

SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR OF PAKISTAN: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is considered to be the most important factor whether it is meant for a product or a service. In case of failure to satisfy customers, company will be replaced by others and when industries offering various services, have to be more vigilant because there is a special attitude that plays an important role attracting and retaining the customers. Keeping this in view, the researchers intended to highlight the current issues of transport sector in Pakistan that how service quality effects customer satisfaction. For this purpose, a convenient sample of 120 respondents was selected (60 male and 60 Female) and data collection tool for all the variables (service quality and customer satisfaction) was used from the body of knowledge to check how do they feel about this service. Regression coefficient was used to analyze two independent sets of data. The empirical analysis proved that there was a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the public transport sector of Pakistan...

Keywords: *Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Pakistan Public Transport Sector*

Introduction:

The current crises of the world has effected a lot of people not only just people but organizations as well. One of the most important factors behind these crises was the shortage and increased prices of petroleum products. 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 those luxuries and people had to rely on public transport. In all other countries public transport has been owned by government and major reserves were being made in public transportation system to make them more viable where as other means of transport, most particularly private cars. Companies have steadily focused on service quality and customer satisfaction. This policy was very lucrative for both corporations and customers mainly for transportation organization and passengers. A development of the supplied service quality can be a focus for further users this fact could resolve many problems as discussed above. However it could never be denied that in Pakistan this service has always been at poor quality. And now because of the CNG and petrol crises it has become worst. There should be effective measures to provide better quality in this sector as almost 70% of population in Pakistan utilizes this service.

Problem Statement:

“Keeping the above discussion in view, the researchers plan to study the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in public transport sector of Pakistan.”

Originality of the study:

The research area that is public transport has been discussed by many times but specifically the problems related to residents of Pakistan have never been discussed before. There is a gap in the body of knowledge and the present researchers will try to figure out this gap.

Applied Aspects:

For every sector whether it would be public or private customer satisfaction is considered to be the most important factor. With the help of this research some key points would be driven which could be given to the people who have authority to govern this sector to improve service quality of transport in public sector.

Rationale of the study:

The researchers traveled themselves in public transport which made them to conduct a research in this sector and to suggest how they could overcome the problems faced by them such as:

- Non availability of seats to females
- Less security
- Mental Harassment
- Time problems

Objectives of the study:

Following are the objectives of study:

- ❖ To study the impact of service quality in public transport sector in Pakistan
- ❖ To study the level of customer satisfaction in the same area
- ❖ To study is there any relationship between the two variables i.e. Service quality (independent) and customer satisfaction (dependent).

Literature Review:

Customer satisfaction is something that includes apparent assessment of all the services and products (Leem and Yoon, 2004). Antouvakis and Lympelopoulou, (2008) conducted a research including 388 passengers who use Ferry they found that not only road transport but people want all the means of transport very efficient that there time will be saved not only time but people want its appearance should also be outstanding. Though usually Ferry is used for employees that it saves their time as there are no signals and traffic, still some of them were not satisfied. The reason was its appearance and cleanliness so the results of this study suggested that customer satisfaction is effected by the substantial elements of the service that it involves overall satisfaction level. Chien et al. (2002) affirmed that many companies implement some strategies to make customers satisfied but fails to maintain them because of lack of focus and lack of experience they fail to maintain service .Singh and Singh (2009) attempt to find the affects of innovation created by technological adaptation that how it should be carried out to increase customer satisfaction. They found that use usability reviews matters a lot to check the availability of disaster recovery that in case any experiment does not succeed they should have some strategies to overcome the loss and retain lost customers.



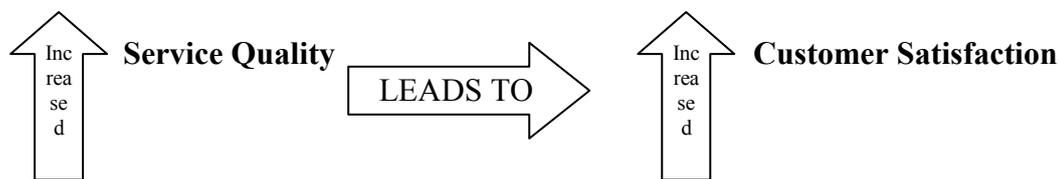
Elobi and Mazzulla, (2009) conducted a research related to air passengers and they found that customers want not only comfort ability but also cleanliness and it effects their satisfaction level. Aworemi et al. (2008)

conducted research on public and private transport system and suggested that socio economic factors also play an important role. Further studies conducted by Gronroos, C (1988); Zineldin (2005); Zheng and Jiaqing (2007); Pucher et al. (2005) all concluded that customers want the best service whether it would be given by private companies or public companies and by improving quality and responsiveness customers could be satisfied which would ultimately be helpful for the reputation and profit of the companies. All the above researches conducted by different researchers can conclude that in transportation sector service quality plays an important role with some other moderating variables which could be stability, capacity, security and not only these all factors feedback from customers should also be there as it helps to enhance the service quality and provide what customers want.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Generation:

Researchers have developed the following theoretical framework to generate hypothesis (Figure 1)
For the present study the following hypothesis have been developed from the above theoretical framework:

“Higher the level of service quality (tangibles and assurance) leads to the higher level of customer satisfaction.”



For experimental testing following null hypothesis will be used:

“There is no relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.”

Methodology:

For the purpose of being concise and also because of the reason that the researchers have selected a domain of public transport in Pakistan so the universe for this research consisted of residents of twin cities of Pakistan. However same proportion of males and females has been selected to know who suffers the most.

Sampling Procedure:

Sample of 120 respondents (60 Males and 60 Females of different ages and different status) was drawn as per the details given below in Table 1.

Table 1. Sampling Details

Residents	Males	Females
Students	Up to 10	Up to 10
Employed/Unemployed	50	52
Total	60	60
Grand total	120	

Source: Researcher's own processing

Tools for data collection:

Servqual model for the measurement of customer satisfaction was adopted from the detailed questionnaire developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988 and 1990) about service quality. Likert scale was used for the investigation.

Reliability of the instruments:

SPSS version 13.0 was used for data analysis. Alpha reliability value for the instrument during pre-testing ranged from 0.727 indicating a strong internal consistency of the tools being used. Generally higher reliability is

considered good but in Pakistan any value greater than 4 is acceptable because usually it is observed that there is a perception that nothing will be going to change because of this reason people are reluctant to participate.

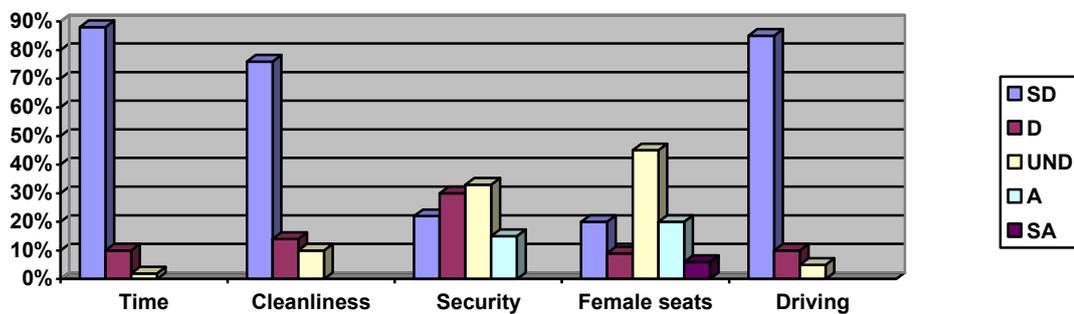
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Demographic Characteristics: Residents of Twin cities of Pakistan

Passengers Survey:

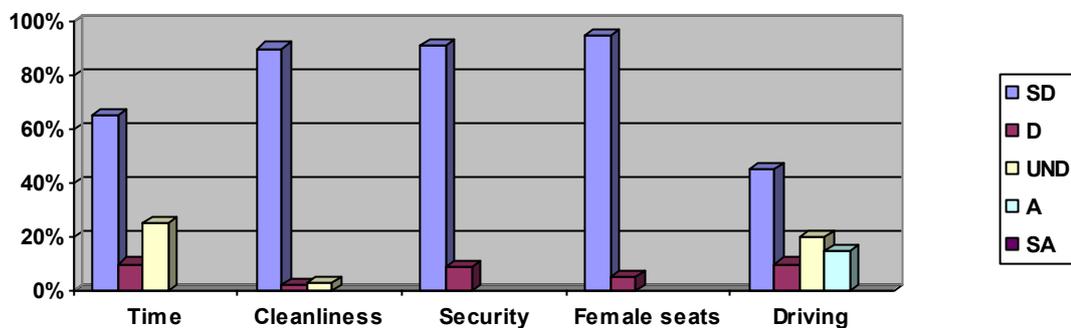
A heavy majority of the passengers of Public Transport in twin cities were belonging from age group of 31-40 years whereas a small portion of population belonged to the age group of 10-20 years and same was the case for people of 40 and above age group. In female respondents it was found that there was an equal ratio for employed and unemployed; 26 employed and 26 were unemployed, while only a small number of female students were traveling through public transport because girls feel more unsecured in the public transport as compared to boys. And from male respondents more than half were employed and using public transport for reaching their offices while only small portion was consisted of students and unemployed persons.

Analysis of Dependent Variables (MALE):



From the above distribution it could be analyzed that almost 80% of males were not satisfied with the waiting time as most of them were employees so they had to reach to their work place on time. Cleanliness was also not up to expectations only 20% of males consider it was not an issue where as 65% still believed it should be cleaned. It can be observed that for male’s security was not a big issue very few portion of population considered it a problem may be students could have this issue but others were quite satisfied. It could be observed that males were not concerned about female seats during survey researcher observed that only those males who were traveling with their families agreed about this problem only 15% of the portion of population. However as males themselves are quite good drivers that is why up to 85% of the population was not satisfied with the driving skills of the drivers.

Analysis of Dependent Variables (FEMALE):



As compared to the males females were quiet unsatisfied with this service. All the bars of strongly disagree can be observed. Almost 95% of the female population faces the problems of non availability of seats, security and cleanliness of bus stops as they can not stand there to wait for the vehicle.

Regression Model:

Table2. Service quality and customer satisfaction (individually of male and female)

MALE (N=60)						FEMALE (N=60)					
R	R square	Adj.r square	F stat	P value	St. dev	R	R square	Adj.r square	F stat	P value	St. dev
.555	.308	.284	.49826	.000	0.98	.520	.270	.244	.50285	.000	0.983

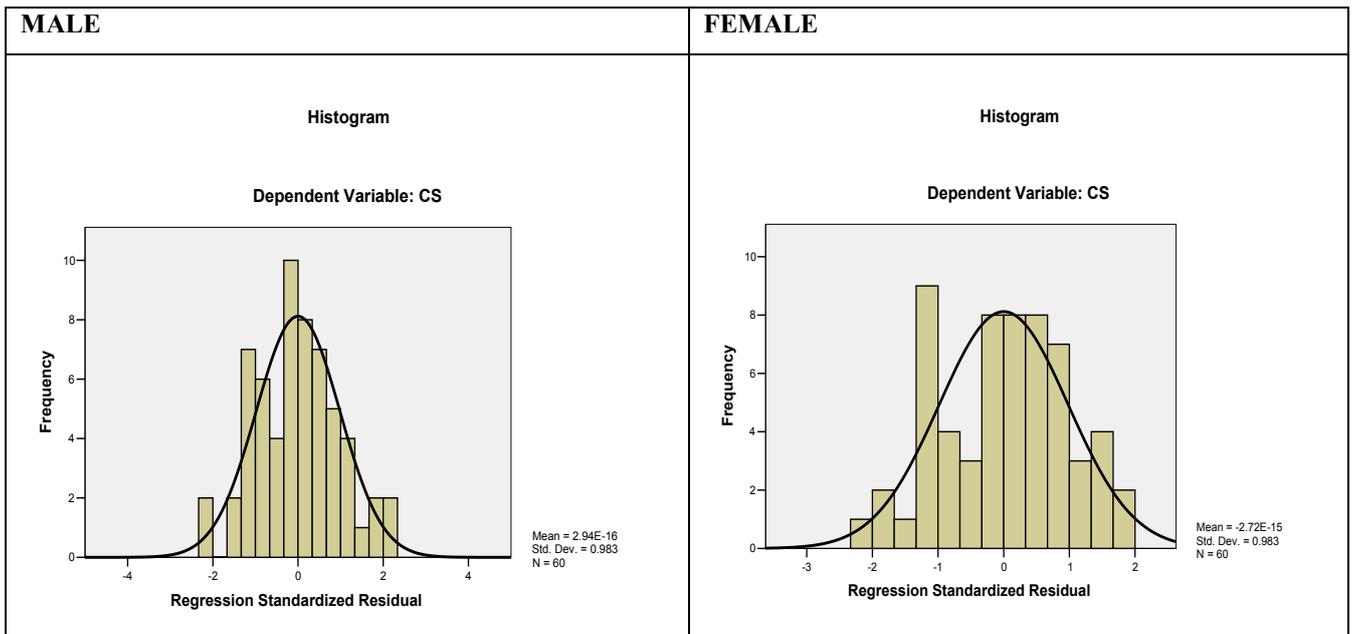
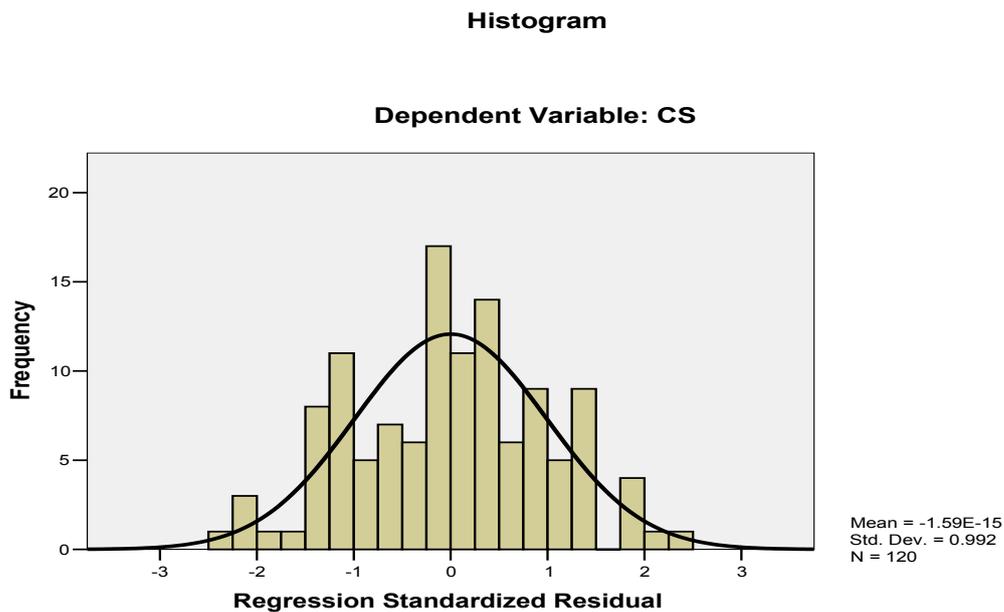


Table3. Service quality and customer satisfaction (as a whole)

MALE/FEMALE (N=120)					
R	R square	Ad.r square	F stat	P value	St. dev
.539	.209	.278	.49506	.000	0.992



Research Hypothesis:

“Higher the level of service quality (tangibles and assurance) leads to the higher level of customer satisfaction.”(Table 2)

Null Hypothesis:

“There is no relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.”

Rationalization of Acceptance of Hypothesis:

According to the data (entered in table 2) it could be analyzed that there was a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction which resulted in the acceptance of research hypothesis and rejection of null hypothesis. Following reasons could support the acceptance of research hypothesis:

As compared to other countries public transport in Pakistan was really wretched. There were no proper cleanliness of bus stops, people litter and spit there it stinks that people can not stay there. In desire to on board more and more passengers, drivers drive so recklessly, because of that reason accidents occurs and people also not felt secure while traveling. Not only drivers but conductors also misbehaved so much. Usually they did not stop at proper stops, just wants to earn as more as they can and for this they stop busses or wagons after every minute which results in wasting of time of passengers and it was also not secure for pedestrians. Sometimes when they do not have enough passengers they do not complete their route just drop passengers in the middle of the route or transfer them in some other busses. Sometimes do not return remaining money. Last but not least females can never ever feel secure, as there were only two seats for females and even those two seats were given to male. Usually students travel they do not give any discount to them. When ever there was increase in petroleum prices they increase the fares.

Conclusion:

The following conclusion can be drawn from the above research and analysis:

1. As in Pakistan this sector was not entirely owned by government that is why its quality has been decreased a lot. There are not any rules and regulations. Those who head this sector did not implement harsh restrictions not to misbehave or not to charge extra fares.
2. As it was not owned by government so drivers wanted to make as much money as they could on single trip that they stop everywhere.

Recommendations:

In light of above study following recommendations was made:

Government should have taken measures to improve this sector as because of the current recession and petroleum and gas crisis not everyone can afford cars, so people have to travel through this transport. Like other foreign countries government should hire their busses and drivers and there should be fixed wages per hour so there would not be any need of waiting at every stop for passengers to fully load the bus, it will save time of passengers. Though separate seats are reserved for ladies still they did not get it, so there should be strict restriction not to give those seats to males.

Limitation /Scope of the study:

Just to be emphasizing researcher had decided to limit the study to Pakistan’s public transport sector otherwise comparison could also be done with foreign transport sector e.g. U.K, U.S.A etc.

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ANNEXURE

SERVICE QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN PAKISTAN

Dear Respondent

We are conducting an academic research on the above topic. Find below please a series of questions to be answered by you. We assure you that whatever information is obtained, will be used for academic/research purposes only. We will be extremely grateful for your kind cooperation.

Age: _____ Gender: _____ Status: _____

Sr.#	Tangibles	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The waiting time for the bus service is acceptable					
2	Cleanliness of bus interiors are sufficient					
3	Proper shelter and benches are available at stop					
4	Seats are enough comfortable					
5	Appropriate seats are available for females					

Sr.#	Assurance	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Drivers drive safely					
2	Drivers and conductors are consistently polite					
3	Drivers have sufficient driving skills					
4	You feel secure while traveling in public transport					
5	Drop the passengers at their destination					

Sr.#	Customer satisfaction	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	You are pleased with the transport services					
2	The services provided by transporters meet your satisfaction level					
3	Compared to private cars you are happy in having public transport					
4	You are satisfied with the fares					
5	As compared to private sector more satisfied with the public sector transport					

Source: SERVQUAL Model by Parasuraman (1994) and Taylor and Baker Customer Satisfaction Tool (1989)