



INDIAN RAILWAYS – SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

¹Ghurni Bhattacharya

¹Undergraduate student

¹Jadavpur University

ABSTRACT

Indian Railways, operated by the Ministry Of Railways is perhaps the biggest facilitator and connector of the masses across the states, divisions, districts, cities, towns and villages, the essence and relevance of railways in the development paradigm along with railways infrastructure today and its contribution to development across the country is of utmost importance to understand having all, different functional units such as (IRTS, Indian Railways, Passenger Reservation Enquiry, IRPS, signaling, tracking, eco-review, statistics, electrification, sanitation, symbols, departmental conventions of rules regulation, safety, security, self sufficiency, passenger safety and security, station cleanliness, general duties of staffs ,general conventions of passengers, IRCTC, asset utilization etc.) working in collaboration with one another with a proper set of structural organizational conventions and maintenance of value consensus reinforces stability in the organizational structure, thereby, promoting integration on the account of sociological basis evidenced by customer satisfaction highlighting the smooth running of Railway Organization and its social contributions as the Lifeline to the nation.

Keywords: Indian Railways, Functional Units, Customer Satisfaction and Social Contribution

INTRODUCTION

Indian Railways is operated by the Ministry Of Railways, manages the fourth largest railway network in the world by size, with 121,407 kilometers of total track over a 67,368-kilometre route. Eighty percent of routes are electrified with 25KV-AC electric traction while thirty three percent are double or multi-tracked. Indian Railway runs more than 20,000 passenger trains daily, on both long distance and suburban routes, from 7,349 stations across India. The trains have a five-digit numbering system. Mail or express trains the most common types, run at an average speed of 50.6 kilometers per hour. In freight segment, IR runs more than 9,200 trains daily. The average speed of freight trains is around 24 kilometers per hour.

A **society** is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or social territory. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may

be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent of members. There is a scholarly disinterest when it comes to sociological conceptualization of railways as empowerment agency in India. Whereas, the railways is perhaps the biggest facilitator and connector of the masses across the states, divisions, districts, cities, towns and villages, the essence and relevance of railways in the development paradigm becomes important to understand. Traces the advent of railways in India and conceptualizes the railways as development within a sociological prism. The very advent of railways in India, the railway as a bridge agency of empowerment, the role of railways in connecting the larger country and development of masses is very important to understand the essence of railways in its entirety. Further railways infrastructure today and its contribution to development across the country is of utmost importance to understand.

FEW STUDIES

In India, train has arguably been the most important material emblem of modernity since the first passenger train ran in 1853. Representations of Indian Railway comprise an anormously important global symbolic history that includes numerous novels, short stories, poems, photographs and films (Aguilar, 2011). Indian subcontinent has one of the most extensive and ancient railway systems compared to countries with about the same level of Economic Development. Railway System has developed gradually as and when the demand for expansion arose. This has meant gradual introduction of technical innovation like Gauge Conversion, adoption of automatic signaling, introduction, of diesel or electric traction, centralized traffic control and similar other means to meet the demand of higher transport capacity from time to time. All this of necessity has meant substantial capital investment in railways which even otherwise was comparatively more capital intensive than most of the other sectors of the economy. Railways have, in the process, also been one of the largest consumers of foreign exchange since the beginning of the first five year plan. (Dutta Roychowdhury, 1971)

OBJECTIVES OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

- **Action plan on maintaining cleanliness at railway stations and railway tracks**

Indian Railways has a regular mechanism of maintenance of cleanliness at railway stations and Tracks. Mechanized cleaning is done through specialized private agencies at 532 Major Railway Stations through Departmental/contractual Staffs.

Maintenance of cleanliness at railway stations becomes a mammoth task, can only be achieved with active cooperation of public and with gradual improval of change in habits of users.

1. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL:

1.1 Railway Board has issued detailed procedures order for disposal of wastes arising from pantry car services and static units (Commercial Circular No45, 2011)

1.2 Railway shall provide different colored Dustbins at all major and medium category stations

1.3. All major stations shall be under CCTV surveillance in next two years .

2. Littering of Solid and plastic wastes

2.1. Support of RPF personnel is also taken to keep a check on passenger found littering, deal them under sections of Railway Act and IR cleanliness rules.(Comm.&RPF)

2.2.Zonal Railways have been authorized to undertake operation including cleanliness of toilets on pay&Use basis.(Comm.&Engg.)

- **Indian Railway Traffic Service:** IRTS is an organized Group 'A' Class 1 Service (cadre) of the Government of India conducted by Union Public Service Commission .Traffic Department comprises two branches -

1. Operations 2 Commercial.

Having a history of more than 100 years, Traffic Department is responsible for optimum utilization of Railway assets. Their seamless integration to provide a swift and safe transportation service and consequent realization of revenues in-line with the social obligations of the Indian Railways. Public Service Delivery and Asset Management are their forte.

(1.1) To infuse a sense of fraternity and cohesion amongst IRTS officers.

(1.2) To promote and safeguard interests of member and IRTS as a whole.

(1.3) To act as a think tank to address the issues forming IRTS and Indian Railways.

- **Indian railway Personnel service :** (IRPS) is a cadre of civil servants of the Government of India The officers of this service are responsible for managing the human resources of the Indian Railways which has a work force of about 1.4 million employees
- Personnel Service handles the human resource aspect.

1.1 The main functions and responsibility of IRPS Officers in the railway is to arrange recruitment, training of staff, promotion, demotion, transfers, disciplinary actions, etc along with managing good industrial relations and to see welfare of close to 1.4 million railway employees.

1.2 Dealing with provisions of various laws and acts such as Industrial dispute Act, Factory Act, etc.

- **Indian railway organizational structure :** Organized broadly by functional groups of Indian Railway Service. This is traditionally how the co-operation is organized. The Indian Railways perhaps has been less adventurous in changing the structure; it has largely kept up what it got as a legacy since the British era.

1. Railway Board: The apex management organization is the Railway Board,(Ministry Of Railways). The board is headed by a Chairman reporting to Minister of Railways.

2.Functional Branches: Non Technical Services recruitment:2.1. Indian Railway Traffic Service

2.2. Indian Railway Personnel Service

2.3. Indian Railway Accounts Service

2.4. Railway Protection Force

- **Technical Services recruitment**

2.5. Indian Railway Service of (Civil) Engineers

2.6 Indian Railway Service of Electrical Engineers

2.7 Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers

2.8 Indian Railway Stores Service

2.9 Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineers

- **Medical Services recruitment**

- **Indian Railway Medical Service**

- The Divisional Railway Manager heads the organization at the division level. There are currently 71 divisions on the system nationwide. Divisions are primarily involved with train running but may have loco sheds, coaching depots.
- Each division has all functional organizations. The heads of these functional groups report to the DRM for administrative purposes, rely on guidance from the railway board and the zonal headquarters for policy guidelines.
- **Signaling:** Signaling, a complex system is one of the most important infrastructures of railway service. Performance of railway signaling system depends on functioning of number of subsystems, such as panel, cable, relay, and level crossing gate etc. Signaling system plays an important role for safe running of trains by preventing occurrence of accidents and minimizing the risk of the passengers, operating personnel and railway infrastructure. Failure mode and effect analysis is applied to analyze risk of these subsystems during the operating phase of signaling system. Risk is measured in terms of Risk Priority Number, which is a product of occurrence severity and detection. It is observed that point and point machine, signal, and track circuit are the critical subsystems of railway signaling system. (Panja and Ray, 2009)
- **Symbols:** While travelling by the train we often see different signs & symbols besides the railway track.
- **Arrow-shaped boards points to the left or right.** This sign indicates special restrictions on the track due to temporary or permanent engineering work. The direction of the arrow indicates that on which track the restriction applies to. These boards are usually painted in black and yellow colour.
- The circular board written T / G and T / P on the side of the tracks. Generally Speed Termination Indicator Boards are located on the left side of the tracks. T/G's full name is termination of speed restriction for Goods trains, whereas the full name of T/P is termination of speed restriction for passenger trains.
- **IRCTC:** (IRCTC) is a Public Sector Enterprise was incorporated on 27th September, 1999 as an extended arm to upgrade, professionalize and manage catering and hospitality services at stations, trains to promote domestic, international tourism through development of budget hotels, special tour packages, information & commercial publicity and global reservation systems. While

discharging its mandate, Company has made significant mark in its passenger-services oriented business lines like setting up of Food Plazas on Railway premises, „*Railneer*’, Rail Tour Packages and „Internet Ticketing’ bringing great deal of professionalism into the operations. In addition to above, managing on Board Catering Services in *Rajdhani / Shatabdi / Duronto* and Mail / Express Trains and Static Catering Units viz. Refreshment Rooms, AVMs, Book Stalls, etc across Railway Network.

1. To be a customer friendly company through constant innovation, technology driven and human resource development
2. Optimize resources, increase manpower productivity through quality product vending and innovative marketing strategies.

- **Duties of Staff, station master:**
 1. (1.1) If untoward incident occurs at station, the concerned Station Superintendent shall immediately arrange for medical assistance to injured passengers and report such incident within twenty-four hours of the occurrence to Divisional Security Commissioner
 - (1.2) If untoward incident occurs in mid-section, Guard of concerned train shall inform the Station Superintendent of the nearest station who shall perform duties referred to in sub-rule.
- **.2 DUTIES OF STATION SUPERINTENDENT :**
 - 2.1. On receipt of an information about the Occurrence of untoward incident under rule 3, make necessary entries to this effect in station diary
 - 2.2) Arrange for medical assistance to the injured passengers.
- **DUTIES OF FORCE STAFF :**
 - 3.1 Obtain copies of inquest report, post mortem report and Jama Talashi report from the police investigating the incident
 - 3.2. Obtain a copy of the report from station superintendent.
- **Railway Protection Force:**

(RPF) is an ‘Armed Force of the Union’ constituted under the RPF Act, 1957 for better protection and security of railway property, passenger areas and passengers and matters connected therewith. The Force is empowered under the ‘Railways Act, 1989’ to deal with offences related to alarm chain pulling, roof traveling, touting, ticketless travel, unauthorized entry into coaches earmarked for ladies, unauthorized vending, trespass etc. under ‘Railway Property (Unlawful Possession) Act 1966’ to deal with offences related to theft, dishonest misappropriation and unlawful possession of railway property. The sanctioned strength of RPF is 75,704.

 - (1.1)Escorting about 2,000 important Mail/Express trains daily in addition to escorting of 2,200 important Mail/Express trains by GRP personnel.
 - (1.2)Escorting of ladies compartments of suburban trains during night hours in coordination with GRP staff.

- **Material Management:** In order to ensure uninterrupted supply of materials, Zonal Railways and Production Units have 262 stocking depots spread all over Railway Network. Important function of Material Management is generation of revenue through disposal of surplus, obsolete items and industrial waste.
- **Telecommunication:**
 - To give improved telecommunication systems on Railways, Optical Fibre based communication systems has been adopted and laying OFC has increased to 7,700 route kilometer this year. Rail Tel Corporation has been created to make nationwide broadband multimedia network laying optical fibre cable along railway tracks Thus will provide better operational passenger amenities , additional revenue to Railways..
- **Electrification:** In pre-independence period, electrification remained confined to 388 Route Kilometers and only in post independence period that Furthur electrification was taken up. Indian Railways have prepared Action Plan for electrification of 90% of BG net work of Indian Railways by 2020-21. Accordingly, it has been planned to electrify 24,400 RKM in five years (2016-17 to 2020-21).
- **Finance:** Secured excellent rating for fourth year in succession by the Department of Public enterprises on basis of performance targets. Besides, Standards and Poor's, the international credit rating agency, also reaffirmed the sovereign ratings to IRFC. The Corporation has been making profits and paying dividends.
- **Accounts Department:-**
 - (1.1) Keeping the accounts of railway in accordance with prescribed rules
 - (1.2) Prompt settlement of proper claims against railway.
- **International Cooperation:** working in close cooperation with International Union of Railways (UIC), International Heavy Haul Association (IHHA), to gain latest technical know-how to constantly upgrade its infrastructure and operations to World Standards.
- **Passenger Business:** Indian Railways is a commonly used mode of public transportation in the country. During 2016-17, it carried 8,116 million passengers as against 8,107 million in 2015-16.
- **Security:** All India Security Helpline: Security Helpline 182 has been set up to provide round the clock security related assistance to passengers. Another Security Helpline i.e. 1800111322 is also functioning.
- **Social Service Obligation:** Senior citizens, disabled persons etc. enjoy concessional benefits. New initiatives in this area during the last three years include reduction of age limits for special concession to senior women citizen from 65 to 60 years, blind and mentally challenged persons can now travel in AC classes on concessional rates. Free second class Monthly Season Tickets for school going children upto tenth standard for travel between home and school.

- **Tourism:** Indian Railway is prime mover of tourism in the country, has taken several initiatives viz .operation of tourist train / coach services on popular tourist circuits in different regions of the country, offering tour packages inclusive of rail travel, local transportation, , onboard services like catering, off board services such as conducted tours etc.
- **Tracks and Bridges:** During 2016-17, passenger train services were introduced on 953 Kms on new lines. During 2016-17, 1020 Kms of track was converted from MG/NG to BG.
- **Technology:** India became the first developing country and the 5th country in the world to roll out the first indigenously built "state-of-the-art" high horse power three phase electric locomotives when the first such loco was flagged off from Chittranjan Locomotives Works Diesel Locomotives Works, Varanasi has produced state-of-the-art 4000 HP AC/AC diesel locomotive in April this year.
- **Undertaking and organization: IRFC 1986:** To raise funds from the market to part finance the Plan Outlay.

- **Rail Road duty:**

For economic regulation duties are set out under section 4 of the Railways Act 1993.

- promote improvements in railway service performance;
- Section 21 of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act 1996 provides that ORR shall have an overriding duty to exercise its regulatory functions in such a manner as not to impede the performance of any development agreement.
- **Classification of posts :** Recruitment of Group 'A' Officers are made through: 1. Competitive examination held by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
2. Promotion of Officers from Group 'B' Service
- **Service of engineers:** Is a prestigious Group 'A' central service recruited through the engineering services examination. The officers of this service are responsible for administering Civil Engineering organization.
(1.1)Responsible for maintenance of all fixed assets of Indian railways, i.e. Track, Bridges, Buildings,,etc.(1.2) Maintenance of existing assets are responsible for construction of new assets such as New lines, Gauge conversion (1.3)responsible for safety and punctuality .
- **Commission of railway Safety:** 1. Inspecting new railways with view to determine whether fitting to open for public carriage of passengers, and to report thereon to the Central Government as required under this Act 2. To make such periodical, other inspections of any railway, rolling stock used thereon as the Central Government may direct.
- **Duties of TTE:** 1.1.Sleeper coach TTEs are required to report for duty half-an-hour before scheduled departure of train.
1.2 To assist passengers traveling in the coach in obtaining food, refreshment, etc.

- **Circulars:** Revision of pension of pre-2016 pensioners by notional fixation of pay 01.01.2016-Bunching of stages in revised pay structure-regarding.(7.3.2019)
- **Determinants of Customer Satisfaction :** Service quality has been viewed as a determinant of customer satisfaction. Identifies components of service quality of Indian Railways at railway platforms. The findings reveal

that five factors are considered important for determining satisfaction with railway platforms, the most important of which are refreshments and behavioral factors.

- **Quality Determinants Authors**
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- Customer perception, customer expectation- Czepiel (1990) Sachdev and Verma (2004),
- TCRP Report 100
- Customer expectation, customer satisfaction and customer attitude- Sachdev and Verma (2004)

Source:Determinants on Customer Satisfaction on Service Quality:A Study of Railway Platforms In India: (Geetika,Shefali Nandan,Motilal Nehru National Institute Of Technology)

- **Concluding Remarks:** This research depicts different functional units of Indian Railways working in collaboration with one another.Proper Organisational structure intertwined with value consensus reflects efficiency in services provided evidenced by customer satisfaction being Indian Railways ,the Lifeline to the Nation in its Social entirety.

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