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     NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

     STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

     OBJECTIVES

     HYPOTHESES

     RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

     RESULTS & DISCUSSION

     FINDINGS

     RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

     CONCLUSIONS

     SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

     ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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     APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio" Ohio State University, Nigeria.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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WEBSITES

- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp

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A CRAM OF CONSUMER'S BUYING PERFORMANCE FOR LONG JOURNEY TRAIN TICKETS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an academic effort to understand the buying behavior of consumer regarding buying of long distance journey train tickets. This paper also highlights problems faced by consumers while buying and cancelling tickets at various options of buying and cancelling tickets. Researchers have collected all the required information from primary data and various published secondary data for the study. It is found from the study that though IRCTC (Indian Railway catering and tourism corporation.) has applied technology for issuing tickets but it still need to upgrade their technology consistently to serve the consumers to their expectation.

KEYWORDS
IRCTC, Indian Railway, Tickets.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Railways (reporting mark **IR**) is an Indian state-owned enterprise, owned and operated by the government of India through the Ministry of Railways. It is one of the world's largest railway networks comprising 115,000 km (71,000 mi) of track over a route of 65,000 km (40,000 mi) and 7,500 stations. As of December 2012, it transported over 25 million passengers daily (over 9 billion on an annual basis). In 2011, IR carried over 8,900 million passengers' annually or more than 24 million passengers daily (roughly half of which were suburban passengers) and 2.8 million tons of freight daily. Indian Railways is the world's ninth largest commercial or utility employer, by number of employees, with over 1.4 million employees. As for rolling stock, IR holds over 229,381 Freight Wagons, 59,713 Passenger Coaches and 9,213 Locomotives. The trains have a 5 digit numbering system as the Indian Railways runs about 10,000 trains daily. As of 31 March 2012, 22,224 km (13,809 mi) (34%) of the total 65,000 km (40,000 mi) km route length was electrified.Since1960; almost all electrified sections on IR use 25,000 Volt AC traction through overhead catenary delivery.

TICKET - means any ticket issued by us. It is an authorization to travel using our ticket booking facility for the specified journey over the network of Indian Railways. This can mean an I-ticket or an E-ticket.

I-TICKET- refers to a Railway reservation booked on this website for the consummation of which a printed Railway ticket on standard Stationery is dispatched by IRCTC to the Customer by courier which constitutes the authority to travel on a train.

E-TICKET -refers to a Railway reservation booked on this website, for the consummation of which the customer prints out an Electronic Reservation Slip which, along with the concerned authorized personal identification, constitutes the authority to travel, in lieu of the regular ticket on standard Stationery.

TATKAL TICKET -A ticket booked against Tatkal Quota against extra payment of premium charges as per extant Railway rules.

ERS(ELECTRONIC RESERVATION SLIP) -The printout in standard specified Performa containing reservation particulars, and instructions for use which can be used by the Passenger along with the relevant authorized Identification, as travel authority for performing the journey. The user of the ERS is governed by these rules and the instructions available on the ERS itself.

TIMINGS OF BOOKING TICKETS: Generally reservation office counter is open for booking from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm and some counters from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm. While online booking is available from 0.30 hours to 23.30 hours. Tatkal tickets can be booked from reservation office counter during timings mentioned above and online after 10.00am before 24 hours of travel.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are lakhs of agents standing between you and your railway ticket. Certainly, your case could be exceptional if you are ready to pay 3-4 times more than the counter price of the tickets. IRCTC has authorized lakhs of the agents during past six years.

According to figures, the number of authorized railway agents in Mumbai zone has zoomed to a whopping 1, 35,157 from a mere 1,537 during 2006-2012. One can now imagine the leap in the number of agents all over the country. Railway agents of Mumbai zone book around one crore tickets in every month. These figures clearly show that the agents involved in ticket booking process are making a common man deprived of railway tickets. But there is a sharp increase in this number during the festive seasons and the agents charge several times more than the actual fare charge from the passengers. The surprising fact is that IRCTC is well aware of these practices of the agents but instead of taking any initiative, it continues to authorize hundreds of agents every day. [1]

Anybody who has ever tried to book a *tatkal* (immediate) ticket via IRCTC, the subsidiary of Indian Railways, knows how frustrating the experience can be as its site is often inaccessible, usually between 10 am to 12 pm.[2]

Stepping up efforts to check misuse of tatkal bookings, Railways today said a separate reservation form for passengers booking tickets under this scheme will be introduced soon. The pink colour form has to be filled up by the passenger at the booking counters providing details of his/her address, contact number and ID.[3]

Consumers trying to book e-tickets through IRCTC website seem to be facing serious problems. The e-commerce portal that caters to millions of railway passengers to book tickets online is one of the largest ticket reservation systems and the most visited websites in India Although IRCTC officials claim that the IT infrastructure of the online booking portal irctc.co.in (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited) has been updated, users are constantly complaining about the time the Web page takes to load.[4]

The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism website, which helps passenger's book railway tickets online, has been a letdown for many who were waiting to plan their trips during summer holidays. The IRCTC website has been troublesome for people since a month as many are unable to either log in or proceed any further even if they log in to the portal.[5]

There will be no end to ticket booking woes this festival season. While the bandwidth of IRCTC website remains unchanged, the hits per minute have crossed 10 lakh marks this season. IRCTC officials said they are helpless as the site has its limit and the gap between the demand and supply has touched an all-time high. With a single-window site, there is not much that IRCTC can do to provide immediate redressal.The site gets maximum hits between 10 to 12 in the morning, as

soon as the reservation opens. Logging on to it after 12 in the noon can make it little easy for people, although, by then trains would have a long wait list to show. "We have taken few measures over a period of time to cut down public woes but the problems remain. There are several measures planned in the long run", said PradeepKundu, Jt. GM, public relations, IRCTC, New Delhi.[6]

3. IMPORTANCE OF STUDY
The importance of the present study is to analyze the consumers buying behavior and to high light the problems faced by consumers while buying and cancelling their long journey tickets from various sources.

4. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM
Many a times consumer stand in a long que for long time with the hope of getting confirm tickets for their well advanced planned journey (120 days before travel) but at their turn they get waiting tickets and they get completely disheartened. Problems are many such as slow server and large number of agents between consumer and their confirmed tickets. Agents grab tickets as soon as server allows to book tickets leaving other consumer in vain.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. To analyze the consumer buying behavior for long journey train tickets.
2. To understand the problems faced by consumers while cancelling the long journey train tickets.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY
The data has been collected from various sources. The primary data was collected through structured Questionnaire and it was filled by 200 randomly selected respondents. Secondary data was collected from various published and unpublished research papers, articles, books, reports and mimeograph.

7. IRCTC
Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC) is a Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Railways. IRCTC was incorporated on 27th September, 1999 as an extended arm of the Indian Railways to upgrade, professionalize and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains and other locations and to promote domestic and international tourism through development of budget hotels, special tour packages, information & commercial publicity and global reservation systems. IRCTC is better known for changing the face of railway ticketing in India. It pioneered Internet-based rail ticket booking through its website, as well as from the mobile phones via GPRS or SMS. Ticket cancellations or modifications can also be done online. In addition to E-tickets, IRCTC also offers I-tickets that are basically like regular tickets except that they are booked online and delivered by post. The Tickets PNR Status is also made available here recently. IRCTC's highest ever per day booking is 4.96 lakh e-tickets on 13 July 2012.IRCTC is currently using 58 iridium servers and 10 more servers to be added soon to cater the heavy traffic in peak hours.

8. RESULT AND FINDINGS
1. **PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE FOR TRAVELLING LONG JOURNEY BY TRAIN AND THEIR PURPOSE:**Table No.1concludes that 35 respondents prefer to travel every month and 35 respondent travel quarterly, 65 respondent prefer to travel twice a year and 65 respondent prefer to travel once a year.

TABLE NO. 1: PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE FOR TRAVELLING LONG JOURNEY BY TRAIN AND THEIR PURPOSE

Time period	Male	Female	Total
Monthly	30	5	35
Once in a Quarter	25	10	35
Twice a year	50	15	65
Once in a year	35	30	65
Total	140	60	200

2. PEOPLE'S NEED OF TRAVEL: Table No.2 concludes that mostly people travel for vacations. 22 respondents travels for business, 13 for religious purpose, 23 for education, 30 for personal, 100 for vacations and 12 for other reasons.

TABLE NO.2: PEOPLE'S NEED OF TRAVEL

Reasons	Male	Female	Total
Business	20	2	22
Religious	10	3	13
Education	15	8	23
Personal	25	5	30
Vacation	60	40	100
Others	10	2	12
Total	140	60	200

3. PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE FOR BUYING TICKETS ACCORDING TO CLASS: Table no.3 concludes that 12 respondent likes to travel through 1AC, 11 by FC, 23 by two tier AC, 42 by 3 tier AC, 83 by Sleeper class, 22 by Chair car, and 7 by two seater.

TABLE NO. 3: PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE FOR BUYING TICKETS ACCORDING TO CLASS

Class for booking	Male	Female	Total
1AC	10	2	12
First class	8	3	11
Two tier AC	15	8	23
Three tier AC	30	12	42
Sleeper	60	23	83
Chair car AC	12	10	22
Two Seater	5	2	7
Total	140	60	200

4. PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE TO BUY TICKETS FROM: Table no.4 concludes that 75 respondents prefer to book tickets from reservation counter, 19 from authorized agents, 26 from unauthorized agents and 80 from IRCTC website.

TABLE NO. 4: PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE TO BUY TICKETS FROM

Options for booking tickets	Male	Female	Total
Reservation office counter	50	25	75
Authorized Agents of IRCTC	15	4	19
Unauthorized agents of IRCTC	20	6	26
Online using IRCTC website	55	25	80
Total	140	60	200

5. PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE OF BUYING TICKETS IN ADVANCE: Table no. 5 concludes that 75 respondentsprefer to book tickets in advance before 120 days of travel, 110 prefer to book any time before travel date and 15 people prefer to book Tatkal tickets.

TABLE NO. 5: PEOPLE'S PREFERENCE OF BUYING TICKETS IN ADVANCE

Days	Male	Female	Total
Before 120 Days	45	30	75
Between 120 days to 2 days before the travel date.	85	25	110
Tatkal	10	5	15
Total	140	60	200

6. PEOPLE'S BUYING BEHAVIOR REGARDING TATKAL TICKETS: Table no.6 concludes that while people buy Tatkal tickets 105 respondents prefer to buy only confirmed tickets and 95 respondents prefer to buy even waiting tickets.

TABLE NO. 6: PEOPLE'S BUYING BEHAVIOR REGARDING TATKAL TICKETS

Options	Male	Female	Total
Only confirm tickets	85	20	105
Waiting tickets also	55	40	95
Total	140	60	200

7. PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE WHILE BOOKING TICKETS: Table no. 7 concludes problems faced by people while booking tickets. Generally long que and slow server as a problem is faced by people booking tickets from reservation office counter. High charges and mostly instruction for booking tickets were not followed is the problems faced by people booking tickets from authorized agent and unauthorized agents. While people booking tickets online faces problems of slow server and high reservation charges.

TABLE NO. 7: PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE WHILE BOOKING TICKETS

Problems	Reservation office counter			Authorized agents of IRCTC			Unauthorized agents of IRCTC			Online booking.			Grand Total
	M	F	T1	M	F	T2	M	F	T3	M	F	T4	
Long que	40	20	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
Slow server	10	5	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	22	72	87
High charges	-	-	-	10	3	13	15	4	19	5	3	8	40
Not following instructions for booking tickets	-	-	-	5	1	6	5	2	7	-	-	-	13
Total	50	25	75	15	4	19	20	6	26	55	25	80	200

8. PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE FOR CANCELLING TICKETS: From the table no. 8, it is concluded that48 people faces problem while cancelling tickets. Problems are same while booking tickets. 152 respondents didn't find any problems while cancelling tickets.

TABLE NO. 8: PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE FOR CANCELLING TICKETS

Problems while cancelling tickets.	Reservation office counter			Authorized agents of IRCTC			Unauthorized agents of IRCTC			Online booking.			Grand Total
	M	F	T1	M	F	T2	M	F	T3	M	F	T4	
Yes	15	5	20	3	1	4	10	4	14	-	-	-	48
No	35	10	45	12	3	15	10	2	12	55	25	80	152
Total	50	25	75	15	4	19	20	6	26	55	25	80	200

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

IRCTC should constantly upgrade their website for user friendly and should encourage users to use mobile to book tickets that have to face struggle for hours, often unsuccessfully, to book tickets online. Technology should be upgraded for handling more booking per minutes.

10. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

In spite of the best infrastructure, IRCTC website suffers heavy traffic in peak hours, specially 08.00 hrs.and 10.00 hrs. IRCTC takes preventive steps regularly but consumers still face heavy lag during peak hours. Further from the above study it is concluded that people are changing attitude of buying tickets from counter to online. People preferring for vacations book their tickets well in advance.

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Response was collected from educated Mumbai urban populaces.
2. Respondent's income criteria was not considered for this research.

12. SCOPE OF FUTURE STUDY

With the implementation of rail budget, 2013, it will give future scope to this study to analyze the consumers satisfaction a level ahead.

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