
Consumer Perception about the Services of State Road Transport Corporation: With Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC)

*H.C. Purohit **

ABSTRACT

In the transport generating organization or even in other service generating organizations, it is pertinent that the users are given due weightage. The different categories of users use the services with different motives. The general users like safe, time-honoured and economic services and like this, the industrial or organizational users also prefer quality and fast services even if they are asked to pay more. In India both public and private sectors have been found offering transportation services to the general and industrial users. Road transportation is the second largest after railway and in India the State Road Transport Corporations are providing road transportation services. They have gone far reaching changes after independence and both public and private management are engaged in the transportation of man and material. SRTCs have challenges from the private players.

The present study is an attempt to understand the services rendered by State Road Transport Corporation and evaluate the performance of these services as perceived by the passengers.

Introduction

In the 21st century, the business environment conditions are likely to be more volatile. The multi-dimensional developments in the information technologies, activated and energized by the developed countries, have made ways for sophistication in almost all the areas. In the present world, it is not possible that we keep ourselves isolated. To be more when we have advanced information technologies and quality professionals, we don't find any sense in continuing with the traditional, technology creative approach and innovative strategies which would make our efforts productive.

The technologies have been found dominating the service sector and the organizations depending on traditional technologies or manual services have been facing rough time. Hence it is right to mention that application of modern marketing principles would

help almost all the organizations in enriching their efficacy.

Concept of Service Marketing

Marketing a service is meant marketing something intangible. It is marketing a promise. It is more selling you. In the marketing of services, the providers are supposed to influence and satisfy the customers or users. The perception of service marketing focuses on selling the services in the best interest of users/customers. When we buy services

** Dr. H.C. Purohit*

Faculty Member

Department of Business Economics (MBE),

VBS Purvanchal University, Jaunpur (UP)

e-mail: hcpurohit_mbe@rediffmail.com

offered by a service generating organization in true sense we buy the time knowledge, skill or resources. The application of marketing principles in the service sectors is the main thing in the service marketing. Traditionally, we study marketing only from point of view of profit-seeking institution but recently we have the marketing type problem of even the no-profit making organizations like educational institutions, hospitals, political and social organizations or so. In view of the above we observe the following key points regarding the concept or perception of service marketing: It is managerial process of managing the services. It is an organized effort for providing a sound foundation for the development of an organization. The story of satisfaction with service can be traced back to the seventies; surveys with respect to services actually began at the time when Parsuraman and other developed the internationally popular scale "SERVQUAL".

As service industries became a major component of the most developed countries and competition intensified with increasing government deregulation, service providers sought to differentiate themselves with superior service quality. In this lies the genesis of service quality measurement. One major reason why Parsuraman felt it was necessary to develop SERVQUAL for services even though satisfaction with respect of goods was being measured by satisfaction researchers with available tools was that while goods quality can be measured objectively by such indicators as durability and numbers of defects service quality is an abstract and elusive construct because of four features unique to services: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perish ability.

Quality as measured by SERVQUAL involves perceived quality which Zeithaml (1988) elaborates thus –"perceived quality is the consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority". It results from a comparison of expectation with perceptions of performance." Stemming from that they feel service firms should offer (i.e. from their expectations) with their perceptions of the performance of firms provide the services. Perceived service quality is therefore viewed as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumer's perceptions and expectations." As well known, the scale consists of (22) statements for measuring quality along five

dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles, where, reliability reflects the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, responsiveness relates to willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, assurance deals with knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence, empathy indicates caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers, and tangibles stands for the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel.

The difference between ratings of ideal organization and evaluation of actual organization on the (22) statements provides gaps in service quality. While the companies using SERVQUAL continue to advertise their satisfaction score one wonders whether the scale used in above surveys, measure satisfaction, at al. Parsuraman et.al. (1988) emphasize that perceived quality is different from objective quality it is a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction. This definition begins to tie SERVQUAL to attitude formation.

Key Services

Sky is the limit for marketing of services. Almost all the countries of the world have been seen assigning a transcendental priority to the development of services sector. Today we market a number of services. This has engineered a sound foundation for the development of service generating organization. The emerging key services in which we find enough potential to serve the society and economy need innovative marketing strategies. Scientific inventions and innovation have energizes information explosion and we find information technologies playing and incremental role in improving the quality of services. The new corporate culture is waiting for innovations. There are a number of services likely to be productive if the policies and strategies are innovated. The banking services, transportation services, education services, hotel services, consultancy services are to mention a few waiting for a major change. The personal care services, entertainment services, electricity services have tremendous potentials. We need a sound policy to make possible an optimal utilization of the potentials and to make the development. Now we are going to concern with transport service in the field of service marketing.

Services of UPSRTC

The UPSRTC was started on 15th May 1947 with the operation of bus service on the Lucknow-Barabanki route by the erstwhile U.P. Govt. roadways. The corporation has 365 bus stations of which 251 are in owned and 114 in rental premises. For the convenience of the passenger the corporation generally, has rest rooms, canteens, booking offices, toilets, drinking water, time table, and fare chart display enquiry counters, public address systems, lights, fans benches and PCO etc. cleanliness of the bus stations and buses are accorded priority. Suggestions and/or complaint book have been made available to station in-charge and passenger feedback through them is invited and monitored. TVs have been fitted in passenger lounge of important bus stations. The bus station have been classified in four categories ABC and D, the facilities to be provided as per classifications is as follow:

1. Drinking water- taps
2. Lighting & Passengers sheds and stations
3. Fans in passengers sheds
4. Benches and chairs on plate forms
5. Display of time tables and fair list
6. Booking and Inquiry counter
7. Suggestions/ complaint box
8. Canteen/ Book stalls/ General merchant shops
9. P.C.O.
1. Passenger Lounge
11. Public address
12. Cloak Room
13. Generator
14. Television
15. Seat Reservation facility
16. Pass system facility

The bus transportation service is the second largest transport service industry after railway in India. The present study covers the services provided by the U.P. state transport corporation and perception/ feed back of the passengers/consumers about these services.

Objectives- The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To evaluate the services of UPSRTC.
- To prepare a profile of the passengers/ consumers of UPSRTC.

Survey:

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study we have conducted a survey in Jaunpur bus station. The passengers who were traveling in the buses of UPSRTC were interviewed personally and the services of the state transport corporation were evaluated on 27 attributes a structured questionnaire were constructed on 7- point Likert type scale ranging from "Excellent to Worst" for the purpose. Attributes regarding the services of state transport corporation were collected in a preliminary survey where passengers contacted in a focus group and asked: why do you prefer to travel with the buses of state corporation, what are the services of state corporation that makes it different as compared with the private bus services etc. and attribute collected from the focus were selected for evaluation of the services provided by the state corporation.

Sample Profile

A great majority (70%) of the respondents are male; an overwhelming majority (84%) of the respondents are having their own business or engaged in some professions. A great majority (70%) respondents are educated with (46%) graduate, and an overwhelming majority (84%) of the respondents are from younger age group (20-40years), while more than half (54%) of the respondents belongs to large families (more than 5 members), and a great majority (76%) of the respondents are belonging to lower middle income group (upto Rs. 10,000 per month).

Findings:

The evaluations of services as perceived and ranked by the passengers of UPSRTC with the bus services on different attributes during the survey are presented as below:

1. Drinking Water Facilities

More than half (56%) of the respondents reported that the drinking water facilities at the bus stations is bad, only one or two hand pump sets are located some time the hand pump did not function and there is very poor arrangement of direct water supply for passengers on the passenger sheds. While, rest (44%) of the passengers rated that drinking water facility at the stations of the state transport corporation is good,

with 3.6 mean score of the item and found significant on chi square test at 0.05 level ($\chi^2 = 27.84$).

2. Lighting Arrangement

More than half (56%) of the respondents reported that light arrangements on the stations of the UPSRTC is bad, except few big towns the light sodium/tube lights are not functioning properly and there is no arrangement for repair or maintenance rest (44%) of the respondents rated light arrangements are quite average, with mean value 3.46, and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2 = 25.55$).

3. Passenger Sheds

Only 30% respondents rated passenger sheds as average, however more than one third (38%) of the respondents reported that sheds on stations are bad, because the seating arrangements are not available and the stations are quite unhygienic, with mean 3.88 and $\chi^2 = 22.70$ at 0.05 level.

4. Fans in Passenger Sheds

A great majority (62%) of the respondents reported that fans in passenger sheds of UPSRTC bus stations are not available or where the fans are available they are malfunctioned or not working properly, while rest more (38%) of the respondents rated that it is quite average, fans are available but there is no maintenance of the fans or coolers, with mean score 2.94 and ($\chi^2 = 25.27$) significant at 0.05 level.

5. Display of Time Table

Less than half (46%) of the respondents rated that time table display system of the state corporation is good with mean 4.14 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2 = 17.27$).

6. Display of Fare list

Only (40%) of the respondents rated display chart of bus fares on the stations is good and around one fourth (24%) reported that it is average, and rest (36%) bad because the display list is not updated and revised fares are not mentioned on the chart with mean value 3.94 and ($\chi^2 = 11.55$) insignificant at 0.05 level on chi square test.

7. Inquiry counter

A great majority (62%) of the respondents reported that inquiry counters on the bus stations are

available and providing good services, while 20% respondents rated inquiry system of UPSRTC as an average because the counters are available but the person is not available with the counters to reply the queries of the passengers with mean 5.44 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2 = 32.69$).

8. Complaint/Suggestion

Around half (48%) of the respondents reported that complaint/ suggestion register is available with the buses or at the stations of UPSRTC but the action on the complaint/suggestion is not good, while less than one third (28%) of the respondents reported that the action of complaint/suggestion is neither good or not bad it is so-so, sometime they consider and some time not, with mean score 3.38 and ($\chi^2 = 18.84$) significant at 0.05 level.

9. Toilet/ urinal

A great majority (62%) of the respondents rated toilet/ urinal facilities at the bus stations are available but these toilets are not clean and the arrangement for cleaning the toilet/urinal is very poor, with (18%) average ratings. Mean value 3.94 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2 = 14.97$).

10. Canteen/ Book Stall

More than half (56%) of the respondents reported that canteen/ book stalls are available on the stations and rated these facilities good, while 18% respondents reported that it is an average with mean score 4.6, found ($\chi^2 = 22.27$) significant at chi square test at 0.05 level.

11. Cloak Room

A great majority (76%) of the respondents reported that cloak room facility on bus stations of UPSRTC is not available with 38% average rating, mean value 3.76 and chi square ($\chi^2 = 38.27$) significant at 0.05 level of significant.

12. Television

An overwhelming majority (84%) of the respondents reported that television sets are not located on the bus stations there is no entertainment facility on the stations of the UPSRTC with mean 1.82 and $\chi^2 = 122.98$ significant at 0.05.

13. Seat Reservation

A great majority (62%) of the respondents reported that seat reservation facility of UPSRTC buses is bad with 20% average rating. Mean 3.9 and ($\chi^2=25.12$), significant at 0.05.

14. Pass Facility

A great majority (60%) of the respondents appreciated pass facility of UPSRTC, however more than on third of the respondents reported that pass facility of UPSRTC is bad, with mean 5.4 and ($\chi^2=43.12$).

15. Frequency of Buses (Short Distance Route)

A great majority (78%) of the respondents reported that frequency of buses on short distance routes is good, with a mean score of 5.36 and ($\chi^2=35.41$).

16. Frequency of Buses (Long Distance Route)

More than half (52%) of the respondents reported that frequency of buses for long distance routes is quite good, while less than one third (32%) respondents rated the frequency on long route as average with mean value 4.5 and significant on chi square test ($\chi^2= 41.27$) at 0.05 level.

17. Behavior of the conductor

More than half (54%) of the respondents reported that the behavior of the conductor is good rest (46%) of the respondents rated behavior of the conductor with the passengers is not good with 34% of the respondents as an average one, the average score of the item is 4.5 and significant at 0.05 level($\chi^2=51.79$).

18. Seats (ordinary/Semi-ordinary Deluxe).

Less than half (48%) of the respondents reported that make of the seats in the buses of UPSRTC are quite average not very much comfortable in almost all available categories i.e. ordinary, semi-ordinary, deluxe, except air conditioners with mean value 4.34 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2=38.39$).

19. Space

More than half (58%) of the respondents reported that the buses of UPSRTC are not spacious, while, rest (42%) reported that these buses are quite

spacious with mean 4.16 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2= 42.71$).

20. Behavior of other Employee

Around 48% of the respondents rated that behavior of other employees is good and rest 52% of the respondents reported that the behavior of the employees working with state transport corporation is not good with 34% average rating, the mean score of the item is 4.4 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2=42.41$).

21. Carrier Facility

A great majority (78%) of the respondents reported that carrier facility with the buses of UPSRTC is not good, with mean 3.1, and significant at 0.05 level on chi square test ($\chi^2= 35.56$).

22. Bus Services (Ordinary, semi-ordinary, deluxe)

More than half (58%) of the respondents reported that the availability of bus services in all categories i.e. ordinary, semi-ordinary and deluxe to almost all important places or routes is good with mean 4.54 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2= 28.83$).

23. First Aid Facility

An overwhelming majority (84%) of the respondents reported that the first aid facility available with the buses of UPSRTC is not good, with mean 2.14 and significant at 0.05 level ($\chi^2=51.69$).

24. Passengers Waiting Room

Around half (52%) of the respondents reported that the passengers waiting room is not good at the stations of the UPSRTC, mean=3.42 and significant at 0.05 level on chi square test ($\chi^2=35.41$).

25. Audio Video System

Almost all (92%) of the respondents reported that audio video system is not available with the buses of UPSRTC mean value=1.68 and significant at 0.05 level of significance on chi square test ($\chi^2=125.56$).

26. Security

More than half (54%) of the respondents reported that there is no security arrangements in the buses or bus stations of the state transport corporations. Mean score 3.34 and significant of chi square test at 0.05 level ($\chi^2= 25.5$).

27. Overall facility

More than one third (36%) of the respondents reported that the overall services of the UPSRTC is good, while a great majority (64%) of the respondents

reported that the overall services of UPSRTC are bad, with mean value 4.14 and significant on chi square test at 0.05 level($\chi^2 = 33.56$).

Table

Evaluation of the Services of UPSTRC Buses

	Name of the Attribute	Good	Bad	Mean	X²
1	Drinking Water Facilities	44	56	3.60	27.84
2	Lighting Arrangement	44	56	3.46	25.55
3	Passenger Sheds	32	68	3.88	22.70
4	Fans in Passenger Sheds	26	78	2.94	25.27
5	Display of Time Table	46	54	4.14	17.27
6	Display of Fare list	40	60	3.94	11.55
7	Inquiry counter	62	38	5.44	32.69
8	Complaint/Suggestion	24	76	3.38	18.84
9	Toilet/ urinal	38	62	3.94	14.97
10	Canteen/ Book Stall	56	44	4.60	22.27
11	Cloak Room	24	76	3.76	38.27
12	Television	16	84	1.82	122.98
13	Seat Reservation	38	62	3.90	25.12
14	Pass Facility	60	40	5.40	43.12
15	Frequency of Buses (Short Distance Route)	78	22	5.36	35.41
16	Frequency of Buses (Long Distance Route)	52	48	4.50	41.27
17	Behavior of the conductor	54	46	4.50	51.79
18	Seats (ordinary/Semi-ordinary /Deluxe)	52	48	4.34	38.39
19	Space	42	58	4.16	42.71
20	Behavior of other Employee	48	52	4.40	42.41
21	Carrier Facility	22	78	3.10	35.56
22	Bus Services	58	32	4.54	28.83
23	First Aid Facility	16	84	2.14	51.69
24	Passengers Waiting Room	48	52	2.14	51.69
25	Audio Video System	8	92	1.68	125.56
26	Security	36	54	3.34	25.50
27	Overall facility	36	64	4.14	33.56

Conclusion

It is revealed from the study that the services of UPSRTC is not at par to the expectations of the consumers, only pass facility and inquiry system of the state transportation was rated good by a great majority of the respondents. Almost all of the respondents rated that Audio Video facilities are not available with the buses and conditions of fans and television sets on the passenger sheds are also poor. It is also observed that the passengers usually prefer to travel by private buses or taxis for short distance as well as long distance stations because of time factor and other facilities like audio-video (music system), neat and clean seats & behavior of conductor or other employees.

Since the state transport industry is the second largest transport industry after railway in India, therefore, the services of state transport corporation should be improved to attract more and more passengers in daily routines by catering their need & expectations in the line of infrastructural facilities like: waiting room, passenger sheds, fans and television sets on the stations, security arrangements, on the job training of all employees regarding etiquettes, responsiveness, empathy, time management and competency. Further, proper maintenance of the buses, autonomy for mobilization of buses, monthly target for bus driver and conductors, accountability of all employees, regular washing -cleaning of the buses, comfortable seats, audio-video system, and recruitment of professionally trained employees, regular recording/feedback of passenger regarding the services or behavior of the bus conductor and other employees etc. etc. should be taken into consideration for the improvement of state transport corporation, then only the corporation can win the market and reap the margin profit.

References

1. Anderson, R.E., "Consumer Dissatisfaction: The Effect of Disconfirmed Expectancy on Perceived Product Performance", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 10 (Feb.)
2. Berry, L.L., "Relationship Marketing", and Berry, L.L., Shistack, L.G. Upah, G.D. eds "Emerging Perspectives in Services Marketing", American Marketing Association, Chicago, 1983, pag. 25-28.
3. Churchill, G.A, and Carol Suprenant "An Investigation into the Determinants of Customer Satisfaction", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XIX, Nov, (1982), 491-504.
4. Jha S.M. "Service Marketing" Himalayan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, pag. 2-20.
5. Oliver, R.L. "Satisfaction: A Behavioural Perspective of the Consumer", McGraw Hill, Singapore,
6. Parasuraman, A., Zeithmal, V.A., Berry, L.L., "SERVQUAL: A Multiple Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perception of Service Quality", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, No. 1 spring 1988, Pag. 12-32.
7. Purohit H.C., Saklani A., Badoni D.C., "Product Performance and Consumer Satisfaction Measurement", *Research Methodology in Management*, Deep and Deep publication New Delhi, pag.133-141.
8. Saklani A. Purohit H.C. and Badoni D.C. "Expectations, Performance and other Correlates of Consumer Satisfaction". *The Indian Journal of Commerce*, Vol. 53, 2000, pag. 48-57.
9. Xavier M.J. "Marketing in the New Millennium", Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2000, pag 73-77.