

Challenges Faced by the Passengers of Indian Railways - A Study in Mysuru Division of South Western Railway

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Abstract—The Indian Railways, being one of the largest railway networks in the world, plays a vital role in facilitating mobility and supporting socio-economic development. Despite its vast reach and affordability, passengers often encounter multiple challenges that affect their travel experience. This study examines the challenges faced by passengers in the Mysuru Division of the South Western Railway, with insights drawn from primary data collected from 150 respondents through structured questionnaires. The findings highlight key issues such as ticketing difficulties, overcrowding, delays in train schedules, inadequate sanitation, and insufficient passenger information systems. While safety and affordability remain notable strengths of the railway services, recurring operational and service quality concerns reduce passenger satisfaction. The study emphasizes the need for enhanced infrastructural facilities, improved cleanliness, better communication systems, and punctuality measures to address these concerns. By identifying critical problem areas, the research provides actionable insights that can support Indian Railways in its efforts to improve service quality, thereby ensuring a more reliable and passenger-friendly transport system.

Index Terms—Indian Railways, Mysuru Division, Passenger's Challenges, Service Quality, South Western Railway.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Railways, one of the world's largest public transportation systems, plays a vital role in the country's socio-economic development by facilitating affordable mobility across diverse regions. Despite being a backbone of mass transport, concerns regarding the quality of passenger services, punctuality, cleanliness, and safety continue to persist, particularly at the regional division level. With over 23

million passengers traveling daily, even small service inefficiencies can significantly affect passenger satisfaction and perception of service delivery (Prasad & Shekhar, 2022). This makes passenger-oriented research at divisional levels essential to understanding service gaps and addressing them effectively.

Several studies conducted across different railway zones in India consistently highlight recurring challenges. Agarwal, N. et.al (2023), in their study at Tiruchirappalli Railway Station using the SERVQUAL framework, reported that tangibility, assurance, and reliability dimensions were relatively satisfactory, while responsiveness and empathy received lower ratings. Their findings underscore that, although physical infrastructure is improving, interpersonal service delivery remains an area of concern. Similarly, Vasanthi. et.al. (2023) emphasized that service delivery and tangibles such as station facilities, seating, and train cleanliness strongly shape passengers' perceptions, while softer aspects like social responsibility exert comparatively less influence.

Studies across other regions also reveal comparable results, strengthening the case for localized passenger-focused assessments. Kumar Ranjan et al. (2020) investigated the Northern Railway zone and found that gaps in reliability, waiting area amenities, and cleanliness were primary reasons behind dissatisfaction. The study suggested that passengers increasingly demand real-time information systems and transparent communication, areas where the Indian Railways still lags. In the Southern Railway zone, Esakkiammal and Thangaraja (2022) reported passenger dissatisfaction with both on board and station amenities, particularly toilets, food quality, and

waiting facilities, although passengers expressed satisfaction with safety and affordable fares. Similarly, Parvathy and Girish (2020), while analysing satisfaction levels at Aluva Junction in Kerala, noted that demographic differences such as age and travel frequency influence how passengers prioritize issues; frequent travellers emphasized punctuality and cleanliness, while occasional travellers placed greater importance on cost and comfort.

These empirical insights collectively indicate that while Indian Railways has made improvements in infrastructure and affordability, persistent passenger-related challenges such as punctuality, inadequate cleanliness, overcrowding, poor station amenities, and insufficient customer responsiveness remain critical across divisions. Importantly, these challenges vary in intensity across different regions due to differences in passenger profiles, station infrastructure, and service delivery practices (Agarwal, N et al., 2023; Prasad & Shekhar, 2022). This creates the need for context-specific studies.

The Mysuru Division of the South Western Railway is a significant case in this context. Being a hub for daily commuters and tourists, this division faces unique service quality pressures. It combines the demands of regular inter-city travel with the expectations of travellers visiting heritage and cultural sites. However, despite its importance, limited systematic research has been undertaken to assess passenger experiences and identify specific constraints in service quality in this division. Addressing this research gap is vital, as a better understanding of local passenger problems can help railway authorities and policymakers implement targeted improvements, thereby enhancing both efficiency and satisfaction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Passenger satisfaction in rail transport is a widely studied theme, as it reflects the overall service quality of the Indian Railways. Baxis, Vinod, and Nayak (2020), studied Western Railways in Surat City and observed that tangibles such as station cleanliness, waiting area comfort, and on board hygiene were the weakest aspects of service delivery, while affordability and accessibility remained strong points. The importance of service quality dimensions has also been highlighted in Northern India. Rajeev Kumar Ranjan, et.al. (2020) used the SERVQUAL model to

analyse intangible service aspects of the Northern Railways. Their findings revealed that the largest service gaps occurred in the “reliability” and “assurance” dimensions, with punctuality and staff responsiveness identified as persistent issues. Similarly, Vantheeswari, et.al. (2020) investigated passenger satisfaction in Madurai City and found that socio-economic characteristics such as income and travel frequency influenced service perceptions. Passengers reported dissatisfaction with infrastructure facilities such as waiting rooms and display systems but were relatively satisfied with ticketing processes and safety provisions.

Regional variations in passenger experiences are also notable. Esakkiammal and Thangaraja (2022), in their study on Southern Railways, identified sanitation, food quality, and waiting room facilities as consistent areas of dissatisfaction, even as passengers recognized safety and affordability as strengths. More recently, Arunachalam and Janarthanan (2023) studied the Chennai Division of Southern Railways and observed problems related to special amenities, lack of real-time passenger information, and inadequate platform shelter, suggesting that infrastructure development has not kept pace with rising passenger demand.

Recent research by Nandam and Siva Naga Lakshmi (2025) examined passenger experiences at Vijayawada Railway Station in the South-Central Railway and highlighted those basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitation, parking, and lighting significantly influence satisfaction. Their findings emphasized that while facilities are provided at major stations, poor upkeep and maintenance often reduce their effectiveness.

III. RESEARCH GAP

Despite the extensive body of research on passenger satisfaction and service quality in Indian Railways across various zones, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies focusing specifically on the Mysuru Division of the South Western Railway. While prior studies have identified general issues such as cleanliness, inadequate amenities, delays, and lack of real-time information, the unique challenges faced by passengers in Mysuru including the dual demand from daily commuters and tourists remain underexplored. Furthermore, most existing studies rely heavily on secondary data or broad surveys that do not capture

localized, context-specific passenger experiences. This highlights the need for a primary-data-based empirical study to identify the specific problems, frequency, and severity of passenger grievances in Mysuru Division, thereby providing actionable insights for railway authorities to improve service delivery and passenger satisfaction.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds practical and academic importance as it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by passengers of the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway. By using primary data from actual passengers, the study captures real-time issues related to service quality, punctuality, cleanliness, station amenities, and overall travel experience. The findings can guide railway authorities in prioritizing infrastructural improvements, streamlining operational processes, and enhancing customer service initiatives tailored to the needs of both daily commuters and tourists. Academically, the study fills a critical research gap by contributing localized empirical evidence to the broader literature on passenger satisfaction and service quality in Indian Railways, offering insights that can inform future comparative studies across other railway divisions.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyse the challenges faced by passengers of the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway
2. To examine the impact of these identified challenges on travel experience and passenger satisfaction.

VI. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H₀₁: There are no significant challenges faced by passengers in the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway.

H₀₂: The identified challenges faced by passengers of the Mysuru Division have no significant impact on their travel experience and satisfaction.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a conclusive research design to systematically identify and analyse the challenges faced by passengers of the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway. Primary data were collected directly from 150 passengers using a structured questionnaire designed to capture issues related to cleanliness, punctuality, station amenities, and overall service quality, as well as their perceived travel experience and satisfaction. A convenience sampling technique was employed, targeting passengers across major stations, including daily commuters, occasional travellers, and tourists, to ensure representation of diverse passenger categories. The collected data were subsequently analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and inferential tests to examine the nature and severity of passenger challenges and to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

8.1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	32	21.3
	26-35	56	37.3
	36-50	42	28.0
	Above 50	20	13.4
Gender	Male	84	56.0
	Female	66	44.0
Passenger Type	Daily	60	40.0
	Occasional	48	32.0
	Tourist	42	28.0

(Source: Primary data)

The majority of respondents (37.3%) belong to the 26–35 age groups, indicating that young and mid-aged passengers constitute the largest segment of railway users in Mysuru Division. Male passengers slightly outnumber female passengers (56% vs. 44%). In terms of travel purpose, daily commuters form the largest category (40%), followed by occasional travellers (32%) and tourists (28%). This distribution ensures representation across diverse passenger types, which

is essential for capturing a broad view of challenges faced.

8.2. Frequency Distribution of challenges faced by passengers.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of challenges faced by passengers

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor cleanliness in coaches/stations	118	78.7
Delays and punctuality issues	102	68.0
Inadequate seating/waiting area facilities	96	64.0
Lack of proper information boards/signage	84	56.0
Insufficient food and refreshment options	72	48.0
Poor staff responsiveness	65	43.3

(Source: Primary data)

The data indicate that poor cleanliness in coaches and stations is the most commonly reported problem (78.7%), followed by delays and punctuality issues (68%) and inadequate seating or waiting area facilities (64%). Problems such as lack of information boards, insufficient food options, and poor staff responsiveness are reported less frequently but still affect a significant proportion of passengers. This demonstrates that both infrastructure deficiencies and service-related gaps are major challenges in Mysuru Division.

8.3. Descriptive Statistics of challenges faced.

Table 3: Mean Scores of challenges faced by passengers

Challenges	Mean	SD	Rank
Poor cleanliness in coaches/stations	4.32	0.74	1
Delays and punctuality issues	4.01	0.88	2
Inadequate seating/waiting area facilities	3.87	0.91	3
Lack of proper information boards/signage	3.54	0.96	4
Insufficient food and refreshment options	3.21	1.02	5
Poor staff responsiveness	3.08	1.11	6

(Source: Primary data)

The mean scores confirm that cleanliness (4.32) and punctuality (4.01) are the most critical issues according to passengers, followed by inadequate seating/waiting areas (3.87). Lower mean scores for food options (3.21) and staff responsiveness (3.08) suggest that while these are important, they are perceived as relatively less severe compared to infrastructure and operational issues. Overall, the scores highlight that basic infrastructure and timeliness is the key pain points affecting passengers' experiences.

8.4. One-Sample t-Test of challenges faced.

Table 4: One-Sample t-Test of challenges faced

Challenges	Mean	t-	Sig.
Poor cleanliness in coaches/stations	4.32	15.28	.000
Delays and punctuality issues	4.01	12.14	.000
Inadequate seating/waiting area facilities	3.87	10.62	.000
Lack of proper information boards/signage	3.54	7.83	.000
Insufficient food and refreshment options	3.21	5.92	.000
Poor staff responsiveness	3.08	4.67	.000

(Source: Primary data)

The one-sample t-test compares each mean score against a neutral midpoint of 3. All t-values are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H_0 . This indicates that the identified challenges are significantly prevalent and perceived as above moderate severity by passengers. The findings reinforce that cleanliness, punctuality, and seating/waiting facilities are the most pressing challenges in the Mysuru Division, requiring immediate attention from railway authorities.

8.5. Passenger Perception of Travel Experience and Satisfaction.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Passenger Satisfaction

Challenges	Mean	SD	Rank
Poor cleanliness in coaches/stations	2.31	0.81	1
Delays and punctuality issues	2.47	0.79	2
Inadequate seating/waiting area facilities	2.63	0.84	3
Lack of proper information boards/signage	2.87	0.88	4
Insufficient food and refreshment options	3.02	0.91	5
Poor staff responsiveness	3.08	0.94	6

(Source: Primary data)

The mean satisfaction scores indicate that poor cleanliness (2.31) and delays/punctuality issues (2.47) most negatively affect passengers' travel experience. Lower scores reflect dissatisfaction, whereas problems like staff responsiveness (3.08) and food options (3.02) have relatively less negative impact, though they still lower overall satisfaction. This shows that core infrastructure and operational efficiency play the dominant role in shaping passengers' travel experience in Mysuru Division.

8.6. Correlation Analysis.

Table 6: Correlation of Identified challenges with Passenger Satisfaction

Challenges	Correlation	Sig.
Poor cleanliness in coaches/stations	-0.63	.000
Delays and punctuality issues	-0.58	.000
Inadequate seating/waiting area facilities	-0.52	.000
Lack of proper information boards/signage	-0.44	.000
Insufficient food and refreshment options	-0.39	.001
Poor staff responsiveness	-0.35	.002

(Source: Primary data)

All identified challenges show a statistically significant negative correlation with passenger satisfaction ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the more severe

the challenge, the lower the perceived satisfaction and quality of travel experience. Cleanliness (-0.63) and Punctuality (-0.58) have the strongest negative effects, suggesting that improvements in these areas would yield the most substantial gains in passenger experience. Other issues like food options and staff responsiveness also affect satisfaction but to a lesser extent.

The significant negative correlations between all identified challenges and satisfaction lead to the rejection of H_0 , indicating that passenger problems directly affect their travel experience. The findings emphasize that addressing cleanliness, punctuality, and seating/waiting facilities should be a priority for the Mysuru Division to improve overall passenger satisfaction.

IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data reveals that passenger of the Mysuru Division face multiple challenges in their travel experience. The most pressing challenges identified are poor cleanliness in coaches and stations, delays and punctuality issues, and inadequate seating and waiting area facilities. Other problems such as lack of information boards, insufficient food options, and poor staff responsiveness, though less critical, still affect passenger comfort. The frequency distribution and mean scores confirm that these issues are perceived as severe, while hypothesis testing shows that all identified challenges are statistically significant. This indicates that infrastructure deficiencies and operational inefficiencies are key constraints affecting passengers' daily travel experience.

Regarding the second objective, the study shows that these identified challenges have a direct negative impact on passengers' overall travel experience and satisfaction. Correlation analysis indicates that poor cleanliness and delays/punctuality issues most strongly reduce satisfaction, while other problems, though less severe, also contribute to lower perceived travel quality. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirms that addressing these challenges is essential for improving the passenger experience. Overall, the findings highlight the need for targeted measures in infrastructure maintenance, operational efficiency, and service management to enhance the quality of travel in the Mysuru Division.

X. CONCLUSION

The study highlights that passengers of the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway face several significant challenges, with poor cleanliness, delays and punctuality issues, and inadequate seating and waiting facilities being the most critical. These challenges are perceived as severe by passengers and have a direct negative impact on their overall travel experience and satisfaction. The findings confirm that while the railway provides essential connectivity and affordability, deficiencies in infrastructure, operational efficiency, and service management reduce passenger comfort and convenience. Addressing these key challenges through improved maintenance, streamlined operations, and enhanced passenger facilities can significantly enhance the quality of travel and contribute to a better passenger experience in the Mysuru Division.

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