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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FREE BUS TRAVEL AS A PATHWAY TO WOMEN'S MOBILITY AND EMPOWERMENT: UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE AND CONTINUED USAGE INTENTION TOWARDS THE PRIYADARSHINI SCHEME IN KERALAM THROUGH AN INTEGRATED TPB–PERCEIVED VALUE MODEL

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Abstract

The Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme represents an important public policy initiative aimed at improving women's access to public transportation and supporting their mobility and social participation in Keralam. This study examines how perceived economic benefits, mobility freedom and social empowerment shape women's attitudes towards the scheme and it also explores how perceived safety, service quality and attitude influence their intention to continue using the scheme. The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design, using primary data collected from women passengers through a structured questionnaire. Structural Equation Modelling was employed to examine the proposed relationships. The findings reveal that perceived economic benefits, perceived mobility freedom and social empowerment perception together explain 43% of the variation in women's attitudes towards the scheme. Similarly, perceived safety, perceived service quality and attitude collectively explain 56% of the variation in their continued usage intention. These findings suggest that women's acceptance of the scheme is influenced not only by the financial savings it offers but also by the freedom to travel independentl y, opportunities for greater social participation and their experiences with public transport services. The study highlights the need for KSRTC to maintain the economic benefits of the scheme while giving equal attention to the safety, quality, reliability, frequency and accessibility of bus services. Such improvements are important to encourage continued usage and ensure the long-term sustainability of the scheme.

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The study contributes to the existing literature by proposing an integrated framework that brings together Theory of Planned Behaviour and perceived values, complemented by a capability-oriented perspective on women's mobility.

Introduction:-

The Keralam model of development is renowned for its focus on social development and welfare policies, showcasing significant progress in human development despite modest per capita income (Varughese,2024). The discrimination against women is deeply rooted in the structure of society and it forcibly confines women primarily to the domestic sphere of life (Babu & Jose, 2019). The gender equality and women empowerment are recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas (Palanithurai, 2003). The achievements of the state in education, healthcare, social welfare, women's empowerment and environmental sustainability provide valuable lessons for other regions seeking a more balanced and inclusive approach to development. While challenges remain Keralam's model serves as an example of how a focus on human well being can lead to sustainable and equitable development (Varughese, 2024). In this context, the introduction of the Priyadarshini Free bus travel scheme in Keralam represents a significant step towards translating the state's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Priyadarshini scheme is a free public transport initiative launched by the Government of Keralam on 15 June 2026 and it enables women and transgender individuals residing in Keralam to travel free of cost in eligible KSRTC ordinary bus services.

This scheme aims to improve mobility, reduce transportation expenses and enhances access to education, employment and other essential services (Government of Keralam, 2026). The idea of free public transport has gained prominence in some Indian states with governments increasingly viewing mobility as an important dimension of social welfare. The States like Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have already schemes for free or concessional bus travel for women. By equalizing access to public transport across income and caste lines, the Shakti Yojane scheme in Karnataka contributed to a more inclusive model of public service delivery. Beyond economic benefits, Shakti Yojane has contributed to a marked enhancement in women's mobility autonomy (Bammanal,2025). But the success of the free bus transport service project depends on improved implementation, continuous evaluation and effective management (Mohana, 2026). Building on the experiences of other states, the Government of Keralam (2026) stipulated that the scheme's entire financial expenditure would be borne by the State Government, while addressing the operational and financial requirements of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The scheme demonstrated encouraging initial utilisation with daily passenger numbers increasing from 714,402 on 15 June to 1,492,540 on 22 July 2026.

Although free and concessional public transport schemes have been introduced in several Indian states including Delhi, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the effectiveness of such initiatives cannot be assessed solely in terms of passenger financial savings. Previous studies on these initiatives have primarily highlighted their economic benefits to women's mobility. A research work on Karnataka's Shakti Scheme has highlighted its role in improving women's access to public transport (Bammanal, 2025). However, the benefits of free bus travel may extend beyond financial savings to include greater personal independence, social participation and access to education, employment and other essential services. It is therefore, there is a need to examine women's perceptions and behavioural responses towards free public transport schemes through an integrated framework that considers both the factors shaping their attitudes and those influencing their continued usage intention.

Evidence from Delhi also demonstrates that free bus travel can improve women's access to opportunities, although overcrowding and shortcomings in service delivery continue to pose challenges (Jamba et al., 2025). A research on Tamil Nadu's free bus travel policy has reported improvements in women's economic independence and mobility, while identifying inadequate infrastructure and service frequency as important implementation issues (Joel Premkumar et al., 2024). Recent research on Karnataka's Shakti Scheme has also documented substantial changes in women's public transport usage (Halder & Jayadev, 2025). Nevertheless, these studies provide limited understanding of how different perceptions interact to shape women's attitudes and continued usage intentions, particularly within the context of Keralam's public transport system**.** The present study addresses this research gap by developing and empirically testing an integrated behavioural framework that examines the influence of perceived economic benefit, perceived mobility freedom and social empowerment perception on attitude, and the influence of perceived safety, perceived service quality and attitude on continued usage intention.

Objectives of the study:-

1. To examine the influence of perceived economic benefit, perceived mobility freedom, and social empowerment perception on women's attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.
2. To analyse the influence of perceived safety, perceived service quality and attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme on women's continued usage intention.

Literature Review:-

Theoretical Framework:-

The present study proposes an integrated theoretical framework combining Perceived Value Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour complemented by a capability oriented mobility perspective. Perceived Value theory provides the basis for explaining how passengers evaluate the economic and functional benefits obtained from the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme. In particular, perceived economic benefit, perceived mobility freedom and social empowerment are expected to enhance passengers' perception of the overall value of the scheme (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived value is defined as an interactive, relativistic and preferential experience. The relation of consumers with products or services operates in a relativistic manner to determine preferences that lie at the heart of the consumption experience (Holbrook, 1999). A broader theoretical framework of perceived value is developed by Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991a) that proposes five consumption values influencing consumer choice behaviour. These are functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional value. The institutional trust perspective explains a second mechanism through which passengers form attitudes towards the scheme. Perceived service quality and perceived safety are expected to strengthen passengers' trust in the ability and reliability of the service provider to implement the scheme effectively and trust in the scheme's delivery is subsequently expected to influence passengers' overall attitude towards the scheme. This approach is consistent with the conceptualisation of trust in government organisations in terms of institutional competence, integrity and related attributes (Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies, 2017).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen.1991) is one of the most widely applied frameworks in consumer behavior research. It proposes that three core factors-attitude, the subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control-primarily determine individual behavior. Specifically, attitude refers to an individual's evaluation of potential behavioral outcomes based on personal beliefs, while the subjective norm reflects perceived social expectations from others (Sohn,2020). The Theory of Planned Behaviour provides the behavioural-intention component of the framework. According to Ajzen (1991) attitude represents an important determinant of behavioural intention. The study proposes that a favourable attitude towards the Priyadarshini scheme will positively influence passengers' continued usage intention. A capability oriented mobility perspective is also considered, recognising that access to affordable transportation can enhance people's freedom to travel, participate in social activities and access essential opportunities such as education, employment and other public services (Sen, 1999). Subjective norms are not included because the decision to use the scheme is primarily examined from the perspective of individual experiences and personal perceptions rather than perceived social pressure. Similarly, perceived behavioural control is not considered as a separate construct because the scheme provides free access to eligible bus services, while the study focuses on evaluating the perceived benefits, safety and service quality associated with its use. Therefore, attitude is retained as the central TPB construct, as it captures women's overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the scheme and provides the theoretical basis for explaining their continued usage intention (Ajzen, 1991).

Measurement Variables and Hypothesis Development:-

Perceived Economic Benefit:-

The perceived economic benefit refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the financial advantages, cost savings or net utility obtained from using a product, service or policy (Sánchez-Fernández, 2009). In the context of fare free public transport perceived economic benefit primarily arises from the reduction in travel expenditure. It results consequent savings in household living costs rather than from direct increases in wages or formal labour market participation (Sharman et al., 2024). The free public transport can provide passengers with an immediate economic advantage by or reducing transportation expenses. Perceived economic value refers to the benefits people receive from a product or service in relation to the price they pay for it taking into account its quality and other attributes (Lin & Huang, 2012).

Perceived Mobility Freedom:-

The Perceived mobility freedom indicates an individual's subjective sense of autonomy, choice and control over their spatial movement and available travel options. Sager (2006) viewed freedom in mobility as having the ability

to travel to places of one's choice at a preferred time as well as having the freedom to decide not to travel. This perspective highlights that mobility freedom involves not only actual travel but also the availability of meaningful travel choices.Travel autonomy similarly refers to individuals' perceived control over different aspects of their daily travel, including when, where and how they travel (Friman & Olsson, 2023). Mobility can therefore be viewed as a life enhancing activity that contributes directly to personal autonomy, freedom of choice and well-being (Shliselberg & Givoni, 2018).

Perceived Service Quality:-

Perceived service quality refers to passengers overall evaluation of the excellence or superiority of a service based on their experiences with its delivery and outcomes (Zeithaml, 1988). In public transportation service quality is generally multidimensional. It may include aspects such as reliability, punctuality, comfort, accessibility and the quality of interactions with service providers. The customers may perceive and evaluate individual service quality dimensions differently. It means that the same service attribute may receive different evaluations from different passengers (Grujicic et al., 2014). Public transport plays an important role in promoting sustainable mobility and equitable access. Recent evidence from Kerala also highlights the importance of improving the responsiveness, consistency, safety, comfort and reliability of public bus services (Praveen & Sravana, 2026). So perceived service quality is an important determinant of passengers' evaluations of public transport services and their continued willingness to use them.

Perceived Safety:-

Perceived safety in transportation system context refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the extent to which they feel protected from accidents, crime, harassment and other potential threats. Safety aspect involves reaching a transport stop or station, waiting for the vehicle, boarding it and completing the journey to the intended destination (Agrawal et al., 2025). Safety perceptions are particularly important in influencing passengers' decisions regarding public transport use. Chowdhury and van Wee (2020) demonstrated that women's perceptions of safety during waiting times at public transport terminals can influence their experiences and attitudes towards public transportation. More broadly, research indicates that perceptions of safety may exert a stronger influence on travel behaviour than objective measures of crime or actual victimization risk (Bannister & Fyfe, 2001).

Social Empowerment Perception:-

Social empowerment perception refers to women's perceived extent to which accessible and affordable public transportation enhances their freedom of movement, confidence, social interaction, participation in community activities, access to social opportunities, and autonomy in making decisions concerning their daily lives (Bammanal, 2025). The access to safe and affordable transportation is significant for improving women's mobility and facilitating their participation in social and economic activities. The International Finance Corporation (2021) emphasized the importance of understanding women's transportation needs and preferences in order to improve mobility and support their economic participation.

Attitude towards the Priyadarshini Scheme:-

The attitude represents an individual's overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of a particular behaviour, service or policy. In the context of public transportation, attitude reflects passengers' overall evaluation and feelings towards using public transport. Devika et al. (2020) in her study found that the attitude was among the significant psychological factors influencing public transport mode choice decisions. Forward (2019) concluded that attitudes towards public transportation can be influenced by factors such as travel time, convenience, personal experiences and perceptions of the service. The attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme represents women's overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the scheme and their perception of its usefulness and desirability as a means of transportation.

Hypotheses Development:-

H1: Perceived economic benefit has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.

H2: Perceived mobility freedom has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.

H3: Social empowerment perception has a significant positive effect on attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.

H4: Perceived safety has a significant positive effect on continued usage intention towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.

H5: Perceived service quality has a significant positive effect on continued usage intention towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme.
H6: Attitude towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme has a significant positive effect on continued usage intention.

Research Methodology and Data Collection:-
Research and Sample Design:-
The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive approach was used to understand the demographic profile, travel experiences and perceptions of women passengers. The analytical approach focused on examining the relationships among the variables included in the proposed research model. A multistage sampling procedure was followed. In the first stage, three districts were purposively selected. In the second stage, a quota of 100 respondents was fixed for each district. In the final stage, respondents from each district were selected using convenience sampling based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. The measurement items were adapted from established literature and assessed using a five-point Likert scale.Women who were residents of Keralam and had used or are likely to use the Priyadarshini Free bus travel scheme through eligible KSRTC services were considered for inclusion in the study. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to examine the proposed relationships among the constructs.

Data Collection:-
The primary data were collected from women passengers using a structured questionnaire. The survey included eligible women passengers who were willing to participate in the study. A total number of 279 responses were received from the selected three districts. These responses were carefully examined for completeness, consistency and suitability for analysis. During this process 16 responses were excluded as they were incomplete or did not satisfy the criteria for inclusion in the study. Consequently, 263 valid responses were retained for the final analysis.

Results and Discussion:-
Demographic profile of respondents:-

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 263)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 18 years	18	6.8
	18–25 years	95	36.1
	26–35 years	66	25.1
	36–45 years	28	10.6
	46–55 years	34	12.9
	Above 56 years	22	8.4
Education	Up to SSLC	38	14.4
	Higher Secondary	47	17.9
	Diploma	24	9.1
	Undergraduate (UG)	60	22.8
	Postgraduate	71	27
	Others	23	8.7
Employment Status	Student	123	46.7
	Government employee	25	9
	Private employee	34	12.9
	Self-employed	24	9
	Others	63	24
Monthly Family Income	Below 20,000	48	18.3
	20,000–40,000	91	34.6
	40,000–60,000	38	22
	60,000–80,000	58	14
	Above 80,000	28	10.6
Area of Residence	Rural	189	71.9
	Urban	74	28.1
Primary Purpose of	Education	144	54.8

Journey	Employment	72	27.4
	Healthcare	23	8.7
	Shopping	24	9.1

The demographic profile shows that most respondents (36.1%) belonged to the 18-25 age group and this is followed by those aged 26-35 years (25.1%). Regarding education, the largest group had postgraduate qualifications (27%) and students formed the majority of respondents in terms of employment status (46.7%). In terms of monthly family income, 34 per cent of respondents belonged to the ₹20,000-40,000 category and most respondents (71.9%) lived in rural areas. Education was the main purpose of travel for 55% of respondents and this is followed by employment (27.4%).

KMO and Bartlett's Test:-

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.862. It shows that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant, $\chi^2(378) = 4557.488$, $p < .001$ and this indicates that the correlation matrix differed significantly from an identity matrix. Principal axis factoring revealed that the extracted communalities of all 28 measurement items exceeded .50, ranging from 0.523 to 0.738. Based on the eigen value greater than one criterion, all factors were extracted, accounting for 65.088% of the variance based on the extraction sums of squared loadings.

Measurement Model Assessment:-

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading (λ)	AVE	Cronbach's α*	Composite Reliability (CR)
PEB	PEB1	.790	.638	.876	.876
	PEB2	.831			
	PEB3	.758			
	PEB4	.815			
PMF	PMF1	.870	.706	.905	.906
	PMF2	.826			
	PMF3	.845			
	PMF4	.820			
SEP	SEP1	.820	.680	.895	.895
	SEP2	.817			
	SEP3	.830			
	SEP4	.831			
PSQ	PSQ1	.800	.674	.891	.892
	PSQ2	.784			
	PSQ3	.851			
	PSQ4	.847			
PS	PS1	.788	.653	.883	.883
	PS2	.803			
	PS3	.830			
	PS4	.812			
ATT	ATT1	.837	.654	.883	.883
	ATT2	.790			
	ATT3	.824			
	ATT4	.782			
CUI	CUI1	.831	.666	.887	.889
	CUI2	.833			
	CUI3	.764			
	CUI4	.835			

The measurement model was assessed in terms of indicator reliability, convergent validity and internal consistency reliability**.** As shown in Table 2, the standardized factor loadings of the variables ranged from **.**758 to .870.All the values exceeded the commonly recommended threshold of .70 and this indicates that all observed indicators have adequate relationships with their respective latent constructs. The standardized loadings reported were statistically significant. All critical ratios exceeded the conventional threshold and $p < .001$. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from **.**638 to .706.All these values are above the recommended minimum value of .50. Thus, each construct demonstrates adequate convergent validity**.** Composite reliability (CR) values ranged from **.**876 to .906 and it exceeded the recommended threshold of .70. Similarly, the test values of Cronbach's alpha are above .70, providing evidence of satisfactory internal consistency.

Structural Model Assessment:-

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using the Fornell Larcker Criterion

Construct	PEB	PMF	SEP	PS	PSQ	ATT	CUI
PEB	**0.799**						
PMF	0.058	**0.840**					
SEP	0.310	0.167	**0.825**				
PS	−0.093	0.002	−0.046	**0.809**			
PSQ	−0.017	0.048	−0.012	−0.145	**0.821**		
ATT	0.381	0.410	0.519	−0.040	0.007	**0.809**	
CUI	0.227	0.281	0.322	0.024	0.374	0.638	**0.816**

The discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As presented in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE values for Perceived economic benefit (.799), Perceived mobility freedom (.840), Social empowerment perception (.825), Perceived safety (.809), Perceived service quality (.821), Attitude (.809), and Continued usage intention (.816) were greater than their respective inter-construct correlations. The highest correlation was observed between Attitude and Continued Usage Intention ($r = .638$).It remained below the square root of AVE for both constructs. It is revealed that Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied for all seven constructs. It provides the evidence that the constructs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity and represent empirically distinct concepts within the proposed model.

Multicollinearity diagnostics and autocorrelation analysis:-

Multicollinearity and autocorrelation diagnostics were conducted to ensure the suitability of the predictor variables. The tolerance values ranged from .972 to .988 and VIF values ranged from 1.012 to 1.028. Since all tolerance values were above .20 and the VIF values were well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5, there was no evidence of problematic multicollinearity among the predictor variables. The Durbin-Watson statistics was 1.903. This value was close to 2.It indicates that the residuals were reasonably independent and that autocorrelation was not a major concern. Further, the maximum condition index was 11.193, which also supports the absence of serious multicollinearity.

Table 4. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Decision
H1	Perceived Economic Benefit → Attitude	0.245	0.241	0.063	3.922	<0.001	Supported
H2	Perceived Mobility Freedom → Attitude	0.346	0.331	0.062	5.589	<0.001	Supported
H3	Social Empowerment Perception → Attitude	0.392	0.389	0.064	6.098	<0.001	Supported
H4	Perceived Safety	0.109	0.105	0.055	1.978	0.048	Supported

	→ Continued Usage Intention						
H5	Perceived Service Quality → Continued Usage Intention	0.400	0.385	0.059	6.821	<0.001	Supported
H6	Attitude → Continued Usage Intention	0.636	0.639	0.063	10.166	<0.001	Supported

The six hypothesised relationships were examined using the regression coefficients, standard errors, critical ratios and p-values. It is found that all six relationships were positive and statistically significant and it provides support for the proposed hypotheses. The perceived economic benefit had a positive effect on attitude. This suggests that women who experience greater financial savings from the scheme tend to view it more favourably. Similarly, the variable, the perceived mobility freedom also positively influenced attitude (B = .346, β = .331, p < .001). Women who feel that the scheme makes it easier to travel and gives them greater freedom of movement are more likely to develop a positive view of the scheme. Social empowerment perception showed the strongest influence on attitude (B = .392, β = .389, p < .001). This indicates that the scheme's perceived contribution to women's participation in social, educational and work-related activities plays an important role in shaping their overall attitude. Perceived safety had a relatively small but statistically significant positive effect on continued usage intention. Although the effect was modest and significant at the 5% level, it suggests that safety while travelling contributes to women's willingness to continue using the scheme. Perceived service quality had a stronger positive effect on continued usage intention (B = .400, β = .385, p < .001). Women who are more satisfied with the quality of the transport service are more likely to continue using the scheme. Attitude had the strongest effect on continued usage intention (B = .636, β = .639, p < .001). This shows that women who have a favourable overall opinion of the scheme are considerably more likely to intend to use it in the future.

The results showed that the three antecedents such as perceived economic benefit, perceived mobility freedom and social empowerment perception have jointly explained 43.0% of the variance in attitude (R^2 = .430) and this indicates that the proposed model accounts for a substantial proportion of the variation in women's attitudes towards the Priyadarshini Free Bus travel scheme. It is also found that Perceived safety, Perceived service quality and attitude collectively explained 55.5% of the variance in usage intention (R^2 = .555). Thus, the model demonstrates comparatively stronger explanatory power for continued usage intention than for attitude.

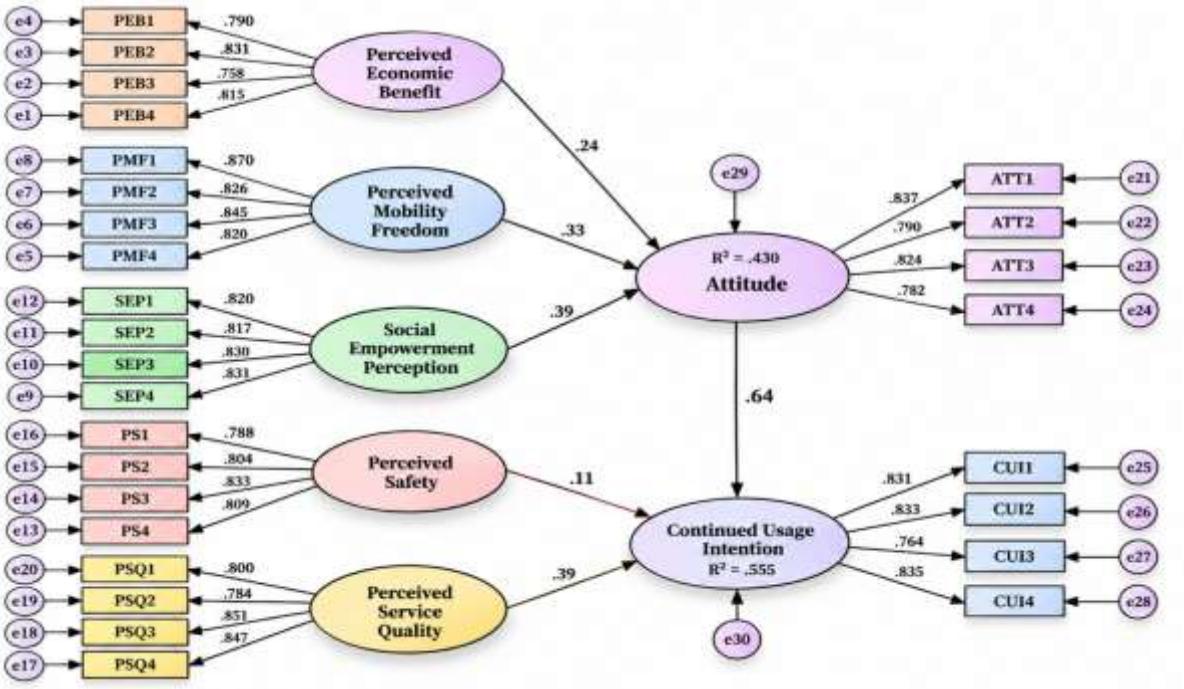


Figure 1 Structural equation modelling

Table 5. Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Criterion	Interpretation	Reference
CMIN/DF (χ^2/df)	1.154	< 3.00	very good fit	Kline (2023)
NFI	0.919	≥ 0.90	Good fit	Kline (2023)
RFI	0.908	≥ 0.90	Good fit	Kline (2023)
IFI	0.988	≥ 0.90; ≥ 0.95	Excellent fit	Hu & Bentler (1999); Kline (2023)
TLI	0.987	≥ 0.90; ≥ 0.95	Excellent fit	Hu & Bentler (1999); Kline (2023)
CFI	0.988	≥ 0.90; ≥ 0.95	Excellent fit	Hu & Bentler (1999); Kline (2023)
RMSEA	0.024	≤ 0.08; ≤ 0.06 preferred	Excellent fit	Hu & Bentler (1999); Kline (2023)

The goodness of fit statistics indicated that the proposed structural model provided a good fit to the observed data. The chi-square statistic was significant, $\chi^2(334) = 385.364$, $p = .027$.The relative chi-square was low (CMIN/DF = 1.154) and this indicates a satisfactory model fit. The incremental fit indices were also within acceptable ranges that is NFI = .919, RFI = .908, IFI = .988, TLI = .987 and CFI = .988. In particular, the IFI, TLI and CFI values exceeded .95.This indicates a close fit. The RMSEA was .024 and PCLOSE is 1.0.This further supports close model fit.

Managerial Implications:-

The relatively strong explanatory power of the model indicates that continued usage of the scheme is influenced not only by the economic benefit of free travel but also by women's perceptions of mobility, empowerment, safety, service quality and their overall attitude towards the scheme. So, KSRTC should focus on maintaining the economic attractiveness of the scheme while simultaneously improving the quality, reliability, frequency and accessibility of bus services. It is to be noted that particular attention should be given to women's safety through adequate lighting at bus stations and stops, effective complaint redressal mechanisms, surveillance facilities and responsive staff support. It is also recommended to improve the punctuality, cleanliness, seating availability, passenger information systems and staff behaviour can further enhance perceived service quality and strengthen positive attitudes towards the scheme. Transport officials should also periodically collect feedback from women beneficiaries to identify service gaps. KSRTC should incorporate their experiences into route planning and service improvement. From a policy perspective, the scheme should be viewed not merely as a free transportation initiative but as a broader women's mobility and social empowerment intervention. So, a regular monitoring of its impact on access to employment, education, healthcare and other social and economic opportunities is highly recommended.

Conclusion:-

The findings of the study indicate that the Priyadarshini scheme has considerable potential to improve women's mobility and encourage their continued use of public transportation. The results highlight that the benefits of the scheme extend beyond the financial savings offered to passengers. In particular, perceived economic benefit, perceived mobility freedom and social empowerment perception jointly explain 43 % of the variance in attitude towards the scheme. Similarly, perceived safety, perceived service quality and attitude collectively explain 56 % of the variance in continued usage intention. These findings are consistent with the broader arguments of earlier empirical studies on public transport adoption, which emphasize the importance of perceived benefits, service quality, safety and user experience in shaping passengers' attitudes and behavioural intentions. The findings also highlight the importance of considering women's mobility and empowerment alongside the economic benefits of free public transportation. Further research may also examine the long term effects of the scheme on women's employment opportunities, educational access, social participation and overall mobility patterns.

Appendix:-

Code	Item	
	Perceived Economic Benefit (PEB)	Lai,W T and Chen (2011), Zeithaml,V.A (1988)
PEB1	The Priyadarshini scheme significantly reduces my transportation expenses.	
PEB2	I save a considerable amount of money by using Priyadarshini bus services.	
PEB3	The scheme reduces the financial burden associated with my regular travel.	
PEB4	The financial benefits of the Priyadarshini scheme are valuable to me.	
	I. PERCEIVED MOBILITY FREEDOM (PMF)	**Porter, G. (2011), Adeel, M., Yeh, A. G.-O., & Zhang, F. (2017).**
PMF1	The Priyadarshini scheme gives me greater freedom to travel when necessary.	
PMF2	The scheme enables me to undertake journeys that I might otherwise avoid because of travel costs.	
PMF3	The scheme has increased my ability to travel independently.	
PMF4	The scheme allows me to make travel decisions with fewer financial constraints.	
	II. PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY (PSQ)	Parasuraman,A (1988), Lai,W T andChen (2011),Eboli, L., L,and Mazzulla
PSQ1	Priyadarshini buses generally provide reliable transportation services.	
PSQ2	Priyadarshini bus services are available when I need them.	
PSQ3	Priyadarshini buses provide an acceptable level of comfort during travel.	
PSQ4	The overall quality of Priyadarshini bus services meets my expectations.	
	Perceived Safety (PS)	Ceccato V, and Loukaitou-Sideris (2004),Delbosc,A., and Curries,G (2012)
PS1	I feel safe while travelling on Priyadarshini buses.	
PS2	I feel safe when boarding and getting down from Priyadarshini buses.	
PS3	The travelling conditions on Priyadarshini buses are generally safe.	
PS4	I am confident about my personal safety when using the Priyadarshini scheme.	
	III. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT PERCEPTION (SEP)	Kabeer, N. (1999). Malhotra, A., Schuler, S. R., & Boender, C. (2002).
SEP1	The Priyadarshini scheme has increased my ability to participate in social activities.	
SEP2	The scheme makes it easier for me to access education, employment and other opportunities.	
SEP3	The scheme has increased my independence in making travel-related decisions.	
SEP4	The scheme contributes to greater mobility and social participation among women.	
	IV. ATTITUDE TOWARDS PRIYADARSHINI SCHEME (ATT)	Ajzen,I (1991),Armitage,C.J., and Conner,M (2001)
ATT1	I have a favourable attitude towards the Priyadarshini scheme.	
ATT2	I consider the Priyadarshini scheme beneficial.	
ATT3	I have a positive overall opinion of the Priyadarshini scheme.	
ATT4	I believe that the Priyadarshini scheme is a worthwhile public-transport initiative.	
	V. CONTINUED USAGE INTENTION (CUI)	Lai,W T andChen (2011),Jen,W., and Hu,K.C (2003)
CUI1	I intend to continue using Priyadarshini bus services whenever possible.	
CUI2	I will use Priyadarshini buses regularly in the future.	

CUI3	I would prefer to use Priyadarshini services when they meet my travel requirements.	
CUI4	I expect to continue using the Priyadarshini scheme in the future.	

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