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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A PASSENGER SATISFACTION STUDY OF IRCTC'S ONLINE RESERVATION FACILITY

*Dr. Ashvini Ravi, Dr. Lekshmi, R.S. and Dr. Rajamani, K.

Department of Management Sciences, Velammal Engineering College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

In IRCTC the major problem faced by the passengers during online reservation are service charges, connectivity problem, automatic cancellation of waitlisted ticket, changes in name and boarding station etc. This study aimed to find the relative importance of the various aforementioned problems on the user. It also aimed to find possible solution for the corresponding problems. The study revealed that the IRCTC online reservation is mostly used by people under the age of 30. People above 50 are less familiar with online reservation. IRCTC must take steps to widen its scope. There seems to be problem with the system like slow processing speed, and slow refund of money. However the study also reveals that the popularity of IRCTC is also on the increase.

Key words: Boarding station, Popularity of IRCTC, Importance

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INTRODUCTION

About the topic

IRCTC stands for Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation. It is an Indian Railways subsidiary and takes care of the online ticketing, catering, and tourism operations. Ever since its launch, IRCTC totally revolutionized rail travel in India. It pioneered internet-based rail ticket booking through its website, as well as from the mobile phones via GPRS or SMS. In addition to e-tickets, Indian Railways and Catering Tourism Corporation also offers I-tickets that are basically like regular tickets except that they are booked online and delivered by post. The tickets PNR status is also made available. Kelley and Storey (2000) mentions that changing customer preferences, improved competitive offerings, and emergence of new technologies often drive firms to introduce new services and improve existing service offerings as in the case of railways: the on-line ticket booking, enquiry, passenger status check-up etc. New service offerings that are timely and responsive to user needs are also developed to remain competitive. Public transport service attributes influencing overall passengers' satisfaction were investigated by Ngatia *et al.* (2010) A survey to public transport users was conducted in the city of Nairobi. The proposed structural equation model allowed elucidating the interrelationship between the observed variables and unobserved variables and their impact to the overall commuters' satisfaction.

Unobserved attributes such as Service Quality, Safety and Travel Cost were estimated. Level of satisfaction was found to be significantly influenced by these attributes. Gleave, S. D (2000); Rail Passenger Quality of Service Valuation, London. This study conducted by convenience sampling. Agarwal, R. (2008); The study has been undertaken to find the factors related to Indian Railway services that have an impact on customer satisfaction. The major findings of the study depict that out of the various factors considered; employee behaviour has the maximum effect on satisfaction level of customers with Indian Railways as a whole.

Need for the study

In IRCTC the major problem faced by the passengers during online reservation are service charges, connectivity problem, automatic cancellation of waitlisted ticket, changes in name and boarding station etc. This study aims to find the relative importance of these various aforementioned problems on the user.

Primary objective

To understand passenger's satisfaction towards IRCTC online reservation facility

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling size: 100. Data collection: From the passengers. Paper Based Questionnaire consisting of 20 questions.

*Corresponding author: Dr. Ashvini Ravi,
Department of Management Sciences, Velammal Engineering
College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Data analysis and interpretation

Parameters	Mean
Convenience	3.28
Ample Information	2.97
Transaction Facility	2.91
Speed	2.60
Credibility	2.86
Affordability	3.21
Payment Gateway	3.25
Experience	3.06

The Convenience of using IRCTC portal has the most positive response having a mean value of 3.28. The Processing Speed provided by IRCTC has the least positive response having a Mean of 2.6.

Parameters	Mean Rank
Convenience	4.97
Ample Information	4.39
Transaction Facility	4.30
Speed	3.82
Credibility	4.16
Affordability	4.74
Payment Gateway	4.98
Experience	4.65
Asymp. Sig.	.002

Null Hypothesis is rejected as the significance value is less than 0.05. Payment gateway and convenience has the highest rating and speed has the lowest rating.

RESULTS

- 37% of the respondents are availing the services of online reservation weekly
- 33% of the respondents feel that auto cancellation is the difficulty in e-ticketing
- 43% of the respondents feel that convenience for the user is neutral
- 38% of the respondents feel that the ample information provided by IRCTC is agreeable & neutral
- 32% of the respondents feel that money transaction facility in IRCTC is neutral
- 38% of the respondents agree with processing speed provided by the IRCTC
- 41% of the respondents agree with the credible information from IRCTC
- 48% of the respondents feel that amount charged by IRCTC is neutral
- 40% of the respondents agree that IRCTC provides safe and secure payment gateway
- 42% of the respondents feel that making reservation through IRCTC is neutral
- The Convenience of using IRCTC portal has the most positive response having a mean value of 3.28

- The Processing Speed provided by IRCTC has the least positive response having a mean value of 2.60
- There is no relation between Age Group and Responses.
- There is no correlation between Experience – Convenience; Speed – Experience.
- Gender has no impact on the responses received.

Recommendations

- The main objective of online reservation is to book tickets at quick succession. So keeping that in mind IRCTC must improve its processing speed even more. Though 38% of the respondent agree with its processing speed yet it needs to improve it.
- It should sort out the problem it is facing with connectivity and automatic cancellation of waitlisted tickets. Waitlisted ticket is the major drawback of online reservation.
- Service charges that are imposed while booking online reservation should be reduced. Currently 20rs plus is charged for second/sleeper reservation, 40rs plus for all other (1AC,2AC,3AC,FC).
- When the cancellation is done IRCTC should refund the money as soon as possible with less deduction of amount.

Conclusion

- At present the IRCTC online reservation is mostly used by students and people under the age of 30. People above 50 are very much less familiar with online reservation. IRCTC must take steps to widen its scope.
- There seems to be problem with systems like slow processing speed, requires fast internet connection and slow refund of money.
- On an overview it can be concluded that IRCTC is increasing in popularity.

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