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Drivers Training and Passengers Satisfaction among Public Road Users and Transporters in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study considered drivers training and passengers satisfaction among the public road users and transport operators in Akwa Ibom State. The research investigated how driver training affects passenger satisfaction. Four research questions were posed and four null hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study population consists of all drivers of the transport companies operating in Akwa Ibom State. The study sample was selected randomly from drivers, passengers and other employees of the transport companies. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher designed driver training and passenger satisfaction questionnaire (DTPSQ). The face and content validity on driver training and customer satisfaction questionnaire was established through experts in the field on four point Likert scale. The findings reveal that drivers training correlated positively with all the four sub variables explored in the study. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between driver training and passenger satisfaction, indicating that driver training affects the level of satisfaction passengers draw from transport services in the case study. It is recommended that drivers be trained to deliver quality transport services which will in turn boost the level of passenger satisfaction.

Key Words: *Drivers training, passenger satisfaction, quality, transport, operators, responsiveness, empathy.*

INTRODUCTION

Transportation is the movement of people, goods, and services from one place to the other. Road transportation, as the major mode of transportation in Nigeria, plays a pivotal role in facilitating the mobility of people, goods and services; between rural and urban areas, as well as between Cities or States of the federation. Increased

mobility contributes immensely to social and economic development, as well as national integration. Thus quality transport service system is a key to the development of the nation, which should be viewed seriously by stakeholders. In India for instance, investment in road transport is seen as an integral part of the public service to provide affordable, safe, and reliable transport service to the people (Transport Research Wing, 2002). It, therefore, goes without contest that road transportation affects the quality of life of the citizens of any society, so its quality is a matter of great concern to the people, government and the operators.

The level of passenger satisfaction depends on the quality of the transport service rendered by the operators. According to Gronroos (1984); Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1985), service quality is a "comparison between customer expectation and performance of the service provider, mathematically expressed as $Q = P - E$". The main objective of any service is customer satisfaction. The customers are satisfied when the performance is equal to or exceeds expectations. According to Oliver (1981), satisfaction is the customer's fulfillment. It is a judgment that a product or service features, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. Customer satisfaction is the percentage of total customers, whose reported experience, meets or exceeds specified satisfaction criteria. According to Anderson, Fornell and Lehrmann (1994), customer satisfaction is the customer's overall evaluation of the services to date.

This satisfaction has a positive influence on customer retention among varieties of products. In service-based enterprises, service quality directly affects customer satisfaction. According to Oliver (1981), satisfaction is a "highly personal assessment" of ones' experience that is greatly influenced by "individual expectations". Boulding *et al* (1993); Yi and La (2004) state that satisfaction is under two general categories: transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction is a customer's evaluation of experience and reactions to a particular service encounter (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Cumulative satisfaction refers to the customer's overall evaluation of the consumption experience to date (Jones and Suh, 2000). Fellesson and Friman (2009, 2012) found out that four general factors bring satisfaction to public transport passengers. They are the transport system, the bus and bus stop design, the staff skill, knowledge and attitude toward customer; and safety. The other factor is the reliability of the services. Black and Towriss (1993) have shown that reliability-related attributes are among the most important service attributes in varied situations**.**

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Balcombe et al. (2004) reported that service reliability is considered twice as important as frequency by passengers. Tahmasseby (2009) states that the sustained growth of the economy and the continued improvements in the quality of life lead to an increase in the value of time and value of service reliability. Konig and Axhausen (2002) concluded that the reliability of the transportation system is a decisive factor in the choice behavior of people. But what is reliability? Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (2004) state that reliability has to do with providing service as promised, dependability in handling customer problems, performing services right the first time, providing service at the promised time and keeping customers informed when services will be performed.

This implies that service reliability is more than just operating a bus transport system. The summary is that transport service reliability entails the application of responsiveness, assurance, and empathy by the operators. Concerning the driver's function, responsiveness means the driver performs the service right the first time and all the time. It also means that the firm honours its promises. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (2004) opined that responsiveness to passengers has to do with prompt service to customers, willingness to help customers, and readiness to respond to customers' requests. An assurance on the other hand is a collective process by which a driver ensures that the quality of the service is maintained. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (2004) declared that assurance has to do with employees' ability to inspire confidence in customers, making customers feel safe during transactions, courteousness, and know-how. Empathy involves caring and the individualized attention the driver offered to the passenger. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (2004) state that empathy has to do with giving customers individual attention; having the customers' best interest at heart, and understanding the needs of their customers.

Human needs are insatiable, but organizations must ensure their customer's needs. The theory of the hierarchy of human needs proposed by Maslow is apt concerning customer satisfaction or passenger satisfaction (Ijeware 2000). According to this theory, human needs are insatiable, they always ask for more and as soon as one need is satisfied, another appears. Thus human needs are arranged in a series of levels, called the hierarchy of human need. As soon as needs on a lower level are satisfied, the one on a higher level appears and demands satisfaction. In the case of customer need, they are not insatiable, since they are contractual and well stated, and time-bound.

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In a transport company, the drivers are the frontline staff who come in regular contact with the passengers. The quality of service depends, to a large extent, on the interaction between drivers and passengers. The drivers are the contacts with the passengers, which plays a role in passenger satisfaction. Passenger satisfaction is an index of the quality of driving and interpersonal skills of the driver. Passenger satisfaction hinged on four predictable factors; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy from the operators, especially the driver. Passengers are satisfied whenever the driver possesses the following attributes: (i) the ability to reliably and accurately perform the promised service; (ii) willingness to assist the passengers and provide prompt service; (iii) the ability to inspire trust and confidence; (iv) ability to demonstrate care and individualized attention.

Driving in its own right is a demanding and complex task, which requires a lot of intelligence, skill, and experience. They involve primarily, controlling a motor vehicle from one point to the other while complying with traffic laws and regulations, noting and minding other road users and the environment, which are constantly changing. This driver training or education is more than just learning to move the vehicle or just about passing the road traffic test. It also involves learning the right attitudes and skills to keep the passenger safe, assured, and confident. Johnson (2007) stated that driver education is to achieve three goals - safety, smooth traffic, and enjoyable driving. The training may take place in a classroom, in a vehicle, online, or a combination of all these. The scope of the training includes instructional topics such as traffic codes or laws and vehicle operation.

Lack of training and experience in the necessary driving skills and capabilities is a reason young drivers are more involved in road crashes (Beirsness, 1996; Texas Transportation Institute, 2005). The needed skills and capabilities must, therefore, be acquired by the driver before the issuance of a license. Driver training and education is a programme of organized learning and practice meant to provide the knowledge, attitude, and skills needed for safe driving. Redelmeier, Tibshiran and Evans (2003) state that driver education is a program that prepares a new driver to obtain a learner's permit or driver's license. Hence, the drivers who are exposed to formal instructions should have lower crash rates than those who do not receive such instructions, that is, those who learn to drive informally (Beirsness 1996; Fisher and Shapiro, 2005).

The complexities of road transportion in Nigeria have been doubled in recent times, due to an increase in the number of road users without a commensurate improvement

in the road infrastructure. This has even been made worst by an increased number of untrained drivers and heightened rates of accidents. The question is what extent does drivers training affect the quality of the road transportation system and how do these affect passenger satisfaction? The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between driver training and passenger satisfaction among road transport companies operating in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include to:

1) Determine the relationship between driver training and service reliability.
2) Examine the relationship between driver training and responsiveness to passenger needs.
3) Determine the relationship between driver training and passenger safety.
4) Evaluate the relationship between driver training and empathy towards passengers.

The goal of the research was to investigate the impacts of driver training and passenger satisfaction among road users and transport operators. All together, the following four hypotheses were formulated to guide the research.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between driver training and service reliability.
Ho2: There is no significant relationship between driver training and responsiveness to passenger need.
Ho3: There is no significant relationship between driver training and passenger safety
Ho4: There is no significant relationship between driver training and empathy towards passengers.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research focused on the road transport companies operating in Uyo, where the terminals of most of the major road transport companies are located. More so, Uyo served as the main hub of the transport system of the State, where the Ibom International Airport is situated and connected to the three neighbouring States of Abia, Cross River, and Rivers via the A342 highway surrounded by a series of waterways, leading to neighbouring Cameroun, Gabon, etc. The descriptive survey design was adopted, for the study since it deals with the opinions of individuals on existing issues. Osuala (2001) indicated that descriptive research design focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behaviours. Thus, the

study is a survey of the relationship between drivers training and passengers satisfaction in Akwa Ibom State.

The target population comprised of all the drivers, other staff and passengers in Akwa Ibom, with particular focus on the Akwa Ibom Transport Company (AKTC) terminal Uyo. It was assumed that the views of these respondents are fair representation of the views of a cross-section of the stakeholders of the road transport sector in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria in general. Information gathered from the company at the time of the study indicates that there were 220 bus drivers, 400 staff members and an estimated 2,500 passenger throughput per day at the Uyo terminal of the case study. This brings the total population of 3,120 adopted as the study population. The study sample size was obtained from this population using the Yard's sample size formula (Avwokeni, 2004), given by $n = \frac{N}{1 + N\alpha^2}$; where n is the sample size, N is the population size and α the significance level or margin of error. Taking $\alpha = 0.05$ (5%) the formula yield the sample size $n = 355$. In order to achieve representativeness, the simple random sampling procedure was adopted.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed structured "Driver Training and Passenger Satisfaction Questionnaire (DTPSQ)". The Likert scale was used to measure the degree of the responses of the subjects to the statements in the questionnaire. The levels of the agreement was measured on a 4-points Likert scale; strongly disagree (SD) =1; disagree (D) =2; agree (A) = 3, strongly agree (SA) = 4; higher score indicates a greater level of agreement.

The instrument was validated by trial testing on ten (10) respondents who were not part of the main study. After a week interval, the same questionnaire was re-administered on the same subject. The reliability was ascertained using the test-retest reliability formula which yielded the reliability coefficient of 0.85. The individual items of the questionnaire were tested using the alpha Cronbach technique resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.85.

The questionnaire was distributed and some were retrieved from respondents on the spot, while others were collected later. Altogether, a total of three hundred and fifty-five (355) copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which two hundred and fifty (250), representing 70% were returned and found to be useful. Other primary data were generated through personal interviews with officials and the study

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participants. Secondary data were also obtained from textbooks, journals, and the internet. The data were carefully coded and edited for completeness.

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Simple percentages and arithmetic mean were used to answer the research questions while the non-parametric Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to test the hypothesis at the level of significance and degree of freedom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Driver training and service reliability			
Options	Frequency	%	Mean
Strongly Agreed (SA)	113	45.2	2.28
Agreed (A)	69	27.6	
Disagreed (DA)	38	15.2	
Strongly Disagreed (SDA)	30	12.0	
Total	250	100	Significant

Source: Field work

The data presented in Table 1 above generated from responses to items 5-8 of DTPS questionnaire. They represent the weight of responses to the items. This shows that majority of the respondents 182 (72.8%) agreed with the four (4) statements used to measure the influence of drivers training on service reliability, while only 68(27.4%) respondents disagreed with the statements. The mean score of the responses is also significant, confirming the high degree of agreement with the statements.

Table 2: Correlation of driver training and service reliability							
Variables		∑XY	Rcal	Rcrit	Df	N	Remark
Drivers training (X)	828	289,683	0.997	0.195	248	250	Significant
Service reliability (Y)	765						

Significant $p < 0.05$

The above result shows that the calculated value of r is 0.997 while the critical value is 0.195 at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom 248. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is sustained. Hence we conclude that there is a significant correlation between driver training and service reliability. The implication is that driver training influences driver ability to perform the reliable transport services.

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Table 3. Driver training and responsiveness to passenger needs			
Options	Frequency	%	Mean
Strongly Agreed (SA)	94	37.6	2.35
Agreed (A)	90	36.0	
Disagreed (DA)	31	12.4	
Strongly Disagreed (SDA)	35	14.0	
Total	250	100	Significant

Source: Field work

The result in Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents 184 (73.6%) agreed with the four (4) statements used to measure the influence of drivers training on responsiveness to passenger needs, while only 66 (26.4%) respondents disagreed. This implies that most of the respondents believed that trained drivers are likely to respond positively to passenger needs on transit, thereby providing passenger satisfaction. This is further validated by the mean score of 2.35 on the four point scale.

Table 4. Correlation between driver training and responsiveness to customers need							
Variables		∑XY	Rcal	Rcrit	Df	N	Remark
Drivers training (X)	828	264,809	0.981	0.195	248	250	Significant
Service reliability (Y)	743						

Significant p<0.05

The results in Table 4 shows that the calculated value of r is 0.981 while the critical value is 0.195 at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom 248. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is sustained, implying that there is a significant correlation between driver training and responsiveness to customers need. This suggest that driver training influences driver responsiveness to passenger needs.

Table 5. Driver training and passenger safety on transit			
Option	Frequency	%	Mean
Strongly Agreed (SA)	99	39.6	2.45
Agreed (A)	89	35.6	
Disagreed (DA)	41	16.4	
Strongly Disagreed (SDA)	21	8.4	
Total	250	100	Significant

Source: Field work

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Table 5 represents the weight of responses to the main question, does driver training influence passenger safety? It can be seen that 74.2% or 188 of the respondents agreed while only 62 (24.8%) disagreed. On the aggregate, an average of the responses stood at 2.45, confirming that the larger part of the respondents agreed that trained driver will give more safety assurance than the untrained one.

Table 6. Correlation between driver training and assurance of passenger safety

Variables		∑XY	Rcal	Rcrit	Df	N	Remark
Drivers training (X)	828	275.338	0.985	0.195	248	250	Significant
Service reliability (Y)	766						

Significant p<0.05

From table 6, above the result shows that the calculated $r$is 0.985 while the critical value is 0.195 at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom 248. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis sustained. It is concluded that there is a significant correlation between drivers training and assurance of passenger safety. The implication is that trained drivers are likely to give more assurance of safety than their untrained counterparts.

Table 7. Drivers training and their empathy for customers

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean
Strongly Agreed (SA)	100	40	2.59
Agreed (A)	110	44	
Disagreed (DA)	19	7.6	
Strongly Disagreed (SDA)	21	8.4	
Total	250	100	Significant

Source: Field work

The result in Table 7 shows that the mean score on the four point scale is 2.59; indicating that significant number of respondents agreed. This is clear from the fact that 210 (84%) of the respondent agreed generally that driver training affect their level of empathy for passengers on transit, while only 40(16%) respondents disagreed with the statements.

Table 8. Correlation between drivers training and empathy for passengers

Variables		∑XY	Rcal	Rcrit	Df	N	Remark
Drivers training (X)	828	290,439	0.968	0.195	248	250	Significant
Service reliability (Y)	789						
Significant $p < 0.05$							

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The result in Table 8 shows that the calculated value of r is 0.985 while the critical value is 0.195 at 0.05 significant level and degree of freedom 248. Since the calculated value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between drivers training and empathy towards passengers is rejected. Thus we conclude that there is a significant correlation between driver training and empathy for the passengers. This conclusion implies that driver training influences how they care and provides individualized attention to passengers.

Table 9. Summary of results

SN	VARIABLES	RESULT		
		Mean	***r***	**Decision**
1	Driver training and service reliability	2.28	0.997	Significant
2	Driver training and responsiveness to passenger	2.35	0.981	Significant
3	Driver training and assurance of passenger safety	2.45	0.985	Significant
4	Driver training and empathy towards passenger	2.59	0.968	Significant
	Mean	**2.42**	**0.983**	**Significant**

It can be seen from the Table 9 that the average mean score is 2.42. This implies that the mean responses to all the items are significant. The correlation coefficient is also significant indi9cating that there is positive correlation between driver training and passenger satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study intends to determine the influence of driver training on customer satisfaction in Akwa Ibom state using Akwa Ibom Transport Company as a case study. The dependent variable, customer satisfaction was operationalized with service reliability, responsiveness to passenger need, assurance of passenger safety and empathy for passengers on transit. The analysis shows that there is strong positive correlation between drivers training and passenger satisfaction. It is concluded that driver training has significant impact on passenger satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that:

1) Public road transport companies should employ only trained drivers.
2) Public transport operators should train and retrain their existing drivers in passenger relation;
3) Government regulators, should enforce the traffic rule, including driver training standards;

4) Government should put in place and enforce a comprehensive driver policy; which should prescribe among other thing the minimum driver training for all categories of drivers.

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APPENDIX

Drivers Training and Passenger Satisfaction (DTPS) QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A (Background of Respondents)

1) Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2) Marital status: Married [ ] Single [ ] Divorced [ ]
3) Age: 18-30 [ ] 31-45 [ ] 46-55 [ ] 56 and above [ ]
4) Qualification: O' Level [ ] OND [ ] HND/BSC [ ] MSC [ ] Others [ ]
5) For how long have been doing business with AKTC?
   1-3 years [ ] 4-6 years [ ] 7-10 years [ ] 10+ years [ ]

SECTION B

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements in the following table by ticking [√] the appropriate column. Key: SA=Strongly Agreed, A=Agreed, DA=Disagreed and SDA=Strongly Disagreed.

	Statement	**Level of agreement**			
	Drivers' training	**SA**	A	DA	SDA
1	The AKTC drivers have all completed an accredited training course				
2	passengers are comfortable with the driving skills of the drivers				
3	Drivers respond well when passengers are upset at another driver's conduct				
4	The drivers drives in line with the condition of employment				
	Reliability				
5	Services are performed as promised				
6	The drivers are dependability in handling customer service problems				
7	Driving services are performed right the first time and all time				
8	Drivers keep passengers informed about when services will be performed				
	Responsiveness				
9	Drivers renders prompt service to passengers				
10	Drivers are willing to assist passengers on transit				
11	Drivers responds promptly to passenger requests				
12	Driver dealt with customers enquiry professionally				
	Assurance				
13	Drivers inspire confidence in the passengers on transit				
14	Driver make passengers feel safe in their journey				
15	Drivers are consistently courteous to passengers on transit				
16	Drivers have the knowledge to answer passenger questions				
	Empathy				
17	Drivers give customer individual attention on transit				
18	Drivers have the passengers best interest at heart				
19	Drivers understand the needs of their passengers				
20	Drivers deal with customers in a caring manner				