

Love Train?

Amirthalingam Thevathasan and Balasingham Balachandran look at commuters' perceptions of train services in Melbourne.

What do Melbourne commuters really think about their metropolitan train service? This study looks at safety, comfort, service delivery, facilities, staff impact, ticketing and information and finds that satisfaction in the quality of service was lower during 2004–2006 than during 1998–2003. Customer perceptions must be taken into account when making decisions which have an impact on passenger services. Customer satisfaction in relation to crowding on trains or waiting times wasn't examined in this analysis so further study is warranted to make more informed decisions about upgrading or improving the rail network.

RESPONDENT PROFILES

Who was asked for feedback on their travel experience?

1998
Male 41.7% Female 58.3%
Service: Peak 45.2% Night 3.2%
Off-Peak 36.2% Weekend 13.9%

1999
Male 40.4% Female 59.6%
Service: Peak 44.7% Night 3.2%
Off-Peak 37.7% Weekend 12.0%

2000
Male 42.0% Female 58.0%
Service: Peak 46.6% Night 3.0%
Off-Peak 35.9% Weekend 11.8%

2001
Male 42.2% Female 57.8%
Service: Peak 44.0% Night 3.3%
Off-Peak 34.9% Weekend 13.6%

2002
Male 42.8% Female 57.2%
Service: Peak 47.8% Night 3.2%
Off-Peak 32.3% Weekend 12.4%

2003
Male 42.0% Female 58.0%
Service: Peak 46.4% Night 3.5%
Off-Peak 33.8% Weekend 12.2%

2004
Male 41.2% Female 58.8%
Service: Peak 49.0% Night 2.7%
Off-Peak 35.2% Weekend 9.4%

2005
Male 42.6% Female 57.4%
Service: Peak 48.2% Night 2.5%
Off-Peak 34.1% Weekend 10.9%

2006
Male 41.5% Female 58.5%
Service: Peak 45.5% Night 2.7%
Off-Peak 35.3% Weekend 12.7%

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To view this academic paper in full, see www.mbr.monash.edu.au.

3.00

3.50

METHODOLOGY

30,834 commuters were asked various questions encompassing areas such as safety, comfort, service, facilities, staff, information and ticketing. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied using a seven point Likert scale as follows: totally satisfied (7), very satisfied (6), somewhat satisfied (5), don't know (4), somewhat dissatisfied (3), very dissatisfied (2) and totally dissatisfied (1). The results are graphed here, similar to a scatter graph whereby values are read across the horizontal axis.

MAP KEY

A SAFETY

- 1 Train safety after dark
- 2 Station safety after dark
- 3 Police availability
- 4 Loutish behaviour
- 5 Visibility after dark
- 6 Car park surveillance
- 7 Platform surveillance

B COMFORT

- 1 Seat comfort
- 2 Cooling in summer
- 3 Amount of space
- 4 Train cleanliness
- 5 Comfort when not seated
- 6 Heating in winter
- 7 Graffiti on trains

C SERVICE

- 1 Freq. nights
- 2 Freq. day time off peak
- 3 Freq. weekends
- 4 Operation hours
- 5 Freq. peak time
- 6 Train on time
- 7 No. of cancellations

D FACILITIES

- 1 Station cleanliness
- 2 Graffiti at station
- 3 Maintenance of facilities
- 4 Facility range
- 5 Lighting

E STAFF

- 1 Staff helpfulness
- 2 Staff courteousness
- 3 Staff appearance
- 4 Visibility around station
- 5 Visibility other times

F INFORMATION

- 1 No. of announcements
- 2 Clarity of announcements
- 3 Connecting service info.
- 4 Cancellation info.
- 5 Timetable info.

G TICKETING

- 1 Ticket price
- 2 Ticket range
- 3 Ticket access
- 4 Value for money
- 5 Ticket vending machines

○ Average score

Improvement on safety-related aspects and other aspects ranked lower by the commuters will help to improve the perception on overall satisfaction on the quality of the train service.



