EAST COAST RAILWAY EXPRESS – AN ODYSSEY

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Abstract: Indian Railways have galloped across a lot of horizons in this 21st century today leaving behind the age-old process and the dilapidated recycled resources, which were used earlier. The most incorrigible and unfathomable query is in spite of being equipped with resources, it still lacks the support of provision of good services and infrastructure to commuters? The unblurred answer is Indian Railways time and again have been a victim of political fiasco. The present paper looks at East Coast Railway in terms of obstacles faced by commuters and abridgement of infrastructure. Ground reality has to be seen by the ongoing government so as to provide with alternate solutions to renovate the existing infrastructure and improving the services because ultimately it is the commuters who are being the sufferers of this quandary.

Keywords: Railway, Commuter, Perception and Facilities.

AN OVERVIEW

Indian Railway is the lifeline for economic development and inclusive growth of our country. It has been providing uninterrupted services to the nation since ages and plays a pivotal role in the day-to-day life of common Indian. Almost 70% of passengers travel through railways only. Except for hilly areas where no rail transport facilities are available, people use road transport. Railways also play an important medium for transportation of goods. A major chunk of budget is being spent for the development and maintenance of Indian Railways.

Recently Prime Minister Modi inaugurated Vaisno Devi Express. This is a welcome step for increasing connectivity. At present we are thinking about hi-tech/speed trains, but at the same time it is also important to understand the present status of

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infrastructure and facilities provided to the general commuters. Since independence the connectivity to the new areas has increased. It is also a fact that railways transformed from steam engine-diesel-electric engine. The fact remains that electric engines are not operating in all corners of India, except where a convertible WAP-4 type of engine is used in remote areas of transportation. The point of discussion through this research paper is whether we are able to provide basic minimum facilities to the commuters? The answer is a big no. The present paper is developed after commuting a number of times in the route from Kolkata to Vishakhapatnam. We are sure that the impending situation is not much different in the rest of the country. The Rajdhanis and other special superfast premium trains operate under a different scenario. In this article, we are considering only express and semi-fast trains.

MAJOR DEBACLES OF RAILWAYS

Debacles have been overflowing in Indian Railways. Track maintenance is a big issue in the Eastern belt where the districts of Odisha have got bad railway tracks leading to voluptuous accidents. There is a demarcation of speed of trains. Tracks need to be doubled as in some parts of Eastern India, where one train has to make a halt in its unscheduled station and wait till the opposite coming train passes through the track. It has been quite often noticed people travel without tickets in railways. The Indian Railways have to bear a whopping 5 crore rupees loss every year. Human errors, neglectedness, lack of maintenance of tracks in uneven areas results in severe train accidents. Lack of latest technology to reckon, obsolete facilities which needs remodeling like rolling technology, some services need to be outsourced for better providing facilities. Some of the long route trains do not have a pantry car and the passengers get into a lot of trouble for food.

Even if the food is cooked and provided in trains, they are of very low quality as sanitation is not maintained to the full extent. No alert system is present whenever a train reaches any platform of the station. Safety feature has taken a back roll in railways whenever it comes to robbery, theft, etc. Low in employee productivity is a constant debacle for Indian railways as it has been reducing in manpower since 1992-93 i.e. 1% annually of the total turnover. Doubly the Indian Railways has to share revenues and meet the social obligations which are difficult to comply in practical life situations.

TRANSFORMATION OF RAILWAYS (MAKE IN INDIA)

Make in India has been an innovative stand which was introduced by Government of India in September 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The idea was to make a way for the FDI to invest in it and make India a global hub for manufacturing products, thereby providing some jobs to the ones, who are unemployed. The economy was raised as India overtook United States of America and China by receiving a massive US\$63 billion in FDI in 2015. Railways are also on the agenda of 25 economy factors to

receive FDI except for space, defence, news media. The aim of Make in India project is to change the railways which has drastically taken downturn not only in its infrastructure but also not been able to provide minimum requirements to commuters Transformation is on cards but fullest of implementation will take time to occur in all the trains. The use of bio-vacuum toilets have already been used in Rajdhani and Shatabdi's, catered to be replaced by 2020 towards all trains. Arrangement of food was done through e-catering but it lacks the full schedule of all the trains and it cannot deliver after ten o'clock in the night. Those long route trains which do not have pantrycar attached to them can use the food supplied to the train by third party agents. The good things these agents are world class companies like MTR Food, ITC are entangled with it. IRCTC has had a tie up for supplying pizza's through Dominos but it is restricted to few stations. The old bandwagons and coaches of premium superfast trains, Shatabdi, Rajdhani's were changed but full change of coaches on all other trains will take time. Recently Spanish coaches were bought in by Make in India from a firm Talgo which could run at 200 km/hr. as it has good driving dynamics, consumes 30 % less energy by lowering the power consumption bill of the railways. The major difficult it is only implemented between Delhi and Mumbai, allocating to all the east zone routes would take a lot of time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Indian railways are one of the longest and highly elongated transportation systems in the world; which is nearly 200 years old and called as 'Backbone of the nation' (Raghuram and Rachna Gangwar, 2000). Considered to be crate and stepping-stone to success is the reason for presence in the socioecomic map of India (Da.Coasta, 1987). Ticket reservation has been a menace as it has to be done in proper time and if they forego any temporal or permanent changes can lead to somewhat of a change in the operating services. (John Gabriel and Suresh Babu, 2005). Customer satisfaction is key and yields a valuable result when it comes to serving and hospitality in luxury premium trains. (Arvind Brame, 2007). Plethora of factors were considered out of a study conducted by a series of consultant that it is the competitive perception, attitude and behavioral way in serving commuters in production process of railways. (Shone, 1999). Significance of railways integrated with change in transportation facilities and services provided by stations, trains was studied by an organization named-Steer Davies Gleave of London (Gleave, S.D, 2000). With competitive market, the world is changing fast in style and in dynamics, commuters have changed their preferences with the up gradation of technology; the demand is more for ultra modern facilities in railways. (Kelley and Storey, 2000). Diversity in 360 degrees had been defined categorically to point the passengers using train as a means of public transport. Huge diversity of the country leads to change in taste; change in preferences and sometimes these changes are not fulfilled leading to what is being called dissatisfaction of commuters. (Patil, Pranay, 2012).

Objectives of the Study

- To study the problems faced by the commuters on boarding the train.
- To study the existing facilities and problems faced at small railway stations.

Scope of the Study

The study is conducted on the East Coast Railway and the respondents are the commuters, the vendors and the general public.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is based on the primary data. For this purpose we personally commuted in the various express and passenger trains from Howrah to Vishakhapatnam over a period of 4 months. In support of the objective of the study there is a primary research through questionnaire administration method in the field through stratified random sampling method covering the stations from Howrah (West Bengal) to Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh). This route covers three states i.e West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh (Simandhra). In total 700 questionnaires distributed and out of which 384 responses received.

Table 1
The components of sample size

Category	Questions distributed	Responses received	Male	%	Female	%
Passengers	480	252	148	59	104	41
Visitors to the station (local people)	120	77	39	51	38	49
Vendors	100	55	33	60	22	40
Total	700	384	220	57	164	43

Respondents' Perception with Regard to the Various Attributes of Railway Services

To measure the perception level of the participants with regard to railway services the various attributes categorised during travel and facilities at railway stations. The various attributes related to during travel are- unhygienic condition in compartments, shortage of drinking water, unhygienic condition in toilets, shortage of water in toilets, unscheduled stoppages, no security personal during journey, unauthorised entry of local vendors, unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment, chain pulling by local commuters, entry of local commuters in reserved compartment, goondaism by local commuters, unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff, no sufficient provision for local commuters, no pantry car in some long route trains, improper lighting facilities, smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers, unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment and no provision for senior citizens.

Similarly the various attributes at railway stations are – monopoly by coolie, no adequate maintenance of toilets, no water facilities in toilets, unhygienic of platform tracks, unauthorised entry by local people at the stations and unhygienic food at stations. In this regard we have been assigned as +3, +2,+1,0 and -1 for the responses of the respondents- Completely agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Completely disagree respectively. Final scores for each feature are calculated by multiplying the number of responses by the weights of the corresponding responses.

Calculation of Respondents' Perception: Ideal and Least Scores

Ideal scores are calculated by multiplying the number of respondents in each category with (+3) and product with total number of attributes. Least scores calculated by multiplying the number of respondents each category with (-1) and the product with number of attributes in questionnaires.

Table 2 Computation of ideal score and least scores for the respondents

Category	Equation	Ideal score	Equation	Least score
Male passengers	$148 \times 3 \times 24$	10,656	$148 \times -1 \times 24$	-3,552
Female passengers	$104 \times 3 \times 24$	7,488	$104 \times -1 \times 24$	-2,496
Male visitors to the station	$39 \times 3 \times 24$	2,808	$39 \times -1 \times 24$	-936
Female visitors to the station	$38 \times 3 \times 24$	2,736	$38 \times -1 \times 24$	-912
Male vendors	$33 \times 3 \times 24$	2,376	$33 \times -1 \times 24$	-792
Female vendors	$22 \times 3 \times 24$	1,584	$22 \times -1 \times 24$	-528

Findings of the Study

Findings of the study are as under. The table 3 shows that in the present case the total actual scores of male and female respondents for passengers, visitors and vendors are 8589, 6736, 2349, 2382, 1931 and 1331, as against the ideal score of 10,656, 7488, 2808, 2736, 2376 and 1584. The percentage of actual score are 80.60, 89.95, 83.65, 87.06, 81.31 and 84.02 respectively. In no case the actual score touching the least score. The perception level is more in case of female passengers, followed by female visitors to the station and female vendors. This shows that the perception is not so favourable by female respondents as compared to male counterpart. This shows that majority are not happy with the existing services provided by the railways during the travel and also the services at station also.

CONCLUDING NOTE

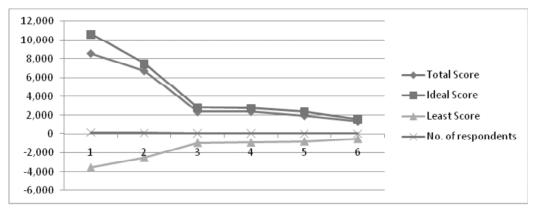
The present paper gives the real pictorial scenario of railways in India. No doubt the various initiatives taken by the new government is in positive direction but we cannot ignore the ground reality. The majority commuters are poor, lower middle class and

Table 3 Response of the respondents

		F	Aggregate	e Score		
	Passen	gers Vis	itors to t	he statior	ı Venu	dors
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Attributes/variables		j	During T	ravel		
Unhygienic condition in compartments	351	280	99	98	82	60
Shortage of drinking water	331	293	91	96	87	56
Unhygienic condition in toilets	338	270	86	103	84	61
Shortage of water in toilets	330	263	103	87	84	50
Unscheduled stoppages	324	281	101	99	70	61
No security personal during travel	347	293	98	99	70	54
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	369	253	85	89	83	48
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	370	279	105	92	83	49
Chain pulling by local commuters	360	265	99	103	93	54
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	373	266	95	106	85	59
Goondaism by local commuters	313	291	91	109	88	58
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	366	302	102	103	86	57
No sufficient provision for local commuters	391	285	105	96	91	48
No pantry car in some long route trains	359	285	102	96	82	56
Improper lighting facilities	310	270	87	93	79	57
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	338	282	95	95	76	62
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	356	272	91	99	69	57
No provision for senior citizens	383	287	99	105	79	60
Condition at railway stations						
Monopoly by coolie	395	296	92	108	82	52
No adequate maintenance of toilets	383	275	103	99	83	55
No water facilities in toilets,	396	269	105	97	80	54
Unhygienic of platform tracks	419	309	111	109	72	60
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	339	288	104	98	82	53
Unhygienic food at stations	348	282	100	103	61	50
Total Score	8,589	6,736	2,349	2,382	1,931	1,331
Ideal Score	10,656	7,488	2,808	2,736	2,376	1,584
% of total score to ideal score	80.60	89.95	83.65	87.06	81.31	84.02
Least Score	-3,552	-2,496	-936	-912	-792	-528
No. of respondents	148	104	39	38	33	22

Source: Annexure A, B, C, D, E and F

middle class people. No doubt the facilities are better in air condition compartments or high class compartments and everyone cannot travel or afford the same. It is time to revisit the existing facility and improve the service quality to the passengers. Most of the time due to internal dynamics of central government the political leaders prefer to give more facility to their respective states and in the process other states are being sidelined. We hope that adequate care will be taken to upgrade the services. It is also



Source: Table 3

found that some services need to be out sourced and also there should be change in mind set of people to maintain cleanliness in the compartments; of course the –Swachh Bharat movement will create some awareness among the people in this direction. The commuters also need to show their accountability in addition to improve the quality of services by the railways. This will give an opportunity to improve the services in the Indian railways.

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ANNEXURE-A (148)

		Perceptio	on of ma	le passen	gers	
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						
Unhygienic condition in compartments	96	31	8	6	7	351
Shortage of drinking water	87	34	9	11	7	331
Unhygienic condition in toilets	94	26	12	8	8	338
Shortage of water in toilets	85	34	15	6	8	330
Unscheduled stoppages	86	29	18	5	10	324
No security personal during travel	92	32	12	7	5	347
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	101	29	10	6	2	369
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	103	28	8	6	3	370
Chain pulling by local commuters	96	36	5	6	5	360
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	111	22	4	3	8	373
Goondaism by local commuters	89	23	14	8	14	313
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	104	26	8	4	6	366
No sufficient provision for local commuters	112	27	3	4	2	391
No pantry car in some long route trains	99	32	5	5	7	359
Improper lighting facilities	84	24	21	8	11	310
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	95	24	13	8	8	338
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	103	18	15	8	4	356
No provision for senior citizens	112	21	8	4	3	383
Condition at railway stations						
Monopoly by coolie	116	23	4	2	3	395
No adequate maintenance of toilets	112	25	3	2	6	383
No water facilities in toilets,	117	22	3	4	2	396
Unhygienic of platform tracks	124	23	1	0	0	419
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	99	22	8	9	10	339
Unhygienic food at stations	102	18	14	6	8	348

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA-Completely agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA -Completely disagree

ANNEXURE-B (104)

	Perception of female passengers					
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						
Unhygienic condition in compartments	86	10	4	2	2	280
Shortage of drinking water	89	11	4	0	0	293
Unhygienic condition in toilets	85	8	3	4	4	270
Shortage of water in toilets	84	5	4	8	3	263
Unscheduled stoppages	91	4	3	3	3	281
No security personal during travel	93	6	2	3	0	293
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	79	8	6	5	6	253
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	85	11	4	2	2	279
Chain pulling by local commuters	81	10	5	5	3	265

Cont. Annexure-B (104)

	I	Perceptio	n of fem	ale passer	ngers	
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	82	9	6	3	4	266
Goondaism by local commuters	91	8	2	3	0	291
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	96	6	2	0	0	302
No sufficient provision for local commuters	91	5	4	2	2	285
No pantry car in some long route trains	90	6	3	5	0	285
Improper lighting facilities	86	7	3	3	5	270
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	88	9	2	3	2	282
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	85	8	4	4	3	272
No provision for senior citizens	92	5	2	4	1	287
Condition at railway stations						
Monopoly by coolie	95	4	3	2	0	296
No adequate maintenance of toilets	91	2	3	3	5	275
No water facilities in toilets,	87	4	4	5	4	269
Unhygienic of platform tracks	101	3	0	0	0	309
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	94	2	4	2	2	288
Unhygienic food at stations	92	3	3	3	3	282

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA-Completely agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA-Completely disagree

ANNEXURE-C (39)

	Perce	ption of	male vis	sitors to the	he station	station					
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score					
During Travel											
Unhygienic condition in compartments	28	6	3	2	0	99					
Shortage of drinking water	27	5	2	3	2	91					
Unhygienic condition in toilets	26	3	4	4	2	86					
Shortage of water in toilets	31	4	2	2	0	103					
Unscheduled stoppages	32	2	2	2	1	101					
No security personal during travel	29	6	1	1	2	98					
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	25	5	3	3	3	85					
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	31	5	2	1	0	105					
Chain pulling by local commuters	30	4	2	2	1	99					
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	28	6	1	2	2	95					
Goondaism by local commuters	27	4	4	2	2	91					
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	30	5	2	2	0	102					
No sufficient provision for local commuters	32	3	3	1	0	105					
No pantry car in some long route trains	31	3	3	2	0	102					
Improper lighting facilities	24	6	5	2	2	87					
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	26	7	3	3	0	95					
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	28	4	2	2	3	91					
No provision for senior citizens	27	8	2	2	0	99					

Cont. Annexure-C (39)

	Perception of male visitors to the station						
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)		DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score	
Condition at railway stations							
Monopoly by coolie	29	3	2	2	3	92	
No adequate maintenance of toilets	31	4	4	0	0	105	
No water facilities in toilets,	32	2	3	2	0	103	
Unhygienic of platform tracks	35	2	2	0	0	111	
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	31	4	3	1	0	104	
Unhygienic food at stations	30	5	2	0	2	100	

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA-Completely agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA-Completely disagree

ANNEXURE-D (38)

	Perception of female visitors to the station						
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score	
During Travel							
Unhygienic condition in compartments	29	4	3	2	0	98	
Shortage of drinking water	28	5	2	3	0	96	
Unhygienic condition in toilets	31	4	2	1	0	103	
Shortage of water in toilets	26	3	4	4	1	87	
Unscheduled stoppages	30	3	3	2	0	99	
No security personal during travel	29	5	2	2	0	99	
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	25	6	3	3	1	89	
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	24	8	4	2	0	92	
Chain pulling by local commuters	31	4	2	1	0	103	
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	33	2	3	0	0	106	
Goondaism by local commuters	34	3	1	0	0	109	
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	31	3	4	0	0	103	
No sufficient provision for local commuters	29	3	3	3	0	96	
No pantry car in some long route trains	28	4	4	2	0	96	
Improper lighting facilities	27	5	2	4	0	93	
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	28	4	3	3	0	95	
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	30	4	2	1	1	99	
No provision for senior citizens	32	3	3	0	0	105	
Condition at railway stations							
Monopoly by coolie	34	2	2	0	0	108	
No adequate maintenance of toilets	31	3	0	4	0	99	
No water facilities in toilets,	29	4	2	3	0	97	
Unhygienic of platform tracks	34	3	1	0	0	109	
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	30	3	2	3	0	98	
Unhygienic food at stations	31	3	4	0	0	103	

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA- Completely agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA-Completely disagree

ANNEXURE-E (33)

		Percept	ors			
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						-
Unhygienic condition in compartments	23	5	3	2	0	82
Shortage of drinking water	24	6	3	0	0	87
Unhygienic condition in toilets	25	4	1	3	0	84
Shortage of water in toilets	26	2	2	3	0	84
Unscheduled stoppages	21	4	2	3	3	70
No security personal during travel	22	3	2	2	4	70
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	24	4	3	2	0	83
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	24	5	1	3	0	83
Chain pulling by local commuters	27	6	0	0	0	93
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	25	3	4	1	0	85
Goondaism by local commuters	26	3	4	0	0	88
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	25	4	3	1	0	86
No sufficient provision for local commuters	28	2	3	0	0	91
No pantry car in some long route trains	24	4	2	3	0	82
Improper lighting facilities	22	5	3	3	0	79
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	20	6	4	3	0	76
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	21	3	3	3	3	69
No provision for senior citizens	22	4	5	2	0	79
Condition at railway stations						
Monopoly by coolie	24	4	2	3	0	82
No adequate maintenance of toilets	25	3	2	3	0	83
No water facilities in toilets,	23	4	3	3	0	80
Unhygienic of platform tracks	22	3	2	4	2	72
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	23	5	3	2	0	82
Unhygienic food at stations	18	4	3	4	4	61

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA-Completely agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA-Completely disagree

ANNEXURE-F (22)

	Perception of female vendors					
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						
Unhygienic condition in compartments	17	4	1	0	0	60
Shortage of drinking water	16	2	4	0	0	56
Unhygienic condition in toilets	18	3	1	0	0	61
Shortage of water in toilets	15	2	2	2	1	50
Unscheduled stoppages	19	2	0	1	0	61
No security personal during travel	16	3	0	3	0	54
Unauthorised entry of local vendors	14	2	2	4	0	48
Unauthorised entry of beggars in the compartment	13	3	4	2	0	49
Chain pulling by local commuters	14	4	4	0	0	54

Cont. Annexure-F (22)

		Percepti	on of fe	male vena	lors	
Attributes / variables	CA(+3)	A(+2)	N(1)	DA(0)	CDA(-1)	Score
During Travel						
Entry of local commuters in reserved compartment	16	5	1	0	0	59
Goondaism by local commuters	18	2	0	2	0	58
Unhygienic serving of food by pantry car staff	19	1	0	0	2	57
No sufficient provision for local commuters	14	3	2	1	2	48
No pantry car in some long route trains	15	4	3	0	0	56
Improper lighting facilities	17	3	0	2	0	57
Smoking and alcoholic use by co-passengers	19	2	1	0	0	62
Unhygienic matters supplied in the A/C compartment	15	5	2	0	0	57
No provision for senior citizens	18	2	2	0	0	60
Condition at railway stations						
Monopoly by coolie	14	3	4	1	0	52
No adequate maintenance of toilets	15	5	0	2	0	55
No water facilities in toilets,	14	4	4	0	0	54
Unhygienic of platform tracks	18	2	2	0	0	60
Unauthorised entry by local people at the stations	14	3	5	0	0	53
Unhygienic food at stations	15	1	3	3	0	50

Sources: Compiled from field survey, CA-Completely agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, DA-Disagree, CDA-Completely disagree