

Hospitality & Public Health - A Case Study of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)

Dr. D. Antony Ashok Kumar

Director & Principal,

SRM Institute of Hotel Management, Kattankulathur, Kancheepuram. Dist. 603203.

ABSTRACT:

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) started in 27th September, 1999, is a subsidiary of the Indian Railways that handles the catering, tourism and online ticketing operations of the railways. In 2010, Catering services provided by IRCTC were handed over to Indian railways (except few trains, all other trains were under the control of zonal railways) which aims to provide "Hygienic food at affordable price". IRCTCs focus on non-railway sectors starting from food kiosks and cafeteria to food courts has earned Rs. 29 cr from its 80 non-railway catering outlet across the country in 2012-2013, a jump of Rs 18 cr compared to previous year. Since, Indian Railways is one of the largest network which serves food to the travelling public, health and safety of the people is a prime concern. This study focuses on the key areas such as quality of food prepared & served and its impact on people's well-being. The railway catering serves food to the people through zonal catering divisions and onboard pantry cars. An analysis on the menu and the nutritional value of the food is done. It's highly imperative for the food handlers to follow food safety procedures such as HACCP, quality of water, personal hygiene and so on. For this research, qualitative analysis and non-random sampling is followed. An in-depth interview with the managers, passengers and contractors are done along with the site visit. In order to improve the quality of food served in the railways, IRCTC has taken slew of measures such as mobile squads for surprise checks, customer service no. for grievance against the food served on trains and onsite inspection. This study reveals the challenges faced by the railways such as varying level of quality across the regions and contractors & complaints relate to overcharging, less quantity & substandard quality.

Keywords: - Railway Catering, IRCTC, HACCP, Health, Quality.

BACKGROUND

The Indian Railways (IR), more than 150 years old, is among one of the largest and oldest systems in the world, fondly called by railway persons as the 'Lifeline of the Nation'. With an extensive network spread across the country, Indian Railways plays a key role in the social and economic development of India. IR is a principal mode of transportation for long haul freight movement in bulk, long distance passenger traffic, and mass rapid transit in suburban area. It occupies a unique position in the socio-economic map of the country and is considered as a vehicle and barometer of growth. It is also the biggest state-owned enterprise in India, and contributes about 1% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GNP) (White Paper on IR). Indian Railways, on one hand is seen as a government department with mandatory service obligations and on the other, is expected to function as a commercial organization, financially self-sufficient. IR provides the most energy efficient and economical mode of transportation in India.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC) is a Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Railways. IRCTC was incorporated on 27th September, 1999 (and began full-fledged operations on 3rd August, 2002) as an extended arm of the Indian Railways to upgrade, professionalize and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains and other locations and to

promote domestic and international tourism through development of budget hotels, special tour packages, information & commercial publicity and global reservation systems.

While discharging its mandate, the Company has made a significant mark in its passenger-services oriented business lines like setting up of Food Plazas on Railway premises, 'Railneer', Rail Tour Packages, Retailing, hotel Accommodations and 'Internet Ticketing' bringing great deal of professionalism into the operations. In addition to above, IRCTC will be primarily responsible for running of Food Plaza, Food Courts, and Fast food units etc. across the Indian Railway Network. IRCTC also started non railway catering project under which cafeteria were operated in many Indian ministries and institutes.

IRCTC aims to provide hygienic, good quality affordable food to the traveling public by adopting best trade and hospitality industry practices. It has an inclusive approach where from the least advantaged passenger to the relatively affluent will be provided catering services in a socially responsible manner. IR shall have the mandate to frame an efficient quality assurance programme to ensure good quality and hygienic food to the passengers. Progressively ISO 22000 Standards & relevant international standards in

vogue from time to time will be implemented for all major contracts/units.

As per new railway catering policy 2010 (introduced by Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee), catering services provided by IRCTC were handed over to Indian Railways. Now IRCTC is in charge of catering services on few trains such as all Duranto Exp., Farakka Exp., Maitree Express (train between India and Bangladesh), Kandhari Exp. and some Rajdhani Exp. rest all of train operated by zonal railways across India.

CATERING & HOSPITALITY:

Mobile & Static units including food plazas, FFUs & NRC Units:

The corporation is left with 41 mobile units (including duronto), four base kitchens, 14 Jan Aahars & 10 refreshment rooms after the complete transfer of licensing units and partial transfer of departmental units.

Mobile Catering

IRCTC is providing catering in all newly introduced Duronto Trains. 39 mobiles units are under the management of IRCTC. Ministry of Railways has directed to continue to manage Duronto trains including newly introduced Durontos.

Static Catering

In respect of static catering, few residual departmental and licensee operated units are still with IRCTC Which are likely to be transferred to zonal railways. The corporation has added 12 food plazas/ fast food units taking the total to 107.

Executive Lounges

In the month of September 2011, Ministry of Railways has directed IRCTC to undertake setting up of "Executive Lounges" at Railway stations to provide pre-departure and post-arrival comforts to Railway passengers, on the lines of lounges at airports and has approved 50 locations on Indian Railways network to provide the facility of "Executive Lounge". In line with the above directives, IRCTC has taken up setting up and management of Executive Lounge at New Delhi station as a pilot project which is likely to be commissioned in 2012-13. Ministry has also approved 50 locations on Indian Railways network to provide the facility of "Executive Lounge" at stations.

Central Kitchen

Inaugurated in the year 2011, the Corporation opened a State of Art Central Kitchen (food factory), in Noida. In the month of August-2011, the production of dry snacks such as assorted Sandwich was started, the cooked food production and supply was started in February 2012, after completion of trial phase. The Kitchen having built up area of 40000 Sq.ft. has capacity to produce 10000 meals per day in the first phase, with provision to produce 25000 meals per day

in the 2nd phase. This is one of its kind ultra-modern food factories and is in line with best flight catering kitchen. It is fully equipped with state of the art equipments from India and abroad. Both veg and non-veg meals are being prepared for supply to Railways and Corporate clients. Indian snacks and sweets items are being prepared in most hygienic manner for which separate section has been earmarked in the kitchen. Presently, Central Kitchen is supplying around 6000 evening snacks to all Departmental Rajdhani trains and also serving approx. 3000meals to corporate clients in Noida/Greater Noida area.

Non-Railway Catering

The Corporation has diversified into related areas like - Facility Management, Food Parks, Budget Hotels, Motels, Hospitality Hubs, Hospitality institutes etc. by harnessing the existing capabilities. The Corporation is also exploring the field of commercial catering at Malls, Business Centers, and Institutional Catering etc. 44 nos. of NRC units were added in 2012-13, taking the total number of NRC units to 83.

The following are the main sub-segments of the Non-Railway Catering areas:

- (a) **Catering:** Institutional Catering, Office Catering, Events Catering and management, Industries Catering, Highway Catering, Sports Catering, and Metro Catering.
- (b) **Facility Management:** Housekeeping Services, Front Office Management, Laundry Services, Security Services, Horticultures Services, Pantry Support Services, Maintenance and other related services.
- (c) **Management of Hotels & Guest Houses:** Provision of Catering Services (Cafeteria and Room Services), Provision of House-keeping services, Laundry Services, Security Services, Horticulture, Maintenance and other related services.

During the years, Corporation has signed MoUs with following institutions /organizations for providing Catering/Facility Management Services such as:

- (a) Writers Building, Kolkata
- (b) Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai
- (c) Info Park, Cochin
- (d) IIM, Indore
- (e) District Court, Bhopal
- (f) Postal Training Centre, Vadodara
- (g) Bhilai Steel Plant, Bhilai
- (h) NIFTEM, Kundli, Sonapat
- (i) Chandra Shekhar Azad University, Kanpur
- (j) Rourkela Steel Plant, Orissa
- (k) Delhi University, Saket court, High court, Calcutta and so on.

Budget Hotels:

IRCTC having experience in managing Budget Hotels/Rail Yatri Niwases has approached State Tourism Board and State Industrial Corporation such as Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Kerala etc. to provide space for setting up of Budget Hotels. Proposals from Kerala and West Bengal Governments are in advance stages and likely to be finalized in 2012-13.

INTERNET TICKETING

E-ticketing has been one of the biggest success stories of e-governance in India and has revolutionized the way the common man deals with the railway. It has resulted in great benefits in terms of convenience, time & energy saving as well as transparency.

IRCTC is in the process of further enhancement of the existing infrastructure to further improve services to the customers. IRCTC ticketing website continues to be considered a benchmark in the e-commerce industry. The numbers of transactions on the website are among the highest on the Asian Continent.

IRCTC is now looking at adopting technologies of the future to keep up with the changing technological environment. It has introduced e-wallet option that has become hassle free for the users. Ticketing through mobile is one such measure taken up during the year. Keeping in view the large number of mobile users in the country and the huge potential of this medium, IRCTC has launched the website <https://www.irctc.co.in/mobile> for ticketing through mobile phones. IRCTC mobile website is convenient and easy to use, can be accessed from any browser enabled mobile having basic GPRS activated on phone. At present about 1000 tickets per day are booked through mobile.

TRAVEL & TOURISM

The corporation has made significant progress in Travel and tourism sector of the business. IIRCTC has entered into an understanding with various governments to run Tirth Yathra trains for senior citizens, running 97 such trains carrying over 90000 passengers.

IRCTC has vision "To be the leading provider of high quality travel and tourism services in the country". The Corporation is planning to further expand tourism business in the coming years by expanding existing business lines as well as development of new lines such as Corporate travel, inbound as well as outbound travel services for individual travelers, institutional travel etc.

RAIL NEER (PACKAGED DRINKING WATER)

To enhance passenger amenities, the IRCTC launched Rail Neer, a branded packaged drinking water for the rail commuters. Rail Neer is processed, purified and bottled at

state-of-art plants. Completely automatic plant and no manual handling of product water at any stage. IRCTC stands for quality and has a key role in ensuring service and product of the highest quality for the rail passenger as well as visitor to any railway premises. Recently, To address the issue of wastage of drinking water, steps are being taken to setup a production line for 500 ml bottle at Nangloi plant. The 500 ml Rail Neer bottles will be served in Shatabdi trains having travelling time up to 5 hours.

In Railways, Three departments, including the commercial, mechanical and health wings are responsible for proper maintenance of the pantry cars and the quality of food. Departmentally Managed Units shall serve as beacon of excellence and define the quality paradigm for the licensee catering units. These units will be subject to rigorous monitoring and supervision through routine, surprise inspections and checks. A complaint monitoring cell was set up at zonal railway headquarters and divisional offices wherein all complaints received through complaint books, emails, SMS should be collected and a mechanism be devised to acknowledge the complaints / feedback within 24 hrs. Action taken on complaints should be monitored by the CCM of the zonal railway and DRM of the divisions on a monthly periodical basis. Complaints of repetitive nature should be taken up sternly. As a part of quality monitoring , Round the clock control monitoring ,Central catering monitoring cell (CCMC)has been set up in New Delhi , Where-in the passengers convey their complaints through a toll free telephone no.1800-111-321.

METHODOLOGY

The primary sources of data for study were "active" interviews, informal conversation, on-site observation and through questionnaires. The methodology adopted here is of an explorative design & both primary and secondary data have been used. In-depth interviews were undertaken for the purpose of obtaining information and better understanding of social development. The qualitative interviews are beneficial, inductive and are explanatory (Bell and Bryman, 2007). An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people. (Kahn and Cannell 1957). Indeed, respondents freely injected thoughts and feelings throughout the interview process. The relevant secondary data has been analyzed by referring tourism websites, annual reports, online books, journals, manuals, policies, observations & careful study of relevant literature.

HOSPITALITY& PUBLIC HEALTH- A Brief Review of Literature

Service quality is the decisive factor for any service organization to create the difference and obtain competitive Advantage. Quality changes the nature of business competition and, perhaps more than any other factor, it dictated how companies make products or deliver services.

In the global economy quality is just the entry ticket. It is recognized that high quality service is essential for organizations that want to be successful in their business (Parasuraman et al 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994). Allen and DiCesare (1976) considered that quality of service for public transport industry contained two categories: user and non – user categories. Under the user category, it consists of speed, reliability, comfort, convenience, safety, special services and innovations. For the non –user category, it is composed of system efficiency, pollution and demand. Sillock (1981) conceptualized service quality for public transport industry as the measures of accessibility, reliability, comfort, convenience and safety. Traditionally, the performance indicators for public transport are divided into two categories: efficiency and effectiveness. Under the efficiency category, the measures are concerned with the process that produce the services while the effectiveness category are used to determine how well the services provided are with respect to the objectives that are set for them (Pullen,1993). As of now, many academicians and practitioners have undertaken various works on other areas of management on Indian Railways but very limited work has been done in Service operations management (Shainesh and Mukul). This study will examine the service operations management and its impact on people well-being.

IRCTC & ITS IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hygienic Food at Affordable Price: The overall result indicates that IRCTC is providing Hygienic food at affordable price. Out of 50 respondents 40 (90%) were positive about food served in Duronto trains , food plazas and fast food chain & considered as value for their money.

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) said People are “Happy to have hygienic food at affordable price,” he said, adding “negotiations are on with some institutions to open cafeterias.”, has earned Rs 29 crore from its 80 non- railway catering outlets across the country in 2012-13, a jump of Rs 18 crore compared to previous year.

"We have now ventured into catering services, starting from food kiosks and cafeterias to food courts in the non- railway sector. There are about 80 such catering units in various government offices, educational institutions and other places," a senior IRCTC official said.

Catering in train was primary business of IRCTC before 2010. However, railways decided to divest the corporation of its catering contracts in trains as per the new catering policy in 2010 and as a result IRCTC has to look for new ventures in the non-railway sector.

"We explored catering business in government offices and other institutions. Currently we have cafeterias in Shastri Bhawan (New Delhi), Writers' Building and Kolkata High Court (Kolkata), Bhilai Steel Plant, Bhabha Atomic

Research Centre in Mumbai and in several other states as well," a senior IRCTC official said. IRCTC has also recently opened catering units at IIT- Chennai and Trivandrum Medical College, Delhi University, Vadodara Postal Training College, Cochin Info Park and Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow.

IRCTC & PUBLIC HEALTH

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity- W.H.O

85% of the respondents agreed IRCTC and its catering services has positive impact on health & well-being. Most people believe that they get quality food in Duronto /Rajdhani trains, Food plazas and fast food outlets. An improved understanding of the risk based approach and growing awareness about the impact of food safety on public health has led to make significant changes to their food control system in recent years.

Keeping in view the importance of food safety and other related issues of the food preparation and serving areas on static/mobile catering units, food safety & hygiene audit were performed against the criteria including cleaning and sanitation, food storage, personal hygiene, personal practices and pest control applicable to Railways. Recently, there has been increased public concern about food safety. Consumers are looking for assurances that their food is safe and its safety is maintained throughout the cooking process.

Based on the current trends, Indian eating habits has the desire for healthy meals. Whether eating at home or out, consumers are starting to demand healthy alternatives to the usual menu fair. This change has been spawned by increased public awareness of heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses. Along with disease awareness that has come in public education -most of all, by modification of the diet. People now take into account more than ever the amount of calories, fat, and sodium consumed. Other popular concerns include all natural ingredients and use of organic produce.

In addition to healthy foods, consumers are requesting more multicultural meals. With minority populations growing at increasing rates, the mobility of consumers, and the globalization of the marketplace, consumer tastes are broadening to include many different cultures. The concept of Dial-a-meal is growing & focusing on state of art technology which provides latest designs and kitchen equipments. Telephone / Mobile technology plays a vital role in the catering services. A passenger can place an order to IRCTC Food plazas available at major railway stations by giving his/her details like Train No., Coach No., Name, Berth Number, Date and Time of Journey. Passenger can choose from a wide range of varieties available at IRCTC Standard Menu. In case of Rajdhani and Shatabdi, a passenger can place an order through online while booking

his/her ticket. IRCTC is putting its best efforts to provide all the needs of the passengers to serve quality food at cost effective prices.

FOOD SAFETY AS VEHICLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

90% of the respondents expressed that they view food safety as a vehicle for public health. There is a growing concern over the Quality of food while travelling. They believe following food safety practices at the various food service outlets will ensure higher guest satisfaction and to reduce harmful effects on people health.

The health and economic consequences of food contamination often differ among countries and regions of the world and depend on factors such as climate, geography, type of crops produced, and the degree of social and economic development. Nonetheless, the basic principles for prevention and control of food contamination and thus food-borne diseases are similar. In general, three lines of defense may be envisioned.

- a. The first line of defense aims to improve the hygienic quality of raw foodstuffs at the agri/ aqua cultural level. By applying the principles of good agri/aquacultural practice and animal husbandry and by improving the environmental conditions under which animals and plants are grown, the hygienic quality of raw food products can be improved.
- b. The second line of defense utilizes food-processing technologies. For example, pasteurization, sterilization, fermentation, and irradiation can increase the availability of foods by extending their shelf life and can contribute to their safety by reducing or eliminating pathogenic microorganisms. In countries where milk pasteurization is common practice, it has been possible to prevent many diseases transmitted through milk. The application of an effective food safety assurance system is essential. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is an important development in this area. Its application would help to ensure the safety of processed and manufactured foods. Contemporary approaches to food safety foresee extension of the HACCP system throughout the food chain, from farm to table.
- c. The third and last line of defense is the most critical for microbiological hazards and will protect the health of consumers when the first two fail. It concerns the education of food handlers in the principles of safe food preparation. The term "food handlers" includes professional cooks, persons handling food in food service establishments, including street vending stands and mass catering

services, as well as those in charge of the preparation of food in the home. Special efforts should be made to educate those responsible for the preparation of the family's food. In this context, particular attention should be paid to women, who are usually responsible for the care of infants and young children—population groups in which morbidity and mortality rates for food-borne diseases are high.

Food should be considered not only an agricultural and/or trade commodity, but also a public health issue. Therefore, food safety has to be seen by the public health community as an essential public health function. Food safety must be integrated along the entire food chain, from farm to table, with the three sectors— government, industry and consumers-sharing responsibility. It is necessary that food safety forms an essential component of health-based nutrition policies and nutrition education

SERVICE QUALITY MANAGEMENT

95% of the respondents expressed a service quality is the key for customer satisfaction. They feel it should be more like airlines where human touch is more.

Tangible Factors of Pantry car Services:

The service is people processing: They would know the product quality in terms of taste. So taste is the tangibility factor. Packaging quality, service provider dress code, purity of water & packaging of water enhances the tangibility factors of pantry car services.

Service Offering:

Customer expectations are beliefs about service delivery that serves as standards or reference points against which performance is judged. Because customers compare their perceptions of performance with these reference points when evaluating service quality, thorough knowledge about customer expectations is critical to service marketers. Knowing what the customer expects is the first and possibly most critical step in delivering quality service.

Customer expectations in train vary from region to region. As India is diversified country IRCTC is trying hard to make common menu and also AI- Carte menu which satisfies the regional tastes and preferences.

Customer want services like Food Served hot, with premium quality at affordable prices. As every customer has zone of tolerance if the service drops below adequate service customer feels frustrated and their satisfaction with the provider will be undermined.

'Bundle of benefits' typically received by customers:

In Rajdhani and shatabdi trains different menus are available for passengers to make most of it. Food price i.e., package of bed tea to dinner are included in the Ticket fare for the

passengers. For the other superfast and express trains standard menu is to be utilized by the customers where the catering cost is not involved in passenger tariff. For this reason the cost of each item is clearly defined so that the customer's feels satisfied and value for product. Service is fast for the customers. Based on the packages different items are served in a combo style which is beneficiary for the passengers.

Service Quality Dimensions:

There are five service quality dimensions. They are Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

Tangibles

Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.

Reliability

Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

Responsiveness

Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service

Assurance

Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence

Empathy

Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers

Yes all the dimensions are applicable to this industry, Especially Responsiveness and Reliability is most important when compared to others. Because prompt service and delivery drags customers attention and wins confidence.

Customer's involvement in the service delivery:

Customers involvement in IRCTC catering services is done by continuous feedback right from the quality :effective or ineffective ,product appropriate or inappropriate and services productive or unproductive based on valuable suggestions given by customers IRCTC makes necessary changes in their service delivery mechanism.

QUALITY MONITORING - A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

90% of the respondents agreed that the continuous quality monitoring is essential for effective operations. IRCTC stringently adheres to HACCP/ISO 22000 and quality standards with the best in-house laboratory and R&D Center.

Monitoring for HACCP compliance

Senior officers having professional experience of providing catering services, and completed Lead Auditor Course have

been entrusted to monitor various Food Production Points to assure HACCP compliance.

Monitoring System- Customer Satisfaction Survey

In IRCTC, quality of Food & Service is assessed by conducting customer Satisfaction Surveys through Third Party professional agencies. During the year 2011-12, Duronto/Rajdhani trains as well as Food Plazas and Fast Food Units were covered under Customer Satisfaction Survey. The exercise was conducted twice, in Q2 and Q4 for 18 Duronto and 6 Rajdhani trains. The results of Q4 have shown an improvement of 3-5% in the case of Durontos /Rajdhani Expresses, over Q2. Also, Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been initiated in Food Plazas/Fast Food Units from year 2011-12. In the first phase, 89 such units were covered, out of which 33 units performed above 85%. For the remaining units, another round was conducted in Q4, after taking corrective actions which resulted in improvement of more than 90% as the Q4 survey reports, showed 64 units performed above 85%.

Food Safety Audit

Keeping in view the impact of food safety on public health, food safety audit is being conducted in IRCTC by third party agencies. During year 2011-12, 16 trains and 100 Food Plazas/FFUs were taken for conducting such audits. The performance in case of trains have been 75% and in case of Static units 70% which is above the target of 60%.

Food Safety and Hygiene audits of Non-Railway Catering units were also taken up in 2011-12 for the first time. A total of 10 units were covered and performance levels achieved were assessed to be above 70%.

ISO Certification

Quality of catering services has been enhanced through various quality measures including ISO2200 certification. It is mandatory for all licensees to obtain this certification for the license to be issued. During the year 2011-12, 23 food plazas/fast food units were ISO certified taking the total number to 52. For the year 2012-13, target of ISO certification for additional 12 such units has been fixed.

Round the Clock Control Monitoring

In order to monitor the quality of catering services, Central Control has been set up at New Delhi which is fully equipped with Phone, Fax, PC with broadband connectivity and scanner for easy accessibility to passengers. National Toll Free number has been provided. The central control is operative round the clock. In addition, all the Zonal Offices also have Zonal control offices to monitor the quality of catering services. The control offices monitor catering operations and handle complaints telephonically on the spot to the satisfaction of complaint.

DISCUSSION & PREDICTIONS:

IRCTC played a significant role in the growth of our economy since its inception. Though started in 2001, as an extended arm of Indian Railways, focusing on passenger oriented hospitality services, expanding its operation in Tourism, Internet ticketing, Non railway catering, Retailing, Rail Neer & so on. The management & supervision of catering services was handed over to IRCTC in 2005 and as per Catering Policy 2010 except for food plaza, fast food unit, food courts & certain departmental catering units, all other catering activities have been transferred back to Railways. Now IRCTC regrouped itself to foray Rail Neer, Non railway catering, targeting educational intuitions, hospitals, government offices such as PMO & Rail bhavan.

In 2008, IRCTC Recruited around 3000 peoples from various IHM & Food crafts institutes as cooks waiters and supervisors to deliver professionalized catering services. Since Indian Railways being one of the largest network in the world carrying more than 13million every day, food services always remains the challenging task. Through its commitment towards serving hygienic food at affordable price, the corporation has been credited for bring out radical change in the food service operation across its network. Some of the challenges faced by them were the difficulty in predicting the quantity of food required, profile of the travelers, their destination, since the chart was prepared only four hours before the departure time.

IRCTC has positive impact on public through its various practices, initiatives and various measures taken by them. Some of them are:

- Rigorous hygiene and quality parameters for its all Franchisees
 - The manual on quality for food & personal hygiene will define good hygiene practices to be followed in base kitchen, fast food units, food plaza's, food handling, mobile pantry cars and catering services at stations
 - All personnel should be aware their food and personal hygiene responsibility to maintain the highest standard of food and personal hygiene.
 - Hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) is a food handling and operation approach which promotes food safety by identifying food hazards and applying and monitoring necessary control measures at point's critical safety.
 - The HACCP approach is being actively encouraged for ensuring food hygiene it is necessary to maintain high level of cleanliness within food premises (where food is stored, prepared and processed) and to ensure that prepared and raw food kept separate.

- With the view to ensuring high quality hygiene, cleanliness and use of standard ingredients for food served in trains, the mobile catering units will pick up meals from the nominated base kitchens. Pantry cars of Rajdhani express trains / Duronto trains should be designed to ensure that pre-cooked are hygienically packed or supplied from base kitchens with minimum handling in transferring the same to the passengers. Light weight compact trolleys will be used on trains to ensure food is not kept on the floors of the trains at the time service. Since there shouldn't be no cooking and grinding on board, food should be served in pre-set trays.
- IRCTC mechanism of monitoring of catering services including inspections, quality checks and round the clock monitoring helps in curtailing the complaints regarding food service operations. Licensee managed the units are subjected to regress monitoring and supervision through routine, surprise inspections and checks.
- Efforts made constantly to upgrade the skills of the staffs by having tie-up with reputed institutes such as IHM's and modernization of units by inducting appropriate technology and methods.
- A system for compliant addressing mechanism is brought in place to provide proactive and effective solution. The compliant monitoring cell has been set up both zonal wise and central control for round the clock quality monitoring.
- Franchise shall maintain ISO : 22000 Standards and relevant international standard in vogue from time to time for the fast food units
- It has been absorbed that most of the fast food outlets has been delivering consistency in quality because of the standardization policies and procedures.
- As per the policy, commercial officers, catering officers, Railway doctors and health inspectors are empower to do the quality checks.
- External food auditing agency was appointed to audit the services and provide unbiased feedback through the customer satisfaction survey.
- First Aid, Energy conservation and Sustainable practices through CSR initiatives, IRCTC is determined to deliver quality services across its network.

- Rail Neer was an important milestone in public health.

Suggestions:

- In the days to come, food on trains may be served as is done on aircraft — with improved cleanliness and comfort.
- Pantry cars in trains have to undergo a major change, redesigned with special attention to give them an aesthetic look and prevent fire accidents, which have been on the rise of late.
- The interior panels of the proposed pantry cars will be replaced with stainless steel and the LPG cooking arrangement with induction cooking.
- Manufacturing units have been allowed to examine the possibility of consulting kitchen experts to incorporate and use the design of aircraft pantry in railway coaches.
- The Railways are aiming at improving cleanliness by introducing the system of placing food trolleys directly in the hot case. Modernized trolleys can be used
- Deep freezer-cum-bottle cooler designs will be recast to suit the items to be stored. Sliding channels will be used for easy sliding of trays.
- Water tanks with enhanced capacities will be provided in the pantry cars and the system will ensure that waste water is drained properly so that there is no seepage in corrosion prone areas.
- In Railways, the human touch is more required as we can see in Airlines services which we are missing in Indian Railway Passenger Services. If this aspect is improved there will be definitely improvement in the satisfaction levels of the Passengers.
- Dial-a-meal concept should be taken to the next level with increased technological advancement since people want quick access.
- Service delivery has to be enhanced to improve the image of the railways.
- Now the effectiveness in service is limited, since 50% of them are contract workers. So more graduates & cooks can be recruited from Hotel Management institutes to professionalize the services.

Conclusion:

Tourism, if planned, controlled and properly monitored, can help in achieving the desired stages of development, but at the same time it has tremendous possibilities to cause deleterious impacts on the socio-cultural environment of the destination, if it grows unplanned and uncontrolled. IRCTC was formed to upgrade, professionalize & manage the catering & hospitality services, these changes in catering

policy affect the overall strategy and long term goals of the Corporation that can cause setback on HR planning & Business/operational plans. Though there were complaints registered regarding the catering services, many suggestions were taken as complaints. It would be better to gain deeper insights and progressive complaints redressal mechanism would benefit the corporation and Indian Railways in the longer run. Also, tariff for catering services is Government controlled, making it difficult to meet customer expectations and business needs. Intense competition from private players in Packaged Drinking Water segment, since the market is quite unorganized and evasion of taxes is rampant thereby bringing down cost of production and supplying product at cheaper rates. IRCTC has been profitable from its inception and its various food safety practices & Professional catering operations across the network is a testimony towards its effort on public health and people well-being. Thereby, increasing the focus on quality and consistent service orientation will best serve the needs of the travelling public at large.

Reference

- [1] Allen, W.G., and Dicesare, F. (1976). Transit Service evaluation: preliminary identification of variables characterizing level of service. *Transportation Research Record*, Vol. 606, pp 47-53
- [2] Asian Development Bank Report on Indian Railways, RRP: IND 36317
- [3] Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007). *Business Research Methods*. 2nd ed. United States: Oxford University Press Inc.
- [4] Kahn, R. and Cannel, C. (1957). *The dynamics of interviewing*. New York and Chichester: Wiley.
- [5] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., and Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple item scale for measuring
- [6] customer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64 No. 1, pp.12-37.
- [7] Pullen, W.T. (1993). Definition and measurement of quality of service for local public transport management. *Transport Reviews*, Vol.13 No 3, pp.247-64
- [8] Shainesh and Mukul Mathur. (2000). Service Quality Measurement: The Case of Railway Freight Services. *Vikalpa*, Vol 25, pp 15-22
- [9] Silcock, D.T. (1981). Measures of operational performance for urban bus services. *Traffic Engineering and Control*, Vol. 22 No. 12, pp. 645-8.
- [10] White Paper on Indian Railways, Railway Board Publication, December 2009.

Weblibliography

Available at:

http://www.irctc.com/annual_report.html
<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/pantry-cars-in-trains-set-to-undergo-major-change/article5572353.ece>
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/16574/1/fo031002.pdf>
http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-10-02/india-business/42614750_1_new-catering-policy-irctc-total-income
<http://www.hospitalitybizindia.com/detailNews.aspx?aid=6146&sid=6>
<http://www.managementparadise.com/forums/publish-upload-project-download-reference-project/174236-irctc-services-analysis.html>
http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/view_section.jsp?id=0,1,304,366,519
<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/IRCTC:+Cooking+Up+Growth/1/66503.html>
<http://www.indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/tourism/downloads/catering-policy-2005.pdf>
<http://www.iritm.indianrailways.gov.in/uploads/files/1315294207555-Catering%20Policy.pdf>
<http://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijbm/article/viewFile/7318/5691..>