

Food and Beverage Service Quality in Indian Railway

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Abstract – Indian Railways cross the catering industries and facilities delivered every day to 22 million travelers. Improving catering quality is a phase that is continuing. Indian Railways has established an effective and institutionalized system to track the standard and hygiene of catering facilities by frequent inspections at different levels in its efforts to provide passengers with safe and hygienic food. The degree of customer satisfaction is often tracked routinely by direct and other methods of coping with catering grievances. This experiment is carried out on a group of 80 passengers in selected trains to evaluate catering satisfaction standards for Indian Railways. The respondents were randomly chosen from the community.

Key Words: Indian Railway, Service Quality, Satisfaction Level

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INTRODUCTION

Service has been increasingly relevant in the economy of today and is evidenced by the advent of the word 'market economy.' Service providers must consider their consumers' needs and satisfy them by delivering premium services. Satisfaction can be represented as a mixture of customer service standards and real service performance in individual purchases and full-service meetings. Service quality represents the passenger's expectations of transit performance; claims that station efficiency has a significant effect in terms of customer experience overall in rail travel.

Indian Railways has a nationwide network and is a leading supplier of air transport services in the world, with numerous developments in countering the challenge of air and road transport.

This is important for calculating the level of service offered on Indian Railway platforms. This is an effort to determine the quality of service operation and the efficiency of various service providers at one of India's busiest railway stations.

HISTORY OF CATERING SERVICES IN INDIAN RAILWAY

On April 16, 1853, the Indian Railways (IR) began moving 53 km between Mumbai and Thane. It also has one of the world's biggest rail networks, with

64,460 kilometres of length road route. It provides millions of passengers a convenient and reliable means of travel and hence plays a significant role in the country's social and economic growth.

The sheer amount of passenger traffic implies a successful passenger service strategy for Indian Railways. Catering on Indian Railways is really popular and it is crucial to consider this as one of the most valuable passenger facilities. Railways understand this and have taken accountability for it into account in the Citizen's Passenger Facilities Charter on Indian Railways. The charter aims to include mobile and static catering facilities.

Indian Railway catering / sales systems consist of the following facilities: -

- (i) Refreshment halls, supermarkets, fast food centres and snack bars, shops, shops for meat / fruit drinks, hot and cold drink dispensers, numerous Curio products stalls, train stations ice cream parlour etc.
- (ii) Tea stands at stations on the roadside.
- (iii) Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express seamless on-board catering facilities.

- (iv) Services on long and medium distance chosen superfast and express services via pantry buses.
- (v) Simple kitchens for on-board catering ready-made meals.
- (vi) On board catering / sales services via static units (trains without catering vehicles).

The history of Indian Railways catering has been distinguished by abrupt and periodic shifts in its values and policies. From the very beginning, Indian Railways catering services is operated by private parties. In 1915, the former Bengal-Nagpur Railway implemented catering in the western style by departmentally operated units. Departmental catering began on the Southern Railway in 1920.

In 1954, the government formed an Alagesan Committee to investigate all aspects of catering. The Committee suggested that the trains without departmental catering begin with an experiment with an economic catering organization to establish a paradigm of quality and operation. As a consequence, departmental catering was adopted by other railways.

In 1967, the Ministry of Railways formed a committee under the chairmanship of the then Minister of State for Railways called "Railway Catering and Passenger Amenities Committee" which made the following recommendation:

- (i) Railways should enhance their current catering business and boost their efficiency and facilities. In addition, expanding departmental catering may be suggested until economic steps have been successful.
- (ii) The new concept of 'no benefit no loss' operating departmental catering should be revised so as to allow for a limited benefit of three or four percent which should be replenished throughout the operation

The Minister of Railways made the following statement in his budget speech in 1979-1980: "The establishment of an independent railway catering business under the administrative control of the Railways Ministry for the management of all catering services on the Indian Rails was introduced by many Members of the parliament and others. This will be carefully investigated.

Following this declaration, a one-man railway catering specialist committee was set up. The Committee suggested that the period for a different catering firm could not be correct. This can therefore be investigated at a later date.

At the 1991-92 budget address, the Minister of Railways declared the privatization of railway catering services. As a consequence of this decision, the Chief Commercial Superintendents (CCMs) met on 14.10.1991 in the Railway Commission. Decisions were made following:

- (i) In addition, there should be no departmental administration catering / sales systems to be utilised and all current static and mobile devices should be operated exclusively by licensees.
- (ii) While current departmental divisions may be privatized in spite of the different problems involved, primarily employee concerns, privatization must be carried out in stages.

In 1999, it was eventually agreed by Railways to de-cater Indian Railways to a corporation and a report was sent for Cabinet before the Cabinet Committee. The Union Cabinet of 27 March 1999 authorized a full transition of railway catering operations, whether departmental or franchised, to the new company with personnel and railways from this role. Therefore, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) was formed as a public sector company under the administration of the Ministry of Railways under the Companies Act of 1956 on 27 September 1999.

IRCTC became completely functional after the creation of the unified board on 1 August 2001. The business transformed the shape of the catering sector through its effective preparation and control on railways. Through 2009-10, revenue of departmental catering were '150,06 crore, and license fees paid by catering / selling contractors were 205,21 crore.

However, a new catering strategy was proposed in the 2010 railway budget. It revised the position of catering services management agency on Indian Railways. Under the new scheme, catering facilities (except Food Plazas, Food Courts and Fast Food Units) would be integrated into departmental administration by Zonal Railway rather than IRCTC. IRCTC would, nevertheless, continue to be an Indian Railway Service Provider and is responsible for the management of premium and top end outlets such as Food Plazas, Food Courts and Fast Food Units including institutional catering operations outside the Railways.

During 2010-11, approximately 11,237 static catering units and 291 pairs of train services were offered by pantry cars and in 136 trains through train side sales. The functions of 51 departmental catering units were Zonal Railways and IRCTC 721. 10,521 and 371 catering units were run by private licensees under Zonal Railways and IRCTC.

AVAILABILITY OF FOOD SERVICES AT VARIOUS STATIONS AND TRAINS

Duronto, Rajdhani, long-haul main trains, super-fast trains and E-mail / Express trains of more than 24 hour travel time should be linked to the cupboards. The proposal stipulated that pantry cars could be applied to Premium / Superfast and Mail / Express trains more and more. Priority will be given to the allocation of pantry cars for different Zonal railways:

1. Duronto and Rajdhani Express trains have first preference.
2. Second preference for luxury long-distance, superfast services.
3. Third preference for e-mail / express trains for either path for 24 hours.
4. Fourth priority: remainder of the ships, priorities for the vestibules.

The policy defined priority for the attachment of cars to premium long haulage buses, superfast trains and Mail / Express trains for more than 24 hours. However, the audit noted that pantry cars were not accessible in 291 trains of the 718 mail / express trains operated for longer than 24 hours.

Joint audits of 80 chosen trains were carried out

1. For nine trains operating for more than 24 hours, there was no pantry car. In seven 12 of the 9 trains, neither train-side sales facilities were given nor a base kitchen was named for cooking.
2. Similarly, there was no pantry car for ten trains operating for more than 12 hours but fewer than 24 hours. Eight of these ten trains did not have train-side sales facilities or designate any base kitchen for cooking.
3. Train No. 12403/12404, operating continuously for 16 hours (NCR), did not have any catering / e-catering facilities. Passengers have shared a desire to prepare for this train during the passenger survey of 55 passengers (27 upside and 28 down side).
4. The NER Gorakhpur – Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Express (15018) has no pantry car for more than 36 hours (2 days and 1 night). Similarly, there's no pantry car in Gorakhdham Superfast Express (12555), which operates for over 12 hours. Passengers are allowed to take unregistered vendor facilities throughout the whole ride. It was noticed that these trains operated without pantry cars during the joint inspection (July 2016 via Oktober 2016) of

Train No.13248 Guwahati Rajendranagar Capital Express and Train No.15662 Kamakhya-Ranchi Express. It was also found that about 25-30 unregistered suppliers were selling in some train's electronic products such as bread omelette, roti-sabji, biryani, China, tobacco, cigarettes, jhalmuri, etc. for unapproved / unbranded / local goods. In the railways, passengers stressed the need for the passenger car in these cars.

The amount of facilities offered by trains therefore demanded a considerable increase. The collective inspections of static catering units on the chosen 74 stations between July 2016 and October 2016 have shown that

1. Six Class A and A1 stations, including Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Rajendra Nagar, Guwahati, Kamakhya, Rourkela, Kanyakumari and Chennai Central, did not have the Food Plaza / Food Court / Fast Food Unit / Refreshment Room facilities.
2. Automatic Vending Machines (AVMs)14 were also not accessible at four of these stations (Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Rajendra Nagar, Guwahati and Kamakhya).
3. Of the 74 stations with joint audit inspections, 5515 AVMs were not given.
4. Both 20 automated vending machines purchased by IRCTC were removed in the NCR on 30 April 2016.

POOR QUALITY OF FOOD

- Catering facilities are typically outsourced; safety monitoring have not been conducted on a daily basis.
- Contracts would typically be completed by small traders who plan to gain more money in the contract duration than selling decent food.
- There are no background checks throughout the screening of vendors.
- There is no sense of duty when they rely on collecting rather than fulfilling their duties.
- Guest entrance into a cupboard is permitted to other coaches that potentially produce more dirt than money.
- Insufficient food storage services.

- Most travelers are not completely happy with the cleanliness of buses.

Passengers are frustrated with bathroom cleaning. Yet they are pleased with the actions of railway workers. Passengers are still not completely pleased with the facilities provided by car managers. Railway needs to increase the consistency of the food provided by the catering coach for passengers and to advise catering workers to be courteous and attentive towards the passengers.

FOOD QUALITY AND HYGIENE

This is by far the most critical subject to be discussed. Most concerns refer to the consistency of the food supplied. There are still several questions over food safety. Such components of nutritional safety and hygiene facilities are:

- a. Food Quantity: Several passengers report that they do not receive enough food.
- b. Variety of food: Travelers, often on distance trains, often claim that all travels offer the same menu. You want the quality of food you get.
- c. Degree of hygiene: This is one factor that draws the most reports. There are also concerns posed by travellers regarding the food that does not meet with the correct requirements.
- d. Packaging: Inaccurate packaging is always important.
- e. Meal scheduling: sometimes, when the train is late, the meal scheduling is disrupted and hence the railway catering services get a bad feeling.
- f. Meal Temperature: Cold meals frequently contribute to criticism of on-board and off-board catering facilities
- g. Pace of delivery: the timeframe between order placing to service delivery is vital

IMPROVEMENTS OF CATERING SERVICES

1. Only e-catering would be used to offer a-la-carte goods in trains to resolve passengers' overload concerns and also ensure the supply of regular food during transit.
2. The regular meals to be prepared for excess in the several Rs . 10.
3. Zonal Railways and IRCTC should encourage the selling of read to eat (RTE)

food goods at a maximum retail price to give passengers options.

4. Rationalization of costs to monitor overcharges and adjustment of inflation-related catering costs.
5. Appropriate IRCTC supervisory powers to Zonal Railways.
6. To be a consumer-focused organization through relentless creativity, technological led and the growth of human capital.
7. Optimize capital, improve employee morale through improving commodity purchases and creative campaign campaigns.
8. Upgrade and integrate structured catering facilities.
9. Expand key competency fields and expand growth prospects by successful public-sector alliances to optimize revenue development.
10. It will be a powerful and ethical work culture in the evolving services field by coordination, the growth and repositioning of Indian Railways.
11. Enhance good corporate integrity practices, quality compliance and productive cost reduction steps.
12. Providing tea / coffee packets on both trains on luxury trains for travelers. Meals can be served on the Rajdhani and Duroto trains as an alternative.
13. IRCTC should be totally barred from licensing and growing sales to private players for catering.
14. IRCTC can outsource operations such as support workers, service personnel, cooks, transport, packaging, etc. Yet the administrators can be assigned to supervise programmes.
15. Climate and cultural issues.

CONCLUSION

The Indian Railway (IR), 150 years old and older, is one of the biggest and oldest networks on the planet, named the nation's lifeline by railways. "Indian Railways plays a vital role in India's social and economic growth with a vast network throughout India. IRCTC strives to provide the travelling public with hygienic, reliable affordable by introducing best practices in commerce and the

hospitality industry. It has an egalitarian policy through which catering facilities are offered from the least-advantaged customer to the comparatively rich. IR is expected to establish an effective quality assurance network to guarantee passengers high quality and hygienic food. For all big contracts / units, gradually the ISO 22000 Specifications & universal norms in vogue will be introduced from time to time.

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