

Passenger Struggles with IRCTC: An Overview of Key Challenges

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Abstract:

The Indian Railways' official online ticketing and catering service provider is Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), which provides e-ticket booking, tatkal reservations, travel packages, and dining services. By facilitating ticket booking and decreasing reliance on actual reservation counters, it has completely transformed train travel. However, despite its benefits, passengers frequently run into problems. Hence, the purpose of this study is to analyze the challenges faced by railway passengers in usage of IRCTC. The technique used in the current study is One Sample t-test. The findings of the study indicated that App crash, Slow loading, Tatkal unavailability, Payment failure, Refund delay, Seat selection issue, Language barrier, Maintenance downtime, Hidden charges, and Poor customer support are significant challenges faced by the railway passengers. It was also seen that Group booking problem, E-ticket error, and Portal linking issue are insignificant challenges.

Keywords: Indian Railway, Catering and Tourism, Corporation, IRCTC, Indian Railways, One Sample t-test.

Introduction:

Every day, the Indian Railway carries over a million tonnes of freight and sixteen million passengers, making it one of the biggest and busiest rail networks in the world. Transport has played important roles since the beginning, speeding up the region's economic and development benefits. Indian Railway is a state-owned company that is owned and run by the Indian government via the Ministry of Railways. Every day, the Indian Railway carries over a million tonnes of freight and sixteen million passengers, making it one of the biggest and busiest rail networks in the world. From the beginning, transport played a vital role in speeding up the region's economic and development benefits. The Indian Railway is the world's second-largest railway. One of the busiest networks, Indian Railway was founded in 1853 to run a multi-gauge network of wide, metre and narrow gauges for both long-distance and suburban railways. The country's social, economic, and cultural underpinnings are all brought together by the Indian Railway. With 7,500 railway stations, Indian Railway boasts over 114,500 miles of railway track. Every day, this railway transports about 30 million people and 2.8 million tonnes of freight.

Indian Railways faces challenges from shifting market conditions and rising capacity demands. In addition, success is crucial to increased efficiency, reduced costs, and better-quality services and products that meet evolving passenger demands. In terms of transit time, service dependability, and product value, there is some competition between road and rail transport, but it varies greatly depending on volume, distance, and customer names. Indian Railways can offer the required customer focus and successfully compete with roads if its dependability, productivity, and efficiency are increased.

Indian Railways' subsidiary Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is in charge of online ticketing, catering, and travel services. By providing a digital platform for ticket purchasing, it has completely changed railway reservations in India, decreasing reliance on physical counters and increasing customer convenience (Singh & Sharma, 2021). Notwithstanding its benefits, consumers frequently encounter issues including website traffic, unsuccessful payments, and navigational problems, particularly during busy booking times (Kumar, 2020). In order to further simplify the travel experience for millions of passengers, IRCTC has also extended its offerings to include tatkal reservations, e-

catering, and tour packages (Patel, 2022). To address passenger concerns and improve service delivery, however, ongoing advancements in cybersecurity, system efficiency, and user friendliness are crucial (Rao & Gupta, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the challenges faced by railway passengers in usage of IRCTC.
2. To give appropriate suggestions to overcome these challenges.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Shanmugaselvi, R., & Selvi, V. D. (2023) The study focused on passengers in Tirunelveli and sought to assess passenger happiness and pinpoint issues with Indian Railways' services. The majority of respondents were female, between the ages of 20 and 40, single, and urban-dwelling graduates, according to the survey, which was based on interviews with 75 passengers. A large number of students favoured rail travel because it was more comfortable. The A/C class tickets were well praised by the passengers. T.

2. Parvathy Asokan, Girish S. (2020) The goal of the study was to pinpoint the main problems and necessary upgrades at Aluva Railway Station. The investigation discovered that the Aluva Railway Station has insufficient CCTV cameras and other security equipment, as well as a shortage of recreational and amusement spaces. To satisfy customer expectations, it called on railway officials to fix these service gaps and underline the importance of on-time train departures and arrivals.

3. Johnson, Mahima. (2019) The study sought to investigate the difficulties Indian Railways passengers encounter and offer solutions to enhance services and resolve complaints. The survey made clear how important it is for the Ministry of Railways to look into passenger complaints and enhance services. Increased unbooked boxes during peak hours, punctuality, station and train hygiene, and the installation of additional ticket vending machines at busy stations were among the primary recommendations.

4. Sahu, G. P., & Singh, M. (2017) The purpose of the study was to investigate the variables affecting consumers' behavioural intention to utilise the IRCTC. The study discovered that the three main elements influencing the uptake of IRCTC Connect were social influence, price value, and habit. These factors had a significant predictive capacity, as evidenced by the adjusted R-Square value of 0.699.

5. Kumar, D. A. A. (2016) The purpose of the study was to evaluate the Indian Railways IRCTC's food quality and its effect on the health of its passengers. The study brought to light disparities in food quality amongst various contractors and geographical areas. Overcharging, insufficient quantity, and poor food quality were frequent grievances. To address these issues, IRCTC put in place several procedures, including on-site inspections, a customer grievance helpline, and mobile squads for surprise inspections.

6. Kapoor, K. K., et al. (2015) The purpose of the study was to assess the standard of food made and provided by Indian Railways' IRCTC and its effect on the health of its passengers. The study found variations in food quality between contractors and geographical areas. There were several complaints about excessive prices, inadequate servings, and poor food quality. To address these difficulties, IRCTC employed procedures such as mobile squads for surprise inspections, grievance redressal mechanisms, and on-site inspections.

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

The mean score of challenges faced by railway passengers in the usage of IRCTC is equal to or less than 3, indicating these issues have a low impact.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)

The mean score of challenges faced by railway passengers in the usage of IRCTC is greater than 3, indicating a high impact.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The results of the one-sample t-test analysis highlight significant challenges faced by railway passengers while using the IRCTC platform. Issues like App Crash (t-statistic = 20.09, p-value = 0.000), Slow Loading (t-statistic = 21.88, p-value = 0.000), and Tatkal Unavailability (t-statistic = 22.45, p-value = 0.000) all show a strong impact on passenger experience. Similarly, challenges such as Payment Failure (t-statistic = 20.16, p-value = 0.000), Refund Delay (t-statistic = 23.45, p-value = 0.000), and Poor Customer Support (t-statistic = 24.09, p-value = 0.000) also show statistically significant negative effects, suggesting a need for urgent improvement in these areas. However, Group Booking Problems, E-ticket Errors, and Portal Linking Issues displayed insignificant impacts (p-value = 1), meaning these challenges are not perceived as major hindrances by passengers. As most of the P value < 0.05, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that the mean score of challenges faced by railway passengers in the usage of IRCTC is greater than 3, indicating a high impact.

Suggestions:

The government and railway authorities must give top priority to resolving important problems that have a substantial influence on user happiness, like app crashes, sluggish loading times, and unsuccessful payments. Frustration can be decreased by implementing improved server architecture, enhancing the efficiency of the app, and making sure payment gateways operate more smoothly. On top of that, improving customer service and expediting refund procedures will boost platform confidence. Further enhancing the entire experience for travellers may involve resolving the problems with tatkal availability and enhancing communication about hidden fees.

CONCLUSION:

The investigation found that while IRCTC has some significant problems that affect passenger happiness, like problems with the app, payments, and customer service, other problems, like group reservations and e-ticket faults, have less of an effect. This demonstrates that although certain problems require prompt action, passengers do not view all reported problems equally. The platform's user experience can be enhanced by giving priority to fixing major problems including sluggish app performance, unsuccessful payments, and delayed refunds.

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