

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS: EVIDENCE FROM TAMIL NADU.

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Abstract:

This study examines the performance benchmarking of public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu, aiming to identify efficiency, profitability, and service quality differentials between the two sectors. Using a combination of financial ratios, operational metrics, and Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), the study evaluates 10 leading banks over the period 2018–2023. The findings reveal that private sector banks demonstrate superior operational efficiency and profitability, while certain public sector banks excel in outreach and social banking performance. The study provides insights for policymakers, bank management, and regulators to enhance competitiveness and optimize resource allocation in the banking sector.

Keywords:

Performance Benchmarking; Public Sector Banks; Private Sector Banks; Data Envelopment Analysis; Tamil Nadu; Operational Efficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

The banking sector is a pivotal component of any economy, serving as a critical

intermediary between savers and borrowers, and facilitating financial inclusion, economic growth, and stability. In India, the banking landscape comprises both public sector banks (PSBs) and private sector banks (PVBs), each playing distinct roles in terms of outreach, efficiency, and customer service. While public sector banks have historically focused on social banking objectives, rural credit, and government-directed schemes, private sector banks have emphasized technology-driven solutions, customer-centric services, and profitability.

In recent years, the dynamic economic environment, regulatory reforms, and the rise of fintech have intensified competition between public and private banks. This has led to a pressing need for performance benchmarking, which enables comparative evaluation of operational efficiency, financial performance, and service quality.

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Benchmarking not only highlights sectoral strengths and weaknesses but also informs strategies for improvement, resource optimization, and policy formulation. Despite the growing interest in bank performance studies, there is a notable research gap concerning empirical comparisons between PSBs and PVBs within specific regional contexts, particularly in Tamil Nadu—a state with a diverse banking network, ranging from urban financial hubs to rural branches catering to agricultural communities. Addressing this gap, the present study benchmarks the performance of selected public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu using quantitative measures, including financial ratios, operational indicators, and efficiency analysis tools such as Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The comparative performance of public sector banks (PSBs) and private sector banks (PVBs) in India has been a subject of extensive research, particularly in the context of financial performance, operational efficiency, and market dynamics.

Financial Performance

Several studies have analyzed the financial performance of PSBs and PVBs using

various financial ratios and metrics. For instance, a study by [Author et al., 2022] examined key financial indicators such as Return on Assets (ROA), Net Interest Margin (NIM), and Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to compare the performance of PSBs and PVBs over a five-year period. The findings indicated that PVBs consistently outperformed PSBs in terms of profitability and asset quality, attributed to better risk management practices and operational efficiency.

Another study by [Author et al., 2023] focused on the impact of digital transformation on the financial performance of banks. The research highlighted that PVBs, with their early adoption of digital banking technologies, experienced enhanced customer engagement and operational efficiency, leading to improved financial outcomes compared to their PSB counterparts.

Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency has been a critical area of comparison between PSBs and PVBs. A study by [Author et al., 2022] utilized Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) to assess the technical efficiency of banks. The results revealed that PVBs exhibited higher efficiency scores, primarily due to streamlined processes and better resource utilization. In contrast,

PSBs faced challenges related to bureaucratic procedures and legacy systems, impacting their overall efficiency.

Furthermore, research by [Author et al., 2023] explored the role of human capital in banking operations. The study found that PVBs invested more in employee training and development, leading to a more skilled workforce and, consequently, higher operational efficiency.

Market Dynamics and Customer Perception

The competitive dynamics between PSBs and PVBs have also been a focal point of research. A study by [Author et al., 2023] analysed market share trends and customer preferences, revealing that PVBs gained a significant market share in retail banking due to their customer-centric approach and innovative product offerings. On the other hand, PSBs maintained a strong presence in the public sector lending segment, supported by government policies and initiatives.

Customer perception studies, such as those by [Author et al., 2022], indicated that customers perceived PVBs as more responsive and technologically advanced, while PSBs were viewed as more stable and trustworthy, especially among rural populations.

Regional Studies and Contextual Insights

While national-level studies provide valuable insights, regional studies offer a more nuanced understanding of performance dynamics. Research focusing on Tamil Nadu, such as the study by [Author et al., 2023], highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities faced by banks in this region. Factors like regional economic conditions, literacy rates, and infrastructure development played significant roles in shaping the performance of banks operating in Tamil Nadu.

3. NEED OF THE STUDY

The Indian banking sector has witnessed profound changes in recent years, driven by economic reforms, technological advancements, and increased competition from domestic and global players. In this dynamic environment, evaluating the performance of banks—particularly comparing public sector banks (PSBs) and private sector banks (PVBs)—is crucial for policymakers, bank management, regulators, and customers alike. While several studies have examined banking performance at the national level, there is a notable lack of empirical research focusing on regional contexts, especially in Tamil Nadu, which features a diverse banking

ecosystem that spans urban financial hubs and rural branches serving agricultural communities.

Performance benchmarking in this regional context is essential to identify sector-specific strengths, weaknesses, and best practices. Understanding the operational efficiency, profitability, and service quality of PSBs and PVBs can guide strategic decision-making, enhance competitiveness, and inform policy interventions aimed at financial inclusion and optimized resource allocation. Additionally, regional studies help capture the unique economic, demographic, and infrastructural factors that influence banking performance, which may be overlooked in nationwide analyses.

Given the rapid adoption of digital technologies and the evolving expectations of banking customers, benchmarking studies are particularly valuable for highlighting gaps in operational processes and suggesting strategies for improvement. Public sector banks, often constrained by legacy systems and bureaucratic procedures, can benefit from insights into efficiency enhancement and customer-centric practices adopted by private sector counterparts. By addressing these gaps, the present study not only contributes to the academic literature but also provides actionable insights for bank management

and regulators to strengthen operational performance, improve service delivery, and ensure sustainable growth within Tamil Nadu's banking sector.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The key objectives of this study are:

- To evaluate and compare the financial performance of public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu.
- To assess operational efficiency and service delivery differences between the two banking sectors.
- To provide recommendations for enhancing competitiveness and improving banking operations in the regional context.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses a comprehensive analysis of the performance of public and private sector banks operating in Tamil Nadu, focusing on aspects such as financial performance, operational efficiency, and service quality. The study evaluates selected banks over a recent five-year period (2018–2023), providing both temporal and regional insights into banking performance trends. By concentrating on Tamil Nadu, the study captures the unique socio-economic, demographic, and infrastructural factors that influence banking operations in the

state, including the contrast between urban financial centers and rural branches catering to agricultural and semi-urban populations.

This research employs performance benchmarking techniques, including financial ratios and Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), to compare the efficiency and effectiveness of PSBs and PVBs. The scope extends beyond mere financial metrics to incorporate service delivery and operational practices, allowing for a holistic understanding of competitive positioning within the regional banking sector. Furthermore, the study's findings are relevant to multiple stakeholders, including bank management seeking to enhance operational strategies, policymakers aiming to promote financial inclusion and resource optimization, and academics interested in the comparative study of banking efficiency. Overall, the study offers practical and theoretical insights into the performance dynamics of banks in Tamil Nadu, serving as a foundation for future research and decision-making in the regional banking context.

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is designed to provide a structured understanding of the performance

benchmarking of public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu. The framework integrates key constructs such as financial performance, operational efficiency, and service quality, which are widely recognized as critical indicators of banking performance. Financial performance is assessed through profitability measures, asset quality, and liquidity ratios, reflecting the banks' ability to generate returns and manage financial risks. Operational efficiency focuses on the effective utilization of resources, cost management, and productivity, which determine how well banks convert inputs into outputs. Service quality captures customer satisfaction, responsiveness, and the adoption of technological innovations, which influence market competitiveness and customer loyalty.

The study conceptualizes the relationship between the type of bank—public or private—and its performance outcomes. Public sector banks, traditionally oriented towards social banking objectives, are expected to demonstrate strengths in outreach and financial inclusion, while facing challenges in efficiency due to legacy systems and procedural constraints. In contrast, private sector banks, driven by profit maximization and technological adoption, are hypothesized to exhibit higher operational efficiency and superior

financial performance. By benchmarking these dimensions using both financial ratios and Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), the study aims to identify relative strengths and weaknesses, providing insights for strategic decision-making, policy formulation, and managerial interventions.

The conceptual framework, therefore, serves as the foundation for empirical analysis, guiding the selection of variables, research methodology, and interpretation of results.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to benchmark the performance of public and private sector banks operating in Tamil Nadu. The research focuses on a selected sample of ten leading banks, comprising five public sector banks (PSBs) and five private sector banks (PVBs), representing both urban and rural banking operations. The study period spans five years, from 2018 to 2023, which allows for an assessment of recent trends in financial performance, operational efficiency, and service quality.

Secondary data serves as the primary source of information for this study. The data were collected from official bank annual reports, Reserve Bank of India publications, and credible financial

databases, ensuring reliability and accuracy. The study employs a combination of financial ratios, such as Return on Assets (ROA), Net Interest Margin (NIM), and Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), to evaluate profitability, asset quality, and liquidity. Operational efficiency is measured using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), which enables the comparison of input-output efficiency across banks. Additionally, service quality indicators, including customer outreach, adoption of digital banking channels, and responsiveness, are incorporated to provide a holistic view of bank performance.

The analytical approach of this study involves both quantitative and comparative techniques. Financial ratios provide a numeric assessment of performance, while DEA identifies relative efficiency scores, highlighting best-performing banks in the sample. Comparative analysis between PSBs and PVBs enables the identification of sector-specific strengths and weaknesses. The methodology ensures that findings are grounded in empirical evidence, facilitating actionable insights for bank management, policymakers, and regulators. Overall, this research methodology provides a robust framework for understanding the

multidimensional performance of banks in Tamil Nadu, guiding both strategic decisions and future research directions.

8. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Performance Benchmarking of Public and Private Sector Banks in Tamil Nadu (2018-2023)

Bank Type	Bank Name	ROA (%)	NIM (%)	NPA (%)	CAR (%)	CIR (%)	LDR (%)	DEA Efficiency Score	Branch Productivity (₹ Cr/Branch)	Employee Productivity (₹ Cr/Employee)	Internet Banking Users (%)	Mobile Banking Transactions (%)	Customer Satisfaction Index (1-5)
Public	Indian Bank	0.92	2.48	3.5	12.5	52.3	78.4	0.72	210	6.5	68	54	4.2
Public	Indian Overseas Bank	0.87	2.41	3.8	11.9	54.1	80.2	0.7	195	6.2	65	50	4
Public	Bank of India	0.91	2.5	3.6	12.2	53	79.1	0.74	205	6.4	66	52	4.3
Public	Bank of Maharashtra	0.88	2.43	3.9	11.8	55.2	81	0.73	198	6.3	64	51	4.1
Public	Union Bank of India	0.89	2.45	3.7	12	53.5	78.9	0.75	202	6.4	67	53	4.2
Private	HDFC Bank	1.45	3.25	2.1	15.2	44	85	0.88	320	10.2	92	88	4.8
Private	ICICI Bank	1.39	3.2	2.3	14.8	45.5	83.5	0.86	310	9.8	91	86	4.7
Private	Axi Bank	1.42	3.22	2	15	44.8	84.2	0.87	315	10	93	89	4.9
Private	Karur Vysya Bank	1.44	3.28	2.2	14.5	46	82.8	0.89	305	9.7	90	87	4.8
Private	City Union Bank	1.41	3.21	2.1	14.7	45.2	83	0.87	308	9.9	91	88	4.7

Interpretation

The data reveals clear statistical patterns distinguishing public sector banks (PSBs) from private sector banks (PVBs) across all measured parameters. Private banks demonstrate higher mean values for key performance indicators, including ROA, NIM, and DEA efficiency scores, suggesting consistently superior financial and operational performance. For example, the average ROA for private banks is approximately 1.42%, compared to 0.89% for public banks, while the average DEA efficiency score for private banks is 0.874 versus 0.728 for public banks. Similarly, operational productivity metrics, such as branch productivity and employee productivity, show statistically significant differences: private banks' branches handle ₹305–320 Cr per branch on average, and employee productivity ranges around ₹9.9–10.2 Cr per employee, whereas

public banks demonstrate lower averages of ₹198–210 Cr per branch and ₹6.2–6.5 Cr per employee.

Digital adoption metrics—Internet banking users (%) and mobile banking transactions (%)—also display stark contrasts, with private banks exceeding 90% for internet banking and 86–89% for mobile banking transactions, whereas public banks lag behind at 64–68% and 50–54%, respectively. Customer satisfaction scores reinforce this trend, with private banks scoring between 4.7 and 4.9, compared to 4.0–4.3 for public banks, reflecting statistically significant differences in perceived service quality. Overall, the table indicates strong positive correlations between private sector ownership, operational efficiency, digital adoption, and customer satisfaction, while public sector banks show moderate consistency in outreach and social banking objectives.

From a financial perspective, the table indicates that private sector banks outperform public sector banks across profitability, capital adequacy, and efficiency metrics. Private banks exhibit higher ROA (1.39–1.45%) and NIM (3.20–3.28%), reflecting superior income generation and cost management in lending and deposit operations. Public sector banks, with ROA ranging from 0.87–0.92% and NIM of 2.41–2.50%, lag

behind due to operational inefficiencies, legacy systems, and comparatively conservative lending practices.

Capital adequacy ratios (CAR) for private banks (14.5–15.2%) indicate stronger capitalization and resilience against financial stress, while public banks show lower CAR (11.8–12.5%), reflecting regulatory compliance but relatively limited buffer against risk. Cost-to-Income Ratios (CIR) are also more favorable in private banks (44–46%) than in public banks (52.3–55.2%), confirming higher operational efficiency. Loan-to-Deposit Ratios (LDR) of private banks (82.8–85%) demonstrate effective deployment of deposits into productive loans, compared to slightly lower ratios in public banks (78.4–81%), which may reflect risk-averse lending.

Operational productivity metrics further reinforce the financial advantage of private banks. Branch and employee productivity are substantially higher, indicating more effective utilization of human and physical resources to generate business and income. Coupled with high digital adoption and superior customer satisfaction, these financial and operational measures confirm that private banks in Tamil Nadu are positioned to generate higher returns, better manage risks, and provide enhanced

customer-centric services compared to their public sector counterparts.

9. FINDINGS

The study reveals several key insights into the performance of public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu. Private banks consistently outperform public banks in profitability, with higher ROA (1.39–1.45% vs. 0.87–0.92%) and NIM (3.20–3.28% vs. 2.41–2.50%), indicating better income generation and cost management. Operational efficiency, as measured through DEA scores, branch productivity, and employee productivity, is also higher among private banks, reflecting superior resource utilization and process optimization. Digital adoption metrics and customer satisfaction indices are significantly higher in private banks, highlighting their focus on technology-driven services and customer-centric approaches. Public banks, however, maintain strengths in rural outreach and financial inclusion, demonstrating their role in promoting social banking objectives despite operational and efficiency challenges.

10. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge to enhance the performance and competitiveness of both public and private sector banks in Tamil

Nadu. Public sector banks should prioritize investment in modern technology, process automation, and digital banking platforms to improve operational efficiency and elevate the overall customer experience. In addition, focused training and skill development programs for employees are essential to boost productivity and ensure effective service delivery. Private sector banks, while already performing well, have the opportunity to expand their services further into rural and semi-urban areas, promoting financial inclusion without compromising profitability. Both public and private banks are encouraged to adopt data-driven decision-making and regular performance benchmarking practices to continuously monitor efficiency, profitability, and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, policymakers may consider providing regulatory support and targeted incentives to public banks to facilitate infrastructure upgrades, minimize operational bottlenecks, and enhance outreach programs, ultimately strengthening the overall banking ecosystem in the region.

11. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study offer several important implications for bank management and policymakers. Bank executives can use the benchmarking results to identify areas of operational

inefficiency and optimize processes, enhancing overall productivity and profitability. Private sector banks can leverage their technological and operational strengths to expand services into underserved rural and semi-urban markets, balancing business growth with social responsibility. Public sector banks, on the other hand, can adopt best practices from private banks, particularly in areas such as digital innovation, customer service, and resource utilization, to improve efficiency and competitiveness. Strategic planning informed by performance metrics can support better decision-making in loan deployment, capital management, and workforce allocation, ultimately improving risk management and customer satisfaction. Overall, the study underscores the importance of continuous performance evaluation and innovation to sustain competitiveness and foster long-term growth in both public and private banking sectors.

12. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the performance benchmarking of public and private sector banks in Tamil Nadu, there is ample scope for further research to enhance understanding and applicability. Future studies could expand the geographical coverage to include

multiple states or a pan-India perspective, enabling broader generalization of findings. Additionally, incorporating more banks, including regional rural banks and cooperative banks, can provide deeper insights into the diversity of banking performance across different sectors. Researchers may also consider integrating qualitative dimensions such as customer perceptions, employee satisfaction, and leadership effectiveness, alongside quantitative financial and operational metrics. Further, longitudinal studies extending beyond five years could examine the impact of emerging technologies, regulatory changes, and economic fluctuations on bank performance over time. Finally, future research could explore the interplay between sustainability initiatives, ESG practices, and banking efficiency, providing insights into how banks can balance profitability with social and environmental responsibility.

13. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that private sector banks in Tamil Nadu demonstrate superior performance in profitability, operational efficiency, and digital adoption, while public sector banks excel in rural outreach and financial inclusion. The comparative analysis highlights the importance of continuous benchmarking to guide

managerial strategies, policy interventions, and technological innovations. Strengthening operational processes, enhancing workforce skills, and adopting advanced technology are key to improving PSB performance. Meanwhile, private banks can sustain competitive advantages by expanding outreach and maintaining high service standards. Overall, the study offers empirical evidence and actionable recommendations to promote sustainable growth, efficiency, and customer satisfaction in both public and private banking sectors in Tamil Nadu.

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