

Service Quality And Passengers' Satisfaction Of Public Road Transportation Firms

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Abstract—The growth of literature in the field of quality of service in the public road transport sector shows increasing concern for a better understanding of the factors affecting service quality in public road transport firms. The purpose of this study was to examine service quality and passengers' satisfaction of public road transportation firms in Calabar Metropolis. The objectives of the study were to determine the effect of service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance) on passengers' satisfaction of public road transportation. The cross-sectional survey research design was employed while Topman formula was used to select the sample size of 323 passengers (respondents). Data were collected through self structured questionnaire and analysed through simple regression. Findings of the study revealed that service quality reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance significantly affected passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation. The study recommended that: the transportation firms should strive hard to deliver dependable, accurate, consistent, confidence and trusted services in order to maintain passengers' satisfaction.

Keywords — <i>service quality, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, satisfaction</i>

INTRODUCTION

For a long time the performance evaluations of public road transportation has been carried out of the service managers' perspective, based on the cost efficiency and cost effectiveness of public road transport services and operations. However, in the last few decades, service quality has become a major area of attention for practitioners, managers and researchers, who have focused on determining the relationship between service quality and passengers' satisfaction.

In Nigeria, major investment are being made in public road transport systems to make them more competitive vice-versa other means

of transport, most notably private cars. New services are being developed and old ones are being improved [1]. However, an increase in supply qualitatively and quantitatively will not automatically lead to a corresponding increase in demand and satisfaction [2, 3]. To make sure that investment really attracts both the existing and the potential customers envisaged knowledge of satisfaction and service performance should provide policymakers and operational managers in public transport with valuable information.

Quality is increasingly becoming a strategic issue in the western world [4]. One of the main reasons for the success of Japanese industry in the 1970 and 1980s was that the Japanese realized early that quality concept should emanate from the requirements and expectations of the customers [4]. This perception played a vital role in bringing about success [4].

Today service quality has become more vital than ever before because service providers have realized that they have to provide customer perceived value, if they want to stay in business. As global competition increases, customers have more variation to choose from and of course service quality will become their priority when spending their (customer) money, especially as they try to maximize the value in return as well as satisfaction for every unit of money spent.

Customer's satisfaction is considered to be the most important factor whether it is meant for a good or a service. In case of failure to satisfy the customers the firm will be replaced by others and when industries offering various service, have to be more vigilant because there is a special attitude that plays an important role attracting and retaining the customers [5]. The underlying assumption is that there is a direct link between the actual service and the customer perception of it. To increase public road

transport use, the service should be designed and performed in a way that accommodates the levels of service required by customers [6]. Reference [7] stated that the current crisis of the world has affected a lot of people and firms as well. One of the most important factors behind this crisis was the shortage and increased price of petroleum product. Inflation increased and as a reaction layoffs started taking place. Because of lesser job securities, it resulted in less affordability of the luxuries. It became difficult for people to afford many things, personal transport was also one of these luxuries and people had to rely on public transport.

In Nigeria, the use of public transport (water, rail and air) has been on an increase. Through critical observation, the road transportation has witness increase in accident especially the public road transportation firms. Also, notwithstanding the low cost of public road transportation people seems not to patronage it. This study aims to unravel the effect of service quality (reliability, responsiveness empathy and assurance) on passengers' satisfaction of public road transportation in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

The relationship between the customer/consumer and the company environment, product or service is satisfaction which is an overall psychological state that reflects the evaluation a reviewed by customer satisfaction theory [8]. Satisfaction usually involves one of the following three psychological elements: Cognitive (thinking/evolution), affective (emotional/feeling)), and behavioural. Other theories reviewed include, expectancy disconfirmation theory postulated by reference [9] proposed in general terms that consumption of or experience with the product or service produces a level of perceived quality that is influenced by expectation. Assimilation – contrast theory by reference [10] suggests that if the performance is within a customer's range of acceptance, even though it may fall short of expectation and discrepancy will be regarded. Consistency theories suggest that when the expectations and the actual product performance do not match, the consumer will feel some degree of tension. In

order to relieve the tension, the consumer will make adjustments either in expectation or in the perceptions of product performance.

2.1.1 The concept of service quality

In simple words, services are deeds, processes, and performance. But the increasing interest in the services sector has been accompanied with considerate disagreement and debate as to what constitute a service. In order to develop clarity on service as a concept, it is desirable to look at the way various researcher and scholars have defined it over the years.

One of the first to define services was the American Marketing Association which as early as in 1960 defined service as activities, benefits or satisfactions which are offered for sale, or provided in connection with the sale of goods. Reference [11] defined service quality as the global evaluation or attitude of overall excellence of services. Service quality is the difference between customer's perceptions and perceptions of services satisfaction or dissatisfaction formed by their experience of purchase and use of the service [12, 11].

Also, reference [13] defined service quality as meeting or exceeding customer expectations or as the expectations of service. Reference [14] reported that service quality is a casual antecedent of customer satisfaction, due to the fact that service quality is viewed to be at the transactional level and satisfaction is seen to be an attitude.

In view of reference [14], service quality consists of two primary elements:

1. Either a product satisfies the needs
2. As to what level is it free from differences

2.1.2 Passenger satisfaction

Since passenger satisfaction has been considered to be based on the customer's experience on a particular service encounter, reference [15], it is in line with the fact that service quality is a determinant of customer satisfaction, because service quality comes from outcome of the services from service providers in firms. Another author stated in his theory that "definitions of passenger satisfaction relate to a specific transaction (the difference between predicted service and perceived service) in contrast with attitudes," which are more

enduring and less situational – oriented [16]. This is in line with the idea of reference [17].

Regarding the relationship between passenger satisfaction and service quality, reference [9] first suggested that service quality would be antecedent to passenger satisfaction regardless of whether these construct were cumulative of transaction specific. Some researchers have found empirical supports for the view of the point mentioned above [10, 11, 12]; where passenger satisfaction came as a result of service quality.

In relating passenger satisfaction and service quality, researchers have been more precise about the meaning and measurements of satisfaction and service quality satisfaction and service quality have certain things in common, but satisfaction generally is a broader concept, whereas service quality focuses specifically on dimension of service [21]. Although it is stated that other factors such as prices and production quality can affect passenger satisfaction, perceived service quality to a component of passenger satisfaction [17].

2.2 Conceptual model

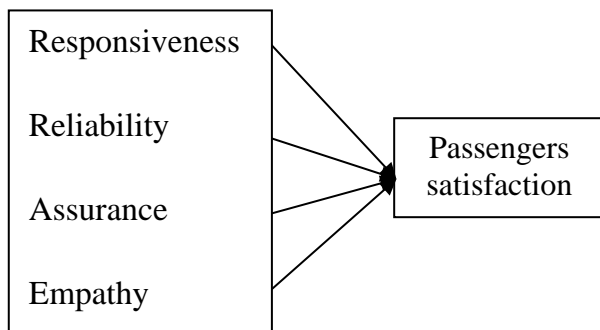


Fig. 1: SERVQUAL and Passengers' satisfaction

Source: Researcher

- Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
- Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
- Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
- Empathy: Caring individualized attention the firm provides to its customers.

2.3 Service quality reliability and passenger satisfaction

A study conducted by reference [22] on measuring service quality in the banking industry: A Hong Kong based study. The objective of this study is aimed at finding out the most important attribute of service quality in retail banks, which can be used to evaluate the characteristics of banking service quality as perceived by customers. The objective also states that service reliability has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Sampling and data collection for this study is the loyal bank customer from HSBC in Hong Kong. A sample size of 119 respondents was drawn from the Hong Kong and Shanghai banking corporation (HSBC) in Hong Kong.

The sample unit consists of a heterogeneous population of legal age to hold a saving. Therefore, the collected data are analyzed with multiple regression analysis. The result shows that the five SERVQUAL dimensions have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. The questionnaire developed for the study was based on a SERVQUA model that identified the influence of five dimensions (i.e. tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy) in banking service environment on customer satisfaction. The study recommended that SERVQUAL is a suitable instrument for measuring service quality in retail banking sectors in Hong Kong.

Reference [23] in their study on “impact of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty programs on customer loyalty: evidence from the sector of Pakistan”, maintained that service quality reliability impact on customer satisfaction and will subsequently increase the loyalty of a customer. According reference [23], improving the quality of all their services would lead to better and greater customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

2.4 Service quality responsiveness and passenger satisfaction

A study conducted by reference [22] on measuring service quality in the banking industry: A Hong Kong Based study. The objective of this study is aimed at finding out the most important attribute of service quality in retail banks, which can be used to evaluate the

characteristics of banking service quality as perceived by customers. The objective also states that service responsiveness has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Sampling and data collection for this study is the local bank customers from HSBS in Hong Kong. A sample size of 119 respondents was drawn from the Hong Kong and Shanghai banking corporation (HSBC) in Hong Kong. The sample units consist of a heterogeneous population of the legal age to hold a saving. Thereafter, the collected data are analyzed with multiple regression analysis. The result shows that the five SERVQUAL dimension have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. The questionnaire developed for this study was based on a SERVQUAL model that identified the influence of five dimensions (i.e. tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy) in banking service environments in customer satisfaction. The study recommended that SERVQUAL is a suitable instrument for measuring service quality in the retail banking sectors in Hong Kong.

2.5 Service quality empathy and passenger satisfaction

A study conducted by reference [22] on measuring service quality in the banking industry: A Hong Kong based study. The objective of this study is aimed at finding out the most important attribute of service quality in retail banks, which can be used to evaluate the characteristics of banking service quality as perceived by customers. The objective also states that service empathy has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Sampling and data collection for this study is the local bank customer from HSBC in Hong Kong. A sample size of 119 respondents was drawn from the Hong Kong and Shanghai banking corporation (HSBC) in Hong Kong. The sample units consist of a heterogeneous population of the legal age to hold a saving. Thereafter, the collected data are analyzed with multiple regression analysis. The result showed that the five SERVQUAL dimension have a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

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customer satisfaction. The study recommended that SERVQUAL is a suitable instrument for measuring service quality in the retail banking sectors in Hong Kong.

In a study conducted by reference [24] on “the impact of service quality dimension on customer satisfaction: A field study of Arab ban in Ibid City”, it was revealed that the higher the service quality, the more customer satisfaction; affirming that service has significant influence on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, reference [24] posited that the benefits of quality customer service include retaining customers, referral and loyalty. He stressed that service empathy is an indispensable tool and quality of service is an essential element for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.6 Service quality assurance and passenger satisfaction

A study conducted by reference [22] on measuring service quality in the banking industry: A Hong Kong based study. The objective of this study is aimed at finding out the most important attribute of service quality in retail banks, which can be used to evaluate the characteristics of banking service quality as perceived by customers. The objective also states that service assurance has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Sampling and data collection for this study is the local bank customer from HSBC in Hong Kong. A sample size of 119 respondents was drawn from the Hong Kong and Shanghai banking corporation (HSBC) in Hong Kong. The sample units consist of a heterogeneous population of the legal age to hold a saving. Thereafter, the collected data are analyzed with multiple regression analysis. The result showed that the five SERVQUAL dimension have a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

The questionnaire developed for this study was based on a SERVQUAL model that identified the influence of five dimensions (i.e. tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy) in banking service environment on customer satisfaction. The study recommended that SERVQUAL is a suitable instrument for measuring service quality in the retail banking sectors in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, reference [25] in evaluating quality service and customer’s expectation stated

that the expectation of service is what propels loyalty and retention.

3. Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design was used for this study, because it enables the researcher to collect first hand data from respondents once for the purpose of decision making. The study area was Calabar, which is the capital of Cross River State. Topman formula was adopted to determine the sample size of three hundred and twenty three (323) respondents in the study. Judgmental sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire at different parks to respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A included the bio-data of respondents, such as: age, sex, educational qualification/level and marital status. While the second B was made up of questions and / or statements about service reliability, service responsiveness service empathy and service assurance in order to elicit individual opinions from respondents on how these variables of service quality affect passenger satisfaction. The opinions of the respondents were subjected to Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). In order to ascertain the validity of research instrument, it was perused and approved by statisticians. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest approach was adopted, using a pilot survey of 30 passengers of road transportation firms. To accept the instrument as reliable, it must have a coefficient of reliability α that is above 0.5. The reliability test gave a result of 0.762 (76.2%) which indicated a high reliability. The data obtained were tested using simple regression analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Results and findings

4.1 Test of hypothesis

- H₀1: Service quality reliability has no significant effect on passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation
- H₀2: Service quality responsiveness has no significant effect on passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation in Calabar Metropolis
- H₀3: Service quality empathy has no significant effect on passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation in Calabar Metropolis

- H₀4: Service quality assurance has no significant effect on passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation in Calabar Metropolis

Table 1, 2 and 3 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test hypothesis 1. The results show that there is a significant relationship between service quality reliability and passenger satisfaction in transportation industries ($b = 0.921$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. Tables 1 and 2 further report a significant f statistics, indicating the model's strong prediction strength ($F=190.157$, $R^2=38.1\%$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 of 38.1 percent implies that for every unit change in passenger satisfaction, 38.1 percent of such variation is attributed to passenger service quality reliability.

Table 4, 5 and 6 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test hypothesis 2. The results show that there is a significant relationship between service quality responsiveness and passenger satisfaction in transportation industries ($b = 0.933$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected. Tables 4 and 5 further report a significant f statistics, indicating the model's strong prediction strength ($F=226.369$, $R^2=42.3\%$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 of 42.3 percent implies that for every unit change in passenger satisfaction, 42.3 percent of such variation is attributed to passenger service quality responsiveness.

Table 7, 8 and 9 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test hypothesis 3. The results show that there is a significant relationship between service quality empathy and passenger satisfaction in transportation industries ($b = 1.068$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is rejected. Tables 7 and 8 further report a significant f statistics, indicating the model's strong prediction strength ($F=360.771$, $R^2=53.9\%$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 of 53.9 percent implies that for every unit change in passenger satisfaction, 53.9 percent of such variation is attributed to passenger service quality empathy.

Table 10, 11 and 12 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test hypothesis 4. The results show that there is a significant relationship between service quality assurance and passenger satisfaction in transportation industries ($b = 1.3698$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is rejected. Tables 10 and 11 further report a significant f statistics, indicating the model's strong prediction strength ($F=1367.315$, $R^2=81.6\%$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 of 81.6 percent implies that for every unit change in passenger satisfaction, 81.6 percent of such variation is attributed to passenger service quality assurance.

Table 1

Model summary showing the relationship between Service quality reliability and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	R	R square	Adjust R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.617 ^a	.381	.379	2.18112

a. Predictors: (constant), passenger service quality reliability

Table 2

ANOVA^a showing the relationship between Service quality reliability and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	904.633	1	904.633	190.157	.000 ^b
1 Residual	1470.003	309	4.757		
Total	2374.637	310			

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

b. Predictors: (constant), Service quality reliability

Table 3

Coefficients^a showing the relationship between Service quality reliability and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.912	.479		8.325	.000
1 Passenger services quality reliability	.921	.067	.0617	13.790	.000

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

Table 4

Model summary showing the relationship between service quality responsiveness and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	R	R square	Adjust R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.650 ^a	.423	.421	2.10607

a. Predictors: (constant), passenger service quality responsiveness

Table 5

ANOVA^a showing the relationship between service quality responsiveness and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	1004.063	1	1004.063	226.369	.000 ^b
1 Residual	1370.573	309	4.436		
Total	2374.637	310			

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

b. Predictors: (constant), Service quality responsiveness

Table 6

Coefficients^a showing the relationship between service quality responsiveness and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.308	.407		10.582	.000
1 Passenger services quality responsiveness	.933	.062	.0605	15.046	.000

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

Table 7

Model summary showing the relationship between service quality empathy and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	R	R square	Adjust R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.734 ^a	.539	.573	1.88294

a. Predictors: (constant), passenger service quality empathy

Table 8

ANOVA^a showing the relationship between service quality empathy and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	1279.094	1	1279.094	360.771	.000 ^b
1 Residual	1095.534	309	3.545		
Total	2374.637	310			

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

b. Predictors: (constant), Service quality empathy

Table 9

Coefficients^a showing the relationship between service quality empathy and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.182	.383		8.314	.000
1 Passenger services quality empathy	1.068	.056	.734	18.994	.000

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

Table 10

Model summary showing the relationship between service quality assurance and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	R	R square	Adjust R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.903 ^a	.316	.815	1.19020

a. Predictors: (constant), passenger service quality assurance

Table 11

ANOVA^a showing the relationship between service quality assurance and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	1936.913	1	1936.913	1367.315	.000 ^b
1 Residual	437.724	309	1.417		
Total	2374.637	310			

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

b. Predictors: (constant), Service quality assurance

Table 12

Coefficients^a showing the relationship between service quality assurance and passenger's satisfaction of public road transportation

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.219	.251		4.853	.000
1 Passenger services quality assurance	1.369	.037	0.903	36.977	.000

a. Dependent variable: Passenger satisfaction

4.2 Discussion of findings

The first finding reveals that service quality reliability significantly affect passengers' satisfaction of public road transportation companies. Supporting this finding, reference [23] in their study on "impact of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty programs on customer loyalty: evidence from the sector of Pakistan", maintained that service quality reliability impact on customer satisfaction and will subsequently increase the loyalty of a customer. The authors further maintained that improving the quality of all their services would lead to better and greater customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Result indicated that service quality responsiveness has a significant relationship with passenger's satisfaction in public road transportation companies in Calabar Metropolis. The finding of this work affirms the result of the research conducted by reference [24] in his study on "the impact of service quality dimension on customer satisfaction: A field study of Arab ban in Ibid City. He stated that the higher the service quality, the more customer satisfaction; affirming that service has significant influence on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, reference [24] affirms the benefits of quality customer service which he stated to include retaining customers, referral and loyalty.

Result indicated that service quality empathy has a significant relationship with passenger's satisfaction in public road transportation companies in Calabar Metropolis. This is in tandem with reference [24] in a study on service quality perspective and customer satisfaction in commercial banks working in Jordan. He agreed that service empathy is an indispensable tool and quality of service is an essential element for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, result also indicated that service quality assurance has a significant relationship with passenger's satisfaction in public road transportation companies. Postulation by reference [25] in evaluating quality service and customer's expectation stated that the expectation of service is what propels loyalty and retention.

5. Conclusion

This study examined service quality and passengers' satisfaction of public road transportation companies. The results obtained from the study indicate that customer service quality reliability. Responsiveness, empathy and assurance improved the satisfaction of passengers. Hence, in order to improve and ultimately maintain passengers' satisfaction in the transportation companies, we must improve the quality service delivery by consistently paying attention to these four (4) critical service quality dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance.

Consequently, the road transportation firm should strive hard to deliver dependable, accurate and consistency in order to maintain passenger satisfaction.

Secondly, the road transportation companies should strive hard to provide speedy and delay-free passenger service and handle passengers' complaints and requirements rapidly.

Also, the road transportation firm should regularly recruit and retain passenger service employees who are friendly and polite, articulate and receptive. The transportation firm should also train them in interpersonal skills and compensate and motivate them in order to boost their efficacy at delivering transportation service.

Finally, the road transportation firm should employ staff that will convey trust and confidence. Also staff that has the knowledge about passengers' welfare should be considered.

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