



HOW TO IMPROVE CATERING SERVICES IN INDIAN RAILWAYS

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Preface

I am a final year undergraduate student in the department of Electrical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IIT H). Since my high school days, I liked to participate in the political and social happenings in the country and the world. I feel a genuine interest to discuss the existing problems in the country. This was the main reason I was looking for a political or a social internship. There are very few such types of internships available in the country. So when I learnt about the 'Rakshak Foundation Internship Program' by the Training and Placement Cell, IIT Hyderabad, I immediately registered for the same.

Rakshak Foundation - a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and headquartered in Santa Clara, California . It researches different public policy issues and creates awareness about them. The basic objective of Rakshak is to help strengthen the foundations of our society and bolster the confidence of a common man in the system by creating awareness about the issues affecting him.

In my interview for the Rakshak Foundation Internship Program, I was told that the mentor panel constitutes of people in the field of academia and the civil services fraternity. I expressed my interest to work under someone from the civil services fraternity for the sole reason that I've never had an experience to interact with a bureaucrat. After I was assigned my project and my mentor happened to be from the civil services fraternity, I decided to take up this internship. In addition, I have always been fascinated by Railways-not only as a mode of transportation but also as a uniting factor in our country of such great diversities. Hence, I was keen on doing a project relating to improvement of infrastructure in the Indian Railways.

Acknowledgements

This report wouldn't have been possible without an extraordinary support of a number of people.

I have to begin with my mentor, Shri Mukul Saran Mathur of the Indian Railway Traffic Services, who is presently the head of UIC Asia, New Delhi at the International Union of Railways. He has been a guide and a motivator throughout the proceedings of the project. Despite of his busy schedule, he has been kind enough to receive my calls and reply to my mails giving me specific suggestions to focus upon. He has been a thorough critic of my developments in the project which helped me to come up with better results.

I am indebted to Rakshak Foundation for providing me with an opportunity to work on public policy issues. I would like to extend my regards to the coordinators- Mr Rohit Agarwal, Mr Kunal Sharma, Mr Braj Kishor and Ms Tulika Jalan for giving proper directions and keeping motivated in the office hours. They have been kind enough to listen to all the doubts, even if they were irrelevant and provided mature, logical and reasonable answers to address them.

I am grateful to the Chief Traffic Manager Sir and IRCTC supervisors at Kanpur Central Station for providing me insights on the catering services at the station.

I want to express my appreciation to Mr Surya Narayan Rao, Assistant Accounts Manager at Nagpur Station for helping me with the understanding of the basic functioning of the base kitchen at Nagpur Station.

I am grateful to Mr. Ganeshnath Dhanraj, a friend and a Hotel Management graduate for explaining me the working of the catering services in the restaurants. In addition, I would like to thank my

friends in Germany, Japan and the USA for helping me with the catering facilities in the countries. Their suggestions helped me to do a comparative analysis of the catering services in India and the catering services in the more developed countries.

I would also like to thank all the people who took out time from their schedule and filled the survey. Their views helped me gain a perspective on the consumer expectations from catering services in Indian Railways.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank all the fellow interns, who raised doubts and gave valuable and constructive suggestions during the weekly presentations. Their contribution towards the progress of this project is immense.

List of Figures

- Figure 1:* Nature of problems faced by passengers in Railway Catering.
- Figure 2:* The various domains in catering systems in Indian Railways
- Figure 3:* The two facets in hygiene – visible and invisible aspects
- Figure 4:* Flowchart for a separate subsidiary for all catering services
- Figure 5:* Flowchart for menu based on type of train and class of travel
- Figure 6:* Flowchart for provision of booking meals via SMS, Phone and Web
- Figure 7:* Flowchart for model of provision of booking meals via SMS, Phone and Web
- Figure 8:* Flowchart for booking a meal by the Food Plaza
- Figure 9:* Factors on which quality of food is perceived to be dependent upon.
- Figure 10:* The various domains concerning Catering Waste Management
- Figure 11:* Flowchart for a better catering waste management system
- Figure 12:* Working of pantry car as a cold room
- Figure 13:* Various forms of overpricing and their remedies.
- Figure 14:* Various forms of feedbacks.
- Figure 15:* The corrective actions taken on the feedbacks.
- Figure 16:* Implementation for the railway smart card scheme
- Figure 17:* Various players that would play a part in the catering expo
- Figure 18:* Various components in the Safe Food Movement

Table of Contents

List of figures	4
Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction of project	8
1.1. Background Information	8
1.2. Main Problems, their scope and impact on the society	11
1.3. Goal and Objectives of the project	14
2. Methodology	15
2.1. Literature Search	15
2.2. Field Visits	17
2.3. Surveys	18
3. Current NGO, and Govt. Efforts	23
4. Results and Discussions	26
4.1. Findings from Literature	26
4.2. Finding from the fields and impact on the theoretical focus of the project	32
4.3. Gap Analysis	34
5. Recommendations, Scope and Strategy for Implementation	36
6. Suggestions for future work	58
7. Conclusion	60
8. References	61
Appendix A: Meetings and Interviews	62
Appendix B: Field Visit Report	66
Appendix C: RTI Application Draft	70

Executive Summary

Indian Railways is one of the world's largest transporters of passenger traffic in the world. More than 21 million people from diverse backgrounds and socio economic conditions travel by the railways daily. Providing services to people from so diverse walks of life is a tough and tedious task and hence, there are many complaints with regards to the quality of food being bad, overpriced food items being sold, staff misbehaviour and so on. In the era where the expectations of young India are high and they expect services especially on premium trains, to be of international standards, the railways has to come up with new policies and innovative measures so as to satisfy the needs and the expectations of the passengers.

For the benefit of the reader, the report has been divided into seven chapters. Chapter one starts with a brief introduction on the evolution and journey of the Catering Services in Indian Railways. The various committees and commissions formed by the government time to time to suggest reforms in railway catering are mentioned. The policies and suggestions that led to the setting up of the Indian Rail Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is being explained in detail. The report then describes the various types of problems that are predominant in the catering services.

Chapter two explains the methodology that I used for this project - 'Literature Survey supplemented by findings from field visits and surveys'. I studied vast amount of documents- budgetary provisions on catering, reports by various professionals who have been managing these services and newspaper articles. To supplement my theoretical findings, I did two field visits at the Kanpur Central Station to examine the facilities that are present there and compare the things in place with respect to the policies on paper. In addition to this, I also made an online survey on 'Consumer expectations from catering services in Indian Railways' to find out the expectations of the passengers from the catering services in the future.

Chapter three describes the current efforts by the government to revamp the catering services in Indian Railways. The vision of the Railway Minister in the 2012-13 railway budget on the improvements in the catering services and the plan to implement the same has been discussed. Some of the innovative developments taken by the ministry of railways in recent time in providing customer friendly catering services have been discussed.

Chapter four focuses mainly on the findings from the literature survey, field visits and discussion with the mentor. The findings divided into three sections – Findings from the literature, Finding from the fields and their impact on the theoretical focus of the project and Gap Analysis in the policies on the paper and the things in implementation. The findings contain the research done by me in the catering facilities in India, in foreign countries and in the organized sectors such as the restaurants and the airline catering services.

Chapter five contains the recommendations that I have proposed to improve the current catering facilities in Indian Railways based on my research from the past eight weeks. Some of the recommendations that I have proposed are

- Menu should be based on type of train and class of travel.
- Using pantry car as a cold room. Frozen food from the base kitchen to be stored in the pantry cars and while delivering the food, it would be reheated. The system would help a lot in keeping food hygienic for longer duration of time.
- A system for booking a meal in advance via telephone, SMS and web in place which would be beneficial for letting the passengers choose their meal from a list of items.
- Inclusion of Food Plazas to provide on-board catering services so as to create a competitive atmosphere with the departmental catering units and hence, improving the services as a whole.
- Mandatory for pantry cars and base kitchens to have 3 dustbins – for biodegradable materials, recyclable materials, and non-biodegradable materials. A proper waste disposal mechanism has been explained.
- In addition to the hygiene at the kitchen and pantry cars, equal importance should be given to the cleanliness of the compartments as clean compartments, along with good packaging of food and clean uniform of staff increase the perception of hygiene level.
- To curb the problem of overpricing in food items in Indian Railways, I propose having a billing mechanism that would reduce of the customer-vendor clashes and the problem of staff-misbehaviour would be reduced.
- Inclusion of snacks, regional cuisine and special meals on order for people suffering from diabetes etc. would help the railways to create more customer friendly services
- An effective feedback management system that would warn/punish/ put a penalty on the catering service providers incase the number of complaints against them rises above a particular threshold.
- Provision of a smart card or a railway card to facilitate the booking of tickets and Catering Services.
- Setting up Railway Catering Expo once in a year
- Infrastructural changes at the stations to make more money from catering services
- Some innovative models to popularize Safe Food Movement in Railways
- Use of quality tools and techniques for improvement in the services

Chapter six describes some of the areas that I could not go into my research due to lack of constraints-time, money and manpower.

Railways will continue to play a major role in the transportation sector in 21st Century. The need of the hour is to have an exclusive catering policy and system in place that would fulfil the requirements of the whole spectrum of passengers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Indian Railways (IR) started with a journey of 53 km between Mumbai and Thane on April 16, 1853. Today, it has one of the largest rail networks in the world with 64,460 route kilometres of route length [1]. It offers a cheap and affordable means of transport to millions of passengers, hence playing a major role in the social and the economic development of the country. According to Indian Railways Yearbook 2010-11, Indian Railways carried about 21 million passengers daily[1].

The sheer volume of passenger traffic implicates upon the Indian Railways to have an effective passenger services policy. Catering on Indian Railways is of utmost importance and recognising this as one of the most important passenger amenities is essential. The Railways realise this and have incorporated their responsibility in the '*Citizen's Charter on Passenger Services in Indian Railways*'. The charter promises providing of catering services through mobile and static units.

Catering/vending services on Indian Railways consists of following facilities:-

- (i) Refreshment rooms, restaurants, fast food centres/snack bars, tea stalls, fruit/fruit juices stalls, cold and hot beverage dispensers, miscellaneous curio goods stalls, ice-cream parlour etc. at railway stations.
- (ii) Tea stalls at roadside stations.
- (iii) Integrated on-board catering services on Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express trains.
- (iv) Services through pantry cars on selected long and medium distance superfast/mail and express trains.
- (v) Base kitchens to provide ready-made meals for on-board catering.
- (vi) On board catering/vending services through static units (trains having no pantry cars) [2].

The history of catering on Indian Railways has on the whole been marked by irregular and frequent changes in principles and policies governing it. Right from the inception, catering services on Indian Railways have been managed by private parties. In 1915, ex-Bengal-Nagpur Railway (South Eastern Railway) introduced western style catering by departmentally managed units. On Southern Railway, departmental catering came up in 1920.

In 1954, Government set up Alagesan Committee to review all aspects of catering. The Committee recommended that Railways with no departmental catering should start with an experiment with an economic departmental catering organisation so as to set the standard and service as a model. Consequent to this, other railways introduced departmental catering.

In 1967, Ministry of Railways appointed a Committee named "Railway Catering and Passenger Amenities Committee" under the Chairmanship of then Minister of State for Railways, the Committee made the following recommendation:

- (i) Railways should consolidate their existing catering service and effect an improvement in their quality and services. Further, extension of departmental catering may be contemplated after economy measures have become effective.
- (ii) The present principle of running departmental catering on a 'no profit no loss' basis should be modified so as to provide a small profit of three to four per-cent which should be ploughed back into the service

In 1979-80 then Minister of Railways in his Budget Speech made the following announcement: *"Formation of a Railway Catering Corporation as an autonomous body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, to take over the entire catering services on the Indian Railways, has been suggested by several Members of Parliament and others. This will be examined in depth"*

Consequent to this announcement, a one-man Expert Committee on Railways Catering was set up. The Committee recommended that time is not right to have a separate Catering Corporation. However, this should be looked at a later date.

The Minister of Railways during his Budget Speech of 1991-92 had announced privatisation of catering services on the Railways. Consequent to this announcement, a meeting of Chief Commercial Superintendents (CCMs) was held in Railway Board's Office on 14.10.1991. Following decisions were taken:

- (i) In future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and all new units both static and mobile should be managed by licensees only.

- (ii) Although existing departmental units could be privatised keeping in view the various problems involved, mostly the staff problem, the privatisation has to be undertaken in phases.

It was in the year 1999 that Railways finally decided to hive off catering of the Indian Railways to a Corporation and a note for Cabinet was put up before the Cabinet Committee to this effect. The Union Cabinet on 27th March, 1999 approved that the catering activity of Railways, whether Departmental or franchised, should be completely hived off to the new corporation along with the staff, and the railways, should divest itself of this function. Hence, a corporate entity Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC) was set up under the Companies Act, 1956 on 27th September, 1999 as a public sector company under the administrative control of Ministry of Railways.

IRCTC became fully functional from 1st August, 2001 after setting up the functional Board. The corporation, through its efficient planning and managing, changed the face of catering industry in Railways and by the year 2009-10, sales turnover of departmental catering was ` 150.06 crore and the license fees realized from the catering/vending contractors was 205.21 crore [3].

However, in the railway budget of 2010, a new catering policy was formulated. It revised the role of agency of management of catering services on Indian Railways. According to the new policy, catering services (except Food Plazas, Food Courts and Fast Food Units) will be managed by Zonal Railways departmentally, instead of IRCTC, in a phased manner. However, IRCTC would continue to be a service provider to the Indian Railways and shall be responsible for managing the premium and high end outlets like Food Plazas, Food Courts and Fast Food Units including institutional catering present outside the Railways [1].

During the year 2010-11, catering services were provided through approximately 11,237 static catering units and in 291 pairs of trains through pantry cars and in 136 trains through train side vending. 51 departmental catering units were operational under Zonal Railways and 721 under IRCTC. Private licencees under Zonal Railways and IRCTC operated 10,521 and 371 catering units respectively [1].

1.2 Main Problems, their scope and impact on the society

The Indian Railways (IR) network connects areas across the length and breadth of the country. The passengers travelling represent the broad diversity of the country – regional diversity, cultural diversity and financial diversity. Due to the vast diversity of the country, food cuisine changes as one travels from one region to another.

The catering services providers have to take into account the diversity of the passengers and provide services that would be appreciable by all. However, there are many faults in the planning and managing of the system which leads to consumer dissatisfaction.

Some of the highlighting issues that are prominent in the delivery of the catering services in Indian Railways are:

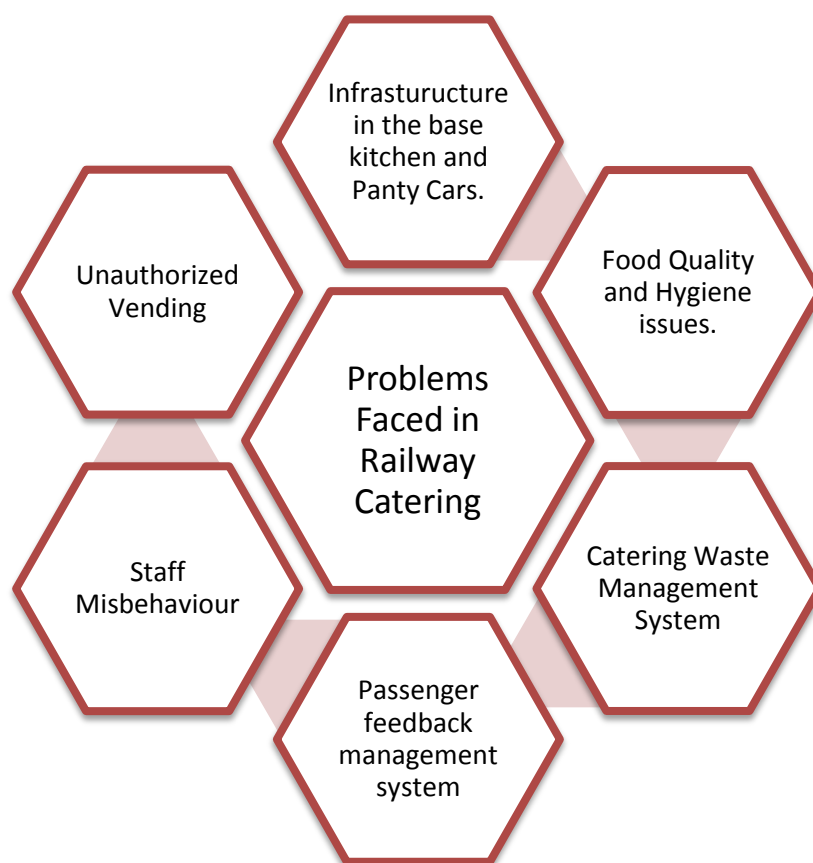


Figure 1: Nature of problems faced by passengers in Railway Catering.

1.2.1 Infrastructure Development

The Base Kitchens have not been renovated from a long time. Most of them were constructed during the colonial times and in the early years after independence. There is a need for developing these kitchens according to modern standards – ISO 22000.

The storage measures adopted in the base kitchen is an area of concern. Separate storage and cooking of vegetarian and non-vegetarian raw food items should be followed. Storage of water used for cooking is another issue that is important as contaminated water is an easy source of spreading diseases.

1.2.2 Food Quality and Hygiene

This is by far the most important issue to be looked into. A lot of complaints concern with the quality of the food provided. In addition, there are many complaints regarding the food hygiene. Some of the components that constitute in the food quality and hygiene services are:

- a. *Quantity of food*: Many passengers complain that the quantity of food was insufficient to their expectation.
- b. *Variety of food*: Passengers, mostly who travel in long distance trains often complain about the same menu being served during all travels. They expect the variety in the food provided to them.
- c. *Hygiene level*: This is one aspect which attracts most number of complaints. There are a lot of questions raised by the passengers on the food not adhering to the proper standards.
- d. *Packaging*: Improper packaging often attracts a lot of criticism.
- e. *Timing of meal*: Often, when the train runs late, the timing of meal gets delayed and hence, it causes a negative impression of the Railway catering services.
- f. *Temperature of Meal*: Meals served cold often lead to criticism of the catering facilities on-board and off-board cater
- g. *Speed of delivery*: The time frame from placing of the order and delivery of the services is crucial.

1.2.3 Staff Misbehaviour

The railway staff, particularly servicing and cleaning staff has the same responsibility as any other staff in the multinational food chains and are expected to be polite and answerable to all the queries raised by the passengers. But often, it is found that the staffs abuse the person instead of

clarifying his doubts/queries.

1.2.4 Overpricing

Selling of food items at higher price than their Market Retail Price (MRP) is very prevalent in the trains. Due to lack of alternatives, the passenger has no other alternative but to buy the food items at overpriced rates.

1.2.5 Vending Stalls selling more items than they are assigned

The vending stalls have a license of selling an item of a particular brand. The brand is being decided by the tender system. But there have been instances where the shopkeeper keeps goods of other brands too in order to increase their sales.

1.2.6 No Provision of Mid-Career Training/ Professional Ethics

Once an employee is recruited into the service, there is no program for inculcating the professional ethics in them after a few years of service. This is one of the reasons for slow pace of work and staff misbehaviour.

1.2.7 Feedback Management System

A very crystal clear feedback registry system was developed by the IRCTC. Feedback facility is available through telephone, SMS and web. There is also a register that is maintained by the authorities working at the pantry car. But the procedure for addressing a complaint is not very certain. In addition, actions on the service providers in case of repeated complaints against them have to be done.

1.2.8 Waste Management System

Leftovers and other catering waste have to be properly disposed of. In general, waste is being thrown out of the trains. This causes degradation in the quality of the tracks. It is also harmful for the families residing near the railway tracks. Railways suffer a lot of losses due to degradation in the quality of the tracks. In railway stations, catering waste is being thrown on the tracks which cause perception of the cleanliness of the station to decline. Also, a mechanism for proper waste disposal according to the type of waste- biodegradable, non-biodegradable and recyclable has to be formed.

1.2.9 Effective Pest Control

Techniques to prevent pests have to be implemented uniformly over all the base kitchens, Pantry Cars and other Vending Stalls.

1.3 Goals and Objectives

Objective

The objective of this project is to conduct a research study on the existing policies and practices in the catering services and suggest measures that can improve the facilities if the same.

The research mainly focuses on the policies implemented and the approach followed by the ministry of railways in the last 10 years. The difference in the policies on paper and practical implementation are to be taken into consideration and remedies for the same are to be suggested.

Goals

The goal of this project is to come up with innovative solutions which can improve the face of the existing catering facilities of the Indian Railways. The solution must adhere to the fact that the citizens are increasingly aware of their rights and that the railway has to keep the promise of their citizen's charter.

The innovative solution must be cost efficient and be easily implementable. For a long term solution, a cost benefit analysis has to be done to check whether the proposed idea would yield the fruits desired.

2. Methodology

Since the project mainly deals with studying of the policies framed by the Railways and the suggesting some possible solutions to the problems that are faced by the catering departments, my approach has been '***Literature Search supplemented by findings from Field Visits and Surveys***'.

2.1 Literature Search

- I started with reading the budgetary speech of the then honourable Railway Minister Shri Dinesh Trivedi presented by him in the Parliament House for year 2012-13. I looked specifically looked at the improvements suggested in the existing catering facilities in the budget.
- I analysed the fourteenth report by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) presented at the Standing Committee on Railways Conference at the Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi. The report gave me insights about the history of policies formed on providing catering services from the inception of catering services in Indian Railways.
- I studied the catering policies of from the year 2000-2010 to gain an understanding of the policy developments in the recent years.
- There was a seminar on 'Food Safety and Quality in Transport Sector' held at New Delhi on 18th September 2009 where members from government and private sector discussed on the issues related to catering. I analysed reports of several members holding key positions in IRCTC and in other private firms working on catering services who presented in the seminar. Some of them are:
 1. "*Innovations in Food Quality and Safety*" by Shri Prem Narayan, GGM (P&Q), IRCTC Corporate Office. The report advocated for innovative measures like upgradation of base kitchen, regular checking on the quality of services provided through Quality Control Professionals etc.
 2. "*Action to revamp Catering Services in Indian Railways*" by Shri Kamlesh Gupta, Additional Member (Tourism and Catering) Railway Board.

3. *'Initiatives of IRCTC on Food Quality & Safety'* by Shri Vinod Asthana, Director (Catering Services), IRCTC, where steps taken by IRCTC in the past few years for the betterment of the facilities were mentioned.
 4. *"Consumer expectations of food on Board Indian Railways"* by Mr T S Mohan Krishnan, IMRB International.
 5. *'Importance of Personal Hygiene – Good Practices'* by Mr Sumit Nair, Manager- Food Safety, JohnsonDiversey Knowledge Centre, JohnsonDiversey Indian Pvt Limited, Mumbai
 6. *'Food Safety and Quality in Transportation Sector'* by Ambassador Sky Chef, New Delhi.
 7. *'Benchmarking in Quality Standards in Retail Chains'* by Shashi Sareen, Head, Quality, Aditya Birla Retail Limited.
 8. *'Benchmarking in Quality Standards- ISO 22000 Certification in IRCTC'* by Mr Rakesh Chopra, RITES Limited.
 9. *'Quality and Food Safety in Supply Chain'* by Dr. Manoj Mishra, Britannia Industries Limited.
 10. *'Cluster approach for continual improvement using Quality Tools and Techniques'* by Mr K Debnath, *Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Institute of Quality*.
- I filed an Right to Information (RTI) application to the Central Public Information officer (CPIO), Railway Board asking him for the number of complaints registered by the passengers from 2005-2010. I also asked for the division of complaints into various domains- overpricing, staff misbehaviour etc. [see appendix C for RTI draft]
 - I studied 'Indian Railways Vision 2020' presented by the Ministry of Railways in December 2009. The vision emphasises on the need of *"availability of hygienically prepared and nutritionally balanced food to passengers and cater to the diversity of India's palate and pocket"*.

2.2 Field Visits

To supplement my conclusions drawn from the literature survey, I went for two field visits to the Kanpur Central (CNB) Station.

In the first field visit, I interacted with some officials there about the facilities that are available at the station. In addition, I asked for their suggestions about various measures that can be used to improve the existing catering services. I also visited the refreshment rooms and the vending stalls present at platform 1, 2 and 3 of the Kanpur Station and looked at the facilities available and the quality of the services they offer [see appendix B for detailed field visit report].

In my second field visit at the Kanpur Central station, I visited the base kitchen of the station. I had a discussion with the workers in the base kitchen and discussed about various aspects of the catering services in the railways. I also examined the storage facilities and the hygiene maintenance at the base kitchen. [see appendix B for detailed field visit report].

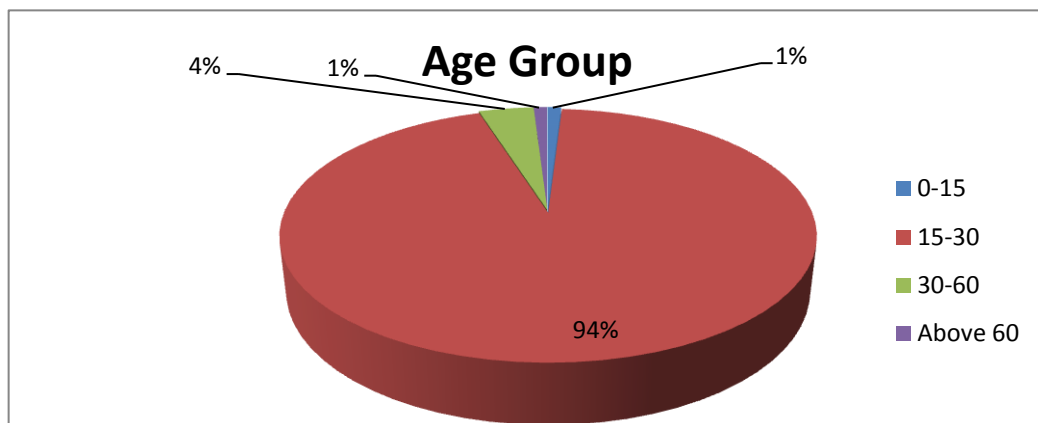
To understand the base kitchen facilities in Nagpur Station, I called an official there, Mr Surya Narayan Rao, Assistant Accounts Manager, IRCTC and discussed with him on the facilities and problems faced in the delivery of the catering services. We discussed upon possible solutions to the same.

In order to compare the catering facilities railways with that of more organised sectors, such as that of airlines and restaurants, I contacted a few officials from these fields. I had a discussion with Mr Ganeshnath Dhanraj, a Hotel Management Graduate about the working of the whole logistics chain in the restaurant sector.

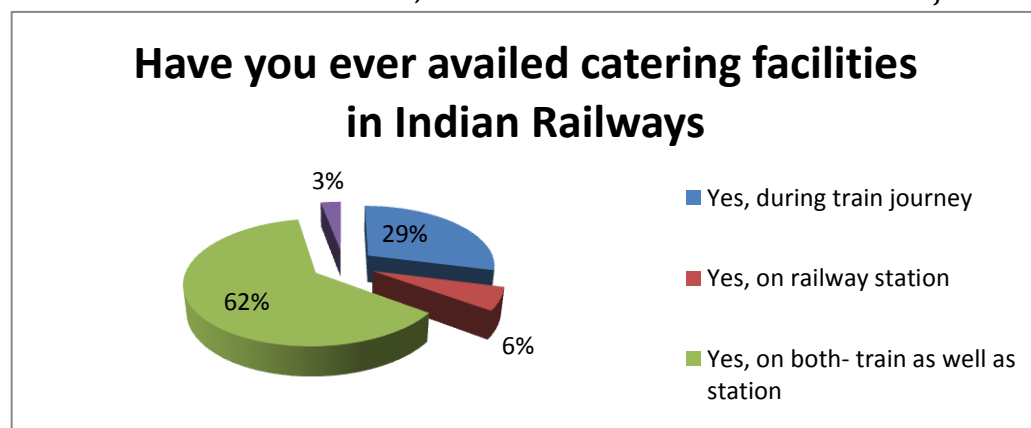
For a comparative analysis of the railway catering facilities in India with respect to more developed countries in Europe and Japan, I contacted my friends in Germany and Japan and discussed with them about the unique aspects of the catering services in these countries.

2.3 Surveys

In order to have a better understanding, I decided to conduct an online survey on '*Consumer expectations from catering services in Indian Railways*' in which questions were raised from various domains in the catering services and the customer was asked to put up his preference. There were more than 200 responses on the survey from people from all parts of the country. Some of the questions are discussed below.

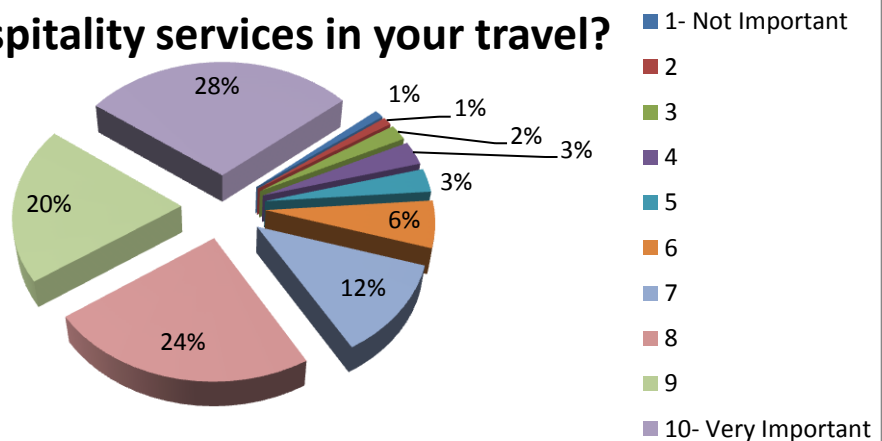


Since it was an online survey, most of the responses were received from the age group of 15-30. The survey can also be termed as expectations of young India from catering services in Railways. The highest number of responses came from the state of Andhra Pradesh, which constituted 23% of the total votes. Other significant contributors were from the states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.



More than 95% of the people have availed catering services by Indian Railways.

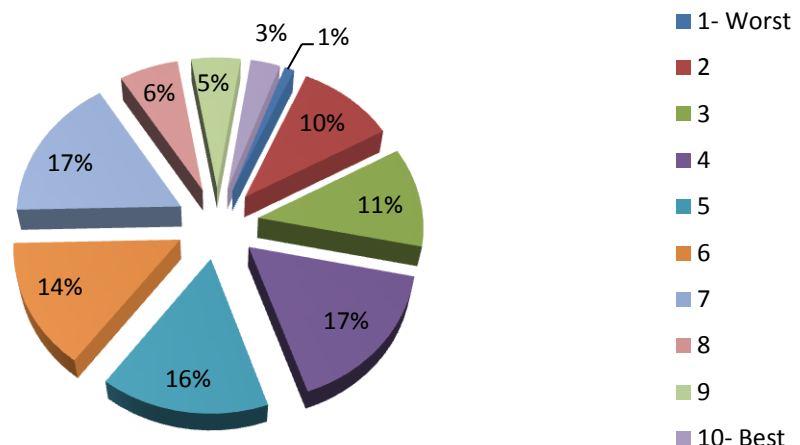
How important are catering and hospitality services in your travel?



More than 80 percent of the people feel that catering and hospitality services form an important part of their travel, which clearly calls for revamp in the planning and the implementation for new and innovative policies to develop this sector.

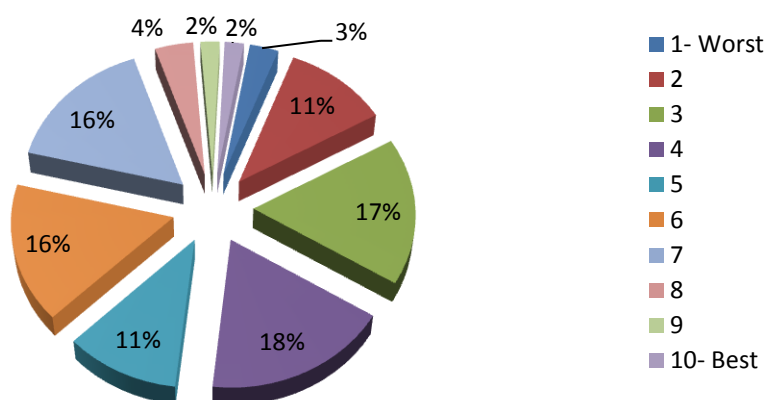
I decided to ask questions regarding the catering facilities that passengers have observed in their past journeys.

How was the quality of food offered?



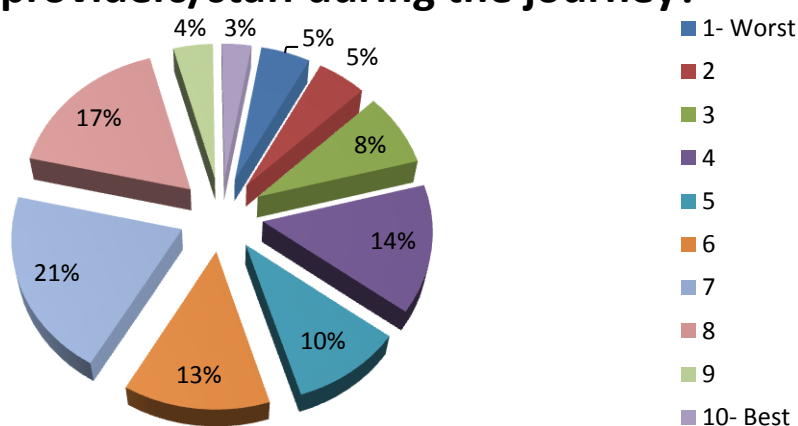
Most of the reviews suggest that the food quality was nearly average. This is a compliment for the railways, given the diversity of the passengers travelling in it. However, there lies a huge task to improve the quality of food satisfy as many passengers as possible.

How was the variety of food offered by the service providers?



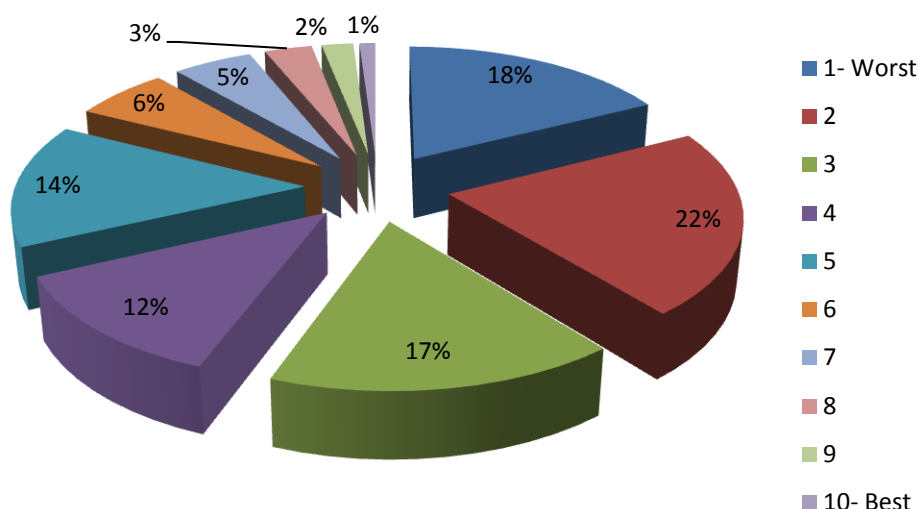
In India, variety and quality are often used interchangeably. Increase in the variety of items is generally perceived as increase in quality of services. The data on the consumer satisfaction on the variety of services provided by the survey indicates that this sector has to be looked more seriously. Increase in the variety of the items can be done by availing an option of having a deluxe thali for those who want more items in their food, increase in the snacks etc.

How was the behaviour of the catering service providers/staff during the journey?



This is one another factor that needs to be looked at seriously. Staff misbehaviour is frequently seen while questioning for the timing of meal, quality of services etc. The staff needs to be trained for making a professional conversation with the passengers- as is done by the waiters in the restaurants.

How was the waste management system in the platforms and inside the trains?



This is perhaps one of the most important and one of the most neglected issues. Maintaining healthy environment at the stations and inside the trains directly changes the perception of the hygiene of the food. For example, food served in clean compartments and clean stations would be perceived to be more hygienic than the same served in unclean stations. There is a need for a proper waste disposal mechanism. The disposal of waste from onboard catering services needs to be looked into seriously. The throwing of all the waste products on tracks degrades and becomes harmful for the families residing near the tracks.

Also, one aspect where we lack from our foreign counterparts is ethics training. Use of dustbins for dumping all the waste is not taken seriously. That is another reason for the accumulation of waste on the tracks. There is a need to create awareness among the people to follow hygienic practices in their life. Maintaining cleanliness is a collective effort, hence, all players have to play their part for the overall system to benefit.

2.4 Meetings and Interviews:

Date	Name	Designation	Institution	Topic of Discussion
12 June, 2012	Mr. Surya Narayan Rao	Assistant Accounts Manager	IRCTC	Base Kitchen Facilities in Nagpur Station
26 June, 2012	Mr Ganeshnath Dhanraj	Hotel Management Graduate, MBA	Entrepreneur	Catering in Restaurant Sector
5 July, 2012	Mr Maaz Mashoud	Research Intern in Germany	Student	Catering services in Germany- Some unique aspects
7 July, 2012	Mr Aniket Deshmukh	Former Research Scholar in Japan	Student	Catering Services in Japan – some unique aspects

Please refer Appendix A for details on mentor meetings*

3. Current NGO and Government Efforts

In his railway budget speech for the year 2012-13, the then Railway minister Shri Dinesh Trivedi emphasized for the need of redefine the approach of railways towards catering. He said *“Given the fact that catering is a passenger service, there is an urgent need to redefine railways’ approach towards catering and to address demands of the entire spectrum of passengers. The need for visible improvements in the service through pantry cars and base kitchens is a priority since expectations of young India are high and they expect services especially on premium trains, to be of international standards. I therefore propose that reputed professional agencies which are providing such services internationally be engaged through global tenders for pantry cars and base kitchens under departmental supervision and management. By engaging such specialised international professionals, a benchmark shall be set for modernisation and upgradation. A pilot project will be launched on a 26 few premium trains to introduce international expertise on Indian Railways for catering services.”*[4]

In addition to this, the minister also advocated for the following recommendations to be incorporated in the catering services in Indian Railways

- Introduction of regional cuisine at affordable rates through catering service to cater to local palate.
- To meet the needs of changing times and customer demand, launching of “Book-a-meal” scheme to provide multiple choice of meals, like low cost meal, diabetic meal etc. through SMS or email.
- To set up AC Executive lounges at important stations to provide value added services at a charge, offering facilities such as wifi internet, buffet services, wash and change concierge services for pre-departure and post-arrival assistance to passengers [4]

One recent scheme carried by the ministry of railways has to be really appreciated. The scheme is called ‘janata khana’ (food for people) and is launched across the country. A box of ‘janata khana’ comprises seven puris, sabzi and pickle. All this can be availed by paying a meagre amount of ` 10. The delicacy has not only become a hot favourite with commuters, but also with employees working at the railway station [7].

The catering business of the Indian Railways was shifted from the Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to the Indian Railways during the year 2010. Hence, a new catering policy was formulated in the year 2010.

The objectives of the policy are:

- To provide hygienic, good quality affordable food to the traveling public by adopting best trade and hospitality industry practices.
- The policy will have an inclusive approach where from the least advantaged passenger to the relatively affluent will be provided catering services in a socially responsible manner.
- It should meet all the social objectives of the Government, including provision of reservations as per Government Directives issued from time to time[10].

Some of the highlighting features of the catering policy 2010 are:

- 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.
- Zonal Railways will set up a grid of modern mega, medium and small base kitchens to ensure that all mobile catering are serviced through these base kitchens to improve quality, hygiene, cleanliness and use of standard ingredients for food served on trains.
- The base kitchens would be set up on railway premises for which the existing base kitchens / cell kitchens available on platforms shall be developed. In case of non-availability of existing base kitchens or Cell kitchens, the zonal railways shall take immediate steps for construction of the base kitchens as required.
- With a view to ensuring high quality hygiene, cleanliness and use of standard ingredients for food served on trains, henceforth all mobile catering units will pick up meals on transfer rate basis (rate as fixed by Railway Board) from nominated base kitchens. The base kitchens would be railway specified, supervised and controlled to ensure quality of the food served on trains.
- Infrastructure of base kitchens should be designed to create modern and mechanised kitchens with the latest state of art technology.
- Refreshment Rooms/Restaurants/Snack Bars should be self-serviced and should have computerized billing arrangement and prominent display arrangements.
- All systems and processes and equipment such as deep freezers, hot cases, microwave ovens, refrigerated storage units, bain-maries should progressively replace the existing traditional equipments and manual methods in static units.

- Disposal of garbage: Solid waste management will be a priority area. All static and mobile units should liberally provide garbage bins properly lined with garbage bags. Garbage thus collected should be disposed off in the prescribed manner which should be incorporated in all agreements and should adhere to extant pollution control and environmental norms. All instructions in regard to disposal of garbage issued by Health, Mechanical and Commercial Directorate are to be adhered to by licencees and departmental catering units.
- Monitoring of complaints for catering services: A system for complaint redressal for catering services for static and on-board services should be brought in place to provide proactive and effective complaint redressal mechanism. The toll free number and the website created by IRCTC for the purpose of lodging of complaints would be continued and data of complaints received will be transferred by IRCTC to zonal railways directly until the time zonal railways set up their own mechanism. [10]

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Findings from the literature

In the 2012-13 budgetary speech of honourable Railway Minister Shri Dinesh Trivedi emphasized the need for visible improvements in the service through pantry cars and base kitchens since the expectations of young India are high. A proposal was brought up that reputed professional agencies which are providing such services internationally be engaged through global tenders for pantry cars and base kitchens under departmental supervision and management. By engaging such specialized international professionals, a benchmark shall be set for modernization and upgradation.

The Railways first found out the need for a separate entity to focus on the catering services in the rail budget 2000. The then railway minister, Ms Mamata Banerjee suggested a creation of a subsidiary of Railways whose sole aim would be to manage the catering and tourism sectors. Hence, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) came into existence. IRCTC started full-fledged operations with effect from August 1st 2001.

The corporation brought in several initiatives which helped in managing of the catering sector effectively. Some of the initiatives taken are:

- a.** IRCTC had set up control rooms at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Secunderabad to maintain quality of services on-board trains. The zonal controls have been equipped and strengthened with phone, fax and computers with broadband connectivity, and are operational around the clock, seven days a week. Central office at New Delhi regularly coordinates with all the five zonal offices for effective monitoring of complaints and catering activities [6].
- b.** Quality Control Professionals having Diploma/Degree holders in hospitality with 2 or more years of field experience were engaged in August, 2008 & posted in Zonal & Regional offices. Specific trains have been allotted to them for achieving overall improvements in on board services [6].
- c.** A toll free no. 1800-111-139 has been launched for redressal of complaints and suggestions conveyed by the passengers on phone.
- d.** Facility of lodging of complaint/suggestion by passenger through SMS on phone number 9971-111-139 had been started [6].
- e.** On-line Complaint Management System had been introduced to facilitate the passengers for lodging their online complaint by logging on IRCTC

website. A unique complaint number is allotted to the complainant for viewing the status by the complainant at any time. An auto-generated reply with the unique complaint number is sent to the complainant mail id [6].

- f. The reputed Food Audit & Certification Agency has been enlisted for third party audit on food hygiene & safety audit [6].
- g. In order to ensure availability of reputed branded products in various segments including biscuits, Aerated drinks, Chips, Packaged Drinking Water, Cakes and Namkeens, Rate Contracts have been awarded to the short listed National players [6].

In the railway budget 2010, a new catering policy was formulated. As per new Railway Catering Policy 2010(Introduced by the then Railway Minister Ms. 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 Express, Frakkha Express, Maitree Express (Train between INDIA and BANGLADESH),Kandhari Express and some Rajdhani Express rest all of train operated by Zonal Railways railway stations across India. IRCTC also started NRC project (NON RAILWAY CATERING) under which cafeteria were operated in many Indian Ministries and Institutes. The reason given by the ministry of railways for the formulation of this new policy was increase in the number of complaints. But, the increase in complaints could also be attributed to the fact that IRCTC, in the last few years, has facilitated ways to report complaints by advertising e-mail ids, phone numbers and SMS numbers.

To confirm whether the change in policy was due to the increase in the number of complaints or there was any other reason involved in it, I filed an *RTI to the Central Public Information officer (CPIO), Railway Board*.I asked for the number of complaints registered by the passengers from 2005-2010. I also asked for the division of complaints into various domains- overpricing, staff misbehaviour etc.

[see Appendix C for the draft of the RTI application].

Theoretical Readings and literature survey helped me to understand the policies that are in place for the catering services. For the simplification of my study, I decided to divide the study into four domains – ***Infrastructure, Food Quality and Hygiene, Feedback Management Systems, Waste Management Systems.***

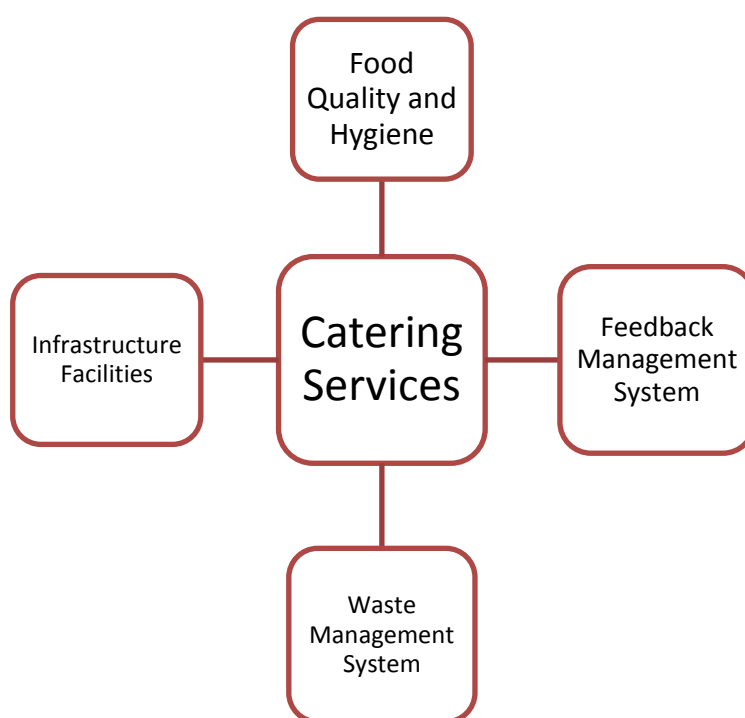


Figure 2: The various domains in catering systems in Indian Railways

Infrastructure Facilities:

The domain mainly consists of the adequacy of the equipment in the base kitchen, pantry cars, vending stalls, Food Plazas etc. The base kitchens are generally present on the platform of the main stations. However, in some cases, the Base Kitchens are located outside the railway stations, as it is in Kanpur. The reason is that the building of the Kanpur Central Station has been there since the colonial times and there is limited space for a base kitchen to come up.

The rail ministry in its catering policy has specified the need of base kitchens to come up on the platform of the station as it is easy to monitor and manage the proceedings there. In coming years, we can expect the base kitchen to be installed in the station premises itself.

Pantry cars occupy an important place in the catering system of the Railways by serving the on board passengers of long distance trains.

In the catering policy 2010, it was mentioned that all old catering stalls should be replaced with compact modular stalls of uniform design to ease congestion on the station platforms and circulating area as per the policy guidelines issued by Railway Board. Refreshment

Rooms/Restaurants/Snack Bars should be self-serviced and should have computerized billing arrangement and prominent display arrangements.

Food Quality and Hygiene:

Food Quality and hygiene is the most important part of the catering system. Ensuring that quality and the hygiene of the food are maintained has been the top priority of the railways. There have been tie-ups with the nearby retail chains and the base kitchen so as to get fresh supply of vegetables. Again, measures are being taken to have better storage facilities. Storage and cooking of vegetarian and non-vegetarian diets are being done separately.

In order to provide quality water for the passengers while travelling, IRCTC has launched 'Rail Neer' scheme. The aim of this scheme is to provide packaged drinking water through Public Private Partnerships (PPP) on Build, Own, Operate, Transfer (BOOT) basis. The first ever Rail Neer plant at Nangloi in Delhi was inaugurated on May 6, 2003 to provide safe packaged drinking water to Indian Railway passengers with capacity to produce 66,000 bottles per day which has been enhanced to 1,02,000 bottles per day in April 2009.[11]

Certification and Standardization is being promoted at some base kitchens to improve the overall food quality and hygiene. Certification from agencies like HACCP - Hazard analysis and critical control points guarantees preventive approach and pharmaceutical safety that identifies physical, allergenic, chemical, and biological hazards in production processes that can cause the finished product to be unsafe, and designs measurements to reduce these risks to a safe level. [12].

In the case of Food Quality and Hygiene, the overall satisfaction depends upon two facets – the things visible to the customer and the things invisible to the customer. The things visible would constitute of Cleanliness of the compartment, packaging, cleanliness of the uniform of staff, cleanliness of trays, cups, etc. The invisible things are the cleanliness of kitchen, processes laid for the procurement/storage of raw materials, hygiene practices followed by the cooks and the other workers, actions taken against the contractors who had not delivered services up to the mark etc. Both these factors combined give a 'perceived hygiene of food' by the passengers. [13] Specific guidelines are to be circulated among the persons working in the base kitchen regarding the hygiene they are required to follow.

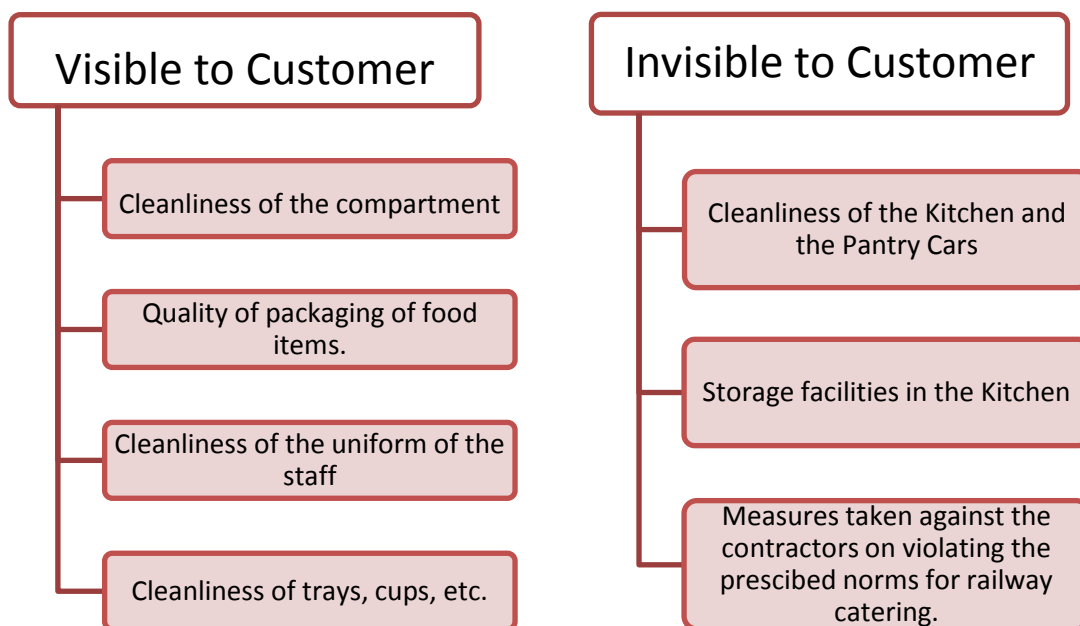


Figure 3: The two facets in hygiene – visible and invisible aspects

Feedback Management System:

A strong feedback analysis system would help the people restore their faith in the railways. At present there is a provision of providing feedbacks through SMS, telephone and web. This is a very commendable step taken by the IRCTC during its tenure. After the new catering policy was launched in the year 2010, the same system has been running. The complaints that are concerned with the catering services provided by Indian Railways are being forwarded to them by the IRCTC. The railways are coming up with their own feedback management system.

The railways have a system that divides the complaints according to the problems faced by the passengers. For example, the complaints regarding staff misbehaviour come under one banner while analysis etc. This would help in solving the cases quickly. But there should be stricter and stringent policies against the catering suppliers against whom repeated complaints have been logged.

Catering Waste Management System:

The catering waste management has been a sector that needs frequent attention. There has to be an effective waste management system. Railway suffers a huge amount of loss due to corrosion of tracks because of the increasing waste dumped into them. There are specific guidelines laid out for waste management in the base kitchens as well as in the pantry cars. There is no proper waste management mechanism for the passengers on-board. The packaging and other catering waste are simply thrown out of the windows of the train. There has to be a proper system wherein the passengers get a dispose off the catering waste. Again, most of the catering waste consists of bio-degradable and recyclable materials. So, a proper mechanism for disposing these materials has to be there.

At Kanpur Central Station, the waste is being collected by the sanitation workers dumped into a garbage pit nearby the station. When I interacted with the cleaners and asked whether there is any provision for categorizing the waste into biodegradable, non-biodegradable, he replied that there was no such thing in place.

4.2 Finding from the fields and impact on the theoretical focus of the project

Field visits were done with the aim to find the similarities/differences between the policies on the paper and the policies in implementation. There is a huge difference in the implementation of policies. The vendors are often seen overpricing the items. There are many cases where the goods are sold above their MRP in trains. There are cases of improper packing, staff misbehaviour, food being cold etc. Such problems have to be dealt head to head. Also, in my interaction with various railway officers, I came to know that after the new catering policy wherein the zonal railways was assigned the job of providing catering services, it has been difficult job to execute. The reason is the priority of the railways is to ensure passenger safety. Passenger amenities are secondary things to look at. Infact, one official said that in the present scenario, railways do not have enough skilled professionals to manage catering.

Regarding the increase in the number of complaints that people has against catering services of IRCTC; an official when contacted said that the Railways did not raise catering charges since 1999. The prices of eatables were not in synchronization with the market dynamics. This impacted the quantity and the service, In the course of subsidization, the catering business was losing its financial viability and customers were at the receiving end.

I made two field visits at Kanpur Central Station which were aimed to get a first-hand experience of the policies in place. The first field visit was mainly focused upon meeting the officials and discussing about the overall efforts on the part of the rail authorities at the Kanpur Station to put up the policies in place. Also, I came to know about the overall hierarchy of the officials' responsible for managing the catering services. I discussed with them about the present policies in place and some possible changes in them for a better system. I inspected a few vending stalls and enquired with the about prices of commodities. They were being sold as mentioned in the market retail price (MRP). [See appendix B]

In my next field visit, I went to see the base kitchen of the Kanpur Central Station to look at the facilities present there. I interacted with the persons working there about various practices followed in the kitchen. Things such as hygiene, storage facilities, medical facilities, food safety were a priority in our discussion. [See appendix B]

These field visits helped me a lot to see the implementation of schemes at ground zero and the problems arising in them. They helped me to direct the

project in the right direction. The field visits played a very important part in framing the recommendations that I have proposed by my research.

To understand the working and the facilities in the base kitchen at Nagpur Station, I contacted Mr. Surya Narayan Rao, Assistant Accounts Manager, Catering, Nagpur Station and discussed with him the whole logistics chain – from the procurement of the raw materials to the final delivery of food. Some of the highlighting points of the discussion were:

- Infrastructure: The base kitchen is not fully functional as of now. So, the orders are very few and the food is prepared according to the orders placed.
- Raw Materials: Vegetables are bought on that very day. Regarding rice and pulses and wheat, a tender is passed and the stock of a month is bought.
- Storage: Veg and Non Veg items are stored and cooked separately. Water is stored in a tank which is cleaned and checked monthly.
- Officials Checking: There are officials from three departments - Accounts, Commercial and Medical who are responsible for checking. The medical officials take samples (of stored materials and cooked materials) and send it to the labs to evaluate the performance.
- Cooks: A master cook is there who is mainly responsible for preparing quality and tasty food.
- Staff: Earlier most of the staff was from the contractors. Now, a proper railway staff is there that is expected to be polite and hence serve better.
- Hygiene: proper uniforms(adhering to rail ministry guild lines) i.e. hair net, aprons, gloves are worn. Spitting, tobacco, cigarettes are banned inside base kitchen.
- Leftovers: Thrown out because passenger safety is the priority of the railways.

Again, to look into the facilities in some developed countries, I contacted a few of my friends in Germany and Japan. There were some commendable steps taken by these countries to improve the overall system in place. In Japan, there are 4-5 types of dust bins for different wastes like plastic, glass, Degradable, papers, toxic, etc. This helps in better disposal of the waste products. In Germany, where meat is the stable diet, surprisingly, the food on the train has a lot of variety in terms of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian.

4.3 Gap analysis

There have been a lot of efforts on the part of the ministry of railways to improve the catering services time to time. A subsidiary of the Indian Railways, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) was formed to facilitate the promise of the government. The corporation brought the domain in which the railway was always suffering losses to a profit making area.

However, in the railway budget of the year 2010, catering services were taken back from IRCTC and given to Zonal Railways. The reason cited by the rail ministry was an increase in complaints over last few years against the catering services. The IRCTC had developed a very crystal clear mechanism for the passengers to provide feedback. This was an important and a prominent reason for the increase in the passenger complaints.

But the rail ministry felt otherwise, and hence, catering services from the on-board facilities were hived off from IRCTC. The implementation of this policy has been problematic. This is because it was IRCTC that was managing the services since the last decade. There was an immediate shortage of technical and managerial knowledge in the system to manage these services. The officers who were primarily responsible for managing passenger safety and railway traffic were made incharge of the supervision over the catering services. The lessening of professional catering personnel in decision making has affected the formulation of policies and consumer friendly services in the Indian Railways.

From the field visits, I found out that there is a difference in the policy on the paper and the policy in implementation. For example, there are specific guidelines for the workers in the base kitchen and the pantry cars, such as to have proper uniform, gloves, apron, hair net etc. These things are considered to be very important to maintain the hygiene of the food. But they are not being implemented seriously. During an interaction with one of the worker, he told that the government had provided them with uniforms and other necessary items, but they do not regularly wear them. Here the problem lies with the reluctant attitude of the staff.

There are problems arising due to the lack of professionalism among the employees, like overpricing, staff misbehaviour have been prominent in catering sector. There is an urgent need to inculcate the teachings of ethical and moral values in the people.

Though the rail ministry has brought plans for modernization and standardization of the infrastructural facilities in the Indian Railways, there have been problems pertaining in this sector. The main problem lies in the adequacy of equipments. The base kitchens are mainly constructed in Railway Station, which have colonial architecture are old. Most of the kitchens lack proper storage facilities, proper waste disposal mechanism, pest control measures etc. These issues have to be dealt as early as possible.

A proper coordinated mechanism needs to be present for the interaction of various catering inspectors, from the health department, from the accounts department and from the commercial department to discuss and suggest measures for improving the existing state of affairs in zonal level. At present, the officers from these departments make visits to the base kitchen and assess the quality and hygiene of the food, the storage facilities etc. The samples of cooked as well as uncooked items sometimes are being taken and they are sent to laboratories for further evaluation.

5. Recommendations, Scope and Strategy for Implementation

In the 21st century, the railways should change its perception of catering services as a moral obligation to the passengers and come up with solutions that would help the services to be more customer oriented. Some of the recommendations that came up during my research are:-

A separate subsidiary of the railways to look after catering services

After the new catering policy 2010, wherein the catering services were taken back from Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Zonal Railways were given the responsibility for providing the catering services on-board services. The officers in the railways who were responsible for managing other sector of railways, like traffic, accounts etc. were given an additional responsibility of managing the catering services. Now, with the magnitude and the complexity involved in the operations, it is deemed essential that a separated corporation be set up which would exclusively manage catering and tourism functions of Indian Railways.

I propose that the catering services should be given back to IRCTC wherein experienced professionals can be used to formulate policies that would help in providing quality services in the future. The flowchart for the implementation for the same is given below:

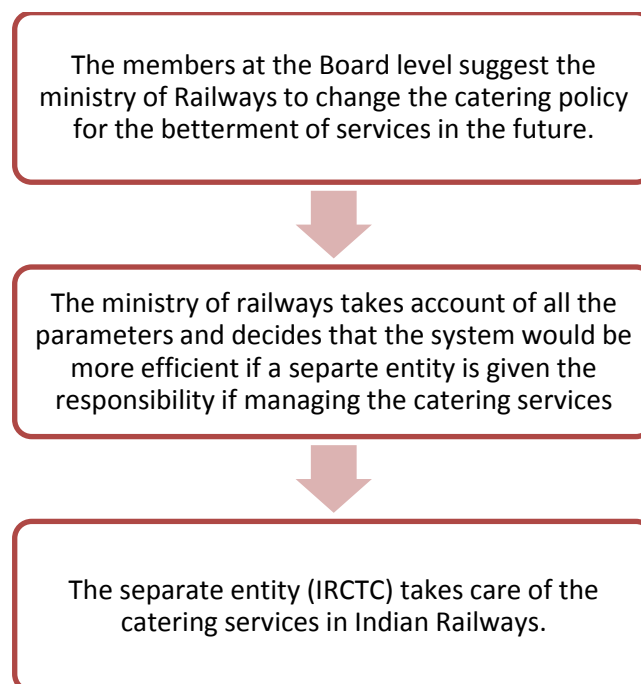


Figure 4: Flowchart for a separate subsidiary for all catering services

Menu should be based on type of train and class of travel:

At present, we have a uniform system for providing food services. The cost of a food thali or a lunch/dinner plate is the same for the person travelling in any compartment. The one thing that has been neglected till date is that Indian Railways has passengers travelling from all class and hence have diverse expectations from the catering services during their travel. *The financial diversity of the passengers calls for a consumer centred services to cater to the needs of passengers coming in from all walks of life.*

I propose that all the people travelling in trains (particularly in AC and Sleeper Classes) be availed of the option of a 'special thali' at higher costs than the normal thali. The special or a deluxe thali would consist of more variety of food items and have more quantity than the normal one. This will help to satisfy the needs of the economically sound people travelling by Indian Railways.

If we look at the sector where catering services are more organized i.e. the airlines sector, menu is provided on the basis of the class of travel – the items are different for the passengers travelling in economy class and the persons travelling in business class. So, the need of the hour is that Railways also comes up with such a service.

The flowchart for the implementation of the scheme is

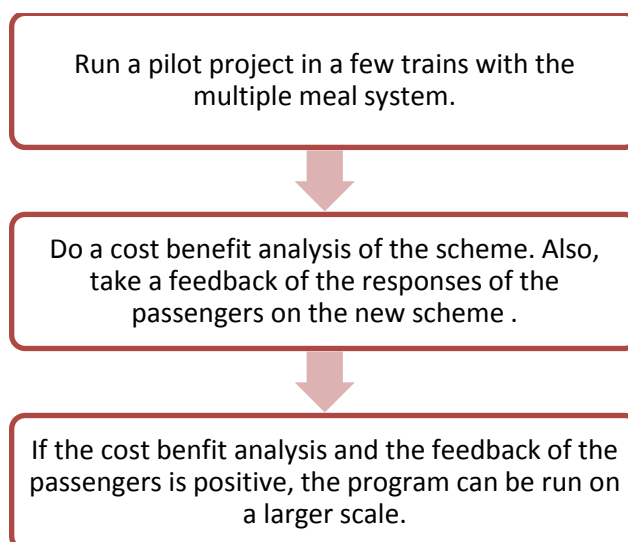


Figure 5: Flowchart for menu based on type of train and class of travel

Provision of booking the meals online, via telephones and SMS:

The advance booking of meals can happen in the following ways

1. Before the journey: While booking the journey ticket itself, an option of booking a meal should be made accessible to passengers. Presently, this facility is restricted to only some trains such as the Rajdhani trains, Shatabdi trains etc.
2. During the journey: There should be a provision of booking a ticket via SMS and telephone while in a train. This is because there are times when the passenger is not in his seat when the railway person taking the order for the meal comes. The passenger left out must have an option either to call a toll-free number or SMS for availing the meal. This can be done by allotting a separate telephone line for addressing catering related queries (as 139 is for train related queries). The mediator (operator receiving the call or the SMS services) should forward the request of the passenger to the corresponding pantry car of the trains with the details (name, coach no., seat number) of the passenger. After the pantry car receives the order, a confirmation SMS should be sent to the passenger that the order has been placed.

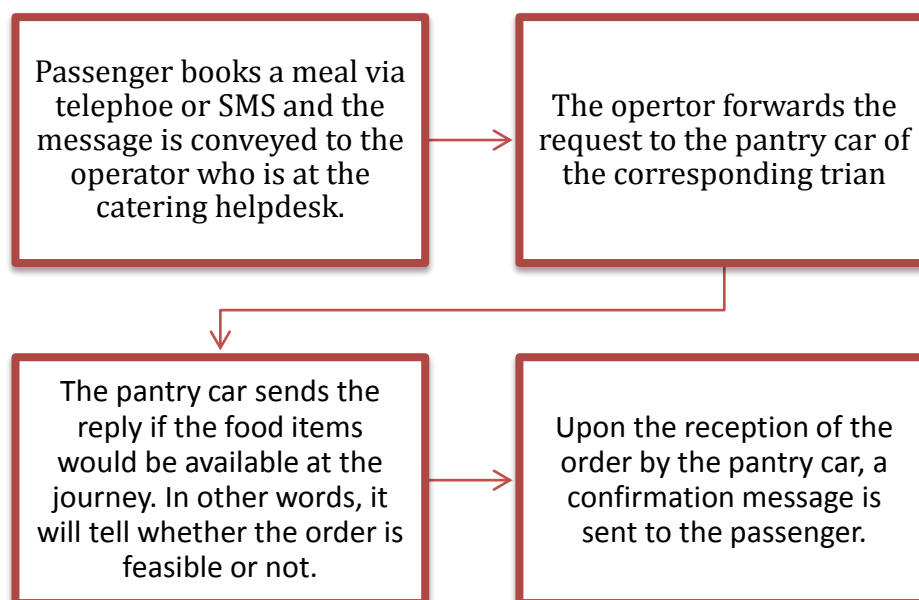


Figure 6: Flowchart for provision of booking meals via SMS, Phone and Web

The facility of booking prepaid tickets is done in some trains such as the Rajdhani trains, Shatabdi trains etc. But these trains carry only a small part of the passenger traffic of the overall system. If the same system is replicated over to other trains in a phased manner, there would be a number of advantages.

- Families travelling in trains are highly concerned about the hygiene of the food they will receive in the train. It is mainly due to this concern that they take food from their home. Availing an option of advance booking would reduce their worries and hence, clear off the extra baggage of food materials that they need to carry.
- The railways can use the opportunity of web based meal booking to publicize the measures it has taken to improve the quality of services. The railways can depict the pictures of various stages of preparation of the meal, variety of the meal, the cost of a-la-carte menu items on the site. This will create a positive response among the passengers.
- As the prices of all the food items are paid in advance, the problem of overpricing will reduce by a large extent. Even if the meals are not booked by the person, he would know the prices of the items and if the vendor tries to increase the price, a complaint can be registered against him.

This model should come up in three phases as mentioned in the flowchart.

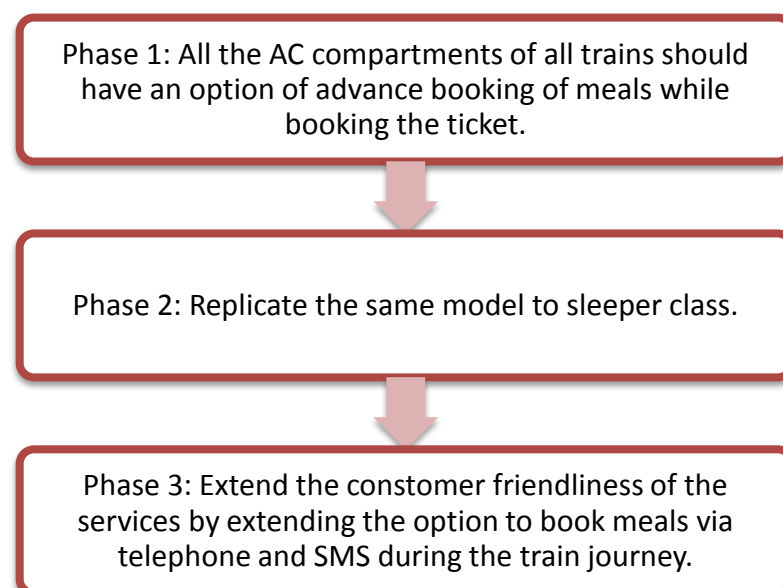


Figure 7: Flowchart for model of provision of booking meals via SMS, Phone and Web

Creating a competitive atmosphere between the Food Plazas and the Departmental Catering Stores of the Railways.

There are many stations that have food plazas today. The food plazas have more variety of food available than in the train. So there should be a provision for a passenger of booking a particular item from the trains via telephone or SMS before it reaches that station. Upon reaching the station, a delivery boy would deliver the items and collect the money with some convenience charges for the delivery. This would ensure that the passenger gets what he desires and in a long run, would release the pressure off base kitchen to prepare a large variety of items.

The advantage of this system would be that people who are choosy about their food menu have more items to choose from. Further, if the meals provided by the base kitchen and the pantry cars are not up to the mark with respect to quality and hygiene, more and more people will shift towards the Food Plazas. This will create pressure among the base kitchen authorities to improve their services and save their business.

I believe this proposal would create a competitive atmosphere between the base kitchen authorities and the Food Plazas. This competition would ultimately benefit the passengers, as both the players would come up with various measures to enhance the services and attract them.

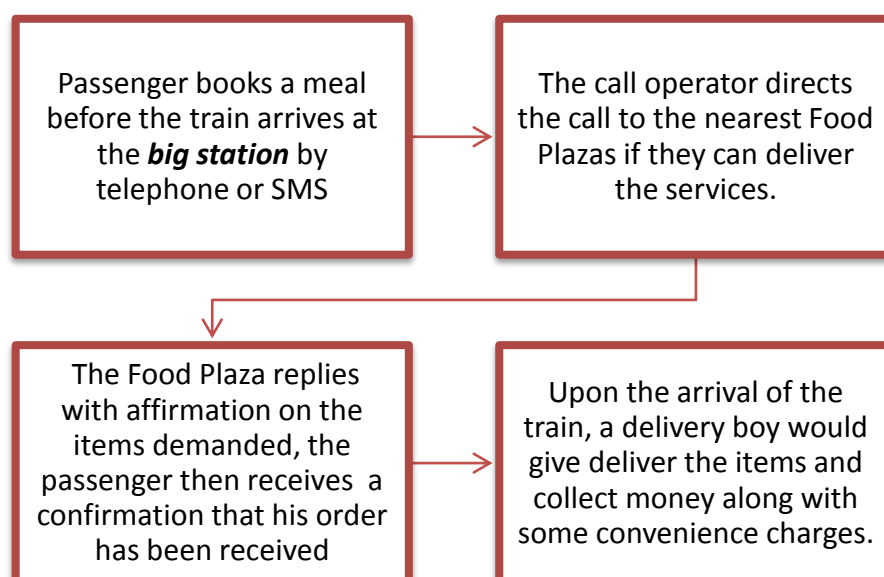


Figure 8: Flowchart for booking a meal by the Food Plaza

Having more variety of items in the menu – Inclusion of snacks and Regional Cuisine.

Availability of more varieties of snacks, mainly packaged ones (Haldiram, Lays etc.) will ensure that the people have more items to choose from. The railways will also be in profit as packaged food items do not get expired for many days.

The trains covering religious routes, for example, the trains going to the Jain pilgrimage places should consider the fact that there would be many Jain people travelling in the trains. So it is profitable to make Jain food in addition to the normal thalis in these trains. The same can be applied for persons having diabetes and other problems. If some food items are made taking in view the number of passengers diabetic, it would help both the sides.

Another important issue is variety of thali across the country. There are varied cuisines due to diverse cultures in the country. A person from north India would like to have sweet curd, from south India would like to have sour curd whereas a person from Maharashtra wouldn't mind if curd is provided or not. It would be good for the railways to include a flavor of local cuisine to add to the richness of the food.



Figure 9: Factors on which quality of food is perceived to be dependent upon.

Importance to Hygiene Practices:

As mentioned in the key findings section, the perception of hygiene by the passengers is determined by two facets- *the visible and the invisible factors*. Visible Factors include Cleanliness of the compartment, Quality of packaging of food items, Cleanliness of the uniform of the staff, Cleanliness of trays, cups, etc. The factors those are invisible to the passengers include Cleanliness of the Kitchen and the Pantry Cars, storage facilities in the Kitchen, measures taken against the contractors on violating the prescribed norms for railway catering.

- a. In the base kitchen as well as the pantry cars, it should be mandatory for all the persons working to have a proper hygiene code. Proper uniform, gloves, apron, hair net and other measures listed down in the policies should be strictly followed. The persons not wearing proper uniforms should be given warnings and proper action must be taken if the warnings are not taken seriously.

Availability of soaps and hand-wash would encourage the workers to remain clean. In addition, providing reading manuals and conducting workshops for the workers to make them understand their duties would help create better services.

- b. Again, the hygiene level inside the compartment plays a very important part as seen from the passenger's point of view. This is because the facilities and the procedures followed at the base kitchen and pantry cars are invisible to the passenger. So the perception of the quality of the services increases by the secondary factors like cleanliness of compartment, cleanliness of uniform of staff, cleanliness of trays, cups etc. and quality of packaging.

I propose that recruitment of workers for maintaining (specifically) cleanliness of the train should be done. The workers should be responsible for cleaning up the compartments and collecting trash from the passengers. The workers should be assigned to clean a compartment in every three hours in the day and also after the peak time when catering waste is high i.e. after breakfast, lunch and dinner. This will ensure that the compartment remains clean and people acknowledge the services. The detailed implementation for this scheme is elaborated in the next suggestion.

Catering Waste Management System:

A lot of catering waste is dumped on the tracks – both onboard and offboard. The findings from the field visits and survey indicate that having a proper mechanism has to be sorted out to manage this waste. The role has to be played out collectively by five domains – passengers, train cleaning staff, sanitation workers in station, municipal workers and waste recycle units.



Figure 10: The various domains concerning Catering Waste Management

Passengers: The role of passengers is of primary importance. There should be a realization among the masses that the throwing of waste products on the tracks and the platforms had to be avoided in order to keep the station clean. There can be some pictorial representations on the stations urging passengers to keep the station clean. In addition, dustbins should be available at the platforms. Inside the trains, I propose having a mini portable dustbin in each compartment where the passengers can put the waste products instead of throwing them on tracks.

Train Cleaning Staff: A railway employee would come every four hours to empty the contents of the dustbin in another bigger dustbin present in one of the places in the train, for example, at a corner of the pantry car. The division of waste in the three types- biodegradable, non-biodegradable and recyclable can be done here as it is mandatory for the pantry cars to have them.

Sanitation Workers at Station: The dustbins would be emptied in the nearest main stations at the route of the train and the waste would then be handed over to the sanitation workers at the station. These workers would then transfer the waste to the municipal workers of the district.

Municipal Workers: The municipal workers would shift the waste to the units assigned specifically for them. For example, recyclable waste has to be sent to waste recyclable units.

Waste Recycle Units: They are primarily responsible for disposing off the toxic and non-biodegradable waste and recycle the waste that can be recycled.

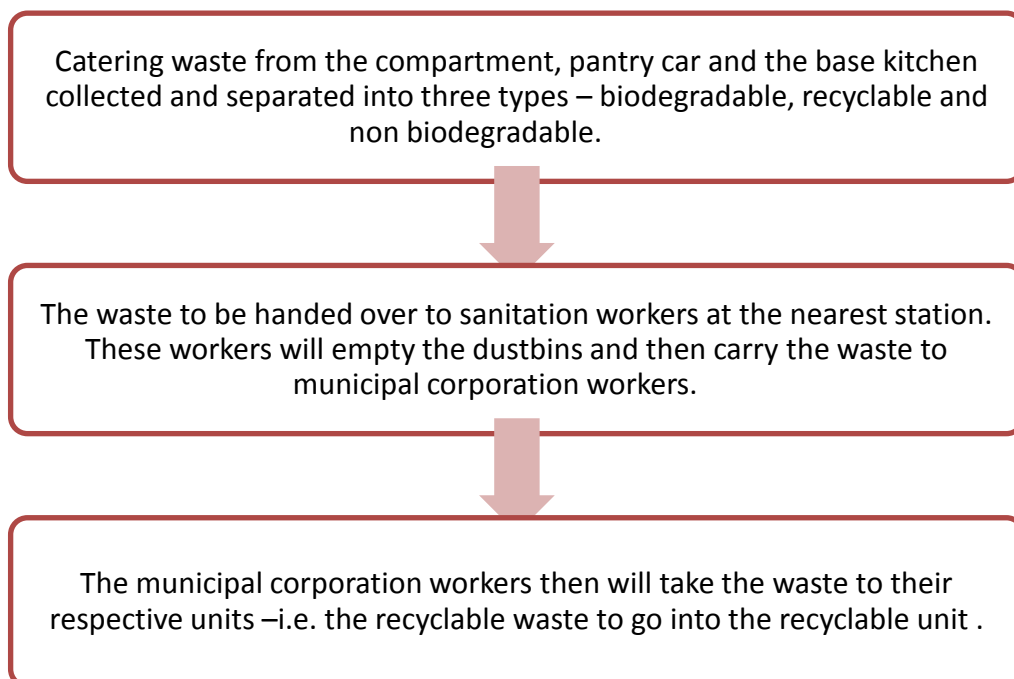


Figure 11: Flowchart for a better catering waste management system

Pantry Car as a Cold Room[9] :

As a long term measure to improve the services and decrease the problems of hygiene, the railway will have to come up with some innovative solutions. One such solution using pantry car as a cold room and storing cooked food there. The procedure is explained simply in the following points: The pantry car in the train can be used as a cold room.

- Pre-plated food will be packed at the Base Kitchen and stored there in freezers
- Upon the arrival of the train, frozen Food will be delivered there.
- The food will be stored in the cold room pantry
- When the food has to be delivered to respective passengers, food packs can be reheated on board.

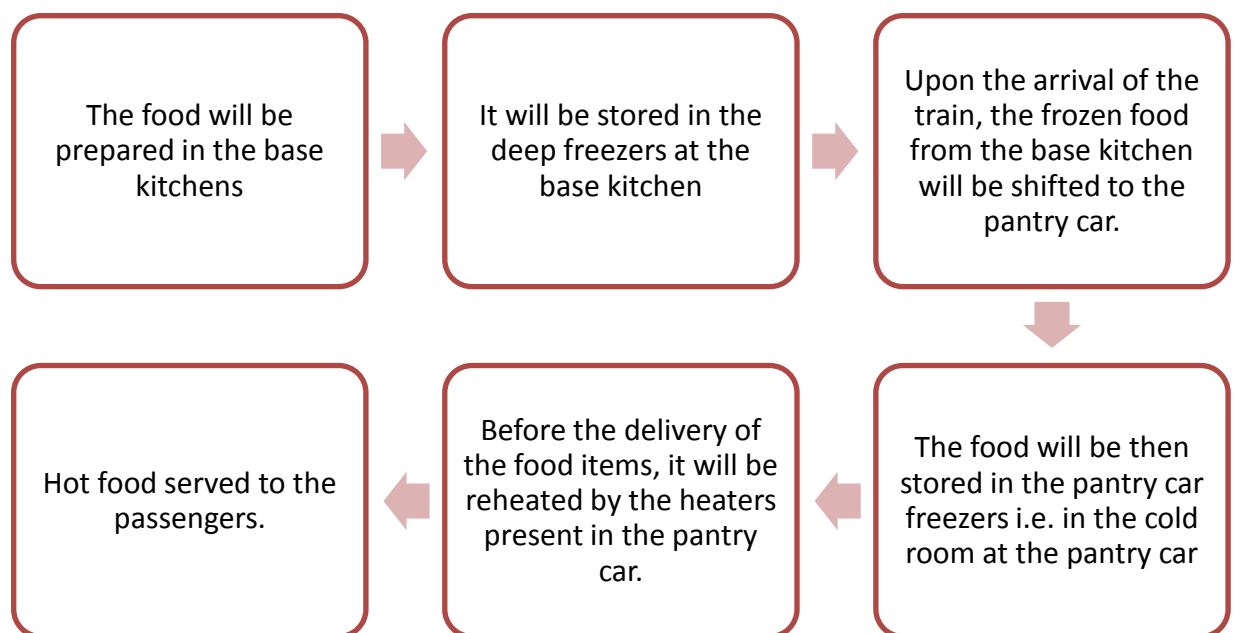


Figure 12: Working of pantry car as a cold room

The advantages of having such a system are:

Maintaining of Nutrition and Freshness:-

- It has been found out that freezing saves vitamins and nutrients, compared to only refrigeration.
- Also, it saves nutritional qualities without preservative.

Food Safety:-

- Freezing lowers bacterial growth and hence, helps in keeping the food safe.
- In addition, it lowers the rate of enzyme reactions and other chemical reactions.

Quality and Taste:-

- The food will be prepared in the base kitchens. So, the best chefs can centrally control the taste and quality of food from the base kitchen.

Value:

- The food prepared would be “waste free”. It is so because whenever there is demand for the food, the required quantity of food can be reheated and the rest can be stored. Hence, the leftovers wasted in the present day catering services can be addressed.
- Bulk processing at the base kitchen can reduce the overall cost of preparation of meals.
- Also, since the food is prepared in the base kitchen, more menu can be bought.

Overpricing:

Overpricing happens due to lack of knowledge of the actual prices of the commodities.

To curb the problem of overpricing onboard facilities, I propose of having transparency on the price of the commodities. It should be made mandatory to have a print of the cost of menu items on the packaging. In addition, a complaint number should also be there on the packaging of the items. This would tell the actual price to the customer and the seller would have no chance to ask for an increase in the price.

To curb the problem of overpricing in the vending stalls, a barcode reader machine can be installed at them. The passengers will get a bill on their purchase of goods and services. This would also keep a check on the vendors selling other items than they are licensed to/ assigned to as there would be no mention of such items in the bar code reader. So the problem of overpricing and selling illegal/more items by the vendors is taken care of.

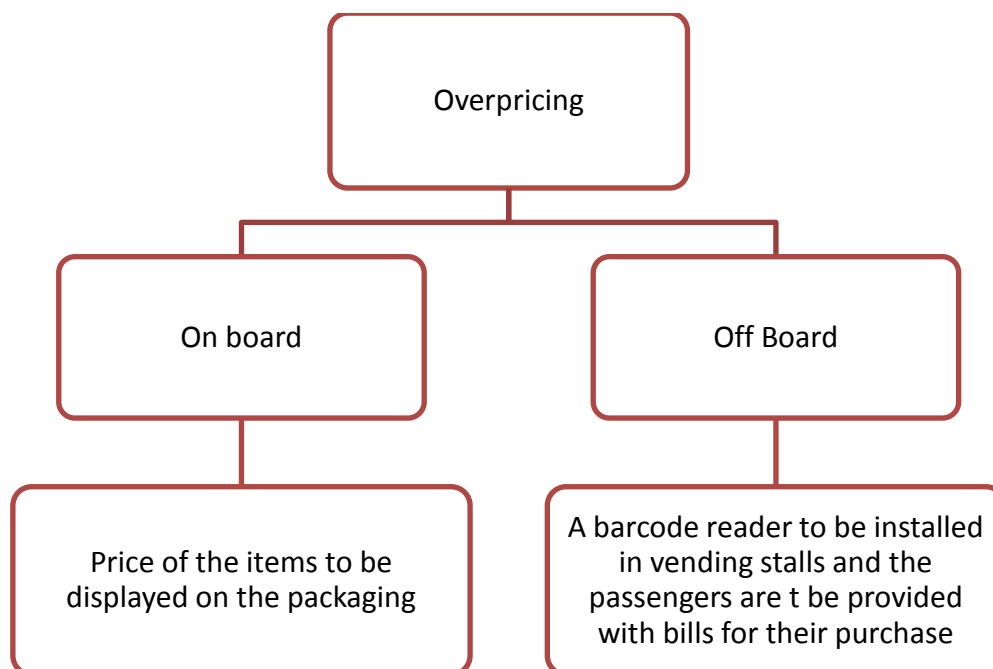


Figure 13: Various forms of overpricing and their remedies.

Effective Feedback Management System:

There has to be a definite feedback management system. The suggestions and complaints should be sorted out in various types and sorted out based on priority. The various types are mentioned in the diagram below:

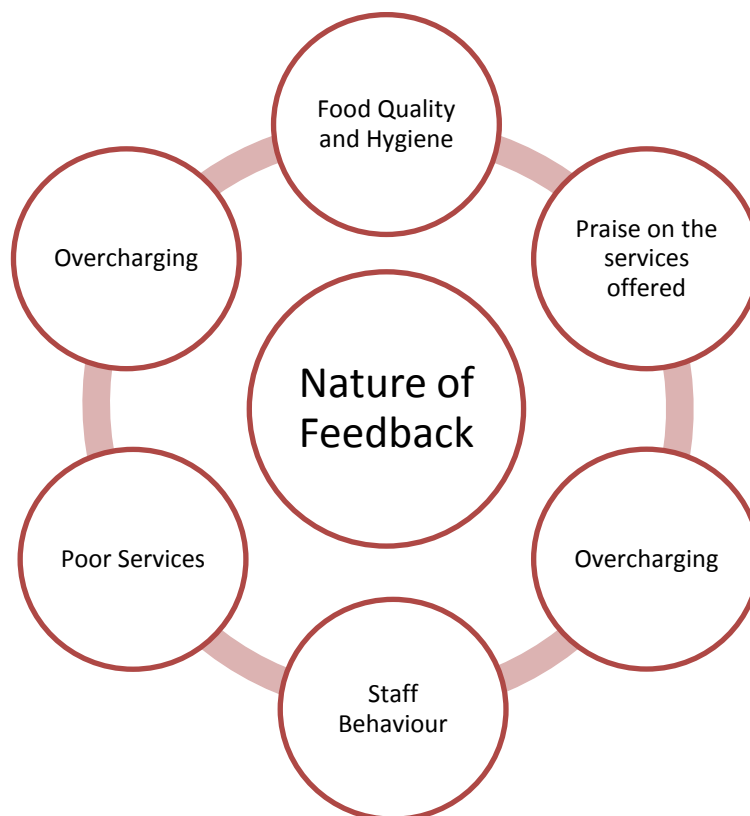


Figure 14: Various forms of feedbacks.

Further, for a more simplified feedback system , I propose that the paper napkin provided with them should have the contact number of the feedback agencies. This will increase the pressure upon the catering Tender of the departmental catering house should be cancelled if the number of complaints exceeds a particular limit.

If the number of complaints against a catering services provider in on the verge of rise over a period of time, inspite of repeated warnings, his contract should be terminated

There should be a corrective action defined on the complaint made. The corrective action may vary from a mild warning to termination. This would put pressure on the concerned authorities to perform better. Figure 12 explains the various corrective actions that can be taken on the suggestions and complaints made by the passengers.



Figure 15: The corrective actions taken on the feedbacks.

Provision of a smart card or a railway card to facilitate the booking of tickets and Catering Services.

The railway is facing a tremendous queue of people for booking of tickets, particularly those travelling for shorter distances. Though there are provisions of booking tickets online, a large chunk of population still believe in going to the station and booking tickets. Provision of having a railway card, just as we have debit cards would help a lot to the people who travel frequently by trains. The card would act in the same way as debit card is used for shopping. There would be machines installed at the stations wherein one could book the tickets for small journeys. In addition billing machines at the kiosks and the food plazas can be integrated with the same so that carrying cash is not required for the passengers for buying snacks and other materials. The new scheme would enable the services to be customer friendly. The long queues of people in the ticket booking counters would get diverged and hence, help the passengers to save their time. The important factor to consider while implementing this scheme is that it should be aimed at the persons who are frequent travellers by the trains. There should be a minimum balance threshold required to put in the account for availing the facility of the cards. This will ensure that only the passengers who travel frequently for shorter distances are made the beneficiaries of the scheme. The implementation for the same can be done in a three phase process as explained in the flowchart

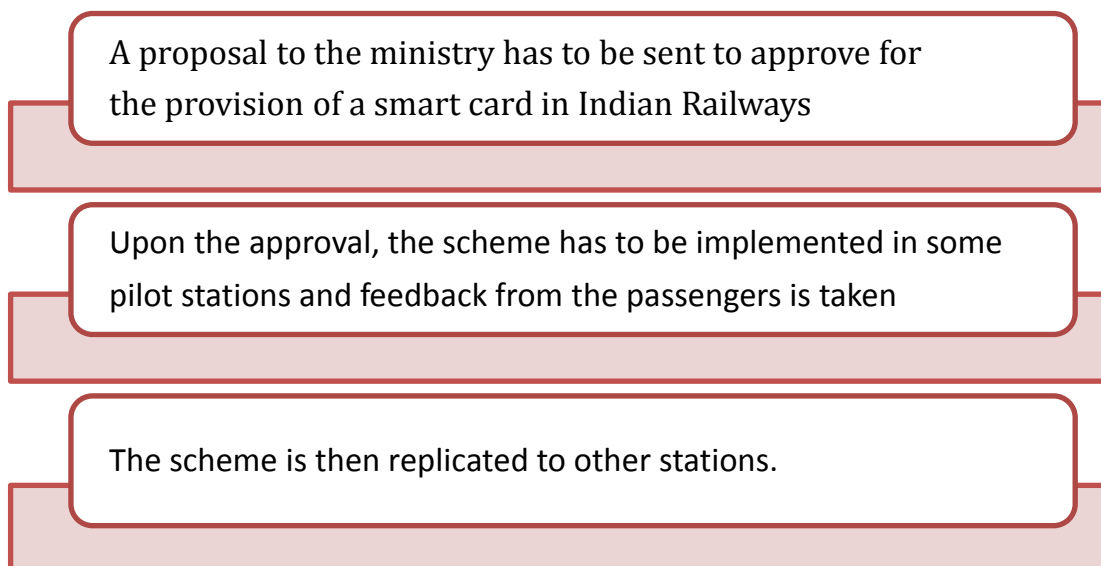


Figure 16: Implementation for the railway smart card scheme

Setting up Railway Catering Expo once in a year:

There should be a national Catering Exhibition held once in a year wherein various caterers providing services to the Indian Railways should take part. Railway Catering Expo would provide a unique opportunity for companies who wish to target decision makers within rail catering operations. Railway Catering Expo should specifically target rail operators, rail caterers and the industry that supplies them. The caterers should demonstrate some unique measures proposed and implemented by them in order to improvise on their services. Railway Catering Expo would provide a perfect environment for companies to showcase their latest products, equipment and services including snack foods, Pre Prepared Meals and Beverages, Food Service Equipment, Galley Equipment and Accessories, Professional Food Service Products including First Class Serveries and Fine Dining, Hygiene Products and Services, Work-Wear and Staff Products etc.

This exhibition would lead to an exchange of thoughts and ideas of various groups coming in from diverse parts of the countries. The interaction between the catering agencies, railway officers, visitors and would help to come up with better services in their future endeavours. The better caterers would help to set a standard for the all the caterers to follow in the services. The competition to be better would propel the other catering agencies to improvise on their quality of service.

In addition to this, the caterers providing the best services should be rewarded at the end expo. The rewarding scheme would serve as an incentive to the caterers to improvise on their services.



Figure 17: Various players that would play a part in the catering expo

Infrastructural changes at the stations to make more money from catering services

In the report of an expert group for modernization of Indian Railways, there has been a suggestion to have huge infrastructural changes in the stations for their development. A plan to modernize 100 major stations immediately has been recommended. Further, it has been proposed that a total of 770 stations should be targeted for development in next 10 years. The above efforts would lead to substantial revenue generation, improved management & customer services as well additional traffic due to new logistic parks & modern terminals. The estimated funding requirements would be approximately Rs. 1,10,000 crores for redeveloping the proposed 100 stations (estimated as Rs. 2,000 crores per station for the top 30 stations; Rs. 1,000 crores per station for the next 30 stations and Rs. 500 crores per station for the remaining 40 stations) and Rs. 17,000 crores for development of 34 multi-modal logistics parks and modernization of existing freight terminals. The time period for completion should be 5 years. The funding for this has been proposed through development of various public private partnership initiatives.

I propose that there should be a provision of a whole new, beautiful retail space in the station. There can be a possibility of using the precious space of the “railway station” which is mostly located in the central areas of the city into a “third place” to hangout — say between office and home or on weekends. This will generate a lot of revenue and hence may compensate for the heavy funding required to upgrade the existing infrastructure at the stations. The retail spaces can be beautified with some state of art interiors and architecture, which would further add to the beautification of the stations. The long term effect of this investment would be that the railways would be able to make money by offering services in retail sector.

The scheme would be very effective in the metro cities, particularly in the cities where local trains are a frequent and an important means of travel. The passengers travelling by these trains would be the potential customers of the retail space. The passengers will find it relatively easy and time saving to use the retail facility at the station itself rather than going in to markets. Further, this will add to the image of the railways as a multifunctional domain which aims at overall satisfaction of the passengers.

Creating some innovative models to popularize Safe Food Movement in Railways(14)

Food Safety is increasingly becoming public health issue. Customers must be protected against food and food production processes which are hazardous to health or life. India is one of the largest food providers in the world. But its share is only 1.6% of the world food trade. All developed countries are setting up stringent safety standards. Governments all over the world are intensifying their efforts to improve food safety and quality for domestic and international markets. The need of the hour is that the Indian Government also take this issue into consideration and railways is perhaps one of the best domains to start this initiative. The Jan Aahar outlets and other vending stalls can be taken as the reference to start this project. There should be an inter-relation between all components responsible: Funders (Government Bodies), Scientists, qualified trainers, retail sector in the industry and consumers. The following ways can be used to promote Safe Food Movement in Railways

- a. Safe food Hubs: To establish a group of food kiosks which have variety of offerings, all are certified to be hygienic and safe. The Jan Aahar outlets and the other vending stalls can be developed in this initiative.
 - The jan aahar staff will have a badge of being certified and trained
 - Frequent checks should be conducted out for the protocol being followed and laboratory testing of the food being served should be done
- b. Safe Food Brand: The one striking example is of 'Rail Neer', which has established itself as a quality drinking water. There is a need of some more brands in food services provided at the station. The Jan Aahar outlets can be an area of focus in this movement.
 - The vendors who receive training and Follow Procedures of Quality and Hygiene can be given a "Brand" value, which will enhance their image, will attract more Customers.
 - The Food Vendors will not only have a "reputation" only for Taste, but also for clean equipments, "clean" ingredients and germ free serving apparatus and methods.
 - Creation and display of a " Safe Food" brand logo will popularize the movement
 - The "Safe Food" Brand will also create public awareness and consciences amongst citizens and consumers.

- c. Recognition of star performers: There should be a feedback mechanism for all the outlets in the railway stations. The one providing best services must be rewarded for the effort put in by the team of that particular hub. The Government bodies, Local Municipality bodies and other Government agencies should initiate a module to recognize and to reward those private and corporate companies and retailers who are maintaining the role models throughout the supply chain. This will set the benchmarks for the industry. It will encourage farmers, traders and distributors to gain a competitive edge. This will also facilitate consumer awareness.
- d. Consumer Awareness: It is required to undertake programs and initiatives to form rating agencies. There should be a close association between Health Bodies and Municipal Bodies, and the Consumer Bodies. Celebrity endorsements and media awareness will play a strong tool in giving momentum to this Movement.
- e. Technology Oriented Initiatives: There is a need to develop more technology, machinery and testing equipment that are mobile, convenient to operate and recordable. It is highly recommended to deliver such tools and gadgets in the hands of the consumers, or vendors and food service bodies. There is a need for equipment to monitor also those officials who are testing and conducting checking programs to make this work. Data Loggers is an excellent example of this.

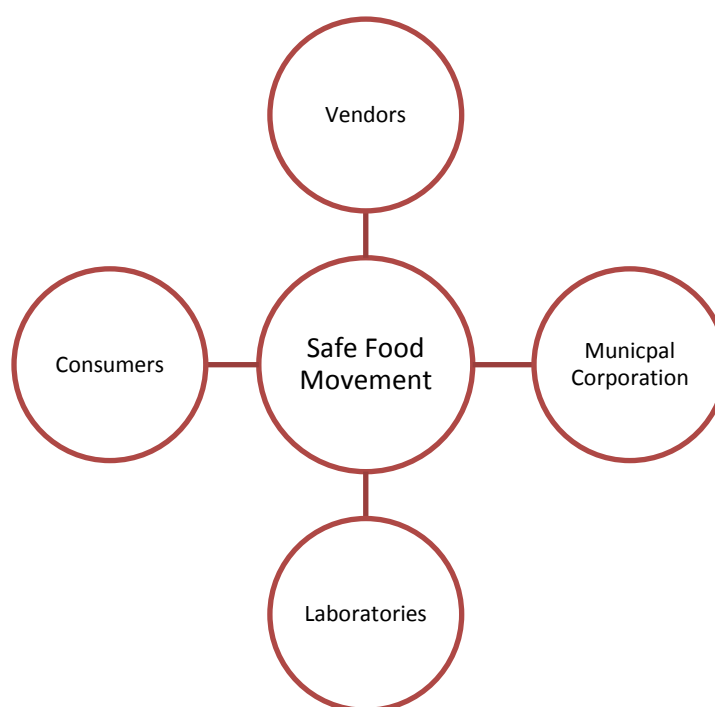


Figure 18: Various components in the Safe Food Movement

Role of Vendors:

- To get acquainted with the food regulations, guidelines etc.
- Take part in general co-ordination between vendors and consumers

Role of Municipal Corporations:

- Provision for easy access to potable water, garbage and waste water disposal
- To enforce compulsory independent audit of the work done by agencies providing HACCP and other Quality Certification.

Role of Laboratories:

- Laboratory Analysis of Food samples
- To organise meeting of Advisory Committee and implementation of suggestions given by the Advisory Committee.

Role of Consumers:

- Creation of improved practices from the vendors.
- Arranging consumer education campaign

Use of quality tools and techniques for improvement in the services

The maintenance of food quality in supply chain is of prime importance in catering services. The distribution of the food products for the railway catering services consists of the following processes

- a. Primary Food Production: The food is being produced by the farmers in their farms.
- b. Purchasing and Storage: The produced food is then purchased by the retailers and the stock is stored in their storage facilities.
- c. Processing in the base kitchen: The stored raw materials are being used as cooking ingredients in the base kitchen.
- d. Packaging: The food items are then packaged and sent to the distribution units.
- e. Distribution units: These consist of vending stalls, onboard catering and other stalls that provide services to the customers.

The main concern in maintaining food quality is the presence of pathogen and pest ingress- E. Coli, cockroaches, flies, rodents etc. In addition, there is a problem of physical hazards in foods, like hair, stones, buttons, stems and seeds etc. These things disrupt the overall quality of the food chain. So there is a requirement for hygienic practices for food handling. Certain benchmarks for food safety have to be taken.

One innovation to safeguard product quality, enhance visibility, improve environmental sustainability is flexible packaging. Flexible packaging has been shaking up the packaging industry for many years now, especially in the food packaging market, where flexible materials are introducing a wide range of new design concepts to minimise waste (both in terms of conservation and cost), attract consumer attention and maintain the freshness of the products within. [15]

Extending food shelf-life and keeping fresh produce - and meat in particular - appealing to consumers for longer is a constant consideration in the food retail world, and it's an area in which flexible packaging has major potential. The package protects steak or other red meats with hermetic sealing to allow a shelf-life of up to 14 days. With this array of retail advantages (not to mention the packaging's lighter weight and easier transportability compared to rigid containers), it seems likely that flexible packaging will be the default selection for meat in the future, especially as this technique matures and reduces in cost.[15]

Flexible packaging inherently brings with it a number of environmental advantages when compared to other packaging types. Packaging weight can be reduced with the use of pouches and other flexible developments for retail packaging, which allows savings on packaging costs as well as material waste. Furthermore, new innovations in the flexible space are incrementally improving the environmental performance of pouches and films.

The environmental benefits of flexible packaging are often linked to financial advantages through the reduced use of plastic materials, lower weight in the supply chain and other factors. In reality, these bottom-line benefits are likely doing more to promote the growth of flexibles than any amount of eco-friendly features could.[15]

6. Suggestions for future work

The research in the report mainly touches the all the parts of the system. In other words, it is a macro-analysis of the system. However, for an efficient service all the parts of the system have to be improved collectively. Hence, there is a wide scope in the micro level analysis of the catering services.

- There is a large scope for research in the field of ‘Quality and Safety in Supply chain’. Maintaining the quality and safety during the journey of the goods from the supplier to the consumer is of very high importance in present times. Transportation sector plays a great role in maintaining quality in retail. This is a very important but a very weak link in the entire chain.

Important factors in transportation include

- Protection from potential sources of contamination – physical, chemical, microbial.
- Protection from damage
- Maintaining environmental conditions – eg cold chain

The expectations from the transport sector are suitable ventilation, proper handling while loading and unloading, temperature checking mechanism, maintain conditions of hygiene and cleanliness etc.

Research can be done and models can be proposed in order to have a smooth supply chain thereby minimizing the loss of quality and hygiene via the transportation sector.

- Another important area where research can be done is in benchmarking in quality standards. The present scenario calls for an infrastructure facilities for storage, cooking and hygiene in the pantry cars and the base kitchens to be of international standards. Benchmarking can be done by foreign agencies or by Indian agencies. Setting up of appropriate things in place to have quality services is of importance and this field can be looked into.
- The entry of multinationals like McDonalds, Dominoes into the catering services at railway stations is another interesting aspect to look at. The effect of such a policy on the normal vendors, its significance on the business of the railways etc. can be done in detail.

7. Conclusion

If there is a sector in India that connects and comprises of people from all the sectors of the country, it is the railways. Indian Railway will continue to play a crucial role in the economy of the country in the many years to come. The need of the hour is to have an exclusive catering policy and system in place that would fulfil the requirements of the whole spectrum of passengers. The changes that would change the face of the catering services should be encouraged. Some of the better things from the more organized sectors, namely the airlines and the restaurants, can be incorporated in the future in the Indian Railways catering services. The services have to be more customers oriented and work has to be done to fulfil the expectations of the passengers travelling. There is a need to set a standard to achieve in the next years to come. People should also be more responsible citizens and exercise their rights. In addition to making complaints, if the services provided are appreciable, people should provide a feedback for the same. The ministry has tried hard over the years to manage a domain concerning such large population coming in from much diversity. There have been a few success and few failures on their part. Many number of committees and expert groups have gone into the various issues and come up with any number of suggestions as to what the railways need to do and how they must change. Lack of a clear political mandate, non-commercial organisational ethos and short tenures at the policymaking levels has been responsible for maintaining the status quo [8]. The future of the railways is very bright and hence, is of the catering services. A definite approach from the government and helped by the people would take railways to heights.

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9. Appendix A- Meetings and Interviews

Meeting minutes of discussion with Mentor: Shri Mukul Mathur (IRTS)

Date of Discussion: 20/5/2012

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Duration of Discussion: 15 min

Discussion:

- We discussed about annual license policy for catering
- Sir asked me to look into the issue of small stall vendors selling more things than the ones they are licensed to.
- Mentor asked to study the railway ministry website about reforms done in improving catering services
- Mentor asked me to get to know details of base kitchen working
- We discussed about the food storage measures base kitchen and pantry cars
- We had a discussion on the Policy related problems: shifting of services from IRCTC to zonal railways. The consequences of the same on the business and the future of the catering services were talked about
- Sir told me to do an analysis on logistics chain faults – examine the whole chain from procurement of raw materials to the delivery of food items to passengers.

Date of Discussion: 22/5/2012

Time: Mailed him at 5:18 pm

- Told him about the progress that I have made in the project- policy level studies, analysis of reports etc.
- Asked him whether I have to cover sanitation in Stations also or restrict my research to waste management in catering services only

Time: He mailed back at 5:36 pm

- Sir told me to research only on the waste management in the catering services as the waste management and sanitation in railway station is taken up by another internee.
- Sir asked me to visit the Kanpur Central Station and examine the facilities there.

Date of Discussion: 28/5/2012

Time: Mailed him at 12:14 pm

- Included a detailed description about the field visit to Kanpur Central Station.
- I told him about my plan to file an RTI (Right to Information) on the number of feedbacks received by IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation) from the year 2005-2010. I asked for suggestions for the same.

Time: Sir mailed back at 12:50 pm

Discussion:

- After going through my field trip report, sir told me to shift my focus on food quality and hygiene issue.
- Sir told me to visit the base kitchen and some vending stalls, assess the adequacy of equipment there.
- About the complaints, he told me to find out their composition – whether they are related to quality, quantity or food being cold.
- Also, the infrastructure facilities have to be checked- are there sufficient freezers, food warmers and other storage facilities, what happens to the leftovers, how are the refreshment rooms functioning.
- Sir told me to talk to some travelers and take feedback of the catering services in Railways.
- He gave me the names of a few officials to contact after I finish up the above tasks- Ms Mani Anand ED Catering Railway Board; Kamlesh Gupta retired AM Catering and Tourism.

Date of Discussion: 31/5/2012

Time: Mailed him at 12:14 pm

Discussion:

- Sent him my presentations for the 1st and the 2nd week
- Asked for his feedback on the same

Time: Sir mailed back at 12:14 pm

Discussion:

- Told me that it is a good start for the project
- He further directed me to focus on food quality and hygiene
- He told me to take a look at the airlines sector for a comparative study.

Date of Discussion: 5/6/2012

Time: 2:18 p.m.

Duration of Discussion: 22 minutes.

Discussion:

- We discussed about some problems in the catering policies followed by the railway ministry.
- There has to be a tradeoff between whether the railways want the profits from the catering services to be maximum or they want to provide food at affordable rates to the whole.
- The whole transport chain has to be looked in detail. I have to find if there is any problem in the existing chain. If yes, I'll have to do more research and find out a suitable solution to the problem
- Sir told me to seek answers on why is the railway investing so much when the private sector has so many players?
- Some ideas to combat overpricing, like a coupon system needs to be there.
- Mechanism to check the vendors selling other/more items than they are assigned to in order to increase their profits.
- Better food serving, packaging(alternative to aluminum foil)
- Are travelers ready to spend more if more variety and more quantity are offered?
- Compare the cost of the thali in the train vs. in nearby dhabas

Date of Discussion: 6th June

Time: Mailed him at 4:25 p.m.

Discussion:

- I mailed him the draft of the survey on '*Consumer Expectations from Catering Services in Indian Railways*'. Asked for his suggestions and feedback for the same.

Time: Sir replied on 12th June at 4:00 p.m.

Discussion:

- He suggested some more things to be included in the survey: pricing, packaging, hygiene, quantity, quality, cuisine etc.
- He gave me some contacts of officers from Lucknow whom i can ask more about the problems of railway catering systems.

Date of Discussion: 13th June

Time: Mailed him at 3:39 p.m.

Discussion:

- I briefed him about the facilities in base kitchen at Nagpur Station.
- Asked him on how the project should proceed from here.

Time: Sir mailed back at 5:21 p.m.

Discussion:

- I was suggested to look into the facilities in the more organized catering sectors- i.e in the airlines and the restaurants. Studying them would give me an idea about the policies and practices followed by them and a comparative analysis would enable me to get some ideas from these sectors into the railways.
- Also, sir told me to see the probable areas in which hygiene are is compromised and how it can be improved.
- He told me to look with inquisitive mind try to find what is wrong in the whole chain.

Date of Discussion: 18th June

Time: Mailed him at 9:18 p.m.

Discussion:

- Sent my mid-term presentation and report to him and asked for his feedbacks.

Date of Discussion: 28th June

Time: 10:43 a.m.

Duration of Discussion: 22 minutes.

Discussion:

- I gave my report to sir on the base kitchen visit.
- He looked at the report and told me to focus on the recommendation part in the coming days.

Date of Discussion: 2nd July

Time: 3:40 pm

Discussion:

- I sent him a mail with a draft of my recommendations for the betterment of Catering Services in Railways
- I also sent him the links to the online survey that I had made.

Date of Discussion: 3 July

Time: 5:20 pm

Duration of Discussion: 15 minutes

Discussion:

- We discussed about the recommendations that I sent him a few days back
- He gave me a suggestion to include a dedicated number for addressing catering related queries. Such a number would increase the quality of feedback system and quality of services offered by a huge margin.
- He told me to come up with a tradeoff that should catering be seen as just a moral obligation by the railways or should be turned into a business venture opening up new opportunities.

Date of Discussion: 11th July

Time: 2:20 pm

Duration of Discussion: 20 minutes

Discussion:

- We discussed about the strategy for implementation of the recommendations that I had proposed in my research
- Sir provided the information of the concerned authorities at the three broad levels of management: Division, Zone and Railway Board.

Appendix B- Field Visits

Field Visit -1

Student Name: Pranay Patil

Project ID: 48

Mentor Name: Shri Mukul Saran Mathur (IRS)

Intern ID: 34

Date of the Visit: 25th May, 2012

Suggested/Referred By: Mentor, Shri Mukul Saran Mathur

Visit No.: 1

If more Trips required to the same organization: Yes

Goals of the visit:

1. To learn about various aspects of practical implementation of catering services in Indian Railways.
2. To know the overall hierarchy of the managing body of railway catering services.
3. Interview the officers concerned with managing the catering services about the present scenario of facilities available to them and discuss how to improve them.
4. To discuss the new catering policy of the Ministry of Railways wherein services were taken back from IRCTC and given to Indian Railways.
5. Get an overview of services offered the food plazas and other kiosks concerning catering with respect to the food quality and safety, cleanliness and cost.

Goals Met:

1. The information about the hierarchy of the officials (designations) managing catering services.
2. Views of the officers and staff on the new catering policy 2010 vs. the previous one taken with the condition that all the views will be quoted unofficially.
3. Got some ideas from the interaction with the officers about how the quality of catering services offered is improved.

Persons Met:

1. Name: **Shri Shivendra Shukla (IRTS), Chief Traffic Manager, CNB Station**

Duration and Timings of Discussion: **25th May 2012, 1:00pm-1:35pm, 35 minutes**

Details of the Discussion:

- We discussed about the problems in the fundamental domains concerning catering department, i.e. in infrastructure development, food safety, feedback management system, waste management system
- Came to know that CNB station has a base kitchen.
- Sir told me to look into the fields where catering services are of utmost importance, i.e. restaurant chains, etc. and come up with some idea for the betterment in the railway catering sector
- The reason cited for shifting the catering services from IRCTC to Indian Railways was given as increase in no. of complaints. So, sir told me to file an RTI and seek information of no. of complaints raised in that time period.
- Discussed about how the system goes into haywire in case of late running of trains.

2. Name: Mr. Anurag* (Supervisor of Catering, IRCTC), Mr. Ritesh* (Supervisor of Catering, IRCTC , Mr. Mishra* (Senior Supervisor of Catering, IRCTC)

(*Names changed: The staff wanted to express their views unofficially. They told that most of things that they were telling are were their personal views and not that of the government. They requested full anonymity of their name.)

Duration and Timings of Discussion: **25th May 2012, 3:00pm-3:35pm, 45 minutes**

Details of the Discussion:

- a. The hierarchy of officials managing catering services in Railways and IRCTC were noted down.
- b. We discussed about the services offered in the present day by railways versus the services offered by the IRCTC.
- c. They criticized railways for not taking in the IRCTC staff after the new catering policy was implemented.
- d. They added that the technical skills and knowledge of the railway officers is inadequate to run the catering services
- e. We discussed about some schemes and policies that can be added into the present system to increase the quality of services offered at the trains and the stations.

Field Visit 2

Student Name: Pranay Patil

Project ID: 48

Mentor Name: Shri Mukul Saran Mathur (IRS)

Intern ID: 34

Date of the Visit: 22nd June, 2012

Suggested/Referred By: Mentor, Shri Mukul Saran Mathur

Visit No.: 2

If more Trips required to the same organization: No

Goals of the visit:

1. To see the working of the Base Kitchen of Kanpur Central Station.
2. Discuss with the officials about the problems they face and their suggestions on how to improve the services.

Goals Met:

1. Got a chance to see the IRCTC maintained kitchen at platform number 1, Kanpur Central Station.
2. Analyzed the practices that were being followed by the staff in the
3. Got some ideas from the interaction with the workers and officers about how the quality of catering services offered is improved.

Persons Met:

1. **Name:** Mr. Chiranjil Lal (Accounts Department)

Duration and Timings of Discussion: 22th June 2012, 12:15 pm-12:20pm, 5 minutes

Details of the Discussion:

- Came to know that there are two base kitchens – one maintained by IRCTC and the other by a private catering group called RK Associates.

- I asked for his reference to see the base kitchen of Kanpur Central. He told me that it is not in his hands to allow and that I should consult the IRCTC officials.

2. Name: Shri Akhlaque Ahmed (IRTS), Chief Traffic Manager (CTM), CNB Station

Duration and Timings of Discussion: 22th June 2012, 12:35 pm-12:45pm, 10 minutes

Details of the Discussion:

- I explained him about my purpose of visit, gave a brief introduction of my project and Rakshak Foundation.
- I asked him a couple of questions regarding catering facilities in the station.
- He had a schedule to keep up, so he gave his email id and told to ask rest of the queries through mails.

VISIT TO THE BASE KITCHEN, IRCTC, KANPUR CENTRAL.

3. Name: Mr Harsh (a worker with IRCTC at base kitchen)

Duration and Timings of Discussion: 22th June 2012, 1:15 pm-1:35pm, 20 minutes

Details of the Discussion:

- Looked into the facilities at the base kitchen and compared them with the policies I read on the paper.
- There was no worker who was wearing a proper uniform. When I asked about the reason, the person told that they are being provided with the uniforms and other necessary accessories. They had brought their uniform, but didn't care to put it up.
- Hygiene practices followed were of a grave concern.
- I learnt about the policies that are followed in the storage of the food items.
- Storage facilities needed to be upgraded. There are no sufficient provisions for pest control.
- Storage of water: Water used is rail neer. But there is no storage measure in stainless steel tank.
- Discussed about the hygiene issues in the Base Kitchen
- Inspections were held on a daily basis by catering supervisors.
- Tenders are passed for masalas, cold drinks and a tie up is there with big bazaar for vegetables and other retail accessories.
- Medical checkup is held once in every 6 months of all the employees to check for various infections and diseases. In addition, fire training is also given to the employees.

Appendix C – Draft of RTI Application

Draft of the RTI Application filed:

Date: 28/05/2012

To,

Central Public Information Officer (CPIO), Railway Board

Room No.5, RTI Cell, Rail Bhavan,

Rafi Marg, New Delhi -110 001

Dear Sir,

The questions for which I sought answers are:

1. The reason given by the rail minister in 2010 for shifting the catering services from IRCTC to Indian Railways was increase in the number of complaints registered on food quality and hygiene. I want to know the total number of feedbacks received by all means [i.e. web, sms, and hand written] by the IRCTC database. The data from Year 2005-2010 is needed
2. The categorization of the number of complaints in various domains are sought i.e. Quality, Quantity, Hygiene, Over Charging, Staff Behaviour. The data from Year 2005-2010 is needed

This application is based on tip-offs received from personal sources. So kindly do ensure its confidentiality. A failure on this account may also endanger the safety of some people.

Preferred language in which information is desired is Hindi or English. In case any of the above-asked information is held by or related to another public authority, you are requested to transfer the application or such part of it as may be appropriate to that other public authority with an intimation to the undersigned (Section 6(3) of Right to Information Act).

If the information sought is accommodated in more than 25 Pages, please give it to me in a Compact Disk (CD) instead of hard copy.

I hereby confirm that I am a citizen of India.

A postal order worth Rs 10 as RTI fees is attached with this application.

Name of the Applicant: Pranay Patil

Phone Number: : +91-9494823572

Email: pranay.2412@gmail.com

Address at which Information is desired :

65, Dhadiwal layout,

P.O. Parvati Nagar,

Nagpur- 440027.

RAKSHAK FOUNDATION

Rakshak Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Santa Clara, California. It partners with Rakshak Foundation NGO, New Delhi, India. It researches different public policy issues and creates awareness about them. Rakshak Foundation sponsors Seminars on public policy matters, sponsors activities to involve the youth in social issues including volunteerism and supports programs to help the needy. Rakshak's Summer Internship Program is aimed at providing an opportunity to highly motivated college students to work on complex real life social/national problems under the mentorship of experts and policy makers.

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