



The Service Quality Gap among the KSRTC and Private Bus Passengers: A Case Study of Palakkad District

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Introduction

As a social animal, transportation plays a vital role in the integration of humans. We use different methods to reach our destinations in our daily life. In the case of a daily commuter, buses constitute an integral part of the journey. In a developing country like India, 'passenger transport for short and medium distances is predominantly bus-oriented, with buses having an edge due to their flexibility and accessibility. Around 90% of total passenger movement is served by road transport, especially buses' (M V Praveen and others, 2024). In Kerala, roughly 6.4 million passengers rely on bus transport on a daily basis. Bus transportation in Kerala is a hybrid system which consists of both privately operated and state owned (KSRTC) buses.

Private buses in Kerala originated in the 1920s. 'Malabar Motor Union' was one of India's earliest private bus unions. They emerged as the primary rural to urban connectivity network, often characterized by vibrant, decorated designs and individual ownership. It grew during the 1930s and 1940s. The introduction of buses to specific routes by the state made them to thrive and expand their connectivity. Private players were pivotal in establishing Kerala's transportation with over 7000 buses operating alongside KSRTC today with approximately 4 million passengers per day.

Statement of the Problem

The hybrid mode of bus transportation system proved to be a part and parcel of the economy of Kerala, as millions of people depend on it for their journeys either occasionally or on a daily basis. Studies show that both modes lack several quality issues relating to the services they provide as well as in efficiencies in their operational aspects. It considerably affects the preferences of passengers towards their comfortability while travelling.

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Objectives

- 1 To compare the preference of passengers towards KSRTC and Private buses.
- 2 To examine the impact of the socio – demographic attributes on the preferences of the passengers.
- 3 To identify the Service Quality Gap in KSRTC and private buses and suggest measures for improvement.

Methodology

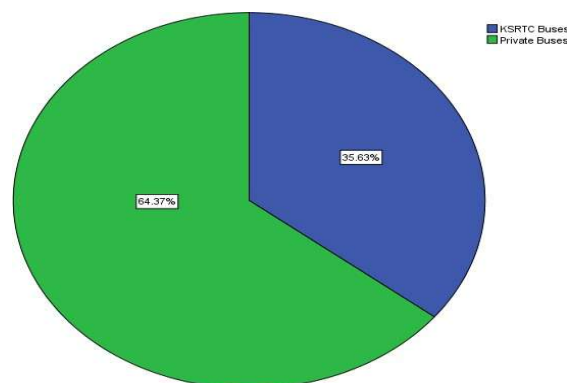
The study uses simple random sampling of 174 passengers who relies both KSRTC and Private buses for their daily and occasional travels for different purposes in Palakkad district. The study relies on SERVQUAL gap analysis in order to identify the service gaps in both KSRTC and Private buses by collecting data through interview schedule. The secondary data has been collected from various sources including the publications of KSRTC department, CPPR articles, Reports from Motor Vehicle Department of Kerala, Economic Review by the Govt. of Kerala which provides insights into the performance aspects, profitability, the efficiencies and inefficiencies in different aspects of both KSRTC and Private buses in Kerala. Frequency analysis, Chi-square test, Wilcoxon-Signed-Rank test are the statistical tools used in the study.

Result of the Study

Passenger's preference towards KSRTC and Private buses

Here the general preference of the passengers towards KSRTC and Private Buses has been taken into account through the samples.

Figure 1 Evaluation of overall preference of Passengers between KSRTC and Private Buses



Source: Primary data

The figure 1 shows that out of the samples (174) collected; majority chooses Private Buses over KSRTC for their various travel needs. 64.37% chooses private while only 35.63% choose KSRTC.

Socio-Demographic attributes and preference of passengers

The preference of passengers across different socio-demographic attributes such as *Age, Gender, Marital Status, Place of residence and Occupation* is analyzed using the **Frequency tables, Mean Score analysis** and the non-parametric **Chi-Square (X^2) test**.

Age & Preferences of Passengers

Table 1 shows the frequency of passenger who prefer both KSRTC and Private buses under different age groups.

Table 1 Age-wise Preference towards Mode of Bus

Age	Preference towards mode of Bus	
	KSRTC Buses	Private Buses
	Frequency	Frequency
Below18	0	1
18- 30	46	96
31- 56	13	14
Above56	3	1

Source: Primary data

The table 1 shows Age-wise preference towards Mode of Bus. Among the 174 samples studied, only 1 person belongs to the below 18 age group and that individual prefer Private Bus. It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents belonging to the age group of 18 to 30, among the 142 persons belongs to this age group, the majority prefers Private bus. In the age category of 31 to 56, only 27 persons more or less evenly preferred. 4 persons are above 56 age category, where 3 prefer KSRTC.

The table 2 shows Mean score analysis of age and preference. It is vividly understandable from the table that there is no much deviations among different age groups in their mean values. As the mean value is 2.00, 1.68, 1.52, 1.25 and 1.64 across the age categories respectively.

Table 2 Mean score Preference towards Mode of Bus across Age groups

Age	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Below18	2.00	1	.456
18- 30	1.68	142	.470
31- 56	1.52	27	.509
Above56	1.25	4	.500
Total	1.64	174	.480

Source: Primary data

Gender &Preference

The table 3 shows the Gender-wise preference towards mode of Buses. Among the 174 samples studied, 48 constitute Male and 126 constitute Female. Among the 48 males, 26 prefer KSRTC and 22 prefer Private Bus for various travel purposes. While, among the126 females, 90 prefers Private and 36 prefers KSRTC. On the whole, 112 Female prefers Private Buses and 62 Male prefer KSRTC for their travel. The data shows that Male have a clear preference towards KSRTC, while Female prefers Private the most.

Table 3 Gender-wise Preference towards Mode of Bus

Gender		Preference towards mode of Bus		Total
		KSRTC Buses	Private Buses	
Male	Count	26	22	48
	%within Gender	54.2%	45.8%	100.0%
	% within Preference Towards mode of Bus	41.9%	19.6%	27.6%
	%of Total	14.9%	12.6%	27.6%
Female	Count	36	90	126
	%within Gender	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	58.1%	80.4%	72.4%

	%of Total	20.7%	51.7%	72.4%
Total	Count	62	112	174
	% within Gender	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

Source: Primary data

The chi-square test results table 4 shows whether there is significant association between two variables, here that is between Gender and Preference towards Mode of Bus. The Null and Alternative hypothesis can be stated as:

H₀: There is no significant association between gender and preference towards buses.

Table 4 Chi-square test association between Gender and Preference towards Mode of Bus

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	ExactSig.(2-sided)	ExactSig.(1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.928	1	.002	.002	.002
Continuity Correction	8.844	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	9.670	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test					
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.871	1	.002		
No. of Valid Cases	174				

Source: Primary data

The test statistics shows that p value = .002 which is < .05 (the level of significance), so we reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis that is, there exists a significant association between Gender and Preference.

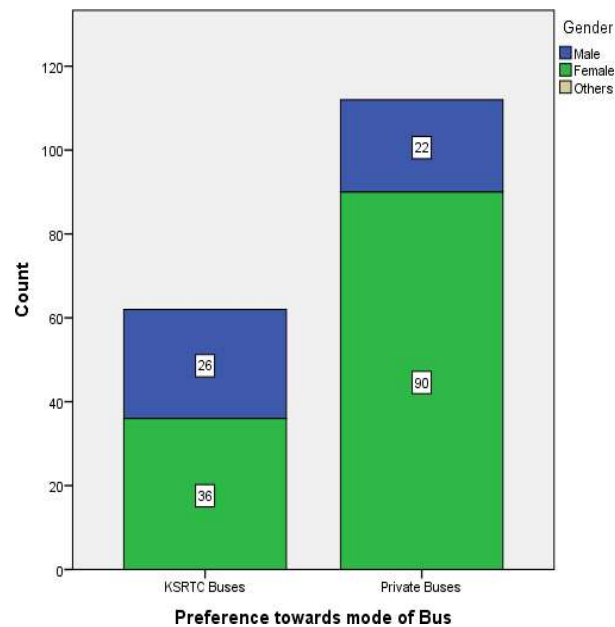
Table 5 Mean Score of Preference towards Mode of Buses across Gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Male	1.46	48	.504
Female	1.71	126	.454
Total	1.64	174	.480

Source: Primary data

The Mean score analysis here in the table 5 shows deviations across gender groups in the Mean values, 1.46 and 1.71 are the mean values for Male and Female respectively. That indicates significant difference across gender towards choice of mode of buses.

Figure 2 Gender Wise Preferences towards Mode of Bus



Source: Primary data

The figure 2 shows the gender-wise preference towards mode of bus as among the users of KSRTC. The majority of the respondents' constitutes Female. It is evident that the male mostly prefers KSRTC, while Female prefers Private Buses.

Marital status & Preference

The table 6 shows that among the respondents; 54 people are married among which 35 people (64.8% within marital status) prefers Private Bus and 19 people (35.2% within marital status) prefers KSRTC. 120



people are unmarried among which 77 people (64.2% within marital status) prefer Private, and 43 people (35.8% within marital status) prefer KSRTC.

Table 6 Preference towards Mode of Bus based on Marital status

Marital Status		Preference towards mode of Bus		Total
		KSRTC Buses	Private Buses	
Married	Count	19	35	54
	% within Marital Status	35.2%	64.8%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	30.6%	31.3%	31.0%
	% of Total	10.9%	20.1%	31.0%
Unmarried	Count	43	77	120
	% within Marital Status	35.8%	64.2%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	69.4%	68.8%	69.0%
	% of Total	24.7%	44.3%	69.0%
Total	Count	62	112	174
	% within Marital Status	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

Source: Primary data

The table 7 shows the chi-square test association between Marital status and preference.

H0: There is no significant association between marital status and preference towards buses.

As the p value =.934(which is>.05) thus the study accepts the null, there is no significant association between Marital status and preference.

Table 7 Chi-square test association between Marital status and preference towards Mode of Bus

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	ExactSig.(2- sided)	ExactSig.(1- sided)
PearsonChi-Square	.007 ^a	1	.934	1.000	.538
Continuity Correction ^b	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.007	1	.934		
Fisher's ExactTest					
Linear-by-Linear Association	.007	1	.934		
No. of Valid Cases	174				

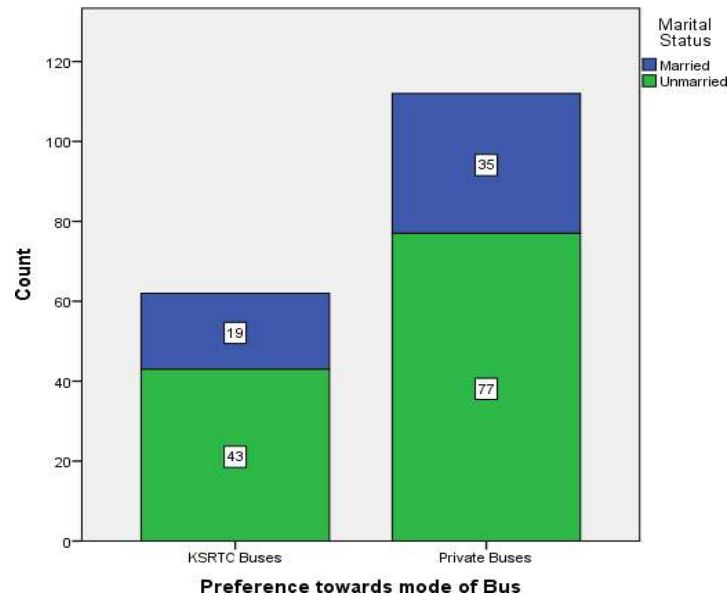
Source: Primary data

Tables 8 Mean Score Analysis of Marital Status and Preferences

Marital Status	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Married	1.65	54	.482
Unmarried	1.64	120	.482
Total	1.64	174	.480

Source: Primary data

This table 8 shows that there is not much deviation in the mean scores of married and unmarried people in their preference. Both have a mean score of around 1.6. The deviations are same. Figure 3 Marital status and preference



Source: Primary data

The figure 3 shows the preference of the respondents to both modes of buses with reference to their marital status. Unmarried ones constitute majority here. Both the categories show keen preference towards Private Buses than KSRTC.

Place of residence & Preference

From the table 9, among the sample collected, 35 people Belongs to Urban area among which the preference is almost evenly distributed among KSRTC and Private buses, 18 people (51.4% within place of residence) prefers KSRTC, and 17 people (48.6%) prefers Private Bus. 60 people are from Semi-urban area, among which 22 people (36.7%) prefers KSRTC, and 38 people (63.3%) prefers Private Bus. Most of the people are from Rural area, among the 79 people from rural area, again 22 people (27.8%) prefers KSRTC, and 57 people (72.2%) prefers Private Bus.

Table 9 Preference towards Mode of Bus based on Place of residence

Place of Residence	Preference towards mode of Bus		
	KSRTC Buses	Private Buses	



				Total
Urban	Count	18	17	35
	% within Place of Residence	51.4%	48.6%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	29.0%	15.2%	20.1%
	% of Total	10.3%	9.8%	20.1%
Semi- urban	Count	22	38	60
	% within Place of Residence	36.7%	63.3%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	35.5%	33.9%	34.5%
	% of Total	12.6%	21.8%	34.5%
Rural	Count	22	57	79
	% within Place of Residence	27.8%	72.2%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	35.5%	50.9%	45.4%
	% of Total	12.6%	32.8%	45.4%
Total	Count	62	112	174
	% within Place of Residence	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



	% of Total	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
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Source: Primary data

The table 10 shows the chi-square association between place of residence and preference towards mode of bus.

H₀: There is no significant association between place of residence and preference towards buses.

Table 10 Chi-square test association between Place of Residence and preference towards Mode of Bus

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.923 ^a	2	.052
Likelihood Ratio	5.833	2	.054
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.747	1	.017
No. of Valid Cases	174		

Source: Primary data

The test statistics shows that p value = .052 which is = .05 (the level of significance), so we reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis that is there is significant association between place of residence and preference.

The table 11 shows mean score of urban, semi-urban and rural areas as 1.49, 1.63 and 1.72 respectively. As it showing significant differences in the mean value, it evident that place of residence has significant influence upon the preference.

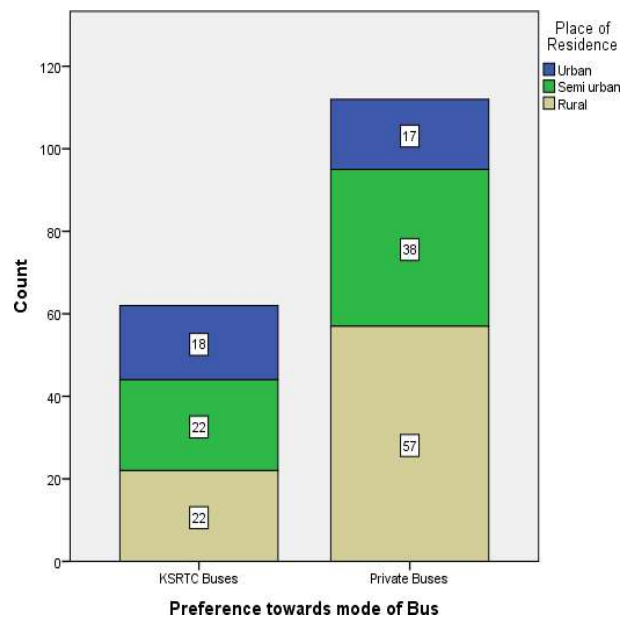
Table 11 Mean score analysis of Place of Residence and Preference

Place of Residence	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Urban	1.49	35	.507
Semi urban	1.63	60	.486
Rural	1.72	79	.451
Total	1.64	174	.480

Source: Primary data

The figure 4 visually represents the data shown in the table 9, the distribution of preference based on place of residence. Most people in the sample are from rural areas. In Urban area people prefers KSRTC most. But in Semi-urban and Rural areas most people prefers Private Buses. In Rural areas, a lion share prefers Private Buses than KSRTC.

Figure 4 Place of Residence and Preference



Source :Primary data

Occupation & Preference

The table 12 shows the preference based on occupation. Among the sample collected, 15 people are Govt. employees, among which 10 people (66.7% within occupation) prefers KSRTC, and 5 people(33.3%) prefers Private buses. 42 people are private employees, among which 18(42.9%) prefers KSRTC and 24(57.1%) prefers Private Buses. 6people are self-employed, among which only 1 person (16.7%) prefers KSRTC and remaining 5 (83.3%) prefers Private Buses. Majority constitutes of no job/retired from job category, among the 111 people belongs to this category, 33 people (29.7%) prefers KSRTC and 78 people (70.3%) prefers Private Buses.

Table 12 Preference towards Mode of Bus based on Occupation

Current Occupation	Preference towards mode of Bus	



		KSRTC Buses	Private Buses	Total
Govt. job	Count	10	5	15
	% within Current Occupation	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	16.1%	4.5%	8.6%
	% of Total	5.7%	2.9%	8.6%
Private job	Count	18	24	42
	% within Current Occupation	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	29.0%	21.4%	24.1%
	% of Total	10.3%	13.8%	24.1%
Self employed	Count	1	5	6
	% within Current Occupation	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	1.6%	4.5%	3.4%
	% of Total	0.6%	2.9%	3.4%
No job/ Retired from	Count	33	78	111



job	% within Current Occupation	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	53.2%	69.6%	63.8%
	% of Total	19.0%	44.8%	63.8%
Total	Count	62	112	174
	% within Current Occupation	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
	% within Preference towards mode of Bus	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

Source :Primary data

The table 13 shows the Chi-square test association between Occupation of the respondents and their preferences towards mode of bus. p value=.020 (which is<.05) thus the reject the null that is, there is significant association between occupation and preference.

H0: There is no significant association between occupation and preference towards buses

Table 13 Chi-square test association between Occupation and preference towards Mode of Bus

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.882 ^a	3	.020
Likelihood Ratio	9.677	3	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.578	1	.006

No.of Valid Cases	174		
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Source: Primary data

The table 14 shows the mean scores of different occupations of the respondents based of their preference towards mode of bus. As the mean values for Govt. job, Private job, self-employed and No job / retired from job are 1.33, 1.57, 1.83, 1.70 and 1.64 respectively. It shows much deviation, which implies that occupation causes significant difference on preference of the people.

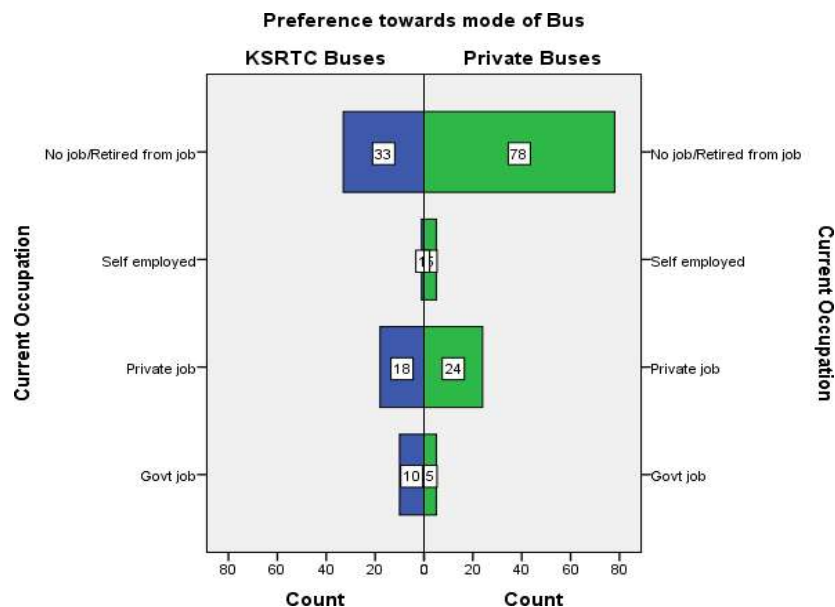
Table 14 Mean score analysis of Occupation and Preference

Current Occupation	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Govt. job	1.33	15	.488
Private job	1.57	42	.501
Self employed	1.83	6	.408
No job/ Retired from job	1.70	111	.459
Total	1.64	174	.480

Source: Primary data

The figure 6 visually represents the data provided in table 12, which shows the occupation wise preference of people towards KSRTC and Private Buses. Govt. employees prefer KSRTC most, but all other categories of occupation prefer Private Buses the most.

Figure 6 Current Occupation and Preference towards Mode of Bus



Source: Primary data



Service Quality Gap between KSRTC And Private Buses

The service quality gap between KSRTC and Private Buses are analyzed under 5 major dimensions: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

Each dimension has been studied using multiple variables. The dimensions and the variables are provided below.

1. Tangibility-Cleanliness, Seats, Door facility, Condition of buses.
2. Reliability-Punctuality, Timing, Breakdowns, Consistency of services.
3. Responsiveness-Response of bus crew, Handling of crowd by the crew, Care and assistance to elderly people and women.
4. Assurance-Safe driving, Behavior of the conductor and driver, safe and reliable journey, Safe and well-functioning doors.
5. Empathy-Empathy of the crew towards passengers, Fair treatment of passengers without discrimination, Availability of concessions.

The **Wilcoxon signed Rank test** is used to measure whether there is significant gap between KSRTC and Private Buses in each dimension as well as to analyze the overall gap.

GAP ANALYSIS

The table 15 shows the dimension-wise service quality gap scores of KSRTC and Private Buses. The Negative ranks indicate the number of respondents whose KSRTC gap score is higher than Private gap score. Positive ranks indicate the number of respondents whose private gap score is higher than KSRTC gap score. Ties imply the number of respondents whose gap scores are exactly the same for both KSRTC and Private Buses. The Mean rank is the average rank assigned to the differences. The dimension Responsiveness has more negative ranks (70), Reliability has a greater number of positive ranks (53). Empathy has a greater number of ties (86). Reliability has higher negative mean rank (60.93) and Tangibility has higher positive mean rank (55.90).

Table 15 Comparison of Service Quality Gap Scores between KSRTC and Private Bus

	N	MeanRank	SumofRanks
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gap_tangibility_	private	Negative Ranks	54 ^a	50.26	2714.00
gap_tangibility_	ksrtc	Positive Ranks	51 ^b	55.90	2851.00
		Ties	69 ^c		
		Total	174		
gap_reliability_	private	NegativeRanks	61 ^d	60.93	3716.50
gap_reliability_	ksrtc	PositiveRanks	53 ^e	53.56	2838.50
		Ties	60 ^f		
		Total	174		
gap_responsiveness_	private	NegativeRanks	70 ^g	57.64	4034.50
gap_responsiveness_	ksrtc	PositiveRanks	34 ^h	41.93	1425.50
		Ties	70 ⁱ		
		Total	174		
gap_assurance_	private	NegativeRanks	64 ^j	50.39	3225.00
gap_assurance_	ksrtc	PositiveRanks	29 ^k	39.52	1146.00
		Ties	81 ^l		
		Total	174		
gap_empathy_	private	NegativeRanks	64 ^m	48.95	3133.00
gap_empathy_	ksrtc	PositiveRanks	24 ⁿ	32.63	783.00
		Ties	86 ^o		
		Total	174		

Source: Primarydata

The table 16 shows whether there is a gap between KSRTC and Private Buses in each dimension by analyzing the Expectations and Perceptions on each variable under each dimension by the samples for each kind of buses.

Table 16 Test result of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

	gap_tangibility private gap_tangibility _ksrtc	gap_reliability_ private gap_reliability _ksrtc	gap_responsiveness_ private- gap responsiveness _ksrtc	gap_assurance _private gap_assurance _ksrtc	gap_empathy _private gap_empathy _ksrtc
Z	-.220 ^b	-1.247 ^c	-4.260 ^c	-4.001 ^c	-4.916 ^c
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	.826	.213	.000	.000	.000

Source: Primary data

(a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

c. Based on positive ranks).

Tangibility

Cleanliness, Seats, Door facility, Condition of buses is the variables studied under Tangibility.

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the tangibility gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

In the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistics, the p-value is .826 which is $> .05$ (level of significance). So, here we fail to accept H_1 .

Reliability

Punctuality, Timing, Break downs, consistency of services are the variables studied under Reliability.

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the reliability gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

In the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistics, the p-value is .213 which is $> .05$ (level of significance). We fail to accept H_1 , we accept H_0 which states that there is no statistically significant difference in the reliability gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. (The Z-score is -1.247 which means the difference between the paired groups is moderate but not strong)

Responsiveness

Response of bus crew, Handling of crowd by the crew, Care and assistance to elderly people and women are the variables studied under Responsiveness.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the responsiveness gap between KSRTC and Private Buses

In the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistics, the p-value is 0 which is $< .05$ (level of significance). We fail to accept H₀. So, we accept H₁ which states that there is statistically significant difference in the responsiveness gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. (The Z-score is - 4.260 which means the difference between the paired samples is large and consistent across respondents).

Assurance

Safe driving, Behavior of the conductor and driver, Safe and reliable journey, Safe and well-functioning doors are the variables studied under Assurance.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the assurance gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

In the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistics, the p-value is 0 which is $< .05$ (level of significance). We fail to accept H₀. So, we accept H₁ which states that there is statistically significant difference in the assurance gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

(The Z-score is - 4.001 which means the difference between the paired samples is large and consistent across respondents).

Empathy

Empathy of the crew towards passengers, Fair treatment of passengers without discrimination, Availability of concessions are the variables studied under Empathy.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the empathy gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

In the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistics, the p-value is 0 which is $< .05$ (level of significance). We fail to accept H₀. So, we accept H₁ which states that there is statistically significant difference in the empathy gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. (The Z-score is - 4.916 which means the difference between the paired samples is large and consistent across respondents).

OVER ALL GAP

The overall gap has been analyzed by taking the average of gaps of each dimension for both KSRTC and Private Buses.

Table 17 Ranks of Overall Gap Scores between KSRTC and Private Buses

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
overall_gap_private	Negative Ranks	98 ^a	90.45	8864.50
overall_gap_ksrtc				
	Positive Ranks	62 ^b	64.77	4015.50
	Ties	14 ^c		
	Total	174		

Source: Primary data

The table 17 represents the ranks obtained from Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test conducted to compare the overall service quality gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. It shows that 98 persons have a negative rank, which imply that overall gap score for KSRTC higher than Private buses. It shows 62 positive ranks, indicates the respondents whose overall gap score for Private buses is higher than that of KSRTC. It shows 14 ties in overall gap scores. The mean rank of the negative ranks (90.45) is higher than the mean rank of the positive ranks (64.77). The sum of the negative ranks (8864.50) exceeds the sum of positive ranks (4015.50), It suggests that a larger number of respondents experienced a greater service quality gap in KSRTC compared to Private buses.

Table 18 Test Statistics for Overall Service Quality Gap

	overall_gap_private- overall_gap_ksrtc
Z	-4.131 ^b
Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Source ; primary data

The table 18 shows the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test statistics for the overall service quality gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the overall gap between KSRTC and Private Buses.

Here, the p-value is .000 which is $<.05$ (level of significance) So, we accept H_1 which states that there is statistically significant difference in the overall gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. (The Z-score is -4.131 which mean the difference between the paired samples is large and consistent across respondents).

Findings

The analysis of Primary data collected through the online survey among 174 commuters who uses public transport system for their various travel purposes in Kerala shows that among the samples collected, more than 60% generally prefers Private Buses. Some of the socio-demographic attributes also plays a vital role in influencing the preferences of people. Age, Marital status generally does not have a significant impact on preference towards the choice of transportation. While Gender, Place of residence and Occupation proves to have a significant influence upon the choice of mode of bus. The SERVQUAL Gap analysis, which have done based on 5 dimensions of Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. In which significant gap have been identified in the dimensions of Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy, where Private Buses are proved to be performing well than KSRTC. The overall gap analysis emphasizes that there exists significant overall service quality gap between KSRTC and Private Buses, in which people experience a greater Service Quality Gap in KSRTC than Private Buses. Even though most people show a great preference towards private buses and it shows better performance than KSRTC in its Service Quality, still there is a monopoly of KSRTC exists in the public transportation sector in Kerala. It could be due to the fact that people prefer KSRTC for long journeys as it maintain consistent speed, especially when it comes to the 'Fast Passenger' services.

As majority of the respondents believe that coexistence of both sectors is vital in the Public Transportation system of Kerala and collective actions can improve the efficiency of both sectors here are some suggestions for the overall improvement of the public fleet service carriages.

- As KSRTC proved to be standing behind service quality, measures could be taken to improve it, for that proper cleaning, automated doors for all buses etc. could be ensured.
- Concessions facilities in KSRTC could be made simple and eligible so that public can be aware about it and it could ensure its availability to the deserved categories.
- There shouldn't be any ignorance and partiality to the concessional travelers.
- Everybody should be treated equally.
- There are overlapping services by KSRTC; it should be solved by proper time management in the



depots.

- A website or application can be formed to unite the timing and frequency of buses by KSRTC.
- Bus fares should be equalized by both sectors.
- The crew behavior could be more empathetic, the rush for them to reach destination should be eliminated.
- Rapid complaint system could be initiated by the motor vehicle department to file complaints immediately specifically for Bus passengers.
- Cctv surveillance should be made mandatory in all buses.

CONCLUSION

The Study shows that; among the sample collected for the purpose of the study, the majority of the respondent's prefers Private Buses over KSRTC. The socio-demographic attributes such as Gender, Place of residence and Occupation is said to have a significant influence upon the preference of passengers towards the choice of mode of Bus. While Age and Marital status proved to have no significant influence upon preference. The SERVQUAL GapAnalysis shows that Private stands ahead of KSRTC in the overall service quality along all the service quality dimensions based on the perceptions of the respondents. Among the five service quality dimensions, there is no much difference in the tangibility and reliability gaps between KSRTC and Private Buses. While the dimensions of responsiveness, assurance and empathy show significant difference in the Service Quality gap between KSRTC and Private Buses. As majority of the commuters belongs to the age group of 18 to 30 in the sample collected, most of them are students who depends buses for educational purposes. Most of the respondents considers Private Buses as cost-effective, which said to charge less than the state-run KSRTC buses. The passengers showing a keen obsession to the attributes of speed, hygiene/cleanliness and crew behavior regarding choice of buses. The results show that, majority believe the coexistence of both sectors are vital and corrective actions can improve the efficiency of Buses in both sectors.

Even though Private Buses showing a competitive edge over KSRTC in almost all; the dimensions and parameters regarding people's preference in the study, A monopoly of KSRTC still vivid in Kerala's public transportation system. The reason for the co-existence of both while majority considers Private as good: could be that the consistency in speed that KSRTC provides in long distance travel through its 'SWIFT', 'Fast Passenger' and 'Town-to-Town' services, and the monopoly of it over certain routes in Kerala. While, majority of respondents in this study spends less than 1 hour in buses and avoid high speedy buses during their commute; the long-distance, fast journey preferences for KSRTC could not studied and measured here.



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