system.

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and the private bus sector play major roles in the transportation system of Kerala, India. KSRTC, a government-owned entity, operates a large fleet of buses across the state, providing essential public transportation services to millions of passengers. On the other hand, the private bus sector consists of privately-owned buses that operate alongside KSRTC, offering additional transport options to the public.

A well-developed transport system is essential for all the citizens around the world. Like other areas, Transportation plays an important role in the economic development of the country. Mainly both private and KSRTC buses are used by people according to their destination and convenience, in some routes only KSRTC buses provide services. People tend to choose their mode of transport by considering the amenity and security they get while traveling. The need of transportation systems are increasing day by day. In olden days people used animals like, horses, donkeys etc. People also used tracks and water ways for the purpose of travelling, but in the changing world all importance were given to mechanical energy. People adopted various vehicles for travelling. Both Private buses and KSRTC buses had created more employment opportunities among people.

In India, people typically prefer to travel short- and medium-distances by bus. Due to their adaptability and accessibility to several villages and cities, buses have a significant advantage over other modes of transportation. It serves as a foundational infrastructure and public utility that caters to the general population's travel requirements for leisure, work, and educational endeavours. With quick and comfortable services available day and night, buses are now even a competitive alternative to trains on some long-distance routes.

This comparative study aims to deliver into the customer perception towards KSRTC and private bus services in Kerala. By conducting a thorough analysis of these factors, the study aims to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of both sectors, identify areas where improvements are needed, and offer recommendations for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indu, (2018) The researcher conducted a comparison of the pricing practises of KSRTC and the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation. Here, the study discovered that basic fare and minimum fare are the two main categories of fares used by KSRTC. A research organisation called PISCO is responsible for Kerala's fare modification. Karnataka, Bangalore, and Maharashtra are only profitable, the researcher discovered. Bus fares in Kerala are changing irregularly and are rising daily. Passengers are required to utilise their own method of transportation and trains for longer trips.

Prageeth P,(2023) The study investigated the challenges faced by the private bus sector in Kerala. Private buses were viewed as a sign of social standing, and the state's roadways are now clogged with them. This sector not only produced developed owners but also produced several direct and indirect job possibilities. A significant source of direct government revenue is the private bus business. Inadvertently many people have career options in this sector. The researcher found out that the sector is in a crisis and many owners had given up their permits since they couldn't function in this industry. To stimulate the private bus sector the study suggested, insurance, tax, and diesel subsidies should be implemented and the researchers also suggested to hike the charges, to increase the concessional rates for the students.

Navya AH, (2018) The researcher contrasted KSRTC and private buses in terms of service quality and performance. The discriminant analysis was employed by the researcher and it led to the conclusion that there is a considerable difference in the quality of the transportation services between the KSRTC and Private Buses in Kerala. It was found out that Service quality is been shown to have a positive impact on passenger behavioural intentions. The researcher identified that in order to retain current customers and draw in new ones who currently use other means of transportation, a high level of service quality must be provided to satisfy their needs. It was also identified that people are becoming more opposed to using public transportation, especially with the introduction of personalised modes of transportation. Therefore, a respectable level of service quality should be offered to them in order to convince them to switch to public transit. The study concluded that, in order to draw customers, both public and private bus service providers must enhance their offerings.

Lakshmi (2017) , "Propensity to Turnover among Female Employees" was the topic of the study. In a study on the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation, the researcher emphasised the inclusion of provisions for gender equality and women's empowerment. The findings showed that an employee's age, education, work happiness, dedication to stay with the company, and length of service all had a significant impact on their plans to leave. The company should concentrate on the reasonableness of disciplinary action, the efficiency of the communication system, compensation and allowances,

incentives, bonuses, and job promotion technologies utilised by the organisation in order to promote employee happiness and commitment.

Vini & P, (2017) conducted a study on an "An Assessment of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation's Performance -In order to examine the performance, the researcher in this study looked at the corporation's financial report from the years 2012 to 2016. The number of buses, average earnings per kilometre, and average earnings per bus are the three factors used to evaluate the performance of the seven different schedules. The KSRTC's performance is on the decline as a result of rising operating expenses. The report recommended cutting back on services on fewer collection routes and increasing bus performance to lower operating costs.

Nisamudheen, (2014) This paper studied the issue of "Recruitment, Selection, Training and Development Practises in KSRTC" was researched. The primary goal of the case study was to evaluate how employees felt about the recruitment, selection, training, and development initiatives conducted by the KSRTC. The survey revealed that the KSRTC's promotion strategy was out of date. According to him, the corporate crisis is a result of the workers' and management's lack of commitment and disinterest.

Research, (2016) The paper studied on Challenges to the role of Private participation in Public Transport: A Case of Kerala" was the topic of the study. Here, the author assesses how the public is affected by this issue. The nation's transport system. This action was taken by the government to break up the monopoly of private buses. The growing significance of private buses in society is also covered in this study.

Sanesh(2015) The study focussed at KSRTC's HR policies as well as a number of HR-related corporate challenges. He learned that the corporation has a number of significant problems, including inter-union conflict, a lack of professionalism, underqualified employees, a lack of scientific training, and inadequate administrative experience, among others.

Harendra Mohan,(2014) The researcher had examined the transportation industry's overall revenue collection from the state transportation system, as well as its impact on the economy and various state-level tax structures. In order to accomplish this, he had set additional goals, including (i) studying the revenue that states and local governments generate from the road transport sector, (ii) looking at the structure of road taxes in India, and (iii) researching the share of road transport GDP in overall GDP.

Eboli & Mazulla, (2007) The researcher studied aspects of service quality that are crucial for client happiness. The 16 service quality attributes (availability, route characteristic, frequency, reliability, bus

stop, bus overcrowding, cleanliness, cost information, promotion, safety on board, personal security, personnel, complaints, environmental protection, and bus stop maintenance) were asked for ratings on importance and satisfaction. The outcome demonstrates that service planning, which is shown in dependability, frequency, information, promotion, personnel, and complaint, is a key factor in overall customer satisfaction.

K. Saravana (2016) The researcher identified bus fare, timeliness, service outside of Kerala, travel comfort, concessionary rates, employee behaviour towards passengers, and additional bus services during festival seasons are just a few of the factors that negatively affect passenger satisfaction, according to a researcher's study on the topic "They play an incredible role in improving the public transport system of Kerala: A study based on the satisfaction level of KSRTC passengers." Researchers found that although employee behaviour towards customers were favourable, rural services and services offered outside of Kerala need to improve. He provided innovative approaches to increase customer happiness, such as Wi-Fi, bus spotting, online reservations, and competent bus repair services.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the importance of public transport in Kerala, there is a lack of comprehensive research comparing customer perceptions of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and private bus services in the state. By comparative analysis, it can provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses and improvements for KSRTC and private bus services. It can shed light on factors such as comfort, affordability, reliability, safety, comfort, accessibility, customer service, overall satisfaction, resulting in a comprehensive consumer opinion survey. Understanding these factors and passenger preferences can help in designing targeted strategies to improve KSRTC and private bus services. Such strategies may include improving service features, providing route planning achieve success, solve customer concerns and adopt best practices from both sectors. Thus, a comprehensive comparative study addressing the research gap would provide valuable insights into consumer perceptions, enabling transport authorities, bus operators and policy makers to make informed decisions, offering strategies to overcome customer expectations are met and the overall public transport experience in Kerala can be enhanced.

OBJECTIVE

- To identify the impact of service quality provided by KSRTC and Private buses to its customers.

- To measure the satisfaction level of passengers of the services provided by KSRTC and Private bus with special reference to Kerala.
- To identify the problems faced by KSRTC and Private bus passengers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The bus transportation systems in Kerala mainly includes KSRTC and Private bus operators. From the beginning till now there are people from middle- and low-income groups who depend only on bus transportation as they don't have the financial ability to own a vehicle and they depend on bus transportation for traveling longer distances and remote areas. Even though there is a large population depending upon their services, they face numerous problems such as low satisfaction, availability of buses, air pollution, Road Safety and Regulations. The passengers have started travelling on their personal vehicles as they derive less satisfaction from public transportation and these were the instances for choosing the study. This comparative study aims to understand the various aspects including convenience, safety and service quality provided to the passengers. This study was conducted to measure the satisfaction level of passengers who are using the transportation services of both private and KSRTC and also identify the problems faced by the passengers.

The study will show what are the changes that has to observed in public and private transportation and also to identify areas of improvement.

LIMITATIONS

1. The study only focussed on the passenger's view towards the public transportation and the other personnels such as bus drivers and conductors' opinion were not considered.
2. The study was limited to two months and hence the data collected shall only be reliable to such extent.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data is collected through questionnaire and circulated to passengers among Kerala. For the purpose of collecting data the entire state was divided in south, central and north. The samples were collected from these parts based on purposive sampling. Primary data and secondary data were collected for the completion of this study.

HYPOTHESES

H₀₁ There is no impact on Service quality and passenger Satisfaction towards KSRTC.

H02 There is no impact on Service quality and passenger Satisfaction towards Private bus service.

H03 There is no significant difference between the Gender of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC.

H04 There is no significant difference between the Gender of the respondent and their satisfaction towards Private buses.

H05 There is no significant difference between the Demographic variables of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC.

H06 There is no significant difference between the Demographic variables of the respondent and their satisfaction towards Private buses.

Results and discussion

TABLE 1

		Satisfaction	Service quality
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.935
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	150	150
Service quality	Pearson Correlation	.935	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	150	150

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 1 illustrates the correlation between Service quality and respondents Satisfaction towards KSRTC. As the correlation value is above .50, the data demonstrates that there is a relationship between the variables. To ascertain how the quality of services affect the satisfaction of respondents it is necessary to perform a regression test.

H01 There is no impact of Service Quality on Satisfaction of respondents towards KSRTC

TABLE 2

MODEL SUMMARY

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.935	0.874	0.873	0.42280	1.694
a. Predictors: (Constant), Service quality					
b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction					

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 2 shows test employed by the researchers to determine the effect of service quality on satisfaction is shown in the above table and involved multiple regression. Service quality is treated as an independent variable in the study, while customer satisfaction is viewed as the dependent variable.

The R square value is .874, which indicates that the factors account for 87.4% of the variation in satisfaction. There is no autocorrelation in the variables, according to the Durbin Watson test. Since the test value is less than 2, there is no autocorrelation.

TABLE 3
ANOVA of REGRESSION

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	183.170	1	183.170	1024.674	.001
	Residual	26.456	148	0.179		
	Total	209.626	149			

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 3 shows the results of Regression Anova. The P value is less than .05 which is less than the acceptance limit and the null hypothesis stands rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is an impact of Service quality on Satisfaction of passengers.

TABLE 4
Correlations

		Service quality	Satisfaction
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.840
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	150	150
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.840	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	150	150

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 4 shows the correlation between Service quality and Satisfaction of respondents towards Private buses. The correlation results prove that there exist a relationship between the variables as the correlation value is above .50. In order to determine the impact of Service on Satisfaction Regression test is to be carried out.

H₀₂ There is no impact of Service quality on Satisfaction of respondents towards Private buses

TABLE 5
MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.840	0.705	0.703	0.64601	0.995
a. Predictors: (Constant), service quality					
b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction					

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 5 shows the test conducted to know the impact of Service quality on Satisfaction and the researchers have used multiple regression. As part of the study Satisfaction is considered as the dependent variable and Service quality is treated as independent variable. The value of R Square is .703 which means the factors explain 70.5% variation on Satisfaction. The Durbin Watson test shows that there is no autocorrelation in the variables. The test value is less than 2 which implies that there is no autocorrelation. Here the test results shows 0.995 which is less than 2 and implies a positive correlation.

TABLE 6
ANOVA of REGRESSION

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	147.862	1	147.862	354.307	.001
	Residual	61.764	148	0.417		
	Total	209.626	149			

Computed from primary data

The above table 6 shows the results of Regression Anova. The P value is less than .05 which is less than the acceptance limit and the null hypothesis stands rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is an impact of Service quality on Satisfaction of respondents towards Private buses.

H₀₃ There is no significant difference between the Gender of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC

Table 7
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	0.987	0.322	1.759	148	0.21134	0.12016	-0.02610	0.44878
	Equal variances not assumed			1.726	109.048	0.21134	0.12243	-0.03131	0.45399

Source: Computed from primary data

Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference between the Gender and Satisfaction of KSRTC. The P value is greater than the accepted level which is 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. The mean value of Male is 2.42 and of Female is 2.21 which is almost equal which shows that Male and Female are equally satisfied with the pricing of tickets, behaviour of the bus conductor, comfortability for night travelling.

H₀₄ There is no significant difference between the Gender of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC

Table 8
Independent Samples Test

		Leven's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	0.466	0.496	0.664	148	0.058	0.087	-0.115	0.231
	Equal variances not assumed			0.652	109.089	0.058	0.089	-0.118	0.234

Source: Computed from primary data

Table 8 shows that there is no significant difference between the Gender and Satisfaction of KSRTC. The P value is greater than the accepted level which is 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is

accepted. The mean value of Male is 4.08 and of Female is 4.02 which is almost equal which shows that Male and Female are equally satisfied with the pricing of tickets, behaviour of the bus conductor, comfortability for night travelling.

H₀₅ There is no significant difference between the Demographic variables of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC

Table 9
Anova

		F	Sig.
Age of the respondent	Between Groups	2.666	0.003
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Education qualification of the respondent	Between Groups	5.374	0.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Occupation details	Between Groups	4.340	0.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

Source: Computed from primary data

According to table 9, there is a considerable correlation between the respondent's demographic characteristics and their satisfaction with KSRTC. Details about the respondent's age, education, and occupation are displayed in the table above. The demographic variables' P value is less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is disproved. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in their satisfaction towards KSRTC.

H₀₆ There is no significant difference between the Demographic variables of the respondent and their satisfaction towards KSRTC

Table 10
ANOVA

		F	Sig.
Age of the respondent	Between Groups	2.602	0.001
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Education qualification of the respondent	Between Groups	5.130	0.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Occupation details	Between Groups	8.953	0.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

Source: Computed from primary data

The table 10 shows that there is a significant difference between the demographic variables of the respondent and their satisfaction towards Private buses. The above table shows the age, educational qualification and occupation details of the respondent. The P value of the demographic variables is less than 0.05 and thereby the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in their satisfaction towards KSRTC.

TABLE 11
SATISFACTION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

KSRTC		PRIVATE	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
4.45	0.71	2.66	0.68

Source: Computed from primary data

The table no 11 shows the satisfaction level of respondents towards KSRTC and Private buses in Kerala. The mean score obtained by Private bus is 2.6683 and for KSRTC is 4.45. From the above table the highest mean score was obtained by KSRTC. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents are more satisfied with KSRTC in Kerala.

TABLE 12

Problems faced by respondents

Variables	KSRTC			Private bus services		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Overspeed	2.47	1.073	I	1.93	0.991	IV
Dressing sense of bus conductor	1.69	0.919	IV	2.39	0.969	III
Availability of Luggage space	2.15	1.116	III	2.53	1.021	II
Environmental impact	2.46	1.072	II	2.61	0.995	I

Source: Computed from primary data

The above table 12 shows the ranking of various problems faced by the passengers of both the transport based on mean values calculated. It can be understood that the major problem faced by the passengers of KSRTC were Overspeed with a mean value of 2.47 followed by Environmental impact with a mean value of 2.46. The mean value obtained by dressing sense of bus conductor was 1.69 which showed the least value. The passengers of private bus services faced environmental impact as the major problem followed by space availability, dressing sense of conductor and overspeed.

Suggestions

The suggestions of the study are as follows:

- Respondents suggested enhancing Wi-Fi capabilities, mobile phone charging capabilities, etc, in KSRTC bus terminals as most of the private bus terminals had these facilities.
- Improved restroom facilities with hygiene and sanitization were recommended by the passengers of both the transport system.
- The service quality of private buses must be improved as the variables only influenced 70.5% on satisfaction whereas the variables of KSRTC influenced 87.4% on satisfaction of passengers. To improve, the private operators must provide better service by ensuring safety during night travelling, timely available on pickup point, provide extra luggage space. On the other hand, KSRTC must also continuously improve their service.
- The road safety authorities must ensure that the speed governors installed are working effectively by inspecting the buses periodically as most of the respondents faced overspeed as a major problem (2.47).
- The passengers of KSRTC (2.47) and Private bus services (2.61) ranked air pollution as one of their major problems with second and first ranking respectively. In order to reduce the air

pollution, buses that run on the traditional system must be replaced with Electric or CNG widely by both the transportation services.

- The passengers of KSRTC are of the opinion that the attitude of bus driver and conductors towards passengers shows a positive attitude whereas the staffs of private bus services were not satisfactory. Hence, the staffs should behave in a friendly manner by providing enough change, addressing their queries, stopping the buses at requested stops.
- The private bus services are covering most of the hilly and remote areas. In order to extend the service of KSRTC in remote areas the authorities must deploy more number of services and bus schedules during the office hours.
- In order to prevent issues with overcrowding during peak hours, buses should be scheduled in accordance with the necessary timing.

Conclusions

The movement of people, goods, and services around the modern world depends heavily on transportation. The survey's goal was to learn what passengers thought of KSRTC and private bus service. According to the study, 48 of the respondents were students who commuted regularly using the public system. From the study it was understood that Service quality of both the transportation positively influenced the Satisfaction of the respondents. It was understood that there is a significant difference in the service quality of KSRTC and Private buses. The tests results showed that 87.4% of Service quality influenced the Satisfaction of respondents towards KSRTC and 70.5% of Service quality influenced the Satisfaction of respondents towards Private bus services. The variables of the private buses were low compared to KSRTC as the variables could only explain 70.5% and was understood that the private bus operators must increase their customer satisfaction by increasing the service quality. It is also to be understood that there are other factors such as Physical appearance of the buses, management's view on their operations were not included in the study which will also influences the satisfaction. There is a huge scope in the future for conducting further studies on the above factors.

The study found out that Male and Female are equally satisfied towards both the means of transportation. The demographic variables on the other side showed a difference in satisfaction towards both the means of transportation. The overall satisfaction level was high towards KSRTC when compared with private bus services. due to the well behaviour of the bus conductor and comfortability for night travelling. On the other hand, Overspeed and Environmental impact were the major problems faced by the respondents.

The research can be useful to both Private bus operators and the State transportation authority to frame policies, regulation in order to improve the services. It will be valuable for transportation authorities, bus operators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in optimizing the public transportation system and meeting customer expectations. Ultimately, the aim is to promote sustainable and customer-centric public transportation services in Kerala.

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