A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study identifies customer service factors influencing patronage and determines the relationship between ambient condition and passengers' repeat patronage intentions using Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a form of public transport. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Data were gathered through the use of structured questionnaire personally administered on the passengers of BRT in four different zones of Lagos state with the presence of BRT bus stops. Simple random and convenient sampling techniques were used to select both the bus stops and respondents of the study. Two BRT bus stops from each of the four zones were selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the eight bus stops thirty (30) respondents were conveniently selected; bringing the total sample to 240. The data collected were analyzed using frequency tables, Logit and regression models. Results showed that customer service factors viz; accessibility, travel time, waiting time, transport fare, comfort, reliability and customer care were the major customer service factors that significantly influenced passenger repeat patronage. Also, findings revealed that humidity, lighting, aroma, neatness and ventilation had significant positive relationship with repeat patronage. The study concluded that increased customer service and ambient condition led to increased customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector Lagos State, Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Customer Service, Ambient Condition, Bus Rapid Transit, Customer Patronage, Retention

I. INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that reliable, efficient, cheap, effective, and affordable transport system remains crucial to economic, development, environmental and social wellbeing of a nation, state or city. As a form of mobility, transport provides access to schools, leisure, construction sites, shops, offices, businesses and banks as well as goods and services (Lai & Chen in [25]; Gbadamosi in [9].

Several studies have been conducted both in developed and developing countries of the world on public transportation [24]; State of Florida Department of transportation, (2008); [27]; [19]; [18]. These studies highlighted several approaches or schemes that may help combating the multifaceted challenges confronting public/urban transportation in developed and developing countries including Florida (USA), Curitiba (Brazil) and Nigeria among others. In the recent past, states governments in the south west Nigeria especially Lagos Ogun and Oyo states have introduced various public transport schemes with a view to alleviating problem of mobility for the masses, transform the states' economy and provide alternative to privately dominated public transport system operated by National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) over years. Until recently, public transport in Lagos State just like other states in Nigeria has been dominated by para-transit mode of transportation without any formal public transport system which was characterized by inefficient transport system with long waiting time, high transport fare, bad seat, poorly maintained buses and cabs, filthy bus stops and highly congested roads.

However, the intervention of World Bank which granted loans to Lagos State for institutional reforms, road rehabilitation and transport improvement with a view to overhauling and modernizing public transportation in the state [19] [31], brought about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which is perceived to be cost-effective and customer-focused transportation system. Though, BRT provides efficient, effective, fast, reliable and safer transportation system, it faces a keen competition for passenger from the age-long moribund traditional system of public transportation mostly operated by individuals.

In order to give BRT a competitive advantage, Lagos state government has dedicated lanes for BRT buses. The bus terminals have also been renovated and upgraded with a view to providing comfort for passengers and enhancing their repeat patronage.

While several studies have been conducted on public transport passengers' behavioural intentions and its impact on passengers movement as well as demand performance of Bus Rapid Transit in developed cities like Florida, Texas, Jarkata, Curitiba, Bogota including Lagos [25]; [21]; [19]; [30]; [6]; [4]; [22]; [10], it is yet to be identified the possible effects customer service and ambient

A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

condition may have on customer patronage of public transport especially in Lagos State, Nigeria. Also, since the introduction of BRT as a form of public transport in Lagos state in 2008 and various studies on this innovation [2]; [21]; [17] researchers seem not to have paid adequate attention to determining what relationship exists among customer service, ambient condition and customer patronage in the sector.

This study therefore identified customer service factors influencing repeat patronage and determined the relationship between ambient condition and customer repeat patronage intentions using Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a form of public transport.

A. Objectives of the Study
In view of the above, this study seeks to:
(i) determine customer service factors influencing customer repeat patronage of BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria; and
(ii) investigate effect of ambient condition on customer repeat patronage of BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria.

B. Hypotheses
(i) Customer service does not significantly influence customer repeat patronage of BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria.
(ii) Ambient condition has no significant effect on customer repeat patronage of BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Customer service
Customer service according to [22] is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. It is a combination of different activities deliberately designed by marketer to facilitate customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the feeling a customer have that a product or service performance has met the expectation. Customer service is a kind of assistance or support given to customer which enables the customer to make correct use of the product and a feeling that a cost effective purchase has been made. It is a kind of assistance given to customers in planning to make a purchase, installing, use, maintenance and disposal of a product.

According to [1] customer service is a major factor in differentiating a company from others, and its relationship or link to customer satisfaction and loyalty cannot be underestimated. The importance of customer service varies by industry, customer and product or service [12]. Customer assists an organization to generate revenue. It therefore must be included in an organisation's overall marketing strategy to attract and retain customers.

Customer service, for the purpose of this study is courteousness, helpfulness and competence of staff, and on-time and safe arrival at commuters' destination. In relation to transportation, it involves making the mode of transportation accessible, reliable, comfortable, timely, enjoyable and convenient for passengers to travel in at affordable cost.

B. Ambient Conditions
This is the background characteristics of the environment of business which include such variables as temperature, colour, humidity, lighting, noise, music, and scent [29]. Studies have identified ambient condition as one of the factors that influence perceptions of, and human responses to the business. A number of studies have confirmed that ambient factors may influence customer responses. For example, in studies by [11], [16] it was illustrated that music tempo could affect the rate of shopping, length of time and amount of money spent by customer.

When a passenger enters a bus; the neatness, colour of seats and inside of the bus, lighting, temperature, type of music played, odour and humidity may determine to a large extent, if the passenger will feel comfortable and relaxed during the travel time. For instance, the temperature inside the bus, if it is too high or low may be unpleasant, if not well monitored. Hence may produce negative feeling from customers. It must therefore be considered an important part of the ambient condition [23]. The type and colour of lighting in a business environment may influence customers' perception of the quality of the environment. This may affect his or her interpretation of the totality (physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual aspects) of the environment (Kurtich & Eakin in [13]. Light according to [8] influences customers' perception of form, colour, texture and environment of business. [26] asserted that lighting must harmonize with the elements in the environment of business. The author explained that an environment in which the lighting harmonizes with elements in the environment is perceived as more pleasant than environments which do not. Thus, the cleanliness and colours of BRT buses both outside and inside, the lighting, scent or aroma, comfortable seats and general ambient condition are important in attracting new customers and retaining the existing ones thereby encouraging repeat patronage by passengers.

C. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Bus Rapid Transit is a transport system that uses dedicated and separated lanes that guarantee prompt, timely, fast and reliable bus travel with a view to providing passengers with nice and memorable travel experience. BRT is an enhanced customer focused bus system. Its aim is to provide cost-effective urban transportation with a view to enhancing the social, economic, and environmental impact of the state. [20]; [17], [21].

A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

[32] described BRT as high quality, customer oriented mass transit with the purpose of delivering fast, comfortable and cost-effective urban mobility. Also [14] provided detailed information about the different elements of BRT systems. The author explained that BRT is a flexible, rapid-transit mode with vehicles, stations and dedicated running ways that gives it a unique image. Succinctly put, a BRT system is different from the usual bus transport system because of its speed, comfort, reliability, convenience, safety dedicated lanes, cost-effectiveness, etc. [19].

D. Customer Patronage

In the literature several factors have been used to explain customer patronage and these include business physical setting, location, identity and advanced inclination behaviour [3]; [33]; [34]. Also, variables such as shopping experience, service environment, store choice, product or service quality, cost or value and location as well as store atmosphere have been linked to customer patronage [3]; [35]; [36]. Customer patronage in this study is explained as the customer intention to continue to purchase, use and disposed of product or service over time.

E. Theoretical Framework

Consumer perception theory propounded by [15] provided the basis for this study. Consumer perception theory explains how consumers' perception of a product or service influences their purchase behaviour. The theory can be divided into three parts. That is self-perception, price-perception and benefit-perception. The self-perception explained that individual become aware of his/her own attitude, emotion and other internal states by deducing them from observations of his/her own explicit behaviour and the circumstances in which the behaviour occurs. Self-perception is the most relevant to this study and it explained how individuals develop an understanding of the motivation behind their own behaviour. Self-perception by customers therefore relates to values and motivations that drive their purchasing behaviour [7]. In view of the above, understanding passengers' behavioural intentions based on public transport provision of customer service and ambient condition become necessary in predicting customer repeat patronage of BRT services.

III. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Data were gathered through the use of structured questionnaire personally administered on the passengers of BRT in the four identifiable BRT zones of Lagos state namely Ikeja, Lagos Island, Oshodi and Oshodi-Abule-Egba with the presence of BRT bus terminals. Simple random and convenient sampling techniques were used to select both the bus terminals and respondents of the study. Two BRT bus terminals from each of the four zones were selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the eight bus terminals earlier selected, thirty (30) respondents were conveniently selected; bringing the total sample to 240. The data collected were analyzed using frequency tables, Logit and multiple regression. To determine the relationship between customer service and customer patronage (objective i), customer patronage was specified as a function of accessibility, security, travel time, waiting time, transport fare, comfort, reliability, customer care and off-street ticketing.

Mathematically, the Logit model equation could be developed as:

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ACB + \beta_2 SEC + \beta_3 TVT + \beta_4 WTT + \beta_5 TPF + \beta_6 CFT + \beta_7 RBT + \beta_8 CMC + \beta_9 OST + \varepsilon \ldots\ldots. (1)$$

Where, (CP) is customer patronage and it is the dependent variable and ACB, SEC, TVT, WTT, TPF, CFT, RBT, CMC and OST are the column vectors of the independent variables (customer service).

β_0 = intercept

$\beta_1 - \beta_9$ = Parameter estimates

ACB = Accessibility

SEC = Security

TVT= Travel Time

WTT = Waiting Time

TPF = Transport Fare

CFT= Comfortability

RBT= Reliability

CMC= Customer Care

OST= Off-street Ticketing

ε = Error term

The explanation logistics function will be inform of

$$F(z) = \frac{e^{a+bx}}{1 + e^{a+bx}} \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (2)$$

Where, the input is z and output is f(z)

e stands for exponential function

A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

a is the intercept

β is the parameter

x is Customer Service

For a multiple independent variables as the case in the hypothesis 1 of this study, the logit model is given as:

$$F(z)= \frac{e^{a+\beta 1ACB+\beta 2SEC+\beta 3TVT+\beta 4WTT+\beta 5TPF+\beta 6CFT+\beta 7RBT+\beta 8CMC+\beta 9OST}}{1+e^{\beta 1ACB+\beta 2SEC+\beta 3TVT+\beta 4WTT+\beta 5TPF+\beta 6CFT+\beta 7RBT+\beta 8CMC+\beta 9OST}} \qquad …………(3)$$

The predicted logit

(CP=1) = a+ β1ACB+β2SEC+β3TVT+β4WTT+β5TPF+β6CFT+β7RBT+β8CMC+β9OST

Multiple regression model was used to achieve objective (ii) and it is given as

CP= f(TPR, LGT, MSC, NSE, ODR, CLN, STT, VTN)

Mathematically, the model can be expressed as:

$$CP= \alpha+ \beta_1 TPR+\beta_2 LGT+\beta_3 MSC+\beta_4 NSE+\beta_5 ODR+ \beta_6 CLN+\beta_7 STT+\beta_8 VTN + \varepsilon……(4)$$

Where:

α= Constant

TPR= Temperature

LGT= Lighting

MSC= Music

NSE= Noise

ODR= Odour

CLN= Cleanliness

STT= Seat Texture

VTN= Ventilation

$\beta_{1-}\beta_8$ = Parameter Estimate

ε = Error Term

IV. RESULTS

A. Demographic variables of the respondents

Table I. Distribution of respondents by their demographic characteristics

Age	Freq.	%		Average income per month	Freq.	%
15 – 25 years	25	10.6		#20000 - #49000	63	26.7
26 – 35 years	75	31.8		#50000 - #79000	84	35.6
36 – 45 years	63	26.7		#80000 - #109000	56	23.7
46 - 55years	41	17.4		#110000 - #139000	18	7.6
56 years and above	32	13.5		#140000 and above	15	6.4
Total	236	100.0		**Total**	236	100.0
Gender				**Level of Education**		
Female	142	60.2		Primary school	32	13.5
Male	94	39.8		Secondary school	75	24.6
Total	236	100.0		Post secondary	71	30.1
				Post graduate	58	31.8
				Total	236	100.0
Marital Status						
Single	41	17.4				
Married	87	36.9		**Frequency of usage**		
Widow	29	12.3		Occasionally	49	20.8
Widower	25	10.6		Almost always	118	50.0
Single Parent	54	22.8		Always	69	29.2
Total	**236**	**100.0**		**Total**	**236**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table I shows that majority of the respondents are within ages 15 – 55 and are therefore in their economic useful years. Furthermore, most of the passengers are low income earners (#20,000 - #109,000 per month) and frequently ride in BRT (79.2%)

A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

B. Descriptive statistics showing Customer service factors influencing passenger repeat patronage

Table II. shows the factor analysis of customer service factors influencing passengers' repeat patronage of BRT

Variable	Eigen value
Accessibility	.620
Availability	.434
Security	.431
Travel time	.772
Waiting time	.474
Transport Fare	.730
Comfort	.638
Reliability	.608
Customer care	.606
Off-street ticketing	.431

Source: Data Analysis 2022

Table II showed that eight of the identified customer service factors influenced passenger repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos state, Nigeria. Variables with Eigen value of approximately 1 were retained. The customer service factors influencing passenger repeat patronage and their factor loading are; accessibility (0.620), travel time (0.772), waiting (0.474), cost/fare (0.730), comfort (0.638), reliability (0.608) and customer care (0.606) respectively. In addition, it was revealed that travel time is the most important customer service factor influencing customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in the state.

C. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1. Customer service does not significantly influence customer repeat patronage of BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria

Table III. Binary Logit Predicting Customer repeat patronage through customer service

Customer patronage	Odds ratio	p-value	Remark
Accessibility			
Always	RC		
Rarely	6.2910	0.002**	Accept
Security			
Always	RC		
Rarely	3.1231	0.639	Reject
Travel Time			
Always	RC		
Rarely	2.6807	0.003**	Accept
Waiting Time			
Always	RC		
Rarely	4.6913	0.041**	Accept
Transport Fare			
Always	RC		
Rarely	6.5939	0.017**	Accept
Comfort			
Always	RC		
Rarely	3.2345	0.046**	Accept
Reliability			
Always	RC		
Rarely	5.5597	0.006**	Accept
Customer Care			
Always	RC		
Rarely	2.0828	0.028**	Accept
Off-street Ticketing			
Always	RC		
Rarely	0.8133	0.413	Reject

Source: Data analysis, 2022

Note: RC= Reference Category

** significant at 0.05 level

This section determines the predictors of customer repeat patronage using customer service provision in the public transport sector in Lagos state, Nigeria. Table III indicated that passengers that always consider accessibility (OR=6.2910; p=0.009) were 6 times

more likely to repeat their patronage of BRT than those that rarely did. Contrarily, there was less chance (OR=3.1231; p=0.639) for passengers that always consider security to repeat their patronage than those that did not. This might not be unconnected with the low level of security in Nigeria generally. Also, those who always consider travel time (2.6807; p=0.003) were about 3 times more likely than those that rarely did to repeat their patronage. In addition, the study showed that passengers whose time at the bus terminals were saved while waiting for BRT buses (4.6913;p=0.041) were about 5 times more likely to repeat their patronage than those who rarely did. Passengers who always attach importance to transport fare (6.5939;p=0.017) were about 7 times more likely to repeat their patronage than those that rarely did. Passengers who perceived that they were comfortable while traveling using BRT (3.2345;p=0.046) were 3 times more likely than those who rarely did to continue their patronage of BRT services. The analysis also indicates that passengers who perceived services provision of BRT as being reliable (5.5597;p=0.006) were about 6 times more likely than those who did not to repeat their patronage of BRT. Furthermore, the result showed that passengers who always enjoy customer care provision of BRT (2.0828;p=0.028) were 2 times more likely than those who rarely enjoyed it to continue their patronage of BRT services. Conversely, passengers who always placed premium on off-street ticketing (0.8133;p=0.413) were less likely to repeat their patronage of BRT services.

Hypothesis 2. Ambient condition has no significant relationship with passengers' repeat patronage intention in the public transport sector

Table IV(a). Regression analysis showing relationship between ambient condition and customer repeat patronage

Model	Standardized coefficients		
	Beta	**T**	**Sig.**
1 (Constant)		3.455	
Humidity	.054	.843	.040
Lighting	.215	3.419	.001
Music	-.111	-1.634	.052
Aroma	.103	1.462	.035
Neatness	.412	6.227	.000
Seat texture	-.090	-1.443	.151
Ventilation	.200	.414	.005
Colour	-.179	-2.804	.754

Source: Data Analysis 2022

Table IV(a) shows the regression analysis indicating the relationship between ambient condition and customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results show the contribution of each variance of ambient condition (independent variable) to customer repeat patronage (dependent variable). The analysis indicated that .054, .215, .103, .412 and .200 of customer repeat patronage can be explained by humidity, lighting, aroma, neatness and ventilation respectively. This implies that a unit increase in humidity, lighting, aroma, neatness and ventilation led to 5.4%, 21.5%, 10.3%, 41.2% and 20.0% increase in customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria respectively. However, Music (-.111;P=0.052) though significant was negatively signed. Contrarily, seat texture (-.090;P=0.151) and bus colour (-.179;P=0.754) were negatively signed and not significant. This means that majority of passengers do not consider seat texture and bus colour in their decisions to patronize public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table IV b. Summary of regression analysis showing relationship between ambient condition and customer repeat patronage

Variables	t-value	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-ratio	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ambient condition and customer repeat patronage	3.455	.504	.254	.247	39.77	P<0.05

Source: Data Analysis 2022

Table IV(b) shows existence of relationship between ambient condition and customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria (R=0.504). The R^2 shows the level of relationship between the independent variable (ambient condition) and dependent variable (customer repeat patronage). The R^2(.254 p<0.05) indicates that 25.4% of the dependent variable (customer repeat patronage) was explained by the independent variable (ambient condition) at 5% level of significant. In addition, the adjusted R^2 (.247) shows the actual contribution of ambient condition to customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. The F-statistics (39.77) shows the goodness of fit of the model and it was a good fit.

V. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
The study highlighted some customer service factors and ambient condition influencing customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results indicated that accessibility, travel time, waiting time, transport fare, service

A Study of Customer Service, Ambient condition and Customer Patronage in the Public Transport Sector in Lagos State, Nigeria

reliability, comfort and customer care were the major customer service factors influencing customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. This finding is in line with the work of [1] which found that customer service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, corporate image and customer loyalty. In addition, the study further corroborates the finding of [5] that caring, problem solving, committed and helpful salesmen play an important role in delivering customer satisfaction.

This indicates that operators and management of public transport sector, that is, BRT should pay special attention to and try to improve on accessibility of BRT buses to customers, travel and waiting time, transport fare, service reliability, comfort and customer care with a view to attracting new customer and retaining the existing ones thereby enhancing customer re-patronage. Also the study showed a significant positive relationship between humidity, lighting, aroma, neatness and ventilation, and customer repeat patronage. This implies that the managers, operators, supervisors, drivers, conductors and those responsible for cleaning and maintenance of both the exterior and interior parts of the BRT buses should try to improve on and constantly monitor the humidity, lighting, aroma and neatness of the buses, and ensure adequate ventilation at all times. The results of this study is in line with the work of [11] which found that personal and environmental factors which moderate servicescape significantly correlated with customer loyalty intentions. This study further reinforces the findings of [29] that ambient condition significantly influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that increased customer service and ambient condition led to significant increased customer repeat patronage in the public transport sector particularly BRT in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study recommended that other state governments in the southwest, Nigeria should emulate Lagos State government by putting in place BRT services and ensuring adequate provision of customer service and monitoring of the ambient condition of the buses. This will help to alleviate the suffering of masses with respect to movement of people, goods and services.

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