

IMPROVING ON-BOARD CATERING SERVICES IN RAILWAYS THROUGH THIRD PARTY AUDIT

The Indian Railways, apart from being one of the largest employer, with more than 1.36 million employees also has the third largest railway network in the world. Currently, it covers more than 7,083 cities, towns and villages across the country through its network of stations which are connected through a wide network of tracks of 63,974 route kilometers. Load wise it carries more than 2.65 million tons (MT) of freight traffic and 23 million passengers per day. Being such a big organization the railways face numerous problems. Be it the number of accidents, attack on the railway property, poor condition of the tracks, outmoded technology, lack of modern management or the challenges related to hygiene and service of onboard catering services, the Indian Railways faces continuous challenges.

The on-board catering services remain one of the major challenges of the Railways. There are many instances where it was found that the food is unhygienic and in others or found to be stale or sub-standard. Regardless to say that many passengers claim that the complaints regarding sub-standard food quality, delivery of food without any proper receipts or bills goes unattended. According to survey conducted by an independent agency, nearly 52 per cent of the passengers interviewed were unhappy with current complaint handling mechanism of the Indian Railways.

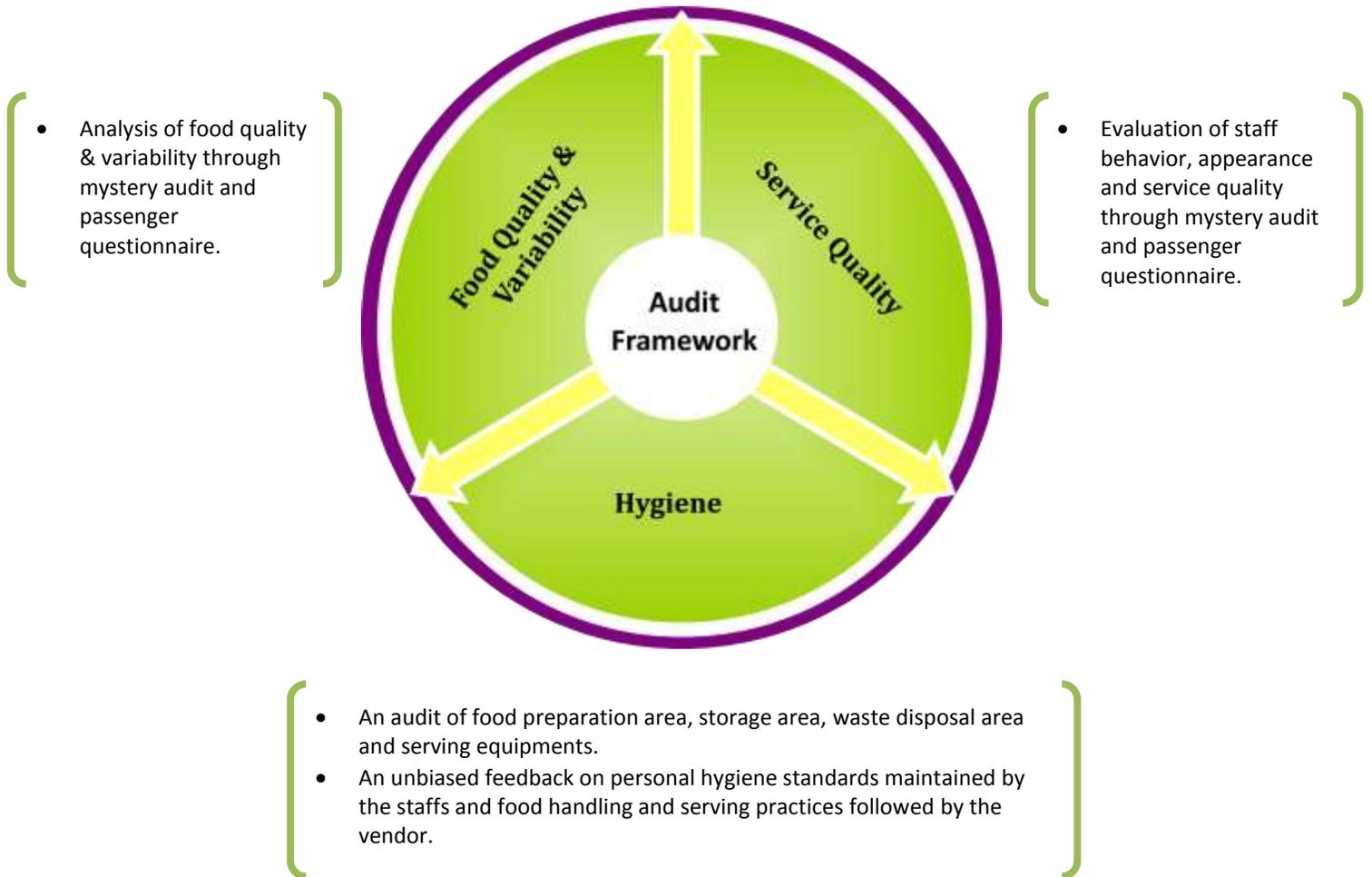
Onicra believes that in order to improve hygiene and service quality of on-board catering services, a third party audit must be conducted onboard the trains. The audit exercise will not only provide an independent and constant examination of the 'real' internal practices of the Indian Railways and what the customers think about its service delivery mechanism and hygiene conditions, it will also identify the root cause for violations of food safety and hygiene standards of Indian Railways. Further the audit exercise will also assist the Indian Railways to benchmark its vendors or the service providers according to Indian Railways standard operating procedures (SOP) and provide gap analysis between the SOP and vendor's practices and suggest areas of improvement. The framework to be used for the purpose must include an evaluation of the **food quality & variability, service quality** and **hygiene standards** which can



be achieved by a combination of **process audit, staff interviews, questionnaires** and **mystery shopper survey**.

All this information will allow Indian Railways to identify both its strong and weak points so that they can improve in the required area, which will further help the Indian Railways in improving its brand image by keeping the passengers satisfied every time they travel.

Audit framework:



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