

Effects of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Rail Transportation System in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

In today's competitive market scenario, organizations have well understood the importance of building and managing the relationship effectively with its customers. For building and maintaining a healthy relationship with the customer, organizations need to understand and meet the expectations of their customer. Further, in the business world satisfaction plays major role. Satisfaction from service quality is usually evaluated in terms of technical quality and functional quality (Gronroos, 1984). Usually, customers do not have much information about the technical aspects of a service; therefore, functional quality becomes the major factor from which to form perceptions of service quality (Donabedian, 1980, 1982). Service quality may be defined as customer perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Czepiel, 1990).

Sri Lanka is one of the most wonderful tourist destinations in the world and after the civil war tourism has become a fast emerging sector in the Sri Lankan economy. Thus, the development of the tourism industry directly influences the economic development of the country. In 2010 immediately after the end of the war, Sri Lanka had a growth of 46% in tourist arrivals. Moreover, transportation is the key player of the tourism industry. In this context the current study investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and identified the existing situation of service quality factors on customer satisfaction of railway transportation in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

The sample of the research is 60 foreign tourists who traveled via Colombo-Badulla rail track in Expo rail and Rajadani Express coaches. Further, they are the recently launched coaches which introduced the public, private partnership to the Sri Lankan rail way system. In addition, the sample was selected by employing the convenience sampling technique. Questionnaire based direct interview method was used to collect data from the selected sample. 30 questions were prepared on the basis of service quality factors and tourist satisfaction and 03 questions were prepared on the basis of tourists demographic factors. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to discover and summarize the attributes of the sample. Furthermore, correlation coefficient analysis was used to measure the degree of linear association between two variables. Multiple regressions analysis was also used to combine the contribution of each part of the independent variable.

Results and Discussion

Results revealed that answers of the tourists fell into almost agree category with existing quality of cleanness, system safety, passenger comfort, servicing, information and itinerary accuracy offered by service providers on average. According to the analysis, the mean value with respect to cleanness, system safety, passenger comfort, servicing, information and itinerary accuracy were 4.277, 4.322, 4.283, 4.283, 4.303 and 4.294 respectively. Considering the customer satisfaction, the mean value with respect to preference, happiness, need fulfillment and

customer convenience were 4.294, 4.294, 4.316 and 4.291 respectively. Further, all the values were falling in to the category of almost agree.

According to the Table1 on correlation coefficient analysis, it can be identified that there is a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and cleanness, system safety, passenger comfort, servicing, information and itinerary accuracy. Furthermore, it can be recognized that “passenger information” factor has the highest value of correlation coefficient. In addition, it is clear that there is a statistically significant relationship between dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction as all the values are significant at the $P < 0.05$ level.

Table 1. Correlation between the customer satisfaction and each factor of service quality.

Variable	Coefficient of Pearson correlation	P-value
Cleanness	0.480	0.000
System safety	0.509	0.000
Passenger comfort	0.776	0.000
Servicing	0.705	0.000
Passenger information	0.848	0.000
Itinerary accuracy	0.499	0.000

Source: Based on primary data

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Predictor	β -value	P-value
Constant	1.040	0.008
Cleanness	0.040	0.000
System safety	0.069	0.000
Passenger comfort	0.587	0.000
Servicing	0.324	0.000
Passenger information	0.229	0.000
Itinerary accuracy	0.096	0.000

Source: Based on primary data

According to above regression output, when cleanness dimension increases by 1 unit, customer satisfaction will increase by 0.040. Moreover, when system safety increases by 1 unit, customer satisfaction will increase by 0.069. Further, when passenger comfort, servicing, passenger information and itinerary accuracy increase by one unit, customer satisfaction will increase by 0.587, 0.324, 0.229 and 0.096 respectively. Therefore, it indicates that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that customers are satisfied with the existing service quality of rail transportation provided by Rajadani Express and Expo rail coaches. Further, according to the correlation coefficient analysis, it can be identified that there is a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and cleanness, system safety, passenger comfort, servicing, information, and itinerary accuracy. According to the multiple regression analysis, it can be identified that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and cleanness, system safety, passenger comfort, servicing, information, and itinerary accuracy. Therefore, it is clear that the service quality plays a major role in customer satisfaction. Thus, service providers should deem more on service quality when developing their business.

References

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