CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION AGENDA

6.0.0 Concluding Observations
6.0.1 Recommendations For Betterment Of Existing Passenger Services
   Offered By South-Western Railway
6.0.2 Proposal For Effective Customer Satisfaction Program
6.0.3 Scope For Further Research
6.0 Concluding Observations

Several research studies have been undertaken in defining service quality and assessing customer satisfaction in marketing of services. The concept of service quality and its assessment in determining the level of customer satisfaction have drawn attention of many researchers. The Servqual model of service quality developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeitham has been an effective tool to assess service quality in marketing of services. The same model has been the basis for assessing service quality and customer satisfaction in the present study.

The present research study focused on issues like customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, expected service quality, absence of quality expected, divergent perceptions of service quality by the service providers, greater expectations of service quality by the service utilisers etc. which led to the following observations –

- There is a definite gap between the customers’ expectations of service quality and service providers’ perceptions of customers’ expectations of service quality.
- There is an encouraging level of customer satisfaction on general passenger services offered by South-Western Railway that can be further enhanced.
- Most of the service utilisers are dissatisfied with the general services offered by South-Western Railway.
• The customers are not dissatisfied with all types of services offered by South-Western Railway.

• Most of the service providers have divergent views on perceptions of customer expectations of quality of services offered by South-Western Railway.

• There is a divergent level of customer satisfaction across the customers dependent upon certain socio-economic variables.

• There are few common views expressed by both the service providers and utilisers on certain issues like the noise level at the railway station, assistance to senior and physically challenged customers, simplicity of passenger ticket reservation forms, need for branded food outlets at the railway station, effectiveness of modes and media of information and communication on railway services of South-Western Railway.

• Finally the researcher concluded on the present study that service quality as expected by the customers including the inter-personal, communicational and informative aspects is the only vital requisite for achieving higher level of customer satisfaction and effective marketing of passenger service offered by South-Western Railway.
6.0.1 Recommendations For Betterment Of Existing Passenger Services Offered By South-Western Railway

Following recommendations are put forth for betterment of existing passenger services offered by South-Western Railway and enhance the level of customer satisfaction.

Phase One: Purchase Of Services

- Provision of booking for convenient choice of berth should be made available for the general customers. Currently it is being done on first come first basis. A computerized system of allocating berth can be followed especially aged men/women, women traveling with small children and physically challenged persons can be given berths of their choice by inserting provision for it in the reservation form itself.
- Special assistance and care should be given to senior and physically challenged customers by opening a special counter of ticketing for them.
- Payments for ticketing should be handled with simplicity in the sense online payments for tickets, acceptance of credit cards can be introduced. For the frequent travelers, railway passes can be introduced.
Phase Two: Pre-Consumption Of Services:

- Facilities at railway station like ramp, wheel-chair, trolley, coolie, pavement and information on delayed trains should be made available and if available, more effective by way of a separate request for every train.
- Registered coolies should be delegated for allocation of wheel-chairs, trolleys. Audio announcements should be made for availability of trolleys and wheel-chairs deployed at a specific location.
- Car parking at the railway station should be placed near the trolley services to facilitate fetching of baggage.

Phase Three: Consumption Of Services

Consumption Of Services At the Railway Station

- Customer assistance facilities like enquiry counters, general telephone facilities, and recreation should be improved.
- Communicational services like railway messages, railways map and map depicting platform network should be displaced at the station.
- A system of railway guides can be introduced by introducing a separate counter.
Consumption Of Services At The Platform

- Basic amenities like acqaguard water at specific points at the platform.
- Soap dispensers should be maintained in the toilet and bathrooms.
- Food quality check-ups should be done often and feedback forms on the quality of food should be administered occasionally among the passengers. Food preparations should be standardized.
- A general provision stores with a variety of products needed by the travelers should be made set up at each platform.
- Focus lamps especially for legibility of reservation list and the Number of the bogie should be installed.
- Flooring of the platform should anti-dust and automatic vacuum cleaners should be deployed on all platforms.
- Big dustbins should be placed and a penalty on passengers soiling the platform can be introduced.
- Sitting lounge for around 20 to 25 passengers exactly at the terminal point of each bogie should be provided so as to ease the traffic movement and commotion on the platform.
- Beggars and stray animals’ menace should be tackled.
- At every platform at a specific point a counter for medical assistance should be placed. A general helpline with the station master should be provided and a board displaying a list of recognized physicians around the locality should placed near this counter.
• A recognized milk booth with availability of baby and child care products should be set up on each platform.

• A counter for assistance for lost baggage should be set up behind the medical counter with a railway staff deputed to assist the grieved passengers.

• For convenient telephone facility, a system of railway telephone card can be introduced and hired self-help group with cell-phones can be made available.

• About delayed and late arrival trains, a SMS can be sent to e-mail Numbers and SMS to landline or mobile Numbers to those passengers who mentioned their contact Numbers in the reservation forms. Usual audio announcements can be made at the platform for the general passengers.

• Electronic display on arrival and departure of trains is provided at the platform.

Consumption Of Services Inside The Train

• There is a need for improvement in the services available in side the train like bogie-related services—cleanliness in and around the bogies should be maintained.

• Soap dispensers should be maintained in the toilet and bathrooms.

• Hygienic drinking water should be supplied in the bogie.

• Sliding window panes fixed for easy handling of windows.

• Electric opening and closing of the bogie door can adopted.
- **Berth-related services**- drop down ladder to have easy accessibility to upper berths can be introduced.
- Occasional sprays of insect repellence should be undertaken.
- **Safety-related services**- a separate compartment for women and a lady police for the safety of women and children should be deputed.
- A medical first-aid-box should be installed inside the bogie.
- Closed cabinets with locker facility below the lower sleeper can be introduced for the safety for baggage.
- **Communicational services**- a telephone facility through BSNL tie-up can be introduced.
- The announcement of arriving station through a PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM should be made for passenger alert.
- **Special customer assistance services**- all types of assistance to the senior and physically challenged customers should be given.

### 6.0.2 Proposal For Effective Customer Satisfaction Program

The fourth objective of the present research study was to formulate an effective Customer Satisfaction Program. Accordingly, the researcher has developed the following strategy-

- **A Customer Satisfaction Feedback Form** to be designed based on the critical factors identified through the Principal Component Analysis method.
• These feedback have to be collected regularly from all the passengers on journey at periodical intervals.

• Some attractive incentives like prize money, gifts, free travel can be offered to ensure that everybody participates in the feedback exercise.

• The Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Committee can be empowered to review the customer satisfaction based on this strategy.

6.0.3 Scope For Further Research

• Further research on South-Western Railway's service quality and customer satisfaction can be conducted by employing other variables like providers' organizational climate; employees' attitude towards role play, job satisfaction, job enrichment; attitude towards service delivery process; interactions between utilizers and providers during service delivery process; interactions between management and general customers; grievance redressal mechanism etc.

• The study could be conducted by involving some more sociological background variables like social class, rural-urban background, education etc.

• It also can be researched further as a comparison with roadways and other modes of transportation for passenger traffic.

• A follow-up study of service providers' efficiency and effectiveness with regard to service quality might yield some conclusive findings.