

# Measuring Customers Satisfaction and Service Quality in Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Food Outlets: A Study of Uttar Pradesh (India)

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## Abstract

Service quality is one of key element in determining customer satisfaction and vice versa. Service quality is crucial source for taking competitive advantage in this world of globalization. Service Quality not only provides satisfied customers but also affects his revisiting behavior and also encourages him to promote that organization. Service quality leads to customers' satisfaction and customers satisfaction increases loyalty, brand image, profitability and investment returns. But achieving customers' satisfaction and service quality is not an easy task due to swinging moods of customers. Today's customers is more concerned about environment, health, culture, culinary art etc. that's why all sectors are providing customers oriented service and Indian Railway is also not an exception.

Indian Railway is of the major public transport mode in India. Its large capacity, low fares, high safety and no traffic jam makes it unique and primary mode of transportation. In fact, Indian railway has fourth largest network in world and largest under single management. It has lots of benefits to society but still service quality and customers' satisfaction is low as compared to other modes of transportation. For improving its service quality Indian Railway establish Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) for looking after its hospitality, catering and tourism business. The present research paper aims to identify customers' satisfaction and service quality through gap analysis between customers' expectations and perceptions visiting IRCTC food outlets with a focus of Uttar

Pradesh. The questionnaire was developed using DINESERV model based on five dimensions and 29 variables.

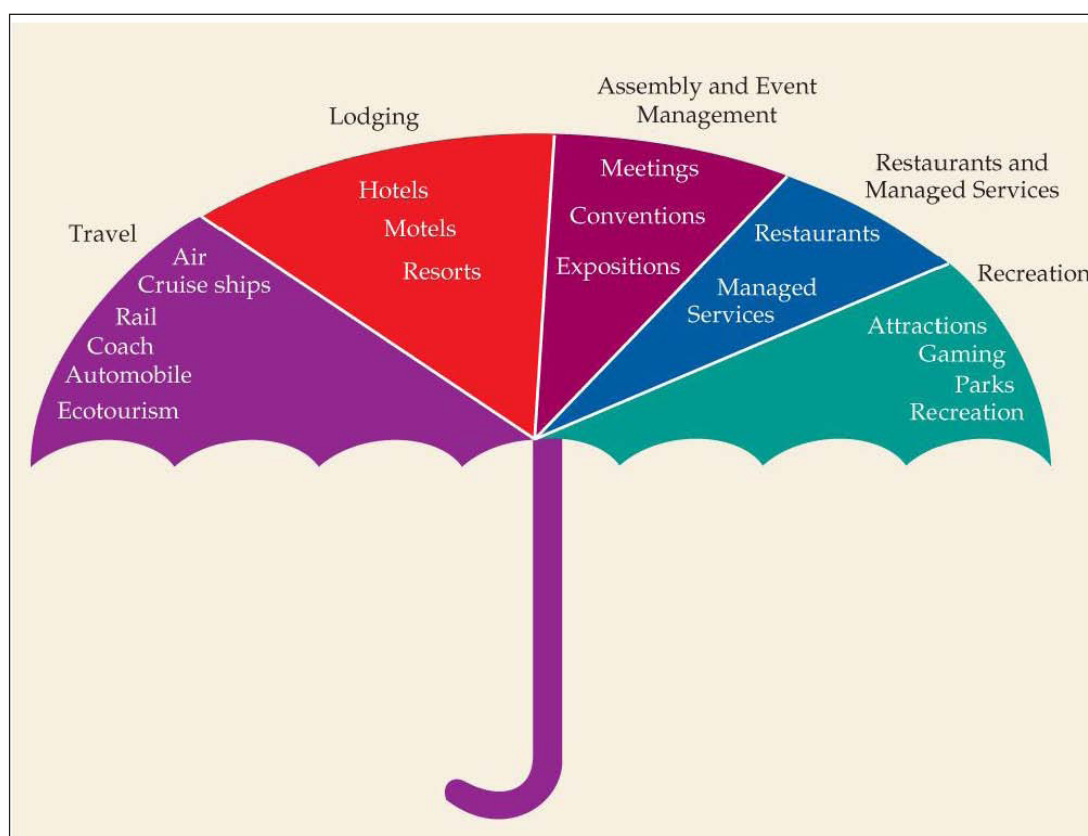
**Keywords:** Service Quality, Customers' Satisfaction, IRCTC, DINESERV, Food Outlets

## Introduction

Hospitality word derived from Latin word 'hospitare' which mean to receive a guest (Ditmer, 2002). Hospitality refers to welcoming of the guest and looking after his/her basic needs like shelter, food, drink and many more. The role of hospitality industry starts from the very beginning when a guest leaves his home. The purpose of visit may be different from person to person but hospitality industry is always there to serve his/her purpose. It will take care of everything from your food to shelter, from your room to destination, from your entertainment to meeting. SiennyThio (2005) refers hospitality as something related to kindness, friendliness and hospitableness. Whereas Brymer et al (1991) sees hospitality industry as an umbrella which encompasses various businesses and organizations like accommodation sector, food sector, recreation, travel and tourism, transportation which caters guests as shown in figure below.

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**Fig. 1: Components of Hospitality Industry**

Source: [www.lostintourism.wordpress.com/2014/09/17/welcome-to-lost-in-tourism/](http://www.lostintourism.wordpress.com/2014/09/17/welcome-to-lost-in-tourism/)

From above it is clear that hospitality industry is not limited to few segments, it is widely spread and touches every segment of the society by providing great job opportunities in various fields like transportations facilities, entertainment facilities, accommodation facilities, food services and other recreational facilities. Angelo and Vladimir (1996) also supported hospitality umbrella with same major sectors which work under hospitality i.e. food service, lodging industry, travel and tourism, meeting and convention planning etc.

Thus from the above it is understood that transportation is a key component of hospitality industry as it link the various destinations and places of tourists interest. The term transport (British English) or transportation (American English) is derived from Latin word 'Trans' (across) and 'Portare' (to carry). Culpan (1987) describes transportation as one of the important component of hospitality & tourism system. Further he insisted that linkage of land masses by air, sea, roads, and railways is not only necessary for day to day function but also helpful for tourism promotion. Abril et al (2008) in his

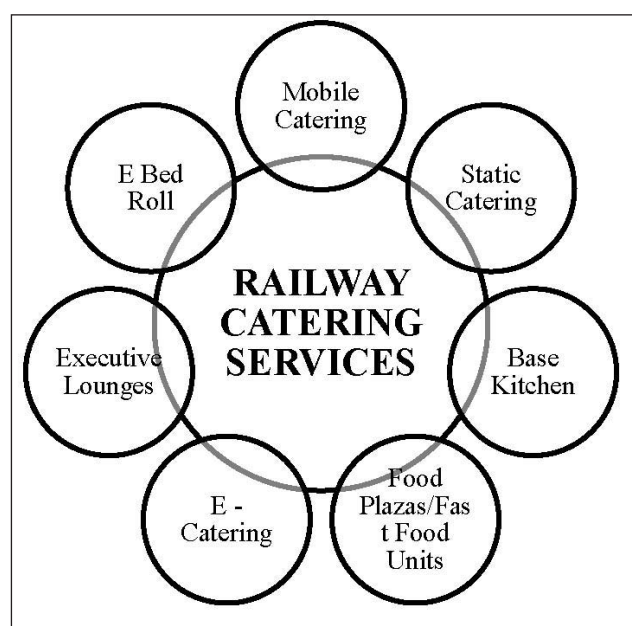
work identifies railroad as major mode of transportation for tourism development. Being a mass transportation system it is not only cheap mode of transportation but also safe and comfortable. The impact globalization and more customer centric world have changed Indian Railway in a big way. Today with the advent of new technology, we can experience various form of railway such as Metro, Monorail, Shatabadi, Rajdhani etc.

Railway plays a significant role in boosting a country's economy and India is not an exception. Today Indian Railway has major contribution in Indian GDP. It is largest public sector earner after ONGC and provide provides jobs to 13 million people which makes it largest employment generator in India. Indian Railway had fourth largest network in world and second largest under single management. In 2015-16 it carries 8.101 billion passengers which is remarkable.

From the past few years, demand of tourists and passengers had increased significantly in Railway. It was a daunting task to manage such huge network with

variety of services. That's why, Indian Railway created its own subsidiary arm to handle all hospitality and tourism services by the name of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC). Currently IRCTC is handling wide range of hospitality and tourism related services which can be broadly divided into four parts these are catering & hospitality, internet ticketing, travel & ticketing & drinking water.

Catering services are further divided into two parts: Railway Catering and Non Railway Catering. Railway catering refers to catering provided on railway platforms and in rail services while Non Railway Catering means all catering services provided outside railway. Railway Catering services include number of services like departmental catering, mobile catering, e catering, lounge services etc. which are shown in figure 2.



**Fig. 2: Railway Catering Services**

Source: IRCTC annual report 2015-16

IRCTC Catering services segment is rewarding and has huge potential of growth. Considering growth in catering business IRCTC is continuously adding catering units with 198 food plazas, 146 static catering unit and 52 mobile catering units. IRCTC also conducts customer's satisfactions survey to measure service quality and now it has empanelled 5 agencies for 3 years. In 2015-16 they conduct survey on 179 food plazas/fast food units and found average satisfaction level at 77%.

A major factor for determining customer satisfaction in service industry is service quality. There is still controversy whether service quality determines customer satisfaction or vice versa. PZB (1985) in their research shows some instances where customers were satisfied with an event or services but doesn't feel that service quality was high. There may be some incidents of satisfaction which results in perceptions of service quality (Hunt, 1979; Johns and Howard, 1998). Oliver (1980) describes satisfaction as a result of one's overall attitude. From this perspective, we can refer service quality as a whole family album, while customer satisfaction is seen as one snapshot.

## Review of Literature

Customers' satisfaction and service quality is the biggest challenge for service industries because of its intangible characteristics. Several researches have focused on the significance of service quality in customer satisfaction (Stevens et al. 1995; Iglesias and Guillen, 2004). Kim et al. (2009) also explained service quality as an important component of customers' satisfaction and return behavior (Kivela et al. 1999). Lam and Zhang (1999) describe customer satisfaction and service quality as key factor for customer retention and success of a business. The demand for quality services has increases in recent years. In hospitality services, quality services are critical in determining success or failure of a business (Gronoos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Lam and Zhang (1999) saw service quality and customer satisfaction as different concept. Service quality is judgment of overall services of an establishment while customer satisfaction focuses on specific business aspect.

Service Quality refers to the performance of services judged by customers (PZB, 1985). Various studies show that satisfaction and service quality are fundamental elements for effective management and highly connected (Rust & Oliver, 1994; Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). Customer satisfaction refers to overall evaluation of customers' experience of a good or service (Fornell et al., 1996). Gunderson et al. (1996) describe customer satisfaction as, "a guest's post consumption judgment of a product or service that can, in turn, be measured by assessing guest's evaluation of a performance on specific attributes." Providing expected or preferred services is a starting point for customer satisfaction. Easiest way to determine customers' satisfaction is simply to approach and ask them. (Lam and Zhang, 1999) explained that fulfilling customers' need and want leads to customers' satisfaction.

Restaurants and food outlets are spending considerable amount and efforts to sustain in this competitive market of catering business. Generally, they try to satisfy customers in many ways because customer satisfaction helps them to predict customers' post-purchase behavior (Tam, 2000). But, all these effort to satisfy a customer doesn't give any assurance for his revisit due to intangible nature of catering services (Dube, Renaghan, and Miller, 1994). Fortunately it can give an idea whether customer is willing to return or not (Yüksel and Yüksel, 2002). Johns and Pine (2002) found those fundamental factors that affect customer satisfaction in restaurants. He enlisted those factors into for category; the food (hygiene, healthiness and balance), the service received (speed, politeness and care), physical aspect (layout, cleaning, space and furnishing), and the atmosphere (comfort and feeling). Baker and Crompton (2000) and Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) linked the customer satisfaction directly with business sale. Thus, if a restaurant service provider identifies major service quality factors which have greatest impact on customer satisfaction, they could survive in this cut throat competitive food market.

Kim et al. (2009) explained five dimensions for restaurant service quality; Atmosphere, food quality, service quality, convenience, price and value. Wu and Liang (2009) said that employees has larger role to play in guest experience. Jang and Liu (2009) described food quality, service reliability, interior design, cleanliness, neat and well-dressed employees has great impact on customers satisfaction and increasing the level of service quality. Further he explained food quality in term of food presentation, hygiene, food variety and taste. Many researchers also found that restaurant cleanliness is major contributor in customers experience and helps in increasing service quality (Baker and Crompton 2000; Becker et al 1999; Barber and Scarcelli 2010).

Sulek & Hensley (2004) considered food quality on priority while Johns and Tyas (2006) indicated that all attributes have their own value and must be given equal consideration. Also there is no such formula or model which can measure the exact value of service quality. The most important thing is to meet the customers' expectation

and service quality level depends on how much percent you meet his expectations (Namkung & Jang 2008).

The present research is carried out to measure service quality and customers' satisfaction in IRCTC restaurants based on the customers' feedback dinning in these restaurants.

## Research Methodology

The objective of this research paper is to measure customers' satisfaction and service quality among IRCTC food outlets in Uttar Pradesh. This study would help IRCTC catering management in identifying customers' level of satisfaction and making proper policies for the same. To find the present objective DINESERV model is used. The model was proposed by Stevens et al (1995). The research uses a revised questionnaire with five dimensions of DINESERV these are; Tangibility (10 variables), Responsiveness (3 variables), Reliability (5 variables), Assurance (6 variables) and Empathy (5 variables). In all 29 variables of service quality were taken.

The research was conducted on 6 IRCTC food outlets located in different parts of state of Uttar Pradesh. In all 150 respondents were contacted by using stratified convenient sampling by selecting 25 customers from each outlet. These are measured on the basis of five point likert scale in which 5 represent highly satisfied customers and 1 for highly dissatisfied customers.

The figure 3 shows the location of IRCTC outlets located in different parts of state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

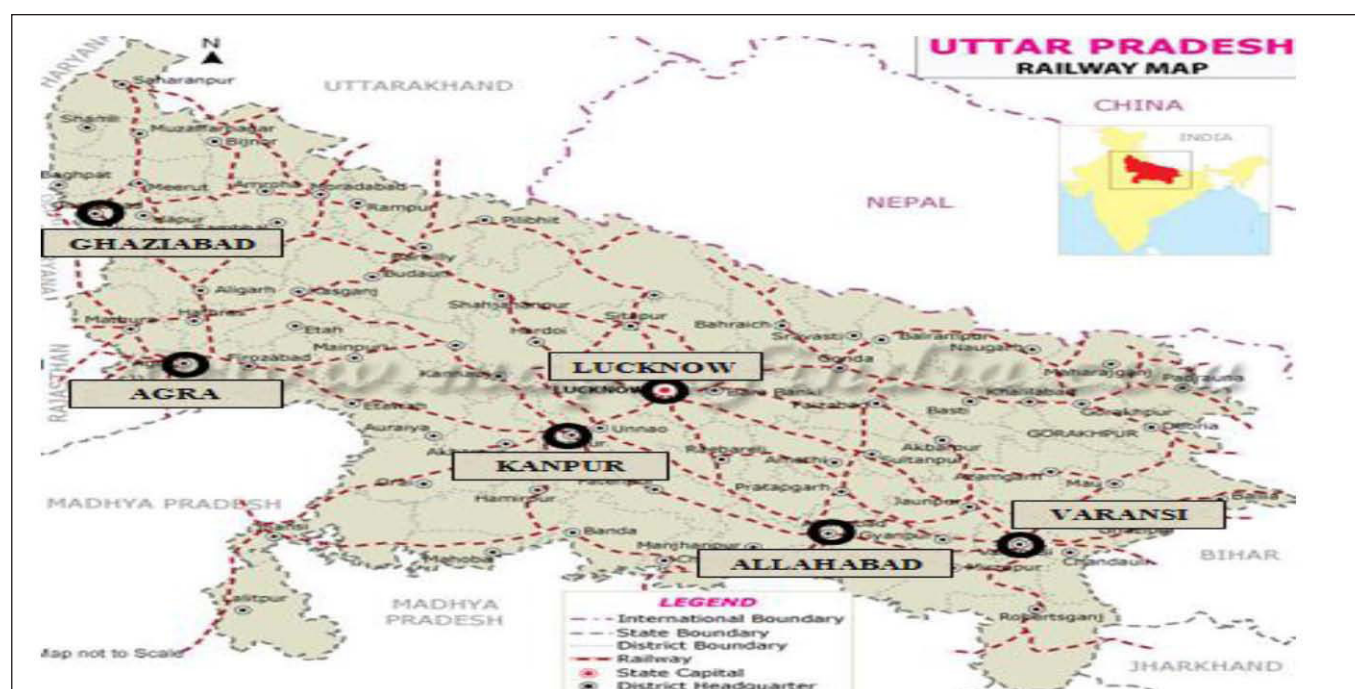
From the above figure it is clear that these outlets are equally spread across Uttar Pradesh and all places i.e. Ghaziabad, Agra, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Lucknow have great tourists' attractions.

## Result and Analysis

### Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents visiting these IRCTC food outlets is presented in table 1 below.





**Fig. 3: Data Collection Area (Uttar Pradesh)**

Source: mapsofindia.com

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Item                | Percentage | Item             | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| Age                 |            | Gender           |            |
| 15-25 years         | 27.3       | Male             | 68.7       |
| 26-40 years         | 47.3       | Female           | 31.3       |
| 41 and above        | 25.3       |                  |            |
| Profession          |            | Education        |            |
| Serviceman          | 29.3       | Senior Secondary | 12.0       |
| Businessman         | 20.0       | Graduation       | 54.7       |
| Student             | 34.7       | Post Graduation  | 29.3       |
| Others              | 16.0       | Above PG         | 4.0        |
| Nature of Residence |            | Income           |            |
| Metropolitan        | 14.0       | Upto 2 Lakh      | 49.3       |
| Urban               | 28.7       | 2-5 Lakh         | 32.0       |
| Semi-Urban          | 34.7       | Above 5 Lakh     | 18.7       |
| Rural               | 22.7       |                  |            |

Above table represents that most of the respondents were young i.e below 40 years (74.6%) and most of them were males (68.7%). This shows that young people loves taking food while their journey in trains and mostly males prefer to dine at IRCTC food outlets located on platforms. Further most of them were students (37.4%), which justify out majority of respondents having income below 2 lakh (49.3%). Most of the respondents' lives in Semi-Urban areas (34.7%) of Uttar Pradesh and mostly are graduated (54.7%).

### Objective: To Measure Customers' Satisfaction and Service Quality through GAP Analysis among IRCTC Outlets Located in Uttar Pradesh

To find service quality and customers' satisfaction GAP analysis method is used which is based on DINESERV

model. In all, as mention above it has five dimensions i.e. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

#### Dimension 1: Tangibility

A tangible item includes those things which can be seen, feel or touched so that a customer can evaluate the services before consumption or use of services. Olu Ojo (2008) mention that tangibility includes physical facilities, personnel, equipment, communication material, building and renovation etc.

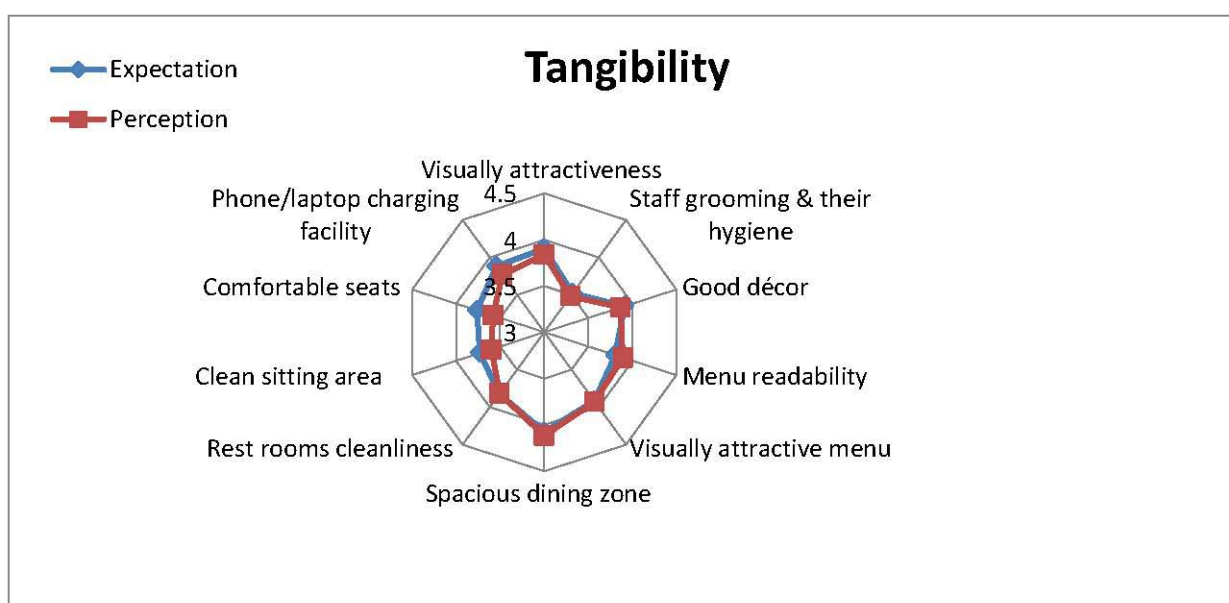
The detail analysis of Tangibility dimension and its variables with mean, standard deviation, GAP and t values is given in the table 2 below.

**Table 2: Tangibility Attributes**

| Dimension   | Attributes of IRCTC Food Outlets   | Expectation |       | Perception |       | GAP     | t-Value |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|---------|---------|
|             |                                    | Mean        | SD    | Mean       | SD    |         |         |
| Tangibility | V1 Visually attractiveness         | 3.905       | .758  | 3.837      | .918  | -0.068  | .920    |
|             | V2 Staff grooming & their hygiene  | 3.520       | 1.052 | 3.479      | 1.145 | -0.041  | .663    |
|             | V3 Good décor                      | 3.913       | .866  | 3.866      | .994  | -0.047  | .669    |
|             | V4 Menu readability                | 3.806       | .887  | 3.893      | .963  | 0.087   | -1.193  |
|             | V5 Visually attractive menu        | 3.918       | .925  | 3.925      | .976  | 0.007   | .000    |
|             | V6 Spacious dining zone            | 4.076       | .836  | 4.117      | .893  | 0.041   | -.546   |
|             | V7 Rest rooms cleanliness          | 3.825       | .890  | 3.818      | 1.007 | -0.007  | .085    |
|             | V8 Clean sitting area              | 3.729       | 1.034 | 3.601      | 1.147 | -0.128  | 1.338   |
|             | V9 Comfortable seats               | 3.761       | 1.042 | 3.581      | 1.154 | -0.18   | 2.065   |
|             | V10 Phone/laptop charging facility | 3.880       | .889  | 3.768      | 1.040 | -0.112  | 1.575   |
|             | Overall Mean                       | 3.833       | 0.917 | 3.788      | 1.023 | -0.0448 |         |

From the above table, it is clear that there is difference between customers' expectations and perceptions, when it comes to tangibility dimension. The same is reflected by the overall mean difference between customers' expectations (3.833) and perceptions (3.788). Further

from service quality gap analysis it is clear that 7 (V1, V2, V3, V7, V8, V9, V10) variables were below customers' expectations as these shows negative gap. This can be easily understood by the figure 4 given below.



**Fig. 4: Service Quality GAP through Customers' Expectations and Perceptions**

The above figure clearly shows that only three matches the customers' expectations and these are Menu readability (0.087), Visually attractive menu (0.007) and Spacious dining zone (0.041).

### Dimension 2: Reliability

Reliability in food outlets refers to services performance and the degree up to which it can create confidence and

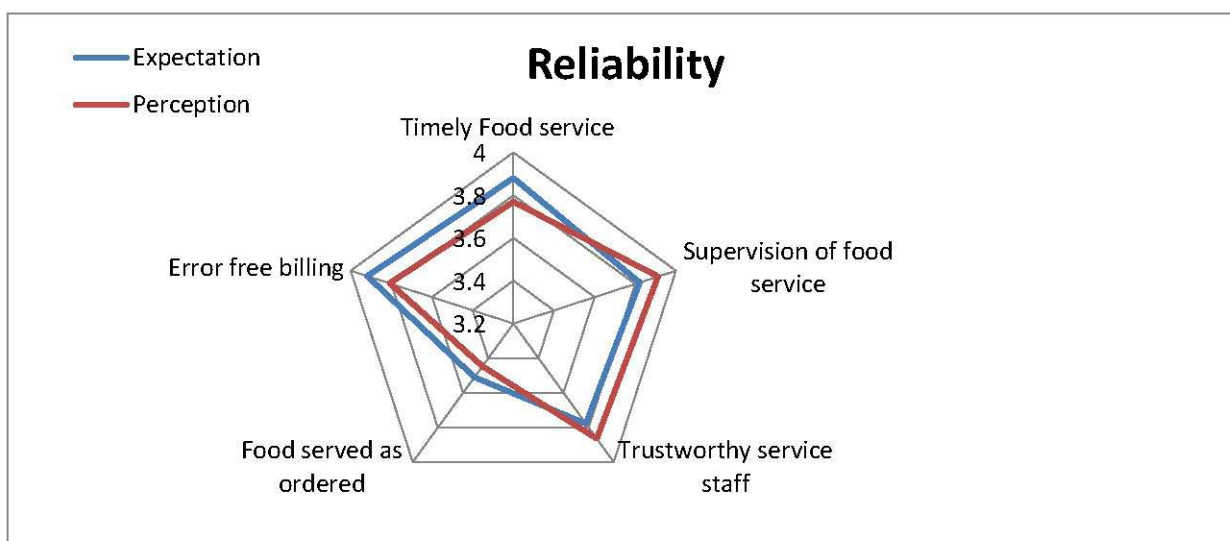
trust in customers (Yuksel, 2001). In its broader term, reliability insures that the restaurant delivers promised services, on time delivery, problem resolution, and pricing. In DINESERV model, Reliability dimension contains 5 attributes showing overall expectation 3.76 and perception 3.81. The detail analysis of Reliability dimension is given in below table 3.

**Table 3: Reliability Attributes**

| Dimension   | Attributes of IRCTC Food Outlets | Expectation |       | Perception |       | GAP    | t-Value |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|--------|---------|
|             |                                  | Mean        | SD    | Mean       | SD    |        |         |
| Reliability | V11 Timely Food service          | 3.821       | .966  | 3.911      | .916  | 0.09   | -1.250  |
|             | V12 Supervision of food service  | 3.778       | .936  | 3.864      | .973  | 0.086  | -1.176  |
|             | V13 Trustworthy service staff    | 3.510       | 1.075 | 3.446      | 1.277 | -0.064 | .554    |
|             | V14 Food served as ordered       | 3.918       | .895  | 3.808      | 1.005 | -0.11  | 1.335   |
|             | V15 Error free billing           | 3.777       | .902  | 4.027      | .755  | 0.25   | -3.892  |
|             | Overall Mean                     | 3.760       | 0.954 | 3.811      | 0.985 | 0.050  |         |

From the table, it is clear that IRCTC performed well in all aspects of reliability expect two attributes. These attribute are "Trustworthy service staff (-0.064)" and "Food served as ordered (-0.11)" thus giving overall high satisfaction in

this area. The remaining three attribute (V11, V12, V15) shows positive gaps. The overall positive gap (0.05) also supports higher customers' satisfaction. The gap analysis is represented through figure 5 below.



**Fig. 5: Service Quality GAP through Customers' Expectations and Perceptions**

The above spider web represents 2 attributes below expectation and 3 attributes above expectation showing overall satisfied customers as the overall mean of gap is also positive (0.050).

### Dimension 3: Responsiveness

Responsiveness Dimension deals with the type of response a customer get while dinning in Food Outlet. It depends

on the willingness of employees to help customers and to provide prompt service. This dimension includes politeness and promptness in dealing with customer queries, complaints, questions and problems. DINSERV model had 3 attributes in Responsiveness and their detail analysis is represented in below table 4.

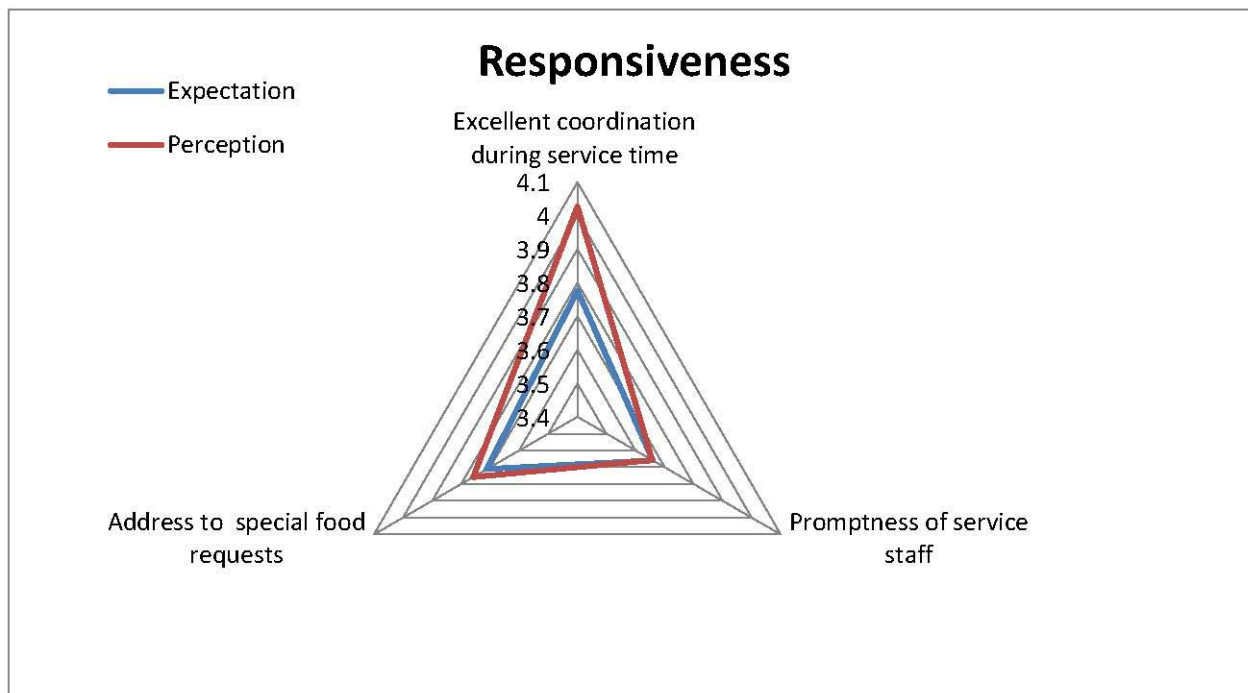
**Table 4: Responsiveness Attributes**

| Dimension      | Attributes of IRCTC Food Outlets               | Expectation |       | Perception |      | GAP    | t-Value |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|------|--------|---------|
|                |                                                | Mean        | SD    | Mean       | SD   |        |         |
| Responsiveness | V16 Excellent coordination during service time | 3.659       | .996  | 3.657      | .978 | -0.002 | -.085   |
|                | V17 Promptness of service staff                | 3.711       | .895  | 3.758      | .956 | 0.047  | -.565   |
|                | V18 Address to special food requests           | 3.789       | .853  | 3.850      | .946 | 0.061  | -.838   |
|                | Overall Mean                                   | 3.719       | 0.914 | 3.755      | 0.96 | 0.035  |         |

The overall mean of Responsiveness is 3.719 for expectation and 3.775 for perception which implies high level of perception. Higher level of perception represents higher customers' satisfaction. The same result is shown

by gap analysis which shown overall mean of gap which is positive (0.035). Except one variable (V16) other two variables (V17, V18) shows positive gap which can be seen through figure 6.





**Fig. 6: Service Quality GAP through Customers' Expectations and Perceptions**

From the above figure, we can say that except “Excellent coordination during service time (-0.002)” attribute all shows positive gap. The overall positive gap (0.035) also represents good service quality and satisfied customers.

#### Dimension 4: Assurance

The term Assurance refers to the knowledge, courtesy or politeness of employees and their ability to build trust and confidence within customers for the organization

(Parasuraman et al., 1985). Assurance involves the common sense, understandings and courtesy of employees, their capabilities to build trust and confidence. It consists of competence, courtesy, sense of security and credibility (OluOjo, 2008).

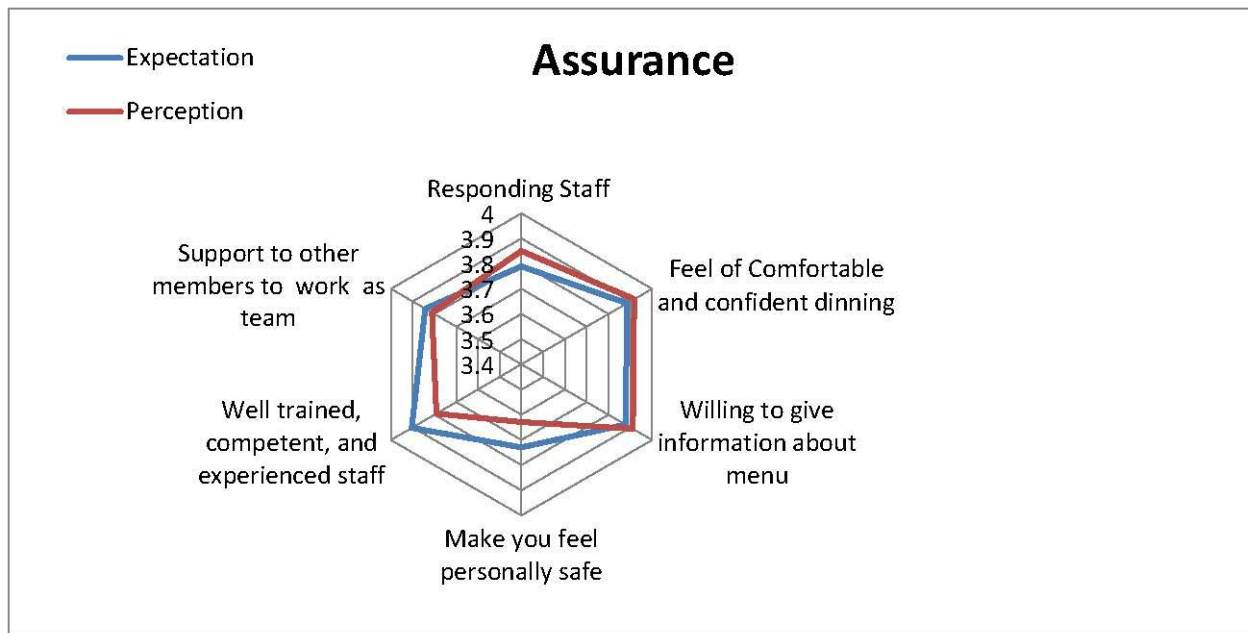
Assurance dimension has 6 attributes in DINESERV model. The Mean, SD, GAP and t value of customers' Expectations and Perceptions for Assurance is given in the table 5 below.

**Table 5: Assurance Attributes**

| Dimension | Attributes of IRCTC Food Outlets                   | Expectation |       | Perception |       | GAP    | t-Value |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|--------|---------|
|           |                                                    | Mean        | SD    | Mean       | SD    |        |         |
| Assurance | V19 Responding Staff                               | 3.885       | .829  | 3.917      | .957  | 0.032  | -.529   |
|           | V20 Feel of Comfortable and confident dinning      | 3.877       | .766  | 3.911      | .924  | 0.034  | -.361   |
|           | V21 Willing to give information about menu         | 3.729       | .940  | 3.629      | 1.136 | -0.1   | .971    |
|           | V22 Make you feel personally safe                  | 3.904       | .807  | 3.790      | .977  | -0.114 | 1.430   |
|           | V23 Well trained, competent, and experienced staff | 3.842       | .876  | 3.810      | .891  | -0.032 | .272    |
|           | V24 Support to other members to work as team       | 3.885       | .751  | 3.802      | .941  | -0.083 | 1.035   |
|           | Overall Mean                                       | 3.853       | 0.828 | 3.809      | 0.971 | -0.043 |         |

Above table clearly indicates that overall mean of expectation (3.853) exceed the overall mean of perception (3.809) which represent the lower level of customers' satisfaction when compared with their expectations. Due

to the high value of expectation the overall gap shows negative sign (-0.04). Only two variables (V19, V20) out of six variables, match the customers' expectations. The detail of gap analysis is presented through figure 7 below.



**Fig. 7: Service Quality GAP through Customers' Expectations and Perceptions**

From the above table, we can clearly see that except variables "Responding Staff" and "Feel of Comfortable and confident dinning" falls below customers' expectations. The underperforming area which doesn't match customers' expectations are "Willing to give information about menu (-0.1)", "Make you feel personally safe (-0.114)", "Well trained, competent, and experienced staff (-0.032)" and "Support to other members to work as team (-0.083)".

#### Dimension 5: Empathy

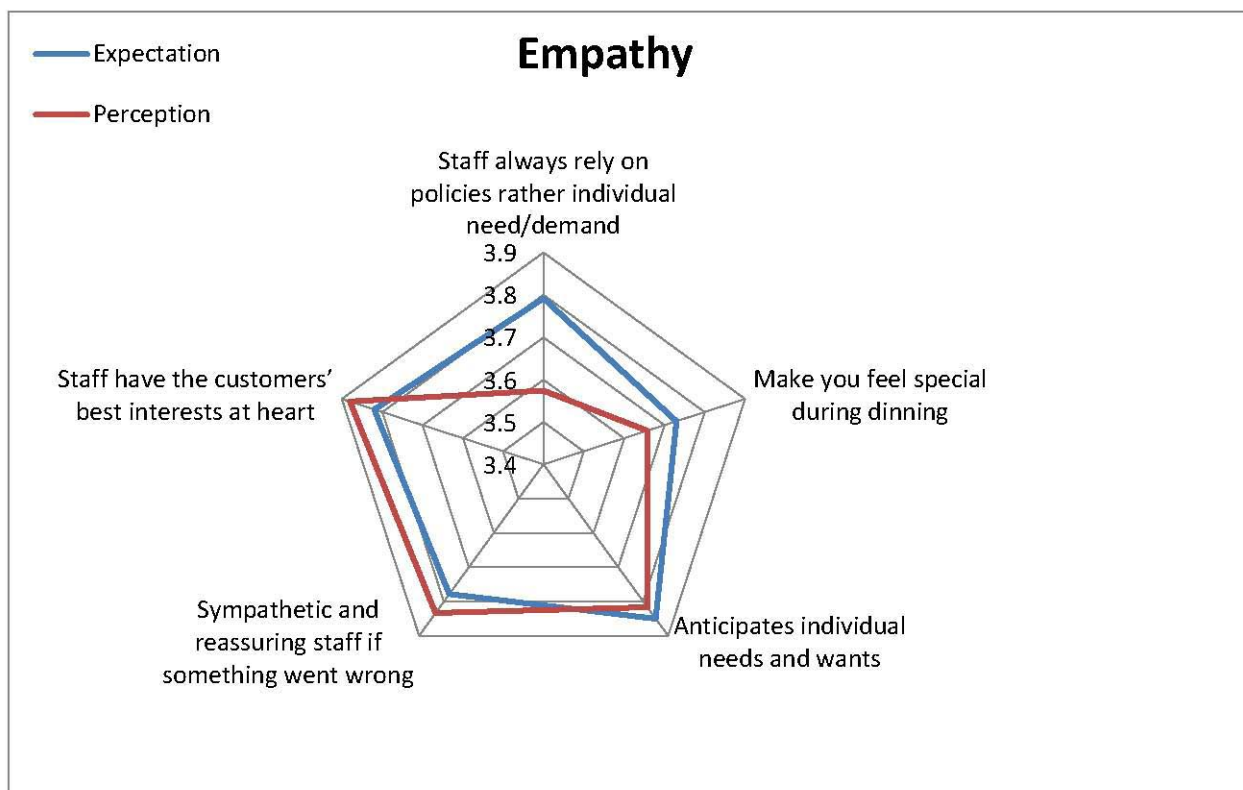
Empathy means individual attention given to a customer while dinning in restaurant. Empathy contains communication, customers' understanding, individual attention etc. Empathy contains 5 attributes in DINESERV model and detail analysis with the help of Mean, SD, GAP and t-value is presented in table 8 below with.

**Table 6: Empathy Attributes**

| Dimension | Attributes of IRCTC Food Outlets                                | Expectation |       | Perception |       | GAP    | t-Value |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|--------|---------|
|           |                                                                 | Mean        | SD    | Mean       | SD    |        |         |
| Empathy   | V25 Staff always rely on policies rather individual need/demand | 3.791       | .953  | 3.574      | 1.094 | -0.217 | 2.729   |
|           | V26 Make you feel special during dinning                        | 3.729       | .937  | 3.657      | .921  | -0.072 | 1.045   |
|           | V27 Anticipates individual needs and wants                      | 3.850       | .838  | 3.816      | .876  | -0.034 | .252    |
|           | V28 Sympathetic and reassuring staff if something went wrong    | 3.778       | .876  | 3.833      | .958  | 0.055  | -.597   |
|           | V29 Staff have the customers' best interests at heart           | 3.820       | .867  | 3.880      | .947  | 0.06   | -.746   |
|           | Overall Mean                                                    | 3.793       | 0.894 | 3.75       | 0.959 | -0.041 |         |

The above table indicates that the overall mean expectation score (3.79) is above the overall mean score of perception (3.75). The lower value of perception shows lower service

quality and customers' satisfaction. The same result is shown by the overall mean of gap analysis which is negative (-0.041). The gap analysis is shown in figure 5.



**Fig. 8: Service Quality GAP through Customers' Expectations and Perceptions**

From the above figure, we can say that two variables show higher perception value than expectation. These are "Sympathetic and reassuring staff if something went wrong" and "Staff has the customers' best interests at heart". The other three variables "Anticipates individual needs and wants", "Make you feel special during dining", "Staff always rely on policies rather individual need/demand" doesn't meet customers' expectation. The overall negative gap (-0.04) shows that customers' expectations are not met in dimension of Empathy.

Hence our objective to measure customers' satisfaction and service quality among IRCTC outlets in Uttar Pradesh was analyzed with the help of mean, standard deviation and service quality GAP analysis. The results show that majority of variables (17 variables out of 29 variables) and majority of the dimensions (3 out of 5) show negative results in service quality gap analysis which means customers' perceptions fall short of customers' expectations. This is shown in table 6.

## Conclusion

Thus to sum up one can mention that service quality plays an important role in enhancing customers' satisfaction. The study focused on measuring service quality and customers' satisfaction in IRCTC food outlets in the state of Uttar Pradesh. IRCTC as part of Indian Railway (one of the largest public ventures under single management) is the fourth largest railway network of the World. The current study carries a great importance as more than 22 million passengers travel daily in 15-16. (Source: Indian Railway).

To measure customers' satisfaction and service quality all five dimensions of DINESERV model were analyzed separately. The dimension Assurance received the highest mean score in the expectation (3.85) followed by Tangibility (3.83), Empathy 3.79, Reliability (3.76)

and Responsiveness (3.72). While Reliability has highest perception mean score (3.81), followed by Assurance (3.81), Empathy (3.79), Tangibility 3.78 and Responsiveness (3.75). As show in table 7 below

**Table 7: Collective Representation of Mean Score & GAP (in Five Dimention)**

| Sr No | Dimension      | Mean Score  |             | Gap<br>(Perception-Expectation) |
|-------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
|       |                | Expectation | Perception  |                                 |
| 1     | Tangibility    | 3.83376     | 3.78904     | -0.04472                        |
| 2     | Reliability    | 3.76118     | 3.81156     | 0.05038                         |
| 3     | Responsiveness | 3.720133    | 3.7554      | 0.035267                        |
| 4     | Assurance      | 3.853933    | 3.810367    | -0.04357                        |
| 5     | Empathy        | 3.79408     | 3.75232     | -0.04176                        |
|       | Overall Mean   | 3.806824138 | 3.787524138 | -0.0193                         |

From the above table 7 it can be concluded that Reliability and Responsiveness dimensions give positive gap showing good service quality in those areas while negative gap in Tangibility, Assurance and Empathy shows need of improvement. The overall mean score of expectation and perception shows negative gap (-0.0193) which shows that service quality level is not as expected by the customers leading to lower customers' satisfaction in IRCTC food outlets.

## Suggestions and Recommendations for IRCTC Restaurants

As mention, IRCTC being a subsidiary of the Indian Railways takes care of the catering, tourism and online ticketing operations of the Indian railways. Presently, it is managing more than two hundred outlets across India. The present study revolves around different IRCTC food outlets located across Uttar Pradesh State of India. In all, six IRCTC food outlets located in Ghaziabad, Agra, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Lucknow were covered. All cites are important tourist spots. The objective of present research is to measure customers' satisfaction and service quality among IRCTC food outlets in Uttar Pradesh. For this a DINESERV model consisting of 29 variables spread in five dimensions was used. The finding shows that majority of variables (17 variables out of 29 variables) and majority of the dimensions (3 out of 5) shows negative results in service quality gap analysis which means customers' perceptions falls short of customers' expectations. This is also clear from above mention table 7. Based on research, the following suggestion and recommendation are proposed:

IRCTC should work on regular training and counseling programs with the help of industry experts as flawless food service can't be achieved without professionalism. They must be trained in food service techniques and styles and as well as counsel them how it is important to coordinate with each other for effective service. Training also helps in anticipating guest's needs and making personal bonds with guests.

During briefing session, manager & supervisor must ensure proper grooming and hygiene for each employee. Service employees must be communicated about the menu items and specialty of today. Service staff must be aware about all menu items and their ingredients and should not hesitate to give this information if inquired by guests.

The "first impression is the last impression". While designing restaurants it should be made visually more attractive by involving interior designers. The interiors should be such which should be low cost & easily changeable.

IRCTC must prepare a checklist for housekeepers. The time of cleaning, areas, numbers of time cleaning to be done, priorities and timing of cleaning should be strictly followed.

From the research it is clear that most the IRCTC restaurants customers are youth. As mobile is an important gadget today. They should provide enough charging ports for the diners to charge their laptops or smart phones with free Wi-Fi.

IRCTC needs to strengthen their KOT system as it helps in speeding up service time and minimizing the risk of serving wrong food items.

There must be a proper complain controlling system at each IRCTC restaurants & effective centralized complaint system. Restaurants must be able to generate trusts among diners and makes them special every time they dine in IRCTC restaurants.

IRCTC should look through various researches and reports conducted on Restaurants industry and maintain the strength and improve upon weaknesses.

The study relevance as dining out culture in India is on rise & the above suggestion can also be generalized to other food & beverage food outlets.

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