



# Critical Assessment Of Passengers' Satisfaction: A Study Of Prayagraj Junction

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## Abstract

Despite considerable research on consumer satisfaction in banking, mobile, IT, etc., railway platforms have received little attention. This research aims to measure the value and satisfaction of amenities at Prayagraj Junction Railway Station in North Central Railway Zone of Indian Railways. Using observation technique, Prayagraj Junction's platform facilities were identified. Gap analysis and performance rating matrix were created to evaluate service providers and determine priority amenities. Personal hygiene services consistently placed bottom in passenger satisfaction surveys. The Ministry of Railways faces issues with passenger food and drink quality and clean drinking water on platforms.

**Key words:** customer satisfaction, railway platforms, Prayagraj Junction, North Central Railway Zone, Indian Railways.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Railways move nearly 23 million people and 3 million tonnes of freight every day, making it one of the largest service providers in the

country (Indian Railways, 2019). But when it comes to service quality, Indian Railways has a major question mark on its forehead, whether it is transit quality, train carriages, or rail platforms (Sharma, 2009; Geetika et al., 2016; Ghosh et al., 2017; Ojha, 2020). Travelers spend a substantial amount of time on railway platforms, whether they are departing or arriving, waiting for a train to depart or receiving/dispatching a guest, purchasing a ticket or alighting from a train. Customers may want to use a range of facilities and services during this period. Rail services, as the nation's most important service provider, should provide sufficient, high-quality services to make transportation more enjoyable (Dash, Dash and Pradhan, 2012).

Research shows that issues like overcrowding on platforms, poor amenities, a lack of adequate lounges for passengers to wait in, an absence of access control and unlicensed vending, a lack of passenger guidance systems makes passenger dissatisfied out of railway services (Sharma, 2009, Geetika and Nandan, 2010). Officials are working to raise the standard of the station's train platforms to international standards. In this regard, the purpose of this study to assess the availability and operational status of various amenities on the platforms of railway stations in the North Central Railway Zone of the Indian Railways. Additionally, the study aims to determine the relative relevance and passenger satisfaction levels associated with each of the selected services rather than the services themselves.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There have been numerous studies on railways and platforms in different countries.

While studying Japanese railway stations, Kido (2005) revealed that they were designed primarily by train companies, with no respect for the local community or the surrounding environment. His proposal is to apply the widely used Context Sensitive Design for Railway (CSDR) model to Japan Railways.

In a study by Geetika and Nandan (2010) the quality of refreshments and the manner of personnel were shown to be the most important factors in

determining passenger happiness on train platforms. Using a modified SERVQUAL model, Feiz, Maleki, and Zargar (2010) assessed Iran Railway's level of customer satisfaction by factoring in the original SERVQUAL model's comfort and convenience variables as well as the notions of service superiority and adequacy.

Most sample passengers were unaware or under-informed about the services provided by railways, according to Vishnuvarthani and Selvaraj (2012), who examined the Salem Division of the Southern Railway in India.

According to Vishnuvarthani and Selvaraj (2013), evaluating awareness is crucial since passengers would not use the amenities unless they are aware of them. Travelers must be informed of the different services available at train stations as a result.

Many factors were taken into consideration in the literature when establishing a model platform and making sure passengers were happy. According to the findings, passengers' satisfaction is greatly influenced by the variety and quality of amenities available on the platforms.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Using a combination of observation methods (Singh and Kumar, 2014) and structured questionnaires, the diagnostic research technique is employed to meet the study objectives. A total of 1807 questionnaires were filled out during the survey's personal administration by direct interview (Kian, Latiff and Fong, 2012; Gupta and Datta, 2012; Goel, Ghosh, Ojha and Shukla, 2017; Ghosh, Goel and Ojha, 2018). Guidelines for sample size are met by this sample size (Gupta and Datta, 2012). Analysis and interpretation of data using gap analysis has been done in the past; same methodology is adopted in this study as well to assess the level of service deliver at junction station.

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

In order to better understand Prayagraj Junction's facilities and operational status, the researcher has visited all ten platforms of junction station. Twenty-three distinct amenities or service providers have been identified by

researchers and organized into six broad categories, namely: food and beverage services; book stalls; cleanliness; washroom facilities; waiting areas and physical infrastructure; information and communication services; and banking services.

The guests of the food, beverage, and drinking water facility are catered to by six distinct service providers. NCR Vibhagiya Khan Paan Seva, operated by Indian Railways' North Central Railway Zone, and NCR Catering Stalls, operated by private vendors, Jan Aahar and Indian Railway Khan Paan Seva are both operated by Indian Railways, and the Milk Stall is operated and serviced by private players, namely Parag and Amul. Also included in this category is a seventh service provider, Water Points. In order to help passengers who can't buy mineral water bottles sold at food stands and restaurants, we've included this amenity to track how well they work and how often they're used.

The Book Stalls category includes four different merchants who meet the reading and literary needs of travelers. There are a number of companies offering their services, such as A. H. Wheelers, Sarvodaya Sahitya, Shikshit Berozgar Mudran and Prakashan Sehkar Ltd., and Ram Krishan-Vivekanand Vedanta Sahitya. Three of these four are privately owned and run, while the fourth, Ram Krishan-Vivekanand Vedanta Sahitya, is operated and serviced by the Zonal Railways of India. The Hygiene and Washroom Facility was noted to have three sets of amenities, including the free urinal, the pay-and-use urinal, and the Sulabh Sauchalaya. Private companies manage, maintain, and service all three under contract with Indian Railways.

Waiting Hall/Seating Chairs, Escalators/Foot-Over Bridges, and Cloak Room are all included in the category of Waiting Arrangement and Physical Infrastructure. In order to qualify for this category, these three amenities must be able to be rated by passengers for their performance, and researchers must be able to monitor the operation and usefulness of these amenities. Passengers and academics will have no way of evaluating the usefulness of features like CCTV cameras. Consequently, such features were left out of our investigation.

Enquiry counters, platform display boards, platform enquiry machines, and a reservation display board were found to be four functional facilities in the

Information Provision domain. All of them are operated and serviced by the North Central Railway Zone. Finally, PCO/STD/ISD and Internet Boots and Automated Teller Machines have been added to the Communication and Banking Facility section (ATMs). PCO/STD/ISD and Internet Booths are administered and serviced by private contractors, whereas ATMs are operated by banks.

#### **4.1 Assessment of Gap in Service Expectation and Service Delivery**

The mean of the importance scale and the satisfaction scale for each individual amenity were used to conduct the gap analysis (on the basis of service provider). The mean score was not calculated using responses from non-users.

Results of passenger interview shows that overall utility satisfaction is 3.20 (out of 5), whereas the average importance is 4.39 (out of 5), resulting in a gap of 1.19 points. In similar terms and for specific amenities, passengers' opinions on the importance of urinals and platform enquiry machines differ the most from their satisfaction with them. At Prayagraj Junction Railways Station, there is a significant disparity between the perceived importance of a water point and customer satisfaction, with a mismatch of 1.19 points. Food and beverage service providers have a gap score larger than one, and three of them, NCR (Vibhagiya Khan Paan Seva), Jan Aahar, and Indian Railways Khan Paan Seva, have a gap score greater than 1.5, except for the milk stall (0.47 points). A negative gap score of -0.02 means that only one amenity, the Reservation Display Board, outperforms the importance score and receives the highest satisfaction rating of 4.29 out of 5.

In addition to platform presentation, which had a mean satisfaction score of 4.28S compared to an important score of 4.32, there was a 0.04-point difference in the performance criterion. Other services with a gap score of one or more include Shikshit Berozgar Mudran & Prakashan Sehkari Ltd., May I Help You (enquiry counters), Escalators, and ATMs. In general, food and beverage and personal hygiene facilities are underperforming, which may be due to a stale atmosphere and a lack of proper upkeep.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Indian Railways' North Central Railway Zone consists significant junction stations; Prayagraj Junction is one of them. Hence this study gives crucial information regarding the state of affairs at railway stations. There is evidence that clients are prepared to pay for services if they know the quality will be high. Passengers have expressed their discontent with the vast majority of food service companies as a primary source of contention. In addition, establishing a sanitary atmosphere is the railroad's most challenging challenge, since the findings reveal the lowest level of satisfaction with cleanliness. Railway platforms should be kept clean and sanitary for the benefit of passengers, yet the urinals are in such poor condition that it's unsanitary to even step into them. Additionally, travelers are urging the railway authorities to improve and preserve existing facilities. A suitable level of care must be taken with regard to all aspects of the platform circulatory system. Many passengers are disappointed with food and water facilities on the platforms because of a lack of cleanliness or proper sanitation, according to a recent survey.

Due to the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Railways work to enhance the ways and means by which passengers can obtain information on the operating status of trains and the condition of the platform. Customers have expressed discontent with the operation of enquiry desks at train stations, and more railway officials and personnel should be educated in how to better assist customers. The performance of restaurants and other food stalls has also been described as disturbing, therefore vendor performance must be constantly monitored and inspected. Food stall contracts awarded by the Ministry of Railways should be thoroughly vetted and monitored on a regular basis.

Customers have voiced unhappiness with the status and quality of urinal facilities, which necessitates the Ministry of Railways' preservation of cleanliness and hygiene. It is also advisable to carefully review each vendor's short-term performance before signing a contract. With these concepts, one significant recommendation would be that a commercial company be given the contract to provide food booths and water stops for two to three years, with the opportunity for renewal. Renewable facilities should be linked to the previous term's success.

According to a recent report, the Ministry of Railways should focus its efforts on boosting public knowledge of railway station amenities through proper maintenance and location. It is imperative that railways make an effort to transform railway platforms into metro rail platforms. As a result of the study's focus on specific services, administration and policymakers may find it valuable. As a result of the research, a solid basis has been laid for better service delivery on railroad platforms. Passenger happiness was shown to be linked to a number of characteristics, and the railway might utilize this information to better its future plans.

## 6. STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

If more stations were included, a more complete picture could be constructed, and hence, the project's sample size is its fundamental flaw. In this regard, future research is suggested to employ more rigorous and multivariate statistical techniques like regression analysis to evaluate the proportional contribution of distinct amenities and to define passenger satisfaction groups.

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