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A Study on Satisfaction of Tamil Nadu Government Free Bus Travel for Women in Madurai City

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Abstract: ***In May 2021, the Tamil Nadu government launched a scheme that made public city and town buses (with certain caveats) free for women. While the rides are completely free (with no restrictions on the number of trips per day or month), the scheme is applicable only on 'white board' buses. The white board buses are what are known as Ordinary Bus Routes and represent the most inexpensive category of service that halts at all bus stops on a given route. The state government has provided an annual subsidy of Rs.1,200 crore to state transport undertakings to compensate for the fare box loss due to the scheme. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has extolled the scheme as an 'economic revolution', enabling women to join the workforce. In the eyes of many though, free transport remains a political gimmick. It's not unusual to find citizens who question why travel should be free; and why just for women. A free travel scheme though is not unlike free health services or free education. Some services are so closely linked to 'public good', that the cost they incur is easily offset by the good that they achieve. Public transport is one of these. In general, women in India struggle to attain financial independence and a promising career. These challenges are multiplied in the case of women from underprivileged communities as they start with little to no education and a higher dependence on men. Much of this is culturally driven. They are also mostly unemployed; and when they do find employment it is within the unorganized sector, earning low wages. In the majority of Indian families, men tend to have access to the household vehicle, while women generally rely on public transport. Considering that the percentage of women undertaking paid work in India is only 21% while the global average is 47%, mobility becomes a life changing factor that could make or break a woman's access to work opportunities. On the other hand, women who decide to not work outside the house, still rely on public transport to run errands and manage the household. This again incurs a cost.***

Keywords: women, public transport, Financial Independence, under privileged, economic revolution etc,

I. INTRODUCTION

The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history their position in society deteriorated early in India's ancient period, especially in the Indo-Aryan speaking regions and their subordination continued to be reified well into India's early modern period. During the British East India Company rule (1757–1857), and the British Raj (1858–1947), measures aiming at amelioration were enacted, including Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870, and Age of Consent Act, 1891. The Indian constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex and empowers the government to undertake special measures for them. Women's rights under the Constitution of India mainly include equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination; additionally, India has various statutes governing the rights of women. Several women have served in various senior official positions in the Indian government, including that of the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, the speaker of the LokSabha. However, many women in India continue to face significant difficulties. The rates of malnutrition are exceptionally high among adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women in India, with repercussions for children's health. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, is a serious concern in India.

Women in India struggle to attain financial independence and a promising career. These challenges are multiplied in the case of women from underprivileged communities as they start with little to no education and a higher dependence on men. Much of this is culturally driven. They are also mostly unemployed; and when they do find employment it is within the unorganized sector, earning low wages. In the majority of Indian families, men tend to have access to the household vehicle, while women generally rely on public transport. Considering that the percentage of women undertaking paid work In India is only 21% while the global average is 47%, mobility becomes a life changing factor that could make or break a woman's access to work opportunities.

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On the other hand, women who decide to not work outside the house, still rely on public transport to run errands and manage the household. This again incurs a cost. This explains why the Chief Minister has referred to the scheme as an 'economic revolution'.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SCHEME

The scheme launched by the Tamil Nadu government to provide free bus travel for working women in government buses on select routes should not be narrowly categorised as "freebies" but an "economic revolution", which helped their families save between 8 and 12 of their income, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Friday

Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation Ltd. - (TNSTC) is a Government owned public transport bus operator in Tamil Nadu, India. It operates intercity bus services to cities within Tamil Nadu, and from Tamil Nadu to its neighboring states. It also operates town busses from major cities and towns of Tamil Nadu to its neighborhoods, with the exception of Chennai, where the public bus service is operated by MTC, and a subsidiary of TNSTC. It is the largest government bus transport corporation in India, and the biggest corporation in the world.

In May 2021, the Tamil Nadu government launched a scheme that made public city and town buses (with certain caveats) free for women. While the rides are completely free (with no restrictions on the number of trips per day or month), the scheme is applicable only on 'white board' buses. The white board buses are what are known as Ordinary Bus Routes and represent the most inexpensive category of service that halts at all bus stops on a given route. The state government has provided an annual subsidy of Rs.1,200crore to state transport undertakings to compensate for the fare box loss due to the scheme.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has extolled the scheme as an 'economic revolution', enabling women to join the workforce. In the eyes of many though, free transport remains a political gimmick. It's not unusual to find citizens who question why travel should be free; and why just for women. A free travel scheme though is not unlike free health services or free education. Some services are so closely linked to 'public good', that the cost they incur is easily offset by the good that they achieve. Public transport is one of these. In general, women in India struggle to attain financial independence and a promising career. These challenges are multiplied in the case of women from underprivileged communities as they start with little to no education and a higher dependence on men. Much of this is culturally driven. They are also mostly unemployed; and when they do find employment it is within the unorganised sector, earning low wages. In the majority of Indian families, men tend to have access to the household vehicle, while women generally rely on public transport. Considering that the percentage of women undertaking paid work in India is only 21% while the global average is 47%, mobility becomes a life changing factor that could make or break a woman's access to work opportunities. On the other hand, women who decide to not work outside the house, still rely on public transport to run errands and manage the household. This again incurs a cost. This explains why the Chief Minister has referred to the scheme as an 'economic revolution'. But to understand how the scheme is being perceived by those for whom it is intended, the author informally interviewed 30 female bus passengers. Latha, a saleswoman pointed out that she is able to save up to 1000 rupees per month on transport expenses. Coming from a struggling family, she is now able to put this amount aside for her children's food and education. In addition, she and her children are able to visit other parts of the city during weekends without having to worry about travel costs. She likes the freedom it gives her and the money saved.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To know profile of the free bus scheme of Tamil Nadu government
2) To identify a favorable and unfavorable factors in the scheme in Madurai
3) To know the satisfaction level of the scheme among the public in Madurai
4) To identify the drawback of the schemes also access to overcome the drawback
5) To give some suggestions for improvement of the scheme

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In general, women in India struggle to attain financial independence and a promising career. These challenges are multiplied in the case of women from underprivileged communities as they start with little to no education and a higher dependence on men. Much of this is culturally driven. They are also mostly unemployed; and when they do find employment it is within the unorganised sector, earning low wages. In the majority of Indian families, men tend to have access to the household vehicle, while women generally rely on public transport. Considering that the percentage of women undertaking paid work in India is only 21% while the global average is 47%, mobility becomes a life changing factor that could make or break a woman's access to work opportunities.

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V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Tamil Nadu government itself has announced the purpose of this scheme is to increase the mobility of women. At the end of the first year, the scheme reportedly increased the outflow of women and their savings. Tamil Nadu is a pioneer in implementing innovative free programmes for the welfare of people. Earlier, the Tamil Nadu government provided freebies, especially to people living below the poverty line. Some electronic goods are also provided to enhance their economic and educational development.

VI. DATA COLLECTION

This is based on primary data and secondary data

1) Primary data

Primary data is the information collected directly from the respondents. It is first-hand information. Primary data is collected from customers who use health insurance through structured questionnaire. The primary data are those which are collected as fresh for the primary time

2) Secondary Data

Secondary data means that data are collected from already published sources. The various sources for obtaining secondary data are interested and libraries

3) Tools of analysis

Table, Chart, and Percentages Analysis

4) Geographical Area

The study is conduct within Madurai City.

5) Period of Study:

The period of study between forms December 2022 to April 2023

6) Method of sampling

The Researcher use convenience sampling method for collect the data

7) Number of Respondents:

The researcher collects data from 60 respondents

8) Questionnaire method:

The researcher used as tools to collect data by issuing questionnaire.

9) Limitation of the study

- The period of the study is only between six months
- The study is restricted only Madurai city

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

1) Occupational statuses of the respondents

Occupational status is one of the major factors which influencing the free bus travel towards women. Therefore the occupational status is classified into four categories- student, businesswomen, jobber, professional

Table 1

S.No	Occupational Status	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Student	25	42
2	Business Women	26	43
3	Worker /Jobber	6	10
4	Professional	3	5
	Total	60	100

Source: Primary data

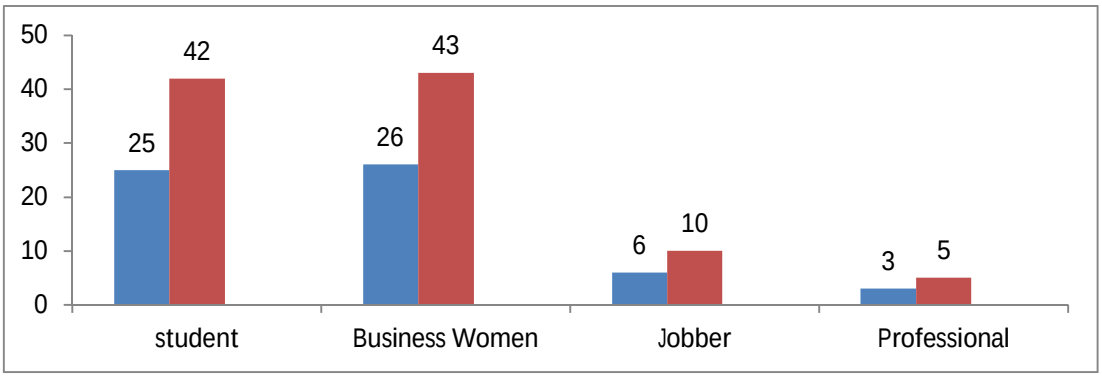


Figure 2

Interpretation

From the table 42 percentage of respondents are student, 43 percentage of respondents are Business women, 10 percentage of respondents are jobber and 5 percentage of respondents are professional the maximum women travelling in the free bus they doing business related work.

Age wise classification:

The age can determine he age or interval between two dates. The age of respondents shows their Therefore the free bus for women the age wise Classification of the respondents is shown in table 2

Table 2

S.No.	Age Group	No .of respondents	Percentage
1	21-30years	12	20
2	31-40years	14	24
3	41-50years	23	38
4	More than 50 Years	11	18
Total		60	100

Source: Primary data

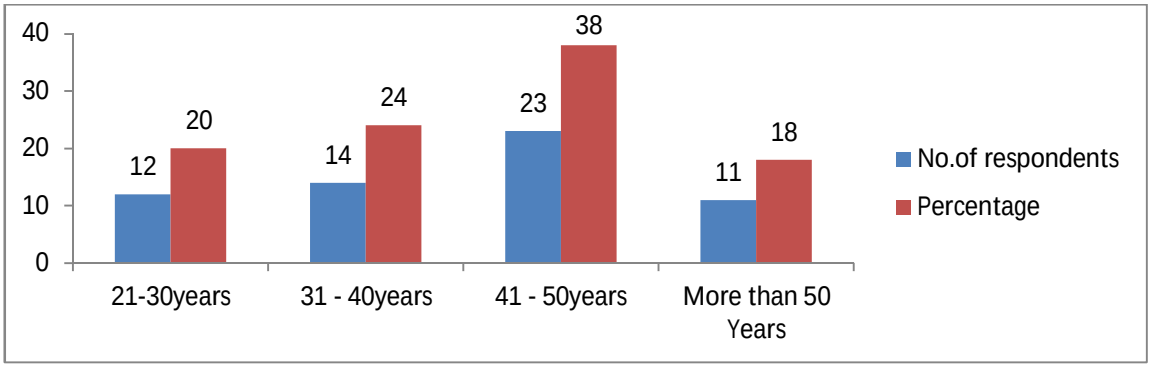


Figure 2

Interpretation:

From the table 2, respondents belong to the age group of 21-30 then the 20 percentage belong to the age group of 31-40, then 24 percentage of the respondents belong to the age group of 41-50, the 38 percentage of the respondents, and rest of the respondents are above 50 years of the age group, 18 percentage of the respondents

2) Purpose for travelling classification of the respondents

Purpose of travelling is one of the major factor which influencing the free bus travel preference towards women. The study is classified into 6 categories-School, College, Work, Shopping, Entertainment and any other.

Table 3

Purpose for travelling	Respondents	percentage
School	1	2%
College	38	63%
Work	12	20%
Shopping	2	3%
Entertainment	2	3%
Any other	5	8%
Total	60	100%

Source: Primary data

From the table 3, 2 percentage of respondents are school, 63 percentage of respondents are college, 20 percentage of respondents are work, 3 percentage of respondents are shopping, 3 percentage of respondents are entertainment and 8 percentage of respondents are comes under any other.

3) Sitting and internal space classification of the respondents

Table 4

Sitting and internal space	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly satisfied	25	42%
Satisfied	7	12%
Neutral	17	28%
Dissatisfied	9	15%
Strongly dissatisfied	2	3%
Total	60	100%

Sources: Primary data

Interpretation

From the table 4, show that 42 percentage of the respondent are Strongly satisfied,12 percentage of the respondents are satisfied ,28 percentage of the respondents are neutral, 15 percentage of the respondents are dissatisfied and 3 percentage of the respondents are strongly dissatisfied

VIII. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

A. Findings

The findings are the findings found by the researcher through the research.

B. Personal profile

- 42 percentages of the respondents are students, 43 percentages of the respondents are Business Women, 10 percentage of the respondents are Jobber and 5 percentage of the respondents are Professional.

- 20 percentage of the respondents are belong to the age group of 21-30, 24 percentage of the respondents are belong to the age group of 31-40, 38 percentage of the respondents are belong to the age group of 41-50 and 18 percentage of the respondents are below 50 years.

C. Business profile

- 55 percentages of respondents are below 10km per day, 25 percentage of respondents are below 11-20 km per day, 12 Percentage of respondents are below 21-30 km per day, 8 percentage of respondents are above 31 km per day.
- 57 percentages of the respondents are availing daily in free bus, 10 percentages of the respondents are availing weekly 1-3 days, 10 percentage of the respondents are availing weekly 4-5 days, and 13 percentage of the respondents are if needed.
- 2 percentage of respondents are school, 63 percentage of respondents are college, 20 percentage of respondents are work, 3 percentage of respondents are shopping, 3 percentage of respondents are entertainment and 8 percentage of respondents are comes under any other.
- 27 percentage of respondents time and softy, 35 percentages of respondents said less cost, 23 percentage of respondents said family economic condition, 15 percentage of respondents said other reasons which should be specified.
- 42 percentage of the respondent are strongly satisfied, 12 percentage of the respondents are satisfied, 28 percentage of the respondents are neutral, 15 percentage of the respondents are dissatisfied and 3 percentage of the respondents are strongly dissatisfied.
- 13 percentage of respondents satisfied, 32 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 28 percentage of respondents neutral, and 15 percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 32 percentages of respondents satisfied, 20 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 12 Percentage of respondents neutral, 18 percentage of respondents said dissatisfied and 18 percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 25 percentages of respondents are satisfied, 15 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 23 percentage of respondents neutral, 13 percentage of respondents said dissatisfied, 24 percentage of respondents said strongly dissatisfied.
- 13 percentages of respondents satisfied, 32 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 28 percentage of respondents neutral, and 15 percentage of respondents said sissy and 12 Percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 63 percentage of respondents said Yes and 37 percentage of respondents said No
- 57percentage of the respondents said yes and 43 percentages of respondents said no.
- 25 percentages of respondents satisfied, 8 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 33 percentage of respondents neutral, 17 percentage of respondents dissatisfied and 17 percentage of respondents are strongly dissatisfied.
- 12 percentage of respondents are satisfied, 7 percentage of respondents are strongly satisfied, 20 percentage of respondents neutral, 38 percentage of respondents dissatisfied and 23 percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 54 percentage of respondents satisfied, 13 percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 22 percentage of respondents neutral, and 8 percentage of respondents are strongly satisfy and 3 percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 20 percentages of respondents satisfied, 12 Percentage of respondents strongly satisfied, 18 percentages of respondents neutral, 25 percentage of respondents dissatisfied and 25 percentage of respondents strongly dissatisfied.
- 8 percentages of respondents agree, 12 Percentage of respondents strongly agree, 20 percentages of respondents neutral, 27 percentage of respondents disagree and 33 percentage of respondents strongly disagree.
- 32 percentage of the respondent are honesty, 30 percentage of the respondent are behaviour conductor, 22 percentage of the percentage are helpfulness and 16 percentage of the respondent are dressing sense.
- 20 percentages of the respondents are carefully driving, 25 percentage of the respondents are fitness of driver, 42 percentage of the respondents are kindness and 13 percentage of the respondents are addiction to alcohol.
- 25 percentage of the respondent are agree, 13 percentage of the respondents are strongly agree, 42 percentage of the respondent are neutral,12 percentage of the respondents are strongly agree and 8 percentage of the respondent are strongly disagree.
- 55 percentage of the respondents are yes and 45 percentage of the respondents are no.
- 38 percentages of the respondents are Administration, 28 percentages of the respondents are Public, and 34 percentages of the respondents are Government.
- 28 percentage of the respondent are Very satisfied, 32 percentages of the respondents are somewhat satisfied, 23 percentages of the respondents are somewhat dissatisfied and 17 percentages of the respondents are Dissatisfied.

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- 58 percentage of the respondents are yes and 42 percentage of the respondents are no.
- 42 percentage of the respondents are agree, 25 percentage of the respondents are strongly agree, 12 percentage of the respondent are natural , 13 percentage of the respondent are disagree and 8 percentage of the respondents are strongly disagree.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions we want to construct. This study will help to overcome the drawback and also for improvement of the scheme.

1) The maximum people daily coming to Madurai city for lot of purposes from the village area in around 15 km of Madurai, So, the free bus scheme is more useful to them.
2) The respondent gives positive response about the scheme but few of them said some drawback in timing and bus condition, so the government should take care in issues particularly in Madurai.
3) This scheme is very useful for economically poor women, but some of the economically wealth people also travelling in the bus, this is affected other mode of transport people like Auto and taxi.
4) Bus cleanness is very poor, So the passengers maintain cleanness the free bus.
5) In Madurai city most of the people from rural area, so the government increase the frequency.
6) Timing based not satisfied with the respondents so the bus must follow the correct time for pickup and drop.

X. CONCLUSIONS

The main purposes of the study for identification of the various favorable and unfavorable factors of the scheme in Madurai city. The scheme is fully accepted by the public but they also indicate some drawback in the scheme. The study suggests that to overcome the drawback surely which help to improvement of the scheme in future.

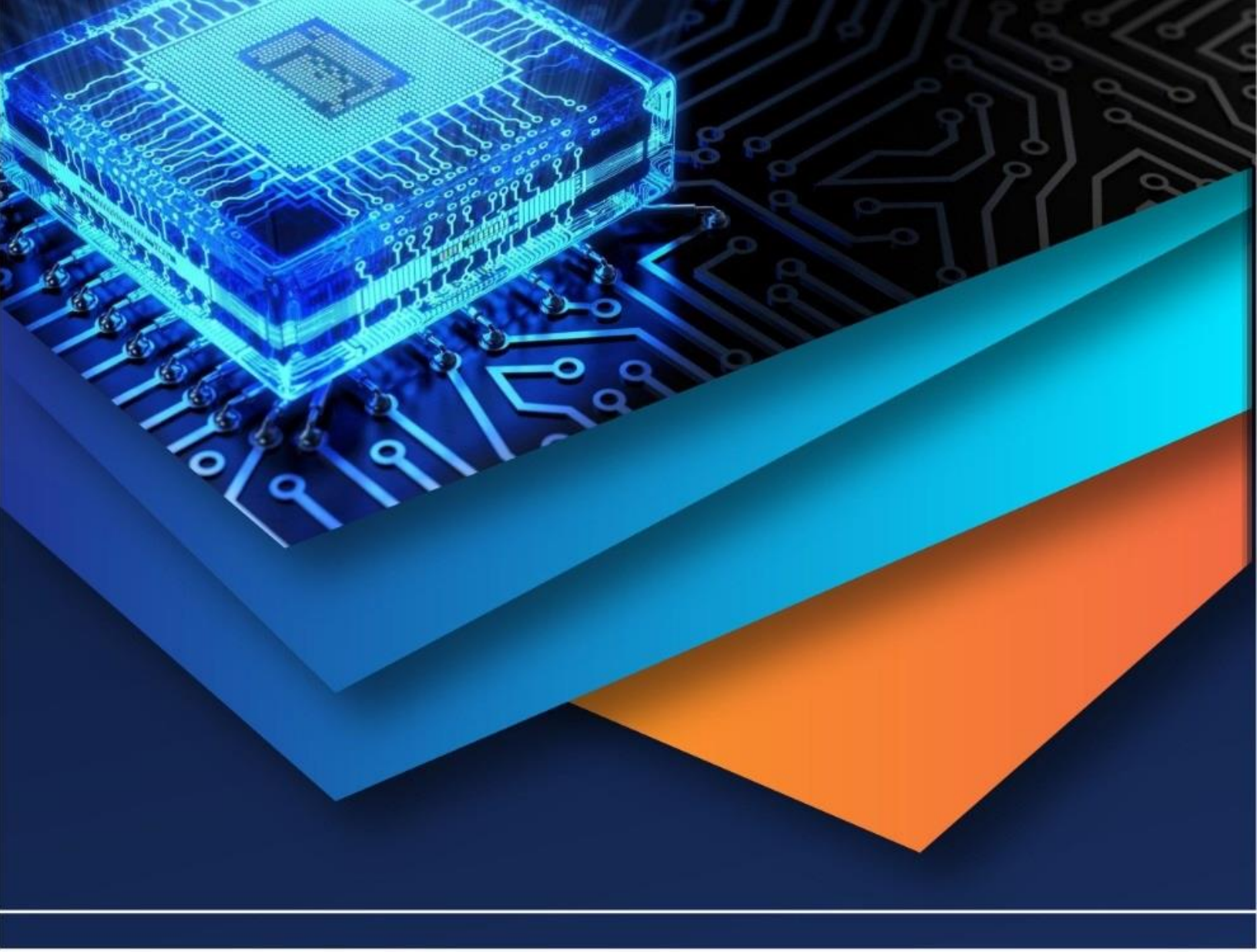
The study also suggested that some general points to Transport Corporation administrators towards to exploring passenger preferences, the following working definition of regional public transport can be adopted, with boundaries towards local as well as interregional public transport. Regional public transport (i) targets passengers travelling between separate urban areas or to rural areas and (ii) a majority of the trips are made on a regular basis. The second part of the definition implies that most passengers on regional public transport services are frequent travelers, and hence, our results mainly target frequent travelers.

Quality attributes commonly reported as priorities for regional travellers are frequency, comfort, reliability, travel time, and network coverage. Some important differences with regard to local public transport are suggested. Firstly, on-board comfort is a higher priority for regional travelers, becoming increasingly important with longer travel times. Secondly, network coverage and coordination are also more prominent features in regional public transport, presumably because of the more dispersed nature of regional public transport networks. In relation to this, it has been concluded that catchment areas for walking and cycling to high-quality regional public transport services can be substantially larger than the conventionally assumed 400 or 800 m radius.

These differences, and the fact that the prerequisites for regional public transport are, in general, substantially different compared to local and interregional public transport, support continued use of this categorization in public transport research. Where applicable, we also suggest inclusion of the impact of trip length or travel time within each category

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