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STUDY OF PASSENGER SATISFACTION WITH CATERING SERVICES ON GWALIOR RAILWAY STATION

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ABSTRACT :

    Indian Railway network is the second largest railway network in the world and counted as a most preferred and affordable mode of transport for both short distance commuters and long distance travellers. Apart from travelling venture, the Indian Railway also deals in catering services. Initially all catering provisions were handled by different zones of Indian Railways but since year 1999 IRCTC made responsible to cater to travelling passengers. Currently, catering services at railway station are provided by IRCTC and its authorized service providers. Besides this, unauthorized vendors are also found in dealing with catering services. This presented study has been conducted at Gwalior Railway Station to get an insight of catering services with respect to passengers' satisfaction level. It analyses that whether provided catering services are acceptable among travelling passengers or not. The not acceptable areas are identified then recommended with suggestions for their improvement.

KEYWORDS : *catering dimensions, passenger attributes, demographic background, IRCTC, service providers, off-board and on-board catering.*

INTRODUCTION

    Gwalior railway station is one of the major commercial railway stations and is a part of the Jhansi Division of the North Central Railway of Indian Railways with zonal headquarter in Allahabad. In year 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1992, Gwalior railway station has won the award for clean infrastructure from Indian Railways. Major trains of India such as Gatiman Express, Taj Express, Rajdhani, Garib Rath, Shatabdi are stopped at Gwalior Railway station and around 12 trains directly originate from Gwalior Junction. Many long distance trains and commuter trains also passes from Gwalior Station.

    All passengers passing through Gwalior railway station can purchase their meals and beverages from vendors as well as order online in trains. IRCTC e-catering provides its catering services at Gwalior railway station. Apart from this, RailRestro along with restaurant partners also offers e-catering provisions to travelling passengers at Gwalior railway station. Major restaurant partners include-Khankhazana.com, Annapurna Kitchen and Jain Restaurant. In addition, some major independent catering service providers also offer their catering services to travelling passengers in trains at Gwalior railway stations. For instance- Punjabi Food Factory, Seven Spice Restaurant, Raj-Rasoi, Bawarchi Express and so forth. Gwalior Railway station is classified as A-1 station.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1) To analyze the performance of existing catering services and facilities at Gwalior Railway Station.
2) To evaluate the quality of provided meals and beverages at Gwalior railway station
3) To evaluate the service quality of catering provision provided at Gwalior railway station.
4) To find out the passengers' level of satisfaction with provided catering services at Gwalior Railway Station

LITERATURE REVIEW

Roday (2011) stated that passengers travelling by trains depend on the railway authorities for providing meals, snacks and beverages. He said that there are two styles of catering arrangement in railways – on-board and off-board catering. In reference to India, Roday said that IRCTC is working towards providing high quality meals and beverages to travellers and maintaining food hygiene & sanitation in trains and on platforms. He further stated that licensed vendors, 24 hours multi-cuisine food plazas at important railway stations, on-board catering units on trains has continuously working for offering better standards to commuters.

Sheeba, et al, (2013) studied in her exploratory research work that there are various factors responsible for service quality in trains in Indian Railways. This study considered seven factors and 16 variables to analyze the satisfaction level of passengers. The findings of the research work reveals that the most important factors determining passengers' satisfaction comes in an sequence order as basic facilities, hygiene, safety & security, catering, health care services, punctuality followed by employee behaviour towards passengers.

Fang Pei Nich (2013) revealed in his research work about the Effect of Service Quality on customer Satisfaction. The objective of the research work was- to understand the present situation of service quality and customer satisfaction in catering; to discuss the effects of demographic variables on service quality and customer satisfaction; and to explore the correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in catering. The findings of the research work revealed that service quality presents significantly positive correlations with product price, service efficiency and perceived value; correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction have differences in some demographic variables.

Ishfaq Ahmed, et, al (2010) revealed in his research work that satisfaction is a key variable which is an outcome of better service quality and in return, it gives customers the zeal to stay with the service provider and creates greater repurchase intentions for the customers. The service quality was measured using Parsuraman et al (1988) SERVQUAL model containing five dimensions of service quality (tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and reliability). Nonetheless, the relationship of service quality with customer repurchase intentions is also considered.

Hong Qin, et, al (2009), explored in his research work about the potential dimensions of service quality and examined the relationship among service quality, food quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and behaviour intentions in fast food outlets. The findings of the research work revealed the five dimensions were significant- tangible, reliability/ responsiveness, recovery, assurance, and empathy. Service quality and food quality are two major determinants of customer satisfaction. The insignificance of perceived value is potentiality due to the homogeneity of the construct within the fast food outlets group rather than the importance of perceived value construct within food services.

Priyanka Gite and Kumar Navodit Manav (2012) stated in their study that Indian Railways requires to have exclusive catering policy and system in place that would fulfil the requirements of the whole spectrum of the passengers. They concluded that as IRCTC is the only railway meal service provider in a country thus it enjoys the 100% monopoly in the railway travel market segment. Authors also said that this monopoly of IRCTC is the core reason behind poor quality meal services to the travelling passengers. Moreover, they said that IRCTC must develop a strong food quality mechanism, simultaneously train their staff in the field of catering services.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study was conducted at the Gwalior Railway stations accepting it as a sample unit of the study. The travelling commuters were interviewed as a unit sample to represent the population. The study covers a sample size of 43 respondents and the survey was conducted in the month of November and December 2018. Sampling was done on randomly selected passengers, at different times of the day, particularly on Saturday and Sunday over a period of eight week duration. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was framed in the form of statements scored on a five points rating scale ranging from 01 (Strongly Unsatisfied) to 05 (Strongly Satisfied). Hypothesis testing approach was used to determine the passengers' satisfaction differentials. Then one way ANOVA and an Independent sample test were used to check the developed hypothesis. Finally correlation analysis was used to study the relationship between chosen variables. In addition, percentage and mean score analysis were also used to support the conducted study.

SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The primary data for this research work has been collected through questionnaire and observation and by interviewing travelling passengers. In questionnaire, 25 questions were used to collect the response and feedback in respect to catering services provided by IRCTC. For questionnaire, the *sample size* of the study was around 90 respondents but responses were received from only 43 respondents. The sample selection was done randomly who travelled via express and Mail trains. The sample composition was consists of those travellers who travel towards Delhi meanwhile passes from Gwalior railway station. On the flip side, the secondary data has been collected from newspaper, magazines, CAG report, articles, relevant websites, previous research papers and annual report of Indian Railways.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The data analysis of this research study is based on the hypothesis testing- finding the differences between variables then analyze these variables on the basis of their mean and percentage score. In reliability statistic, the Cronbach's Alpha is .952, other test results are given below-

Distribution of Passengers Attributes

Attributes		Frequency	Percentage
Age	- 18 – 22 years	15	35
	- 23 – 27 years	07	16
	- 28 – 32 years	02	05
	- 33 – 37 years	09	21
	- Above 38 years	10	23
		43	100%
Gender	- Male	28	65
	- Female	15	35
		43	100%
Education	- Below 12th	01	02
	- Graduate/Under-G	25	58
	- Post - Graduate/Under-PG	15	35
	- PhD/Under-PhD	02	05
	- Uneducated	-	
		43	100%
Occupation	- Private Employee	08	19
	- Government Servant	12	28
	- Businessman	04	09

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	- Student	16	37
	- Unemployed	03	07
		43	100%
Income (Monthly)	- Below Rs. 10, 000	20	46
	- 10,001-20,000	-	-
	- 21,001-30,000	02	05
	- 31,001-40,000	07	16
	- Above 40,001	14	33
		43	100%
Marital Status	- Married	24	56
	- Unmarried	18	42
	- Widow	01	02
		43	100%
ASP	- Below Rs. 500	29	68
	- Rs. 501 – Rs. 1000	06	14
	- Rs. 1001 –Rs. 1500	07	16
	- Rs. 1501-Rs. 2000	01	02
	- Above Rs. 2001	-	
		43	100%

The result of hypothesis testing reveals-

H_{00} Statistically there is no significant difference between passenger satisfaction level and their demographic background.

Result – One way ANOVA clearly specifies that statistically there was no significant difference between passenger satisfaction and their demographic background. The significance value of all demographic background dimensions are above 0.05.

Demographic background	Significance Value	F
Age	0.906 (p = .906)	(3,15) = .183
Education	0.960 (p = .960)	(3,15) = .098
Occupation	0.281 (p = .281)	(3,15) = 1.401
Monthly income	0.805 (p = .805)	(3,15) = .328
ASP	0.849 (p = .849)	(3,15) = .265

H_{01} Statistically there is no significant difference between passenger satisfaction level and gender.

Result- Levene's Test for equality of variance clearly states that there was homogeneity of variance as per gender (between males and females) for satisfaction score. We can see that- F (7,01) = 6.914 p = .034. The result of Independent Sample T-test clearly reflected that statistically there were no significant difference in satisfaction level of male and female passengers- t (6.000) = -3.873, p = .008

H_{02} Statistically there is no significant difference between passengers' satisfaction level in accordance with married and unmarried group.

Result- Levene's Test for equality of variance clearly states that there was homogeneity of variance as per gender (between males and females) for satisfaction score. We can see that- F (7,2) = .032 p = .862. The result of Independent Sample T-test clearly reflected that statistically there were no significant differences in satisfaction level of male and female passengers- t (1.347) = .132, p = .912

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Correlation Analysis on the Satisfaction Dimension

		Food Quality	Service Quality	Food Hygiene & Safety	Prices-Meals Beverages	Employee Behaviour	Waste Disposal	Menu Choice - Food	Menu Choice - Beverage
Food Quality	Pearson Correlation	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N	19							
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	.331	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.166							
	N	19	44						
Food Hygiene & Safety	Pearson Correlation	.201	.685**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.410	.000						
	N	19	44	44					
Prices-Meals Beverages	Pearson Correlation	.352	.688**	.753**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.140	.000	.000					
	N	19	44	44	44				
Employee Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	.316	.558**	.589**	.382*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.188	.000	.000	.011				
	N	19	44	44	44	44			
Waste Disposal	Pearson Correlation	.295	.569**	.666**	.586**	.631**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.221	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	19	44	44	44	44	44		
Menu Choice - Food	Pearson Correlation	.337	.308*	.602**	.337*	.588**	.421**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	.045	.000	.027	.000	.005		
	N	19	43	43	43	43	43	43	
Menu Choice - Beverage	Pearson Correlation	.431	.232	.418**	.223	.376*	.340*	.554**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066	.134	.005	.151	.013	.026	.000	
	N	19	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

** Significant at 0.01level
* Significant at 0.05 level

The above given table of *correlation analysis* on passengers' satisfaction dimensions determine the strength of association in between different variables that used to conduct the study. On one side, the high correlation designates the high degree of relationship among associated variables and *vice-versa*. In this research study this has been observed that low magnitude of relationship is found between service quality, food hygiene & safety, prices of meals & beverages, employee behaviour, waste disposal, menu choice (food) and menu choice (beverage) with respect to food quality.

In addition weak correlation is also identified for the factor between menu choices (beverages) in respect to service quality and prices for meals and beverages. Otherwise rest of all dimensions

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showed vigorous correlation values and hold significance level either at 0.01 or 0.05 level. Hence the implication of rest upon the dimensions of qualitative and quantitative catering provisions for travelling passengers is either poor or below the expected level of passengers.

Descriptive Analysis

S. No.	Rating Scale	Percentage					Mean Score and SD	
		SU	US	SA	VS	SS		
1	Menu Choice (Foods)	9.1	20.5	59.1	9.1	-	2.70	.773
2	Menu Choice (Beverages)	2.3	18.2	56.8	20.5	-	2.98	.707
3	Food Quality	11.4	25.0	52.3	11.4	-	2.64	.838
4	Serving Method (S. Quality)	9.1	13.6	31.8	40.9	4.5	3.18	1.040
5	Food Hygiene and Safety	4.5	15.9	45.5	27.3	2.3	3.07	.876
6	Prices of Meals & Beverages	4.5	36.4	47.7	4.5	2.3	2.62	.764
7	Waste Disposal	11.4	25.0	47.7	4.5	6.8	2.69	1.000
8	Employee Behaviour	4.5	11.4	56.8	27.3	-	3.07	.759
	Average (=43)	6.31	20.72	48.99	19.44	2.02	**2.87**	
Note. SU- Strongly Unsatisfactory, US- Unsatisfactory, SA- Satisfactory, VS-Very Satisfactory, SS-Strongly Satisfactory								

In above given analysis, passengers are found to be least satisfied with prices for meals and beverages followed by food quality (2.64); waste disposal (2.69); food menu choice (2.70); and beverage menu choice (2.98) at Gwalior railway station. On the reverse side, passengers are found highly satisfied with serving method (s. quality) with *mean score* of 3.18 followed by food hygiene & safety and employee behaviour at 3.07 mean score. However, the cumulative result shows the *mean score* of 2.87 with provided catering services by IRCTC at Gwalior railway station. Subsequently, when all catering dimensions collectively represented then it indicates that passengers are not found to be satisfied with catering services expect few components, i.e.- serving methods, food hygiene & safety and employee behaviour.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
1) This research study is limited to 43 respondents only therefore it cannot be generalized for other railway stations of India.
2) The accuracy of the information and processed data is subjected to the accuracy of the responses received from respondents.
3) The study is conducted on the collected sample survey thus it may have some inherent pitfalls of a sample study.
4) The study may have an impact of personal biasness due to personal reasons of the travelling passengers

FINDINGS
The tested hypotheses clearly specify that there were no significant differences between passengers' demographic background (age, gender, education, occupation, monthly income, marital status) and average spending power in respect to catering dimensions. The *mean score* of menu choices, food quality, prices for meals & beverage and waste disposal clearly intimates that these weaken areas should be seriously addressed and need to be strengthened.

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RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1) Framed policies by catering service providers should be generally quantified. It should not be particularly passengers' attributes oriented only.
2) The catering service providers should focus on all below *mean score* areas as these catering dimensions are also affecting to above *mean score* areas. As a result, overall mean score of passengers satisfaction goes below 3 which is not desirable in nature.
3) The lessen strengthen areas can be improved by proper feedback mechanism, regular inspection and surprise checking to better satisfy the need and want of travelling passengers.

CONCLUSION

IRCTC is a helping hand of Indian Railway which predominantly responsible for enduring catering services at railway stations. Therefore, every traveller is directly or indirectly depends upon IRCTC for catering related services. Nowadays catering services are counted as a vital aspect of journey for every traveller and it demands significant satisfaction from the passenger side to meet overall satisfaction criteria. The presented study explores an insight of passengers' satisfaction level with provided catering services at Gwalior railway station. The tested hypothesis also reveals no significant differences among groups consider for conducted research work. The ultimate end result of this research work determines that the overall satisfaction level gained by the passengers towards the offered catering services are desirable for three dimensions (serving method, food hygiene & safety and employee behaviour) and need to be improved for rest of five dimensions (menu choice, food quality, prices for meals & beverages and waste disposal). The cumulative result of all catering dimensions reflects the mean score below <3 which means on an average maximum passengers are not satisfied with provided catering services at Gwalior railway station.

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