CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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The conclusions drawn from the study are framed into three parts:

7.1.1 Transport and Tourism

The study concludes that transport is an integral and vital part of the total tourism system. Since any activity related to tourism necessarily involves the movement of tourists from the tourist-generating markets to tourist destination areas, the link between the two is definitely provided by an element of transportation. Though factors like social, cultural, and economic etc., have played a significant role in the development of tourism, the development of means of transportation show a significant influence on its growth throughout its history.

The evolution of different modes of transport has resulted in different phases in the history of tourism. The introduction of railways led to ‘organised travel’, the technological strides in water transport eased the movement across the oceans, the motorised transport resulted in ‘individual travel diffusion’ and the scheduled air transport lead to ‘mass tourism’.

The modern transport system has evolved into a highly dynamic and competitive industry, with one mode competing the other. In reality each mode of transport has a competitive edge over the others, in one or the other aspects. No mode can be seen in isolation instead these are, most of the time, interdependent on one another. Thus all the modes of transport complement each other at one or the other stage of the total travel experience of a tourist. This phenomenon can be called as ‘Transport Mix’. Today the transport companies do not only meet the travel requirements of the tourists but also provide services of sightseeing, boarding and lodging etc., to make their products attractive. The different modes of transport have different
characteristic features, which influence the 'travel mode selection' process of the tourists. These consumer behavior variables of tourists are, however, also influenced by their own demographic profiles.

7.1.2 Indian Railways and Tourism Promotion

The inland transport sector in India is represented by all the major transportation modes, viz. air, rail, road and water. The inland water transport in India is almost non-existent. The scheduled domestic air transport is very limited as compared to road and rail transport. The rail and road are the two major transportation modes in the country. Road transport is preferred on short distances and on short notice travel, due to its flexibility in departures. The rail transport, on the other hand, becomes an obvious choice on medium and long distances because of convenience, comfort and safety. India being a large sized country, the travel between places involves large distances, and hence rail transport becomes indispensable.

With the humble beginning on April 16, 1853 on a 21 mile track between Bombay and Thana, Indian Railways today criss-crosses the country; carrying more than 13 million passengers daily on about 8,500 passenger trains with more than 40,000 coaches along its more than 63,000 km route network, connecting more than 7,000 stations.

There has been a consistent growth in the operations of India Railways over the years since independence. It is observed that the passenger movements on India Railways increased by about four times from 1951-52 to 2001-02, registering an average annual growth rate of 7.76 percent, which is impressive. But despite this significant growth there has been a growing criticism of its functioning, as over the years it has considerably lost its market share to road transport from 68.4 percent in 1950-51 to mere 20.0 percent in 1996-97. These
figures are striking and imply that Indian Railways has been unresponsive to and uncaring for the customer needs. The organisation has been driven by its production orientation and the customer focus has continuously been ignored. This has been primarily due to higher burden of social obligation costs for which no compensation is given by the government, high political interference in its day-to-day operations and the monopolistic attitude of the railway management. Above all the uncritical attitude of average rail users, who view the services of the railway as neither their right nor their responsibility and take whatever is given to them uncritically, has further distanced the railway services providers from its users. The inadequacies and inefficiencies of the railway services are even more evident while it deals with tourists as consumers of its services, despite its huge potential to meet the requirements of this market.

India is a high-potential tourist destination with diversity in culture, history, traditions, languages, climate and physiography etc., and Indian Railways cuts across all these barriers and reaches out to every nook and corner of the country. The advantage of railway in India lies not only in its vast reach, but it also has the potential to be promoted as an attraction in itself. Its enormous heritage in the form of old royal saloons, steam engines, colonial railway buildings, tunnels and ghats and rail museums etc., bears an immense nostalgic appeal. It has to its credit many hill railways spread in different parts of the country, which have hardly any match anywhere in the world. It has also introduced some luxury tourist trains, with all the modern facilities, representing the aesthetics of the royal backgrounds of the destinations through which they pass.
The study shows that 48.77 percent of foreign tourists and 30.15 percent of domestic tourists prefer to travel by railway in India. The percentage of domestic tourists is comparatively low. It is because, a significant portion of the domestic tourists are excursionists/day visitors who travel short distances for which road transport is preferred because of its flexibility. Even this percentage is very significant to attract the attention of the railway policy makers towards domestic tourism, as the estimates show that it amounts to about 1.2 percent of the 13 million passengers traveling on Indian Railways daily.

The major factors, which influence the choice of foreign tourists in selecting a transportation mode in India, are 'time taken for travel', 'flexibility', 'comfort and safety', 'cost' and 'distance'. The study reveals that 60.29 percent of foreign tourists prefer train travel in India because of comfort and safety, 57.73 percent because of low cost of travel and 55.55 percent prefer it because of distance. However, on the other hand, only 38.89 percent prefer it because of flexibility (particularly in departures) and only 16.66 percent for time taken for travel. The rigidity in departures and the longer travel time (often because of delays) have been discouraging factors for foreign tourists to choose railway as their mode of travel.

The study reveals that, ever since the independence of the country in 1947, and even before that, it was time and again highlighted by various expert committees and commissions on tourism, that the railway could play an important role in the promotion of tourism in the country. Unfortunately the railway authorities never took tourism seriously until 1980s, when after realising its enormous potential, the railway authorities contemplated to put some efforts in this direction. The efforts so involved were initially focused on
the promotion of foreign inbound tourism due to its ability to generate the much-needed foreign exchange. Special tourism projects on rails, such as ‘Palace on Wheels’ in 1982, ‘Royal Orient’ in 1994 and ‘Fair Queen’ in 1997, were launched to cater to the high-spending foreign tourists. However, no serious attention was given to the existing mail/express trains going towards important tourist destinations, which could have catered to the growing domestic tourism market. The ever-growing domestic tourism market, therefore, remained almost completely neglected over the years.

Also several schemes and incentives like, ‘Indrail Passes’, one year advanced reservation facilities, separate booking counters at important reservation centres, ‘foreign tourist quota’ on specific trains and GSA facilities abroad were offered to foreign tourists. Some schemes; like ‘circular journey tickets’, ‘break journey’ and ‘onward journey’ options and provision of special coaches/trains for group travel etc.; were extended to domestic tourists. All these schemes and incentives are good only as long as these are utilised. But except for Indrail Passes, which evoked a good response from foreign tourists, all the other incentives and schemes remained largely unutilised in the absence of any differentiation made between a tourist and a normal passenger. Also the procedures involved to avail these facilities were, and still are, so lengthy and cumbersome that the tourists rather prefer to not to avail them.

There is a dearth of data pertaining to the tourists traveling on Indian Railways. Although a little but fragmented and not well-documented data pertaining to foreign tourists is available, no data has ever been maintained pertaining to the domestic tourists on Indian Railways. Neither has there ever been any official study or survey done to estimate the number of domestic tourists traveling on Indian Railways. Whatever little data is available about
foreign tourists, it shows that majority of those who avail the facility of Indrail Passes, buy them from GSAs in their home countries, while the majority of those who plan to travel by railways after arriving in India, book point-to-point tickets. The study also reveals that the highest numbers of tourists availing the facility of Indrail Passes or point-to-point tickets are from UK. However, the Germans are the highest average spenders on Indrail Passes with US$ 99.78 per person as against US$ 71.26 per person by UK tourists, and between US$ 20 and US$ 55 per person by tourists from other countries.

The domestic tourism market has largely remained neglected on Indian Railways, despite its enormous potential, particularly in the present difficult world scenario, which has made international tourism highly unpredictable. The study shows that 30.3 percent of the domestic tourists in the country travel for social functions. 13.8 percent for leisure, 10.4 percent for business, 6.9 percent for religious purposes and the remaining, which mostly include those 'Visiting Friends and Relatives' (VFR), comprise a sizeable 38.6 percent. Except for the up-market business and leisure tourists the railway has been a preferred mode for all other categories.

Lately Indian Railways has been trying to adopt itself to the challenges posed by the highly dynamic tourism market. This is evident from the establishment of a separate and specialised railway tourism company – IRCTC, in May 2001. The main objective of this organisation is to promote rail-based tourism in the country, through increased participation from different state tourism agencies, private tour operators and travel agents etc. IRCTC offers 'chartered services' and 'value added tour packages' on different sectors of Indian Railways network. It also provides the facility of online ticket bookings. To provide branded and hygienic catering services IRCTC has, till March
2004. established 27 ‘Food Plazas’ on select railway stations and has planned to extend the service to all the 285 stations chosen by it to be developed as model stations. It has also planned to set up 100 ‘budget hotels’, in addition to manage and operate the existing ‘rail yatri niwases’, to facilitate the tourists on budget.

During the three years of its existence, the performance of IRCTC has been commendable. However Indian Railways has given it limited functional autonomy with regard to certain operational responsibilities. For example, the tariffs offered by IRCTC for different packages are regulated by Indian Railways. Such limitations have reduced the role of IRCTC to just an intermediary between the private operators and Indian Railways. The organisation must therefore be given increased functional and operational autonomy to broaden its scope.

7.1.3 ‘Palace on Wheels’

PoW has been by and large a successful specialised tourism project on rails by Indian Railways in partnership with RTDC, under a revenue sharing agreement in the ratio of 56:44 respectively. The operational responsibilities of PoW package carried out by each organisation are clearly defined. The present 7 nights/8 days itinerary is the best itinerary that could have been designed, keeping the basic definition of the project in mind.

As the project was primarily launched to trap the foreign inbound tourism market, particularly that of UK, the initial promotional campaign was aggressively done in UK using all the available media resources. Even some marketing and advertising companies were hired to do this job. During the very first season of its commercial operations, the UK tourists traveled on PoW in impressive numbers and were highest from any country. But their numbers
showed a drastic decline from the very next season and the trend is continuing even today, which implies that the initial aggressive promotion of PoW in UK was by and large a failure.

However, the numbers of tourists traveling on PoW from other countries, particularly USA, show a continuous growth over the years, and that too in the absence of any specific promotion done in these countries. The number of USA tourists even overtook the number of UK tourists on PoW at number one position, barely after four seasons of its operations, in 1986-87. The decline in UK tourists on PoW is more surprising when their numbers on other trains on Indian Railways network are observed. The study reveals that their numbers on other normal trains are continuously increasing and also occupy the top positions. This implies that there are some basic reasons as to why the number of UK tourists on PoW has declined over the years. However, neither RTDC nor Indian Railways has ever tried to study this trend. Also the marketing and promotion is not sufficiently done in other countries, which have shown increasing interest in this package, even when it is clearly recognised by the officials that aggressive marketing in these countries could generate additional revenue of Rs 25 crore to Rs 30 crore.

The overall growth of tourists on PoW has been impressive. The number of tourists on PoW grew from 1,056 in 1982-83 to 2,367 in 1999-2000, registering an aggregate growth of 124.15 percent. RTDC, however, takes occupancy rate as a measure of performance, which is deceptive. The occupancy rate directly depends on the total capacity generated during a season. Since the total seasonal capacity generated on PoW has never been constant, taking occupancy rate as a measure of performance is misleading. That is why it is observed during some years, that even when there is a positive
growth in the number of tourists on PoW, the occupancy rate has shown a decline, which actually should have been the other way round, had the total capacity been constant.

RTDC claims that it reaches 'breakeven' with an average occupancy rate of 48 percent and the occupancy rate above 48 percent gives it profit. However, neither Indian Railways nor RTDC maintain separate profit/loss accounts of PoW, as the expenditures incurred by each of them are mixed with other of their respective operations. The total revenues generated on PoW when compared with the tariffs on PoW give some striking results. The study shows that the weighted average of the least tariffs on PoW is higher than that of average revenue generated per tourist, which must actually be on the lower side. Also the revenues generated include the extra charges paid by the tourists on supplementary services outside the fixed package costs. This is when the comparisons are made only with the least tariffs. The consideration of higher tariffs will further aggravate the imbalance. This imbalance implies that there have been either some irregularities in accounts or some ‘tourists’ on PoW travel free of cost. The later reason seems to be more obvious, which becomes even more evident from the report of the CBI raid conducted on PoW in September 2001; when it found about 66 out of 90 tourists, who were Indians, traveling free on fake identities. During the same season the number of Indian tourists declined drastically to just 84 from 200 a year before. This also supports the argument.

However, the increase in Indian tourists to 225 in 2002-03 was in response to the discounted rupee tariffs extended to Indian tourists as a result of decline in overall foreign tourist arrivals in India. This response to decrease in tariffs and that too in rupee terms shows that the normal dollar tariffs on PoW
are usually very expensive for Indians. No doubt, it is not possible for PoW to break even if the tariffs are permanently discounted. However it implies that if low tariff versions of PoW are introduced on various sectors of Indian Railways network they will evoke a good response from the domestic tourism market.

7.2 Suggestions

Indian Railways needs to introspect into its system and change its approaches and attitudes to meet the ever-growing competition from other modes, particularly from road transport. To meet the requirements of growing tourism market it will have to shed its inward looking and production oriented attitude and focus on the market place and on the customer. It must capitalise on its strengths and explore new opportunities to overcome its weaknesses and to face the challenges and threats posed by other competitive modes. Here it becomes imperative to find out the possible ways and means to improve the market oriented operations, where the tourist as consumer gets precedence. The railways’ tourism policy makers, industry and trade partners and other related agencies and institutions will have to come forward and strive hard to improve tourism related performance and competitiveness of Indian Railways. Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn there from, some suggestions are proposed as outlined below:

7.2.1 Suggestions for Promotion of Rail-Based Tourism

a) Develop a Strong Rail-Tourism Policy

While Indian Railways is now all set to promote rail-based tourism in the country, a strong rail tourism policy is needed, which must be developed under the overall policy framework of Indian Railways and in consonance with the National Tourism Policy of India. However, for any policy or plan to be
successful, an organisation must know, beforehand, answers to some basic questions about the consumers of its services/products, such as who they are? where they are? how many of them are there? what are their needs and wants? how to reach them? etc. To answer all these questions, singling out the consumer called ‘tourist’ from the wider set of consumers called ‘travelers’ with whom they are tangled becomes all the more important. Unfortunately Indian Railways has till now made no distinction between a tourist and a normal traveler. This non-distinction has resulted in poor or non-utilisation of schemes and incentives, if any, promoted for attracting tourists. To develop a strong rail-tourism policy, Indian Railways, therefore, must separate the tourists from the existing and possible sets of other travelers in order to determine their actual size and to find out the answers to each of these questions. The findings will, on the one hand, become basis for drawing objectives for such a policy and, on the other hand, will facilitate as a yardstick for the measurement of intended results and unintended consequences of such policy measures.

b) Make Provisions for Separate Tourist Class (TC) Coaches

Indian Railways at present has three class categorisation of its coaches, i) Air Conditioned (AC) Class, which includes 1AC, 2AC, 3AC and AC Chair Car; ii) Non-Air Conditioned Class or II Class and, iii) General (unreserved) Class. The 1AC Class and 2AC Class generally remain empty in all seasons, except for few peak summer months because of their very high fares, and are accessible only to a small section of high-income travelers and tourists. However the 64-berth 3-tier AC sleeper coaches are doing well with upper-middle and also up-market tourists. The railway might consider introducing 64-berth 3-tier non-AC sleeper coaches, which can easily be done by not fixing
AC units, sunglasses and curtains in the existing 3AC class coaches. Comparatively low fare charged then will make them accessible to lower-middle and middle class tourists who constitute the bulk of domestic tourism market in the country. These 3AC and 3 non-AC coaches may then be called as ‘Tourist Class’ (TC) coaches and can be made popular by attaching them to normal mail/express trains going towards important tourist destinations. A mechanism should also be drawn through which only those who travel for tourism purposes are allowed to reserve seats on these tourist specific coaches.

c) Promote Domestic Tourism

Whatever little efforts have been made by Indian Railways to promote tourism, these have been mainly focused on foreign inbound tourists. As a result some luxurious projects on wheels have been introduced, which remain out of the reach of the domestic tourists’ pocket. In the present difficult world scenario, where international tourism has become highly unpredictable, the promotion of domestic tourism becomes the obvious choice. The Indian domestic tourism market is growing at a higher rate than ever before. Indian Railways should make efforts to trap the potential of this segment, through promoting budget/low-priced packages on the lines of PoW, which will be highly rewarding for Indian Railways. Also the effective implementation of already designed itineraries on different sectors of Indian Railways network will give a new dimension to tourism in the country.

d) Activate Tourism Cells in Zonal Railways

Indian Railways has a tourism cell at almost all zonal headquarters to help tourists, both international and domestic, to avail all the facilities available for them on its network. But these have largely been ineffective in their
operations. These tourist cells must be activated to fulfill the purpose with which these have been established.

e) Make IRCTC Autonomous in its Operations

IRCTC has been established as a specialised rail tourism company to meet the requirements of both foreign as well as domestic tourists. However its role has been reduced to just an intermediary due to increased interference by Indian Railways in its operations. While it develops the packages, Indian Railways quotes the fares, which are most of the times against its market interests. IRCTC must be given full autonomy in its operations to effectively promote rail-based tourism in the country.

f) Make Online Rail Reservation Effective

IRCTC has introduced online rail reservation facility. But the special facilities for tourists such as ‘foreign tourist quota’, ‘circular tours’, reservation for Indrail Passes etc., are not available online. These facilities shall be made available online so that the tourists do not face any problems while booking their seats/berths online.

g) Simplify System for Availing Special Schemes/Incentives Available to Tourists

Although different schemes and incentives have been made available to tourists, but the system for availing them is so cumbersome and tedious that many a times tourists rather prefer to not to avail them. The procedures for availing these facilities must be made user friendly so that these are effectively utilised.

h) Promote Railway Heritage as Tourism Product

Indian Railways has immense heritage potential accumulated through 150 years of its service to the nation. These heritage structures and items can be
promoted as potential attractions for the tourists in general and rail enthusiasts in particular.

i) **Activate International Tourist Bureaus**

Indian Railways has established international tourist bureaus at important international entry points, major railway stations and tourist destinations for providing information and rail reservation facilities to international tourists. Except a few, these have by and large remained ineffective in their operations. These international tourist bureaus should be activated and made effective to meet the requirements of the international tourists seeking to travel on Indian Railways.

j) **Introduce Exotic Coaches**

Indian Railways should also contemplate to introduce specially designed exotic tourist coaches in identified tourist circuits, on the pattern of other railway systems of the world, with open-view glass roofs, large windows, coaches with balconies, dining and lounge cars and other entertainment facilities.

k) **Use Rajdhani and Shatabdi Trains to Promote Tourism**

Indian Railways introduced two premier class trains named *Rajdhani* and *Shatabdi*, with a view to provide fast movement to people. These were later marketed to promote rail-based tourism. Unfortunately, with time, these became politicised and bureaucratised as a common means of transport for the politicians and bureaucrats. The need of the hour is to actively promote these trains on tourist routes, rather than to the hometowns of politicians and bureaucrats where, for most of the time, they run on losses.
l) Encourage Private Participations

The railway must envisage a private sector driven approach. The services on board the trains, and the ground arrangements at stations should be given to the private participants to increase quality and efficiency in their operations. The sustained and sincere efforts in this direction would yield better results. The active involvement of travel agents, tour operators, state tourism corporations and other related agencies would surely boost rail tourism in the country.

m) Work for Healthy, Clean and Hygienic Environ

Indian Railways has an image problem as being unclean, dirty and uncomfortable. The need of the hour is to actively build the image of the railway, through working for the clean and hygienic environs in and around the railway stations and also on board the trains. IRCTC is no doubt working on to develop 285 of the 7,000 railway stations, on its network, as model stations. But it will need long-standing and sustained efforts to bring majority of the stations under this banner.

n) Aggressive Promotion and Marketing

Indian Railways has dual advantage in promoting tourism, one – as a widespread transport network in the country, and two – as having a variety of tourist products available on its tracks, broadly in the form of railway heritage, steam engines and hill railways etc. To attract an increased attention towards these products, the railway needs to undertake massive and aggressive marketing and promotional campaigns both in international and domestic tourism markets.
o) Coordinate with Other Relevant Agencies

The tourism in India is a state subject; hence any activity related to it, by Indian Railways, cannot be taken in isolation. It has to therefore coordinate with relevant tourism agencies at state levels, both in public as well as private sector, to get its policies effectively implemented.

Indian Railways must also focus on the seven key areas as identified by National Tourism Policy of the Government of India, released in May 2002, viz. *Swagat* (welcome), *Soochna* (information), *Suvidha* (facilities), *Suraksha* (security), *Sahyog* (cooperation), *Samrachna* (infrastructure) and *Safai* (cleanliness), as a thrust to tourism development. The concerted efforts towards all these key areas will in the long run benefit Indian Railways in general and its rail-tourism efforts in particular.

7.2.2 Suggestions for PoW

PoW has by and large been successful in achieving the objectives with which it was launched, and at the same time in meeting the expectations of those it was targeted at. However, to improve its efficiency few suggestions, are made hereunder:

a) Promote PoW in Non-Traditional and Growing Tourist Markets

PoW, which has mostly been promoted and marked in UK, needs to be promoted in other countries from where the tourists have shown an increased interest in its package. It becomes more important as the numbers of tourists from the traditional market of UK have continuously been dwindling to unexpectedly low levels. Therefore, a strong and aggressive marketing of PoW should be undertaken in non-traditional markets to make tourists there familiar with PoW. The first step in this direction could be to strengthen the GSAs in these countries. Also there is a need to study the UK tourists to know reasons
as to why their numbers have continuously been declining, despite the huge promotional campaign done in that country, when their number is increasing on other normal trains on Indian Railways.

b) Separate PoW Accounts from Accounts of Other Operations

Both RTDC and Indian Railways mix the financial matters of PoW with that of their other operations. This makes it difficult to study the financial performance of PoW. The financial details of PoW with regard to its expenditures, revenues and profit/loss accounts should be separated from those of other operations. This will help both insiders and outsiders to study the performance of the PoW project.

c) Introduce Economy Version of PoW

The discounted rupee tariff on PoW for domestic tourists in 2002-03 evoked an overwhelming response. The response of domestic tourists to these low tariffs implies that the Indian tourists are ready to experience the thrill of journey on rails in the manner PoW provides it, but high tariff becomes the limiting constraint. Though, it is not possible to regularly extend the discounted tariffs on PoW and at the same time run it on profit, it is suggested that an economy version of PoW, is introduced to trap the potential of growing domestic tourism market. The new train could be made economical by cutting cost on luxurious furnishings and lavish facilities as existing on PoW. The economy version will expectedly run on full occupancy and will be free from international disturbances that hinder the inflow of foreign tourists.

d) Appoint GSAs within India

The up-market Indian tourists have continuously shown a significant response to the package on PoW. To attract more of this category the effective sales promotion of PoW within the country is required. The need is to appoint
GSAs in major cities within the country to enhance the sale of tickets. This will in turn help PoW to generate additional revenue.

e) Check Irregularities to Save the Image of PoW

The PoW for last few years has become notorious for the fact that most of the Indian travelers on it travel free of cost under official patronage. The reports of the CBI raid, which revealed this, have negatively hit the image of PoW. It is, no doubt now almost certain that such irregularities usually happen on PoW. The management of PoW needs to check this menace to save its image, which otherwise will have a negative impact on its credibility in the long run.

7.2.3 Suggestions for Improving Performance of Indian Railways in General

To improve its performance in general, and to supplement its efforts to promote rail-based tourism in the country in particular, Indian Railways must shed its inflexible and rigid structure to adapt to the fast going changes in the external environment. To achieve this it must, at the same time, abandon its inward looking bureaucratic attitude and focus on the marketplace and the customer. The organisation must reform itself to function as a market driven enterprise focused on its core competencies. It should introduce market orientation as a function at different levels of its organisation and devise strategies and reorient its operations so that market forces lead the organisation. This will increase its efficiency to meet consumer requirements and at the same time the challenges from other modes of transport.

Indian Railways has done a commendable job in the up-gradation and electrification of its tracks. However, it has failed to introduce more recent technology to modernise its coaching stock. Steps must therefore be taken to
induct appropriate technology to improve reliability and quality of services offered.

The fact that almost all the trains in the country are overbooked and heavily waitlisted throughout the year implies a crying need for increase in capacity generation to stabilise the heavy demand to retain the market share.

The railway must think to leverage on non-traditional areas of resource mobilisation, such as surplus land, idle space in and above operational buildings etc., which can supplement its efforts to improve financial viability in meeting the much needed modernisation, expansion and capacity generation.

To yield better dividends in terms of pricing advantages, better definition of services and bringing about an optimal mix of public-private participation, in line with their respective competencies, it must separate infrastructure from its operations.

In order to survive in the marketplace and to be able to face competition from other modes of transport Indian Railways must encourage changes in soft areas like, staff and managerial attitudes, customer relations, service quality etc. A proper and formal management training of all the staffs who are in direct contact with the customer is necessary to ensure the better quality of services.

There has to be a change in attitudes both among the railway men and consumers of railway services. While the attitudes of railway men will have to change from inward-looking, production oriented to forward-looking and customer oriented attitude, the consumers must view the quality of rail services as their legitimate right as they pay for them, and not take uncritically whatever is given to them. This attitudinal change can be brought about by confidence building through information sharing and increased care taken of customer needs and wants.
With the growing quality consciousness, in the wake of improved economic conditions, the consumer wants reliable and high quality services and is willing to pay for them. These customers who are commercially beneficial for the railway are quick to switch over to other competitive modes, which give them value for money. Indian Railways has to become more customer oriented to retain this commercially beneficial segment of traveling population.

Indian Railways must work for defining a new relationship with the government, where the government has least or no interference in the day-to-day operations of Indian Railways. The state will have, no doubt, to play a crucial role as a regulator, but the management must be given full operational autonomy. The improvements in the railway’s efficiency and productivity, therefore, lie in the organisation distancing itself from government and realising that it is not in the railway business but in the business of transportation.

Last but not the least, Indian Railways will have to find ways to work in partnership with private enterprises to run operations in a manner which reduces the gap between what the railway offers and what actually the consumer wants. The private participation will bring in specialised management capabilities and additional capital resources that are essential inputs to create an innovative and flexible organisation.

Many of the suggestions made above have for long been overdue. Therefore, it is essential on the part of railway authorities, policy makers and stakeholders in the promotion of rail tourism to go for these reforms and policy changes to rectify the weaknesses and to capitalise on the strengths of Indian Railways to explore the potential of rail-based tourism in the country. If these
suggestions are implemented properly by these relevant agencies they will lead Indian Railways to go a long way in yielding much better results in the future.

7.3 Directions for Further Research

The research work undertaken through this study hints that certain areas of rail-based tourism in India need extensive research both at organisational as well as academic levels. However, some aspects covered under the study can more efficiently be studied at organisational level, which need extensive, long-time study and may involve considerable financial resources, owing to the diversified and vast network of Indian Railways. It is therefore, in the fitness of things that certain guidelines be proposed for further research work.

1) There is a need for comprehensive and continuous long-time study with regard to the trends in tourist (domestic and foreign) movement on Indian Railways, their profile and their needs and preferences. The study could be done at organisational level. Regarding the international tourists it may also be feasible to study the tourists from such countries like America, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, Japan, Sri Lanka, UAE, Bangladesh etc., who show greater interest in rail travel in India.

2) The ‘internal’ and ‘competitive’ benchmarking studies may be conducted, which will help in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats to Indian Railways in comparison to other available modes of transport within the country.

3) It is evident from the present study that poor design and development, and improper implementation of schemes and incentives extended to tourists are major reasons for the poor performance of rail-based tourism in the country. Hence a full study in the area of design and development of rail-tourism products is desirable.
4) Over the years many agencies have been established and appointed by Indian Railways both within and outside its system, for promoting rail-based tourism, such as ‘International Tourist Bureaus’, ‘General Sales Agents’, ‘Special Tourist Cells’ in zonal railways and more recently the ‘Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation’. These are engaged in providing assistance to the tourists in many aspects such as information and reservations etc. A thorough study on the role and functioning of these organisations should be undertaken to evaluate their performance and know their strengths and weaknesses in promoting rail-based tourism in the country.