

SWOT Analysis of State Road Transport Undertakings-A Case Study of UPSRTC

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Abstract-

The word SWOT is derived from the four words: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This paper discusses the application of SWOT analysis as the analytical tool to measure performance and future prospective of the State Road Transport Undertakings (SRTUs) with special reference to Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC). UPSRTC, being a government undertaking working for providing transport services in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It was incurring losses for more than three years. Hence it is of great importance to know the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Corporation, which help in improving the performance of the Corporation. The study is divided into two phases: the first phase analyse the performance of the UPSRTC. The second phase discusses the application of SWOT analysis on the working of the SRTUs and UPSRTC specifically.

Keywords- State Road Transport Undertakings, Mobility, Internal and External Environment.

Introduction-

Road transport is one of the most promising and potent means for rapid economic development. Passenger transportation plays an important role in solving the sociological problems of society, i.e. lack of mobility, geographical dissimilarities, rural and urban gap and medical, educational and pleasure needs. Prior to independence, the passenger road transport sector in India was dominated by the private operators, and there was unhealthy competition amongst operators who concentrated on the more remunerative routes. A consensus, however, has emerged that controlled monopoly is the only answer to the evils of unhindered and selfish competition.

The passing of the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950 provided the necessary legal and financial framework for state participation. With the encouragement given by the Planning Commission and with suitable amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act in 1956, many state road transport undertakings (SRTUs) were formed in the 1960s and were able to provide better services, covered more areas and gave fair wages to the employees.

Current position of SRTUs -

SRTUs, being a state owned undertakings were bound to providing better services to meet the travelling needs in backward regions and of the under privileged sections of the society. The fleet strength of SRTUs has increased by 21 percent from 1, 11,369 vehicles in 2003-04 to 1,34, 706 vehicles in 2012-2013, while the volume of operations has increased from 1, 240.03 crores effective kilometres to about 1, 519.19 crores effective kilometres for the same period. The average number of passengers carried every day was 5.69 crores which rose to 6.77 crores in past decade, with 18.98 percent increase. It may be noted that the surplus generated before tax was around Rs.

340.51 crores in 2003-04 which stood at around Rs. 4,590.97 crores (as losses) in the year 2012-13. During the year 2003-04, STUs provided concessional services of worth Rs.1, 272.96 crores to students and others which further rose to Rs. 3, 984.57 crores recording nearly 21 percent growth every year.

The fleet utilization was 91.1 per cent during 2012-13 compared to 92 per cent during 2003-04. It does not show much variation in the past decade. It ranged from 93 to 91 per cent. It is to be noted that even one per cent improvement in overall fleet utilization will enable SRTUs to get an advantage to operate large number of buses every day. The overall bus-staff ratio was 6.88 per cent with 299.89 wages per employee per day (in 2003-04). Which further witness as 5.86 per cent as bus-staff ratio having 774.28 wages per employee per day (in 2012-13). While the SRTUs could able to generate total revenue of Rs.41, 810.06 crores, they ended up with a net loss of Rs.7, 395.94 crores after tax in 2012-13. Studies suggest that the major reasons for the poor financial performance of SRTUs are the high tax burden and inability to adjust fares to rising input costs.

Objective of the study-

The prime objective of the paper is to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the SRTUs in India. The following are the other objectives formed to analyse the current situation of the Corporation-

- To evaluate the performance of the Corporation in internal as well as external environment.
- To analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the SRTUs with special reference to UPSRTC.
- To suggest some effective measures for strengthening the current situation of the Corporation.

Research Methodology-

For the purpose of detailed analysis of SWOT in SRTCs, UPSRTC is taken as a case study. The study covers the period of nine years from 2004-05 to 2012-13. The current study analyse the performance of the UPSRTC after its separation from Uttarakhand SRTC. The data required for the study is gathered from the secondary sources of information such as Annual Report of UPSRTC, various issues of STUs- Profile and Performance by CIRT, Working Group Report on Road Transport for the 11th Five Year Plan, research papers, books, thesis and other published material.

An Overview of UPSRTC-

To achieve the advantages of the corporation form of management and also to face the competition with private operators and other SRTUs, the Uttar Pradesh Government, under in section 3 of Road Transport Corporation Act 1950, established Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) on 1stJune, 1972. It was formed to provide the public sector passenger road transport services in the state of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and other adjoining states of North India. Under Section-18 of the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950, general duties performed by the corporation were described. As quoted in the act, "It shall be the general duty of a Corporation so to exercise its powers, as progressively to provide or secure or promote the provision of, an efficient, adequate, economical and properly coordinated system of road transport services in the State or part of the State for which it is established and in any extended area." ¹

¹ Section-18, Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950.

Physical and Financial Position of UPSRTC-

Physical Performance- Physical performance appraisal is an integral part of the overall appraisal scheme of an enterprise. The major portion of the total asset of SRTUs is in the form of fleet, constituting of the operating capital. Thus in order to find out whether the organisation has employed its operating capital efficiently and economically, it is necessary to assess the physical performance of the Corporation. Table 1 shows the physical performance of the Corporation.

Table-1: Physical Performance of UPSRTC

(Figures in Lakhs)

Sr. no.	Parameters of Physical Performance	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
1.	Buses Held	5843	6230	6561	6665	7003	7459	7382	6890	7259
2.	Over aged buses	1439	1310	1062	1294	1400	1551	1511	1168	1536
3.	Fleet Utilisation (%)	95	96	96	95	95	96	95	94	96
4.	Passengers Carried (crores)	37.68	39.63	42.49	44.33	46.65	47.75	47.05	49.11	52.65
5.	Staff Employed	36398	37339	35687	35314	34246	32081	30128	28170	27171
6.	Bus-Staff Ratio	5.64	5.59	5.12	4.95	4.66	3.95	5.12	5.22	5.17
7.	Man-power Productivity	54.64	58.64	65.45	69.93	75.48	90.81	67.14	68.41	68.32

(Source: Annual Report, UPSRTC, Lucknow)

Table 1 reveals that the buses held by the Corporation shows continuous increase with very small decrease in the year 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively. The maximum number of buses Corporation held was 7, 459 in the year 2009-10, however the minimum number in the year 2004-05 (5, 843 buses) with an average of 6, 129 buses. The figure under over aged fleet shows very impulsive growth. It varies from 1, 062 buses to 1, 551 buses with an average of 1, 227 buses. Wherever, the fleet utilisation doesn't vary a lot. It ranged from 96 to 94. Further, the passengers carried by the Corporation shows continuously increasing trend. It increased from 37.68 crores (in 2004-05) to 52.65 crores (in 2012-13).

The Corporation was able to reduce its man-power in the past decade. It was recorded 36, 398 number of employees in 2004-05 which further decreased to 27, 171 in the year 2012-13. In case of bus-staff ratio, the Corporation was able to reduce the ratio from 5.64 to 3.95 during the period of the study. The analysis of man-power productivity reveals that it shows increasing trend till 2009-10 from 54.64 (in 2004-05) to 90.81 (in 2009-10). Afterwards, it becomes impulsive in nature with an average of 61.88. However, the analysis of above table reveals that the overall physical performance of the Corporation was good.

Financial Performance- The total revenue means the total earning of the organisation. The main source of income of SRTUs is the fare directly collected from passengers. Other than this there are other sources of income, like royalty from canteens, cloak rooms, etc. On the other hand, total cost means the expenses incurred by SRTUs. Cost analysis is important in case of passenger road transport. The total cost can be classified into a number of components. The usual classification of the total cost in the case of transport operation is into personnel, material, overhead, depreciation, tax and interest. Table 2 shows the Total Cost, total Revenue and Profit/ Loss earned by the Corporation-

Table 2: Total Revenue, Total Cost and Profit/Loss Position of UPSRTC

(Figures in Lakhs)

Year	Total Revenue	% change over the Previous Year	Total Cost	% change over the Previous Year	Profit/Loss
2004-05	87223.46	-	86836.00	-	387.46
2005-06	101867.94	16.79	100491.19	15.73	1376.75
2006-07	114117.46	12.02	110114.44	9.58	4003.02
2007-08	124073.93	8.72	120003.02	8.98	4070.91
2008-09	141385.87	13.95	140318.70	16.93	1067.17
2009-10	165702.01	17.20	170899.35	21.79	-5197.34
2010-11	207439.73	25.19	211289.04	23.63	-3849.31
2011-12	232398.32	12.03	235855.47	11.63	-3457.15
2012-13	252935.80	8.84	261195.82	10.74	-8260.02
Mean	158571.60	-	159667	-	-1095.39
Maximum	252935.80	-	261195.8	-	4070.91
Minimum	87223.46	-	86836	-	-8260.02

Sources: Various Issues of Profile and Performance-STU's, Pune.

From table-2, it is quite understandable that the Corporation record tremendous increase in the total revenue. It can be observed from the table that the total revenue has increased from Rs. 87, 223.46 lakhs in 2004-05 to Rs. 2, 52, 935.80 lakhs in 2012-13 and gained nearly three times increase in nine years with an average of Rs. 1, 58, 571.60 lakhs. It climbed with the rate of 21 percent per annum in the past nine years. The percentage change over the previous year varied from 8.72 percent to 25.19 percent.

On the other hand, total cost also shows continuous upward trend. In 2004-05, the total cost was Rs. 86, 836 lakhs, which increased by more than three-fold and recorded Rs. 2, 61, 195.82 lakhs in 2012-13 with an average of Rs. 1, 59, 667 lakhs. It increased over the rate of nearly 22 percent per annum during the period of nine years. The percentage change over the previous year varied from 8.98 percent to 23.63 percent.

The profit and loss position of the Corporation is quite impulsive in nature. It was positive for first five years and then it became negative for the next four years. In 2004-05, the Corporation earned a profit of Rs. 387.6 lakhs. However, in 2012-13 the Corporation had faced Rs. 8, 260.02 lakhs as losses. During the study, the profit/ loss in the Corporation was recorded as high as Rs. 4070.91 lakhs and as low as Rs. 8, 260.02 lakhs (as losses), with an average of Rs. 1, 095.93 lakhs as losses.

SWOT Analysis-

The SWOT analyse the internal as well as external forces which influence the working of any enterprise. The strengths and weaknesses are the internal forces which can be managed by the organisation. However, opportunities and threats are covered under external environment which includes government policies, competition at national and international levels, economic and technical changes, etc. further, the strengths and opportunities are positive factors which help an organisation in achieving its goals. Whether, the weaknesses and threats are negative factors which hampered the functioning of the organisation.



Figure: SWOT analysis of UPSRTC

Factors affecting the performance of the SRTUs-

The factors which affect the working of the undertaking can be divided into two parts-

1. **Internal/Controllable factors-** Employees and Managerial staff, upper, middle and lower level are covered under internal factors. They are micro in nature and can be managed by the Corporation.
2. **External/Uncontrollable factors-** Passengers’ preferences, Government rules and policies, functioning of other SRTUs, Private bus operators are some external factors. They are macro in nature and outside the control of the organisation.

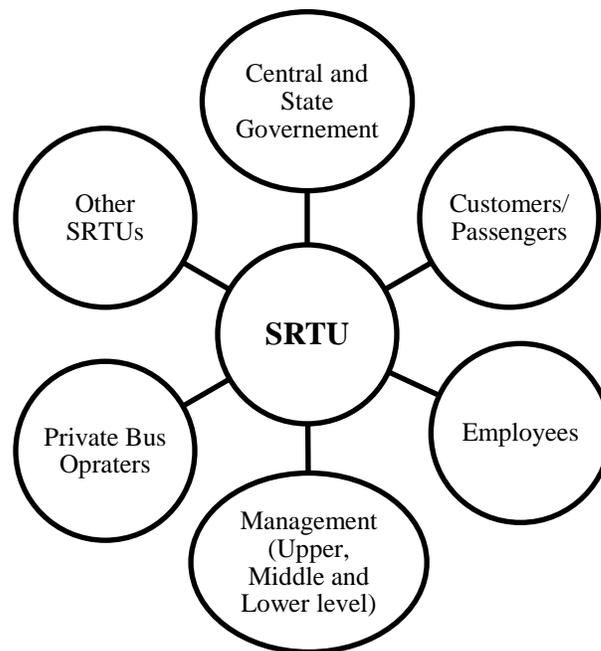


Figure: Factors affecting the performance of SRTUs

SWOT Analysis of SRTUs-

Strengths-

- Strong infrastructural facilities like large fleet strength, workshops, depots and other maintenance infrastructure, large network of operations, etc.
- Highly qualified and experienced managerial staff.
- Being a state owned Undertakings; it has well organised and defined procedures, rules and policies to follow.
- A clearly defined organizational structure for effective planning and control.
- Higher goodwill among travelling public due to economical, safe and comfortable journey provided by the Undertakings.
- Wider reach to the interior parts of the Nation.
- Readymade liquidity position (as cash is collected every day in the form of passenger fare).
- Able to provide large number of employment to the potential candidates.
- Full government support and back-up in terms of financial as well as infrastructural facilities
- Social responsibilities in terms of rural services for providing cheap travelling and better connectivity etc.

Weaknesses-

- Maximum numbers of operations are labour intensive which often resulted to industrial relations problems.
- Restrictions imposed on SRTUs regarding borrowings under the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950.
- Lack of professionalism and work culture resulting in poor customer orientation and low productivity.
- Large number of trade unions working at cross-purposes and inter-union rivalries.
- Vulnerable to political interference in fare fixation, recruitment and selection at upper and middle level management, route fixations, wage settlement, trade union functioning, in almost all the areas.
- Job security among all levels leading to loss of interest in work, inefficiency and indiscipline among workers which further leads to low level of morale and motivation resulted in high employee turnover.
- Fare policy cannot be solely formulated by any of the Undertakings; it requires government approval which further leads to political interference.
- Higher level of job mobility in upper level management.
- Lack of performance linked incentive system.
- Obligatory social services like, fare concession to students, senior citizens, physical challenged personnel, etc.
- Accumulated losses and increasing overheads.
- Technological and operational challenges.

Opportunities-

- Using the threat of privatisation as the catalyst to improve the productivity and operational efficiency.
- Ever increasing demand for transport services.

- They can use external sources for recruitment in man-power planning. The up-to-date knowledge, skilled and professional manpower are available in the market.
- Public goodwill and large infrastructure support in preferring state transport to private operators.
- Financial position can be improved through implementing the seasonal/ occasional tour/ travelling packages with attractive offers.
- Being state owned enterprises, Undertakings has full investment support. Which influence outside money lenders for providing financial services with comparatively low rate of interest.
- Undertakings have scope for increasing revenue from non-traffic source.
- No challenger of equal status.
- Different type of bus facilities for target category of customers.
- Customization of large population areas.

Threats-

- Constant input costs hick such as fuel, chassis, tyre, tubes, etc.
- Strong competition faced from private operators and undercutting of fares by them to attract passengers.
- Lack of enforcement of rules regarding illegal passenger carrying vehicles.
- Continuously increasing number of self owned vehicles i.e. two wheelers, four wheelers.
- High burden of taxation.
- Politicization of trade union activities leading to strikes, demonstrations, etc.
- Poor connection between the technological changes & innovations and functioning of the Undertakings.
- Changes in policy and procedures of the Undertakings according to the change in government.

SWOT analysis of UPSRTC-

On the bases of the internal/ controllable and external/ uncontrollable factors, the SWOT analysis of the UPSRTC is as follows-

Strengths-

On the strengths side, the Corporation has one of the largest numbers of fleet, through which it can provide mobility to a wide range of the passengers. Moreover, the Corporation possesses sufficient and updated infrastructure to operate the passengers transport services in the State. It had 20 regions and 113 depots all over the state, which facilitated nearly 52.65 crore passengers in the year 2012-13. The UPSRTC had 4, 582 buses at the time of its incorporation (1972-73), which rises to 5, 653 buses after its separation from Uttarakhand (in the year 2003-04). Later, the number increased to 7, 259 buses in the year 2012-13. UPSRTC is a renowned name among the public. It is the most preferred, economical and safe mode of transportation. It recorded very nominal number of accidents, i.e. 798 accidents in the year 2012-13. The Corporation also recorded continuous fall in the accidents per 10 lakh kms, which stood at 0.09 in the year mentioned above. Which make it a preferable and common mode of transport among public.

The UPSRTC has a large number of qualified and experienced man-power. The upper level management is placed with the people of IAS's and PCS's rank. The Central and State government places IAS's and PCS's as the MD's and Chairman's of the Corporation. It provided employment to

27, 171 peoples in the year 2012-13. With such huge human capital, UPSRTC has a great market network all over the state. It covers nearly all parts of the State and provides connectivity between people and places.

Weaknesses-

Inspite of so many strengths, the Corporation could not come out of so many weaknesses. The Corporation, as a state owned enterprise, has no right to decide the fare collected from passengers. It is a government affair, which restricts the Corporation to formulate its fare polices according to the rise in the cost of material and other production factors. Likewise, the formulation of wages, salary, incentives and other benefit policies is also fixed as per the government rules. It is a fixed expense which has to be the same for performing and non-performing employees. Moreover, the Corporation bear the losses incurred on concessional rate of tickets. The government made rules providing concessions to students, women, senior citizens and handicaps, which lead to financial losses to the organisation. The UPSRTC has provided Rs. 147.25 lakhs as fare concession in the year 2004-05 which further rise to Rs. 1889.75 lakhs in the year 2012-13. However, no subsidy or reimbursement amount was received during the period of nine years.

Despite of getting the fixed wages and salary, the performance of the staff is not upto the mark, as the public sector job monopoly culture was deep rooted in the Corporation. The performance based incentives schemes are lacking. The morale and motivation of the employees are at low level. Moreover, the trade unions forces are very strong. The union over protects the rights of the staffs, which sometime creates problems in making decisions. Furthermore, the organisation has too many layers, which slows down the process of decision making.

Another point to be kept in mind, while writing down the weaknesses, that the Corporation is suffering from continuous losses. As it can be analysed from table 2 that the overheads are increasing year after year, resulting in an increase in cost of operation, this further leads to huge and accumulated losses. One of the reasons of such losses is a large number of over aged buses, which has low earning capacity with high maintenance cost. The Corporation has 1, 536 over aged buses in the year 2012-13.

Opportunities-

Despite the position of the Corporation in terms of strengths and weaknesses, the market opportunities are noticeable and growing positively. The continuous heavy growth in population, the economic and social development in the State is increasing the requirement of the mobility. In past years, there was a tremendous change in the preference of mode of transportation, which has been shifted from railways to roadways. It was used to transport over 60 percent of total goods and 85 percent of passenger traffic through road transportation.² The Corporation have a large scope for growth in the State, i.e. of providing class specific services, route specific services and time specific services. Besides, there is no equal level challenge. The Corporation have great financial support from the government, which can be utilised for new technologies and other innovative methods.

Threats-

The treats are the fear of loss in future due to practices adopted by the Corporation. It is an external factor, which can be converted into opportunities by forecasting and by managing them effectively. The UPSRTC will be facing some threats to improve its operation in near future. The government

² Road Transport Year Book (March, 2012-13). www.morth.nic.in.

interferences, change in policies according to the change in government, red- tapism, political interference in trade union functions and along with other internal factors, are some possible issues which hamper the performance of the Corporation.

The uncontrollable factors i.e., strong competition from private operators, constantly increasing number of self-owned two and four wheelers, regular input cost hike and taxes etc. The Corporation cannot control them, but effective planning shall help in reducing the risk of losses upto a minimal level.

General problems faced by the Corporation-

- **Political interference-**

The price of input costs, like fuel, spares, wages and salary are external factors which cannot be fully controlled. So, to meet such expenditures, the Corporation needs to increase the revenue. But the Corporation is unable to increase the price of traffic sources of revenue due to political compulsions. The price of diesel and petrol has been increased year after year. But the fare collected has not been increased with the similar speed. Fare structure and any hike in the fare is solely decided by the Central and State government, which does not match the price of input cost. So naturally there is an imbalance between the cost incurred and the revenue generated which further leads to financial crunch in the Corporation.

- **Fixed routes and capacity-**

Ignoring the need of buses operating in each route, uniform capacity buses are available. Even the buses for long distance route and short distance are same. No special arrangements are made for tourist areas. Luxury buses covers a very few number of routes. Another major drawback is that the same capacity buses are given even if the numbers of passengers travelling on the route are few. Moreover, being a social welfare public undertaking, it is concentrated more on providing passenger bus transport services to the rural, interior and backward areas, while the private operators concentrate mainly on high density profitability routes. These particular circumstances lead to unnecessary losses on account of UPSRTC. The situation can be modified with an effective strategic management and top level management support.

- **Goal conflict-**

Being a state owned undertaking, the UPSRTC has to work as a welfare undertaking. According to the UPSRTC mission, the Corporation has the provision for adequate, efficient, well co-ordinated, comfortable and economical services to the passengers, while earning enough for self-sustenance and growth³. The Corporation was formed with an objective of supporting social and economic development by offering cheaper travel linking all rural and urban parts of the state to all categories of passengers with better amenities and well managed services. Most of such objectives, lead to a negative impact on the financial health of the Corporation. This leads to the goal conflict between the social responsibility and earning profits by the organisation.

- **Poor Management-**

Any functioning organisation is the combination of top, middle and lower level management. Top level management is usually assigning the task of planning and policy formulation. One of the major problems for chief executives is to allocate the necessary time for strategic management process.

³ www.upsrtc.com

Lack of long term vision and orientation is an internal reason for the continued meagre performance of the UPSRTC. Moreover the personnel on top level management are selected from the IAS and PCS's ranks. The personnel may not be keen to lead a corporation like UPSRTC. Furthermore, their jobs change very frequently, which contain them to formulate a long run strategy.

- **Financial Crunch-**

After separation from Uttarakhand, UPSRTC facing huge amount financial instability. In first five years of its working (From 2004-05 to 2008-09), the Corporation were able to earn profits. Afterward, it incurred losses continuously. It incurred Rs. 8260.02 lakhs as losses in the year 2012-13. However, if the overall picture of the Corporation is analysed closely, it can be seen that UPSRTC spend Rs.2116.29 lakhs as the compensation for road accidents for the same year. Being a social services sector, it has to facilitate the society at best possible way. It pays Rs.1889.75 lakhs as fare concessions to students, senior citizen, person with physical disabilities, journalists etc. however, no recorded were found under the head subsidy or reimbursement throughout the period of the study.⁴

After analysing all the above facts, it can be concluded that the UPSRTC is a government owned undertaking. As the result it has to obey all the rules and regulation formulated by the government, like providing minimum wages, employee benefits and other amenities, government taxes and interest imposed on the loan capital. However, the objective of the Corporation says that the Corporation has to provision of adequate, efficient, well co-ordinated, comfortable and economical services to the passengers.⁵ This creates great conflict in working of the Corporation, demand of the passengers and aim of the Corporation. Such constraints, limitations and compulsions are not applicable to the biggest competitor in the market, the private operators. This lead to the wide gap between the profits earned and losses incurred.

Suggestions-

- It can be interpretation from the SWOT analysis that the services offered by the undertaking lack customer orientation. They are unable to change categories of services offered with customer preferences. As a result, the Corporation lost its share to other competing modes. The Corporation shall identify various marketing opportunities, determine the uniformity in that and finally develop separate strategic plan for each category of customers.
- UPSRTC shall follow the fare differential policy in peak periods as well as during off-seasonal periods.
- According to the changing needs of the competitive environment, the organisation shall change its technical know-how, operational criteria and service offerings.
- The Corporation shall clearly define the line and staff functions performed by the upper, middle and lower level management. It helps in creating role clarity among management which leads to better plan and strategy construction.
- Political interference in the external as well as internal affairs of the Corporation shall be minimised.
- The organisation shall focus on the effective leadership through proper selection, training and development. Moreover, the decision-making chain should be minimised by distribution work according to the nature of the job specification.

⁴ State Road Transport Undertakings- Profile and Performance, 2012-13, CIRT, Pune.

⁵ The Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950.

- Policies of fixing fares for passenger transport services shall be matched with the increased in the prices of the input cost.

Conclusion-

Being a state owned Corporation, UPSRTC has been facilitating the passengers of the state with economical, safe and comfortable journey, while earning survival profits. But to stand in the competition with private bus operators and other SRTUs, UPSRTC have to start redesigning itself and to think innovative rather than operating in traditional ways. The Corporation shall adapt to new technical know-how and enhance its marketing approach with the help of professional management.

In the past decade, the organisation was able to reduce its man-power. However, it also reduces the organisational layers by removing regional headquarters from their organisational structure. But still there is a wide gap between revenue earned and expenditure incurred. The organisation shall focus on increasing revenue from non-traffic sources and try to control the internal cost incurred. The organisation shall follow the model adapted by Tamil Nadu SRTUs, which suggest the price of fare collected from passengers according to the change in output and input cost.

Moreover, all the above mention changes can be possible with a good match between organisational management and state and central government. Both the parties together can formulate and implement policies which enhance the physical as well as the financial soundness of the organisation, by avoiding their personnel area of interests.

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