

**“A Study on Service Quality and Passenger Satisfaction towards – A Case Study of Kurnool Region in A.P”**

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**Abstract**

Growth of Information Technology has revolutionized Business and has brought in substantial changes in the way business activities are being conducted. There is a paradigm shift in the way people use to access transportation services with the entry of private operators. Andhra Pradesh Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), a state owned public transport system is facing challenges from the private operators. APSRTC was established in 1932 as a unit of Nizam's State Railways - Road Transport Division. On 11 January 1958 it is incorporated as APSRTC. The initial fleet consisted of 27 buses and has been expanded since to about 22,459 buses as of 31 may 2014. APSRTC is the state owned road transport corporation in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It is acknowledged as the single corporation having the largest fleet in the world. This has been certified by the Guinness World Records for being the largest bus operator in the world. In order to maintain its market share, lots of initiatives have been taken up by the APSRTC to enhance service quality there by promoting passenger satisfaction. It is in this context, the study aimed to examine the service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC in Kurnool Region of A.P.

**Key Words:** APSRTC, Service quality in APSRTC, Passenger satisfaction in APSRTC, Service quality and Passenger satisfaction in APSRTC.

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**Introduction**

Growth of Information Technology has revolutionized Business and has brought in substantial changes in the way business activities are being conducted. There is a paradigm shift in the way people use to access transportation services with the entry of private operators. Andhra Pradesh Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), a state owned public transport system is facing challenges from the private operators.

APSRTC was established in 1932 as a unit of Nizam's State Railways - Road Transport Division. On 11 January 1958 it is incorporated as APSRTC. The initial fleet consisted of 27 buses and has been expanded since to about 22,459 buses as of 31 may 2014. APSRTC is the state owned road transport corporation in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It is acknowledged as the single corporation having the largest fleet in the world. This has been certified by the Guinness World Records for being the largest bus operator in the world. In order to maintain its market share, lots of initiatives have been taken up by the APSRTC to enhance service quality there by promoting passenger satisfaction.

**Service Quality:** The quality of passenger services hinges upon the quality of road network and the transport fleet, the transport policy and regulations and other co- partnerships with the private transport counter parts. Road network is vital in boosting economic growth and facilitating trade in an emerging economy like India. An efficient transport sector reduces the cost of transportation and thereby contributes directly to a country's international competitiveness. This sector acts as an economic catalyst by opening up new market opportunities, moving products and human resources with speed and efficiency.

It promotes efficiency in the economy by minimizing total transportation cost in terms of economies of production, distribution and consumption. The role of road transport among the different modes of transport is dominant because of its last mile connectivity or feeder service. In comparison to other modes of transport, the movements of passenger and freight in India over the years have increasingly shifted towards roads transport sector. In 2011-12, the road network in the country carried about 86 per cent of the total passenger movement by roads and railways put together. The corresponding figure for freight movement by roads was 64.5 per cent.

### **Need of the Study**

Demand for transportation is increasing in India at a very great pace. There has been unprecedented growth in the number of motor vehicles over the past few years. Vehicles of all shapes and sizes are competing for road space on our limited road system, which, in contrast, has shown only marginal growth. Therefore, society is facing the problems of slow-moving traffic, air and sound pollution and road safety. The implicit cost to society on this account is immense. In this context, serious thought ought to be given immediately to the need for having sustainable growth in the transport sector by taking into account road safety and environmental issues.

The regulatory and legal frameworks governing the sector are comprehensive enough with regard to infusing competition in the sector and efficiently allocate resources so that both prices (to the consumer) and costs (to the producer) are kept down. There should also be no unnecessary transaction costs and pecuniary externalities. However, to keep up with rising demand and with international best practices, policies need to be identified which facilitates competition. This can be done by improving the efficiency of the public transport system, charging higher user charges for availing facilities like parking and by creating pedestrian facilities. Therefore passenger – centered transport services aiming at their utmost satisfaction are need of the hour.

After thorough literature review, it is found that there is a gap in research with regard to service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC. It is in this context, the study aimed to examine the service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC in Kurnool Region of A.P.

**Objectives of the Study:** The main objective of the study is to find out the service quality levels and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC in Kurnool Region of A.P besides, the focus is on the following

1. To study the various services provided to passengers by APSRTC.
2. To examine the efficiency of services provided to passengers.
3. To find out the services provided by APSRTC in respect of breakdown and in providing alternative services and with punctuality to the passengers.
4. To study the satisfaction levels of passengers towards services provided by APSRTC and
5. To offer suitable suggestions for further improvement of service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC.

### **Methodology of the Study**

**Primary Data:** Primary data has been collected through structured questionnaire.

**Secondary Data:** Data and information has been collected from Primary as well as Secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from Books, Journals, Magazines, Business News papers, World Wide Web etc.

**Area Selection for Primary Data Collection:** Kurnool Region comprises of three districts viz Kurnool, Kadapa and Anantapur. All these three districts are located in Rayalaseema Region, which is the most backward region of the state with about 100 lakh population. Kurnool was

the capital of Andhra state during 1953-56. Kurnool region (Three districts) is one of the most potential areas for development because of its rich mineral deposits and the region lies between India's IT hub Hyderabad, Industrialized city Chennai and Indian Silicon Valley, Bangalore. This necessitated conducting a study on service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC in Kurnool Region of A.P.

**Sampling Design:** As the universe of the study is entire Kurnool Region (Three districts). About 1000 questionnaires were distributed on random sampling basis in all depot areas of Kurnool region to the targeted passengers out of which 500 respondents responded.

### Scope of the Study

The present study aims at analyzing the service quality and passenger satisfaction of APSRTC in Kurnool Region of A.P. Hence, the scope of the present study is confined to the APSRTC Kurnool region in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Three districts of Kurnool region have been taken for study.

### Limitations of the Study

1. Sampling technique employed is random sampling; hence the findings cannot be true representative of the actual population.
2. There is a possibility of bias crept in the answers given by the respondents.
3. The study is confined to APSRTC Kurnool region only.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1: Comfort and inside seat conditions**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	56	11.00
Good	77	15.00
Average	188	38.00
Poor	123	25.00
Very poor	56	11.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 1 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding comfort and conditions of seats provided by A.P.S.R.T.C in the bus stations. 38 percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed as average, 25percent said that their level of satisfaction as poor, 15percent said that it was good, 11percent opined it was very poor and 11percent expressed it was very good. Thus it is clear that 26 percent of the total respondents in general expressed that they either satisfied or felt good and only 36percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with the comfort and conditions of seat facilities in the bus stations of the A.P.S.R.T.C maintenance and upkeep of seating facility, non- functioning are some of the concerns.

**Table 2: Cleanliness in Buses**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	74	15.00
Good	151	30.00
Average	167	33.00
Poor	85	17.00
Very poor	23	5.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 2 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding cleanliness in A.P.S.R.T.C buses and in the bus stations. 33percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed it as average, 30 percent said it was good, 17 percent said that level of satisfaction was poor; 15percent stated it was very good and 5percent were said that level of satisfaction was very poor. Thus it is clear that 45 percent of the total respondents in sample size were overall satisfied and only 22 percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with the cleanliness in buses at the bus stations of the A.P.S.R.T.C. Hence it is much needed to improve the cleanliness in buses to attract more passengers and generate more hygiene and there by satisfaction from the passengers.

**Table 3: Cleanness at Bus stands**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	98	20.00
Good	154	31.00
Average	168	33.00
Poor	44	9.00
Very poor	36	7.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 3 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding cleanliness in buses provided by A.P.S.R.T.C in the bus stations. 33 percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed as average, 30 percent said that their level of satisfaction as good, 17 percent said it was poor, while 15 percent said it was very good and 5percent were said that level of satisfaction was very poor.

Thus it is clear that more than 50 per cent of the total respondents were overall satisfied and only 16 percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with the cleanliness in buses in the bus stations of the A.P.S.R.T.C. while 33 per cent stated it was average.

**Table 4: Bus Fare Structure**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	23	5.00
Good	56	11.00
Average	99	20.00
Poor	155	31.00
Very poor	167	33.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 4 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding fare structure provided by A.P.S.R.T.C in the bus stations. 33 percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed that their satisfaction was very poor, 31percent said it was poor, 20 percent were of the opinion that it was average, 11percent said it was good, only 5 percent it was very good. Thus it is clear that 64 percent of the total respondents were in general dissatisfied and only 16 percent of the respondents were overall satisfied with the fare structure of the A.P.S.R.T.C. Hence it is much needed to improve the fare structure to attract more passengers and generate more satisfaction from them.

**Table 5: Opinion towards speed of APSRTC Express Services**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	38	8.00
Good	74	15.00
Average	103	21.00
Poor	188	37.00
Very poor	97	19.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 5 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding present speed of express services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. 37 percent were of the view that level of satisfaction as poor. 21percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed as average, 19percent said that their level of satisfaction was very poor, 15percent were said that level of satisfaction as good and 8percent were said that level of satisfaction as very good. Thus it is clear that 56 percent of the total respondents in sample size expressed overall dissatisfied and only 44 percent of the respondents are overall satisfied with the present speed of express services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. Hence it is much needed to improve present speed of express services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses to attract more passengers and claim more satisfaction from them.

**Table 6: Opinion towards APSRTC Pilgrimage Express Services**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	76	15.00
Good	88	18.00
Average	154	31.00
Poor	105	21.00
Very poor	77	15.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 6 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding present pilgrimage services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. 31percent were said that their level of satisfaction as average. 21percent of the respondents expressed it as poor, 18percent said that their level of satisfaction as good, 15percent viewed that it was very good and 8percent said that it was very poor, Thus it is clear that 64percent of the total respondents in sample size expressed overall satisfaction and only 36percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with the present pilgrim services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. Hence there is an instant need to attract more pilgrims by improving the service quality.

**Table 7: Authorized Ticket Booking Facilities**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	68	14.00
Good	91	18.00
Average	188	37.00
Poor	99	20.00
Very poor	54	11.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

The biggest achievement for APSRTC has been the institution of authorized booking centers (ATBs). At these points, passengers can get information regarding long – distance buses and book them right there. Table 7 shows that satisfactory level of the respondents regarding authorized ticket booking of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. 38 per cent said that level of satisfaction was average. 20percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed it as poor, 18percent said that their level of satisfaction was good, 14 per cent viewed it very good and 11per cent said that it was very poor.

Thus it is clear that taken as a whole 69percent of the total respondents were overall satisfied and only 31percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with the present authorized ticket booking (ATB) services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. Hence it is much needed to improve present authorized ticket booking services of the A.P.S.R.T.C buses to attract more passengers by generating more satisfaction for them. APSRTC has made strides in creating

better customer service, but they have a long way to go as there are still many people who do not know how to get a connection to their destination.

**Table 8: Functioning and Conditions of TVs, Audios and Videos in APSRTC Buses**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% to Total</b>
Very good	45	9.00
Good	56	11.00
Average	188	38.00
Poor	142	28.00
Very poor	69	14.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 8 shows that satisfactory levels expressed by the respondent- passengers regarding functioning and conditions of TV's and audios in buses of the A.P.S.R.T.C. 38per cent opined that it was average. 28percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed as poor, 11percent were said that their level of satisfaction as good, 14 percent said it was very poor, 9percent were said that level of satisfaction was very poor, Thus it is clear that 58percent of the total respondents had an overall satisfaction and only 42percent of the respondents were dissatisfied with the functioning and conditions of TV's, audios and videos in buses of the A.P.S.R.T.C. Hence it is much needed to improve present functioning and conditions of TV's, audios and videos in the corporation's buses of the A.P.S.R.T.C. so as to attract more passengers.

**Table 9: Security for Passengers Luggage**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>% Total</b>
Very good	33	7.00
Good	56	11.00
Average	155	31.00
Poor	188	37.00
Very poor	68	14.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 9 shows the respondents opinion on security for passenger's luggage in the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. 37 percent said that their level of satisfaction was poor, 31percent of the respondents in the sample size expressed it was good, 14percent said it was very poor, 11percent termed it as good and 7percent opined it as 'very good'. Thus it is clear that

51percent of the total respondents in sample size were dissatisfied and only 49percent of the respondents were either or felt average satisfied with the security of the passenger’s luggage in the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. The opinion in this regard was almost – half – divided. RTC bus crew must be given strict instructions to take care especially during such intervals when buses stop for meals and nature calls during the journey.

**Table 10: Mike announcements on APSRTC bus stations**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	78	16.00
Good	99	20.00
Average	160	31.00
Poor	95	19.00
Very poor	68	14.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 10 shows respondents’ opinion on mike announcement at passengers boarding points in the A.P.S.R.T.C buses. 32percent of the respondents stated their satisfaction as average, 20percent of the expressed as well, 19percent it was poor, 16percent were it was very good, 14percent were stated their level of satisfaction as very poor.

Thus it is clear that 67percent of the total respondents in sample size were in general satisfied and only 33percent of the respondents were dissatisfied with the mike announcement at passengers boarding in the A.P.S.R.T.C bus stands. It is much needed to improve present mike announcement at passengers boarding in the A.P.S.R.T.C bus stands to attract more passengers and claim more satisfaction from them.

**Table 11: Guidance information in case of sudden cancellation of buses**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% Total
Very good	45	9.00
Good	55	11.00
Average	85	17.00
Poor	202	40.00
Very poor	113	23.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 11 shows that majority of the respondents expressed regarding guidance information in case of cancellation of bus for the A.P.S.R.T.C buses as poor or very poor. 40percent of them said that level of satisfaction as poor, 11percent were said that level of satisfaction was good and 9percent were said that level of satisfaction was very good.



**Table 12: Quality of services rendered by APSRTC**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	68	14.00
Good	95	19.00
Average	169	34.00
Poor	102	20.00
Very poor	66	13.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

The breakdowns and making alternative arrangement are the yardsticks to measure the quality and reliability of services. Table 12 shows that 34 per cent of the respondents graded as average with reference to APSRTC's breakdowns and its responsiveness in making alternative arrangements immediately. An average 20 percent of sample size expressed that their level of satisfaction was poor, 19 percent said it was good, 14 percent expressed that their opinion as very good and only 13 percent of the respondents expressed their level of satisfaction as very poor. It is evident from the Table 12 that overall the passenger respondents expressed 66 per cent satisfaction. If the average category is also clubbed with the first two parameters i.e. 'very good' and 'good'.

Therefore, though is clear from the Table: that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the A.P.S.R.T.C running its services with low breakdowns and making alternatives arrangement immediately, the passenger retention rate would become doubtful if the percentage of such passengers, who felt it was poor, is not mitigated.

**Table 13: Satisfaction in alternative arrangements immediately when accidents occur**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	56	11.00
Good	78	16.00
Average	188	38.00
Poor	102	20.00
Very poor	76	15.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

Table 13 shows satisfaction level of A.P.S.R.T.C respondents in providing alternative arrangements immediately when accident occur, 38 percent of the sample size expressed their satisfaction as 'average', 20 percent of the respondents as 'poor', 16 percent of the sample size was 'good' and 11 percent of the sample size as 'very good', thus it is clear from the above

Table: majority of the passengers were satisfied with that APSRTC as it would provide alternative arrangement immediately when accident occurred. In other words, 64 percent of the passengers were overall satisfied and 35 percent of the respondents were overall dissatisfied, in the category of 'poor' or 'very poor'.

**Table 14: Punctuality in arrivals and departures**

Parameter	No. of Respondents	% to Total
Very good	65	13.00
Good	87	17.00
Average	154	31.00
Poor	134	27.00
Very poor	60	12.00
Total	500	100

Sources: Field Survey.

When a question was asked to know whether A.P.S.R.T.C maintained punctuality in its operation of arrivals and departure their level of satisfaction was average (31 per cent) followed by 27 percent of the sample size expressed that they were not satisfactory (poor), 17 percent of the respondents opined 'good', 13 percent of the respondents expressed as 'very good', and only 12 percent of the respondents expressed their satisfaction as 'very poor'. From the above Table 14 it is clear that majority (61 per cent) was fairly satisfied and 39 percent were completely dissatisfied with the corporation's punctuality in its operations.

### Conclusions and Suggestions

**Satisfactory seat conditions:** The condition of seats was found to be satisfactory. However, when asked, those respondents comprising 36 per cent stated the conditions were poor about bus seating arrangements inside. When a specific reason was asked for their dissatisfaction, they were mentioning about the reasons like – nonfunctioning of push back facilities, spoiled footrests and arm rests, etc. A little care about these aspects would have earned a better rating for the APSRTC from its passengers.

**Overall satisfaction about cleanliness:** Most of the passengers rated the maintenance of overall cleanliness in buses was found to be either good or average. Though the opinion about poor quality was less in degree (5 per cent), the depot managers should always be on a special drive towards ensuring cleanliness in buses. With reference to general cleanliness in bus stand locations, majority of the passenger respondents rated it was good or average. Only 16 per cent of them rated it was poor. So far as cleanliness in buses is concerned, the aim should be hundred per cent achievement.

**Dissatisfaction looms large on buses fare structure:** The study did reveal that a large percentage (64 per cent) of the passengers had a low opinion on the bus fare structure of the APSRTC. It is a fact that the APSRTC increased the fares several times for various reasons like hike in oil changes, make up of losses, etc. The APSRTC should be very careful in meeting the aspirations or economic limitations of passengers while revising tariff structure.

**Passengers prefer speed in transport:** Passengers in general were of the opinion that the RTC buses ply very slowly and the speed maintained by APSRTC was rated as poor or very poor. Majority of the respondents (56 per cent) felt it was very poor. Hence it is suggested to increase the speed and reduce running time; however, the safety aspect is also important.

**Passengers' opinions on pilgrimage express services:** The study reveals that the passengers who opted for pilgrimage express services were overall satisfied; however, 3.6 per cent of them

rated that these services as poor. Hence there is an instant need to increase the pilgrim's preference towards APSRTC services by improving the service quality.

**ATBs – A good step forward:** The initiative of the APSRTC in establishing Authorized Ticket Booking facilities at different locations has been hailed as a step forward in accessing ticket booking facilities to passengers through electronic mode. Nearly two-third of the total passengers was happy with the creation of ATB facilities.

**Condition of TVs in buses:** APSRTC provided television sets, audios in the buses. While 20 per cent of the respondents opined the facility as good or very good, 42 per cent of them rated their functioning as poor. It is a fact that most of the equipment did not do well and even the passengers were fed up with the facility. Hence, a negative opinion was generated about the facility and it is time that the authorities should about the continuation of such facility loss as the facility did keep happy neither the service provider nor the customer.

**Security for passengers' luggage to be ensured:** The study reveals that only 18 per cent of the passenger – respondents expressed confidence on their security in the bus and 31 per cent felt it was average. More than 50 per cent of the respondents rated the security aspects as poor or very poor. Therefore, more vigilance by the RTC crew is requested especially when the bus stops for meals and nature calls.

**Overall rating on alerting passengers through mike announcements is good:** The practice of RTC to make mike announcements especially at departing time of long – distance bus passengers has been appreciated. However, 30 per cent of the respondent – passengers rated it as poor. A little more care on the part of the RTC authorities would help claim more satisfaction in the aspects.

**Large scale dissatisfaction on lack of information during cancellation:** The respondents in the study revealed that they were often put to hard ships owing to lack of information on sudden cancellation of the services. More than 60 per cent of the opinions went against the APSRTC on this aspect. More networking and timely flow of information among the depot managers, erection of mechanism for instant communication between the bus drivers and depot managers would resolve such problems.

**More traffic and induced demand for quality of services:** As people began using the road transport services, they have developed new perceptions about the type of services they are supposed to beget from the service providers, equally competing in offering their services.

**Bridging gaps:** The far and wide markets could be kept together along with their prospective customers. Thus transport services have bridged the gap between productions and consumption centers.

**Quality of customer services – a formidable challenge:** The study reveals that quality of services has greater significance for the growth of any business, more so in the case of a transport organization. Unlike in most of other businesses, where a customer stays with a transport service renderer sufficiently for long hours, and sustaining consumer satisfaction in such businesses is a formidable challenge.

**Qualification of quality attributes:** The study makes it felt the need for measuring service quality in a quantified manner. The study targeted quality, standards and various norms to understand the expectations of the passenger satisfaction.

**Equal division of opinion on quality of services during breakdowns:** The study reveals that while 33 per cent of the people expressed the quality of APSRTC services as both good and very good; another 33 per cent of them opined it as poor or very poor. Another 34 per cent of the respondents opined the services of APSRTC were average. Passenger retention in future would become doubtful the percentage of such passengers who felt it was poor is not mitigated.

**Higher dissatisfaction on alternative arrangements during breakdowns:** The opinion of 35 per cent of the respondent passengers went against the responsive mechanism of the APSRTC

in making alternative arrangements during service breakdowns. The passengers also mentioned that the incidences of breakdowns were rarely experienced in case private bus services.

**Low satisfaction on punctuality:** The study reveals nearly 39 per cent of the passengers expressed rather rated the services of APSRTC as poor or very poor in respect of punctuality in arrivals and departures of APSRTC bus services. It is also observed during the study those the passengers with not much time conscious mentioned it as average as revealed in the interaction, as inferred by the researcher. Therefore, it is suggested that the management of APSRTC should concentrate on the issue and chalk out action plan to prevent such irregularities and motivate the bus crew to be more punctual. It is again the opinion of the passengers revealed personally to the researcher that private services are far better in their punctuality.

The passenger orally revealed during the study that there was no proper coordination among the drivers of different bus depots of the APSRTC during breakdowns. This has caused low rate of satisfaction among the users. Therefore steps should be taken by the APSRTC to give sufficient orientation to the drivers on the aspects of coordination so that they can better coordinate during such incidents.

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