

# Impact of Intra-City Public Transport Services Quality on Passenger Satisfaction in Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria

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**Abstract**— Transportation is a very important aspect of urban mobility and the quality of services is a major determinant of its efficiency. This paper evaluated how the quality of intra-city public transport services affects passenger satisfaction in Ibadan, Nigeria. The survey was carried out in five large terminals, including Ojoo, Agodi Gate, New Gbagi, Iwo Road, and Challenge. A sample of 400 passengers was chosen using stratified random sampling using the Yamane formula. The SERVQUAL framework was used to analyse the data and measured the quality of the service in terms of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Findings showed that there were high expectation-perception gaps in service delivery. The greatest gap was in reliability (overall score 6.55), which means poor punctuality and inconsistent schedules. Tangibles like vehicle condition and cleanliness also had high dissatisfaction (overall score 5.64). Smaller but significant gaps in responsiveness and assurance, and empathy, especially individualized passenger care, were missing. These findings indicate that passengers are least satisfied with the reliability of the services and physical conditions, which are the strongest determinants of overall satisfaction. The research concludes that low reliability and tangibles destroy passenger trust and confidence in public transport. It means more rigid schedules, modernization of terminals and vehicles, professionalism of workers, reinforcement of empathy-based policies, and more control by the authorities to enhance service delivery and customer satisfaction.

**Keywords**— Service Quality, Passenger Satisfaction, Intra-City Transport, Reliability, Ibadan.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Transportation is an essential part of any country, and it involves the movement of people, goods, and services via different means, such as roads, railways, airways, and waterways (McTigue et al., 2020). It remains a major urbanization source because it links people to opportunities, reduces the cost of traveling, and increases access to essential services. Properly structured transport systems lead to social inclusion and economic productivity, and poorly structured ones lead to delays, congestion, and stress among commuters (Van Wee, 2015; McLeod et al., 2017). Moreover, shared mobility is affordable by using public transport like buses, minibuses, and trams. It reduces the utilization of personal vehicles, promotes environmental sustainability, and enhances accessibility among urban residents (Rahman and Sciara, 2022; Soyk et al., 2018). Its success, however, is heavily reliant on the quality of its services, which encompasses punctuality, affordability, safety, comfort, and reliability of the vehicle. Without these factors, passengers will not have a reason to use the service, which reduces its role in sustainable travel (Satici and Dayarian, 2024). Moreover, intra-city transport refers to shared services that fall within the boundaries of a single city, such as minibuses, taxis, tricycles, and motorcycles (Odame et al., 2023). Such Nigerian cities as Ibadan are based on these services, which are not always well-controlled and maintained (Ojo, 2020). Problems such as overcrowding, irregular schedules, unsafe cars, and reckless driving decrease passenger satisfaction and confidence (Onokala and Olajide, 2020).

Passenger satisfaction, in its turn, is a key performance indicator of transport quality, which is the extent to which services satisfy the expectations of users in terms of

affordability, comfort, punctuality, and safety (De Ona and De Ona, 2015). Studies show that customers are more satisfied with safe and trustworthy services, and repeated failures, delays, and poor driver behaviour reduce trust in public transport (Hasan et al., 2021; Ge et al., 2017). In Ibadan, despite the efforts of the government to improve services, most commuters continue to use informal operators whose services are of low quality, which affects the overall quality of travel and trust in the system (Etuk et al., 2021).

Furthermore, sustainable urban mobility and passenger satisfaction in the world depend on the quality of the public transport services (De Ona et al., 2021; Preston, 2023). Passengers are more satisfied and will rely on public transport to move around on a daily basis when they are satisfied with the services provided by the transport system as being timely, reliable, and safe. However, in the majority of developing countries, the quality of services is undermined by the absence of appropriate infrastructure, maintenance, and management systems (Zheng et al., 2021).

Intra-city public transport services in Nigeria and Ibadan in particular are a serious challenge. The passengers experience unpredictable schedules, unsafe vehicles, overcrowding, and reckless driving, which adversely impact their daily commuting experiences (Adewale et al., 2019; Olowoporoku et al., 2020). Despite the fact that the public transport is the most common mode of mobility, the standards of service delivery are always below the expectations. This not only leads to dissatisfaction but also reduces trust in operators and government agencies that regulate transport (Abubakar and Aina, 2019). Moreover, the majority of the available studies have been carried out in developed settings where transport systems are more controlled and quality standards are implemented. On the other hand, the

empirical data on how the dimensions of service quality, such as punctuality, comfort, affordability, safety, and vehicle condition, affect passenger satisfaction in Ibadan is scarce (Etuk et al., 2021). The lack of such studies leaves a knowledge gap that makes it difficult to develop policies that can address the realities of commuters in Nigerian cities.

The study therefore filled this gap by exploring the relationship between the quality of intra-city public transport services and passenger satisfaction in Ibadan that can be used to improve urban transport systems.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality is one of the most powerful predictors of passenger satisfaction, yet the literature is increasingly demonstrating that the manner in which quality is measured and given priority is equally important. Using the SERVQUAL framework to analyse the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Dar es Salaam, Mapunda (2021) identified reliability and assurance as the most significant predictors of satisfaction using survey questionnaires and regression modelling. The approach is important: SERVQUAL measures the differences between expectations and perceptions, i.e. satisfaction is not described by absolute performance but by the extent to which the service meets the expectations of the users. That is why reliability, in terms of on-time arrivals, is more important than other aspects such as vehicle aesthetics. Likewise, Sam et al. (2018) applied SERVQUAL in Ghana with paired expectation-perception scores analysed through gap analysis and t-tests, and found that overcrowding and unreliability generated the most significant drops in satisfaction. These studies suggest that service quality cannot be perceived as a checklist but as a hierarchy in which certain gaps, especially those related to timeliness and reliability, produce more dissatisfaction than others.

Recent research uses more sophisticated quantitative methods to demonstrate the interaction of various service attributes in the formation of satisfaction. An example is Ibrahim et al. (2022), who used PLS-SEM with Artificial Neural Networks on Kuala Lumpur monorail data, where comfort and safety were the most decisive latent constructs. Their methodology enabled them to identify both linear and non-linear effects, demonstrating that even minor increases in comfort variables (temperature, seat availability, cleanliness) yielded disproportionately high satisfaction returns. Chen et al. (2019) who applied SEM to passenger feedback on the high-speed rail in China also found that punctuality and cleanliness were the most important factors explaining the greatest variance in satisfaction, but their modelling emphasized professionalism of staff as an indirect mediator of trust. These methodological developments support the thesis that satisfaction is multi-dimensional yet not every service dimension has the same impact on it-comfort and reliability are repeatedly identified as the gatekeepers of satisfaction.

The literature also problematises the assumption of linearity in service quality-satisfaction relationships. In Chile, Soza-Parra et al. (2019) demonstrated that the returns to reliability improvement were decreasing after a minimum threshold was reached. This was supported by Cascajo et al. (2021) in Spain, who used Structural Equation Models and found that

satisfaction increased rapidly when weak points such as ticketing were resolved, but leveled off when premium features were added when basics were already satisfied. Liu and Ceder (2023) used regression models on suburban New Zealand survey data and discovered the same threshold effects: the largest satisfaction returns were obtained when the quality of the environment was improved between poor and acceptable, and the smallest returns were obtained when the quality of the environment was improved between acceptable and excellent. All these methodological results point to the idea that resources must be used to address fundamental shortcomings prior to engaging in luxury improvements, as marginal returns vary widely based on the quality of the base.

Context also influences the dimensions of service quality that are most important, which can be uncovered by comparative means. Toth et al. (2021) used PLS-SEM in a study of data in Budapest and found that accessibility and frequency were significantly more significant to car users than safety, likely because safety did not differ significantly in that setting. On the other hand, Agaton et al. (2021) who applied regression to passenger surveys in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic found hygiene and health protocol enforcement to be the most important predictors of satisfaction. These findings indicate that context-sensitive methodological approaches, such as pandemic conditions or modal comparisons, indicate that satisfaction is a moving target that is influenced by external environments.

Lastly, a significant number of authors directly connect service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty through path models. SEM on Indonesian train data by Gunawan et al. (2022) showed that satisfaction was affected by safety and service quality, which in turn was the most significant predictor of loyalty intentions. The mediating bridge of satisfaction had been earlier proposed by Eboli and Mazzulla (2018), but recent studies like Nguyen-Phuoc et al. (2022) empirically confirm it through large-scale SEM surveys in Vietnam. What comes out in these works is an agreement that satisfaction is not only an outcome variable but also a predictor of behavioural intentions. The unaddressed gap is the absence of context-specific quantifications in African intra-city systems. The majority of the available research determine relative significance but do not go further to define the extent to which an increase in reliability or comfort would result in satisfaction benefits in African cities. The current research fills this gap by using econometric modelling that is appropriate to local data to determine which dimensions of service quality best predict satisfaction in our intra-city transport environment.

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework. Passenger satisfaction is positioned as the independent variable influencing intra-city public transport service quality, captured through SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These dimensions are widely applied in transport studies to measure service quality perceptions (Sam et al., 2018; Mapunda, 2021). The framework assumes that higher satisfaction translates into stronger evaluations of these quality

indicators, reflecting findings that reliability, comfort, and safety are central to urban transit satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2022).



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional research design, considered suitable for capturing passenger satisfaction and the role of socio-economic factors at one point in time. The investigation was carried out in Ibadan, Oyo State, using five major intra-city transport terminals: Ojoo, Agodi Gate, New Gbagi, Iwo Road, and Challenge. These locations were purposively selected because they represent the busiest travel corridors and collectively handle a large share of the city’s passenger flow. The study population comprised passengers who made use of these five terminals, with the monthly patronage estimated at 5,443,435 users (NBS, 2023). The sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, which yielded a sample of 400 passengers. A stratified random sampling approach was adopted, where each terminal represented a stratum to ensure fair representation of passengers across the selected locations.

#### Measurement of Variables

Passenger satisfaction was measured through three indicators: overall trip experience, value for money, and likelihood of recommending the service. Service quality was assessed using the SERVQUAL framework by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which outlines five main dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy). For this study, these were defined as follows:

- **Tangibles:** Vehicle condition, cleanliness, and general appearance.
- **Reliability:** Consistency of service, punctuality, and correct fare administration.
- **Responsiveness:** Staff willingness to assist, waiting times, and problem-solving efficiency.
- **Assurance:** Staff knowledge, courtesy, and ability to instill confidence.
- **Empathy:** Individualized attention and concern for passenger needs.

#### Method of Data Analysis

Subsequent to data collection, data was analyzed using SERVQUAL model in order to identify gaps in passenger expectation and perception. This approach allows for testing interactions between expected and perceived satisfaction, thereby identifying the relative strength of each service quality dimension in shaping satisfaction (Kline, 2015).

### IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 emphasizes socio-economic tendencies of respondents. The 25-34 years (30) and 35-44 years (22.5) age groups are the most dominant, indicating that most users of the public transport are in their productive age. About 20 percent of the respondents were above 55 years, which means that older adults also use public transport, but at a lower rate due to mobility problems. The gender distribution showed that women (55) were more than men who were more dependent, which is usually associated with economic status and low ownership of personal cars. Educational background showed that 61.5% were secondary school educated, 22.75% and 10.75% were tertiary educated, which showed that users cut across various social groups. Occupational data revealed that the largest percentage was self-employed (45.5%), then civil servants (31.75%), and students (20.25%), which means that both flexible working hours and regular commuting create a stable demand in intra-city transport.

TABLE 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Passengers

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	180	45.0
	Female	220	55.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	18-24	50	12.5
	25-34	120	30.0
	35-44	90	22.5
	45-54	60	15.0
	55-64	40	10.0
	65 and above	40	10.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Education	No formal	20	5.0
	SSCE	246	61.5
	BSc	91	22.75
	MSc/PhD	43	10.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Occupation	Unemployed	10	2.5
	Student	81	20.25
	Civil servant	127	31.75
	Self-employed	182	45.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey (2025)

#### Impact of Intra-City Public Transport Services Quality on passenger satisfaction

The research used SERVQUAL model and the outcome is shown in Table 2. One of the most popular tools to measure service quality is the SERVQUAL model, which takes into account the difference between the expectations and perceptions of customers in five criteria: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). The results approximate the impact of the quality of intra-city public transport services on passenger satisfaction. The dimensions were assessed by the difference between the mean expectations passengers have and their real perceptions of the quality of service they received.

#### Tangibles

Tangibles are the physical look of the service such as the condition of the vehicles, cleanliness and the appearance of the staff. According to Table 1, the total gap score of the tangibles

dimension is 5.6405, and the average gap score is 1.1281. That is, the gap between passenger expectations and their perception in its physical aspects is large. As an example, the biggest gap is observed in TA1 area, where the expectation is 4.8081, and the perception is 2.5676, and the gap score is 2.2405. This gap is just a way of emphasizing the size of a big problem in terms of how passengers perceive the physical conditions of vehicles used in the delivery of public transport services, which is supported by Sumaedi, Bakti, and Yarmen (2012), who discovered that cleanliness and conditions of vehicles are fundamental determinants of customer satisfaction with public transportation. The wide gap indicates that the tangibility aspects of intra-city public transport services can be improved.

**Reliability**

The other dimension that presents gaps is reliability, which is the ability to deliver promised services in a reliable and precise way. The total gap score of Reliability is the largest of all dimensions, 6.5515, and the average gap score is 1.3103. As an example, the gap of RL5 is very high at 3.0081, which implies that there is a huge gap between what is promised and what is delivered to passengers. This is highly important bearing in mind that de Ona and de Ona (2015) discovered that reliability is among the most important factors that determine satisfaction in public transportation, and inconsistent service may leave a customer dissatisfied with the service and may never use it again. The huge gap in reliability shows that the transport service is not reliable and thus does not perform reliably and consistently to the expectations of the passengers, particularly in terms of punctuality and reliability.

**Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is the willingness of the staff to help passengers and provide them with timely service. The gaps in this dimension are relatively smaller, with a gap score of 2.2270 and an average gap score of 0.4454. As an example, RS3 has the narrowest gap of all measures, with a difference of 0.1054 between expectations and perceptions. This means that passengers are overall content with staff responsiveness. Lai and Chen (2011) state that responsiveness is directly connected with the quality of customer service interactions and directly affects passenger satisfaction. The lower gap scores in this dimension indicate that the transport service is doing fairly well in regard to the responsiveness of the staff to the needs of the passengers, but there is still room to improve.

**Assurance**

The Assurance dimension consists of the employees' competence, politeness, and ability to convey trust and confidence. Assurance has a total gap score of 2.6540 and an average gap score of 0.5308. This dimension has comparatively moderate gaps, with the smallest gap of 0.0919 in AS1. Yadav, and Rai, (2019) state that assurance is one of the main factors in establishing customer trust in the services of the state, especially in the transport sector where people expect the competence and professionalism of employees to guarantee their safety and reliability. The moderate gap scores indicate that passengers tend to believe that staff are knowledgeable and courteous, but there are still some areas where trust and confidence can be improved.

TABLE 2: SERVQUAL scores for the impact of Intra-City Public Transport Services Quality on passenger satisfaction

Dimension	Statement	Mean Expectations	Mean Perceptions	Gap Scores	Overall Gap Score	Average Gap Score
<b>Tangibles</b>	TA1	4.8081	2.5676	2.2405		
	TA2	4.6243	4.0459	0.5784		
	TA3	4.4784	3.9946	0.4838	5.6405	1.1281
	TA4	5.0000	3.8919	1.1081		
	TA5	4.5000	3.2703	1.2297		
<b>Reliability</b>	RL1	4.8000	4.0486	0.7514		
	RL2	4.8568	4.0324	0.8244		
	RL3	5.0000	4.0000	1.0000	6.5515	1.3103
	RL4	4.7730	3.8054	0.9676		
	RL5	5.0000	1.9919	3.0081		
<b>Responsiveness</b>	RS1	4.5946	4.0541	0.5405		
	RS2	4.6973	4.0892	0.6081		
	RS3	4.4432	4.3378	0.1054	2.2270	0.4454
	RS4	5.0000	4.3919	0.6081		
	RS5	5.0000	4.6351	0.3649		
<b>Assurance</b>	AS1	4.3270	4.2351	0.0919		
	AS2	4.4297	4.1027	0.3270		
	AS3	4.9270	4.1811	0.7459	2.6540	0.5308
	AS4	4.5000	3.9459	0.5541		
	AS5	4.8000	3.8649	0.9351		
<b>Empathy</b>	EM1	5.0000	4.0703	0.9297		
	EM2	4.2216	4.1297	0.0919		
	EM3	4.4432	4.0000	0.4432	5.0729	1.0146
	EM4	4.7500	3.9500	0.8000		
	EM5	4.2270	1.4189	2.8081		

Source: Field Survey (2025).

**Empathy**

The Empathy dimension, which entails giving care and personal attention to passengers, has mixed outcomes. The total

gap score is 5.0729 and the average gap score is 1.0146. EM5 demonstrates a very high gap of 2.8081, which means that passengers experience a strong sense of deprivation of

individual attention and care. This observation aligns with the earlier study by Prentice and Kadan (2019), who found that empathy was a significant predictor of passenger satisfaction in the transport sector, especially in services where customers anticipate personalized services. The empathy gap is high, and it means that more individualized services will be offered to meet the needs of passengers on a case-by-case basis, which can be done by training the staff in customer care and communication.

The total servqual gap scores indicate that there are a number of issues of concern in terms of service quality in intra-city public transport, especially in the dimensions of reliability, tangibles, and empathy. These discrepancies between expectations and perceptions are considerable and suggest that passengers are not always satisfied with the existing service level. Parasuraman et al. (1988) argue that gaps in service quality may adversely affect overall customer satisfaction, which subsequently may affect subsequent use of the service. enhancing these dimensions, especially by improving the physical side of service, making it more reliable, and providing more personalized attention to passengers, may result in higher levels of passenger satisfaction and loyalty.

#### V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Application of SERVQUAL model in assessing the quality of services in Intra-City Public Transport Services showed that there was a wide gap between the expected and perceived service quality, especially in the dimensions of reliability and tangibles. The gap score of reliability was 6.5515 and that of tangibles was 5.6405, indicating that there are critical areas that should be enhanced in terms of physical infrastructure and service consistency. The greatest differences were recorded in the dimension of reliability, where the mean difference was 1.3103, which shows a dire deficiency of the ability to fulfill the expectations of passengers regarding the reliability of service delivery. Likewise, the physical dimension of service, comprising of the physical state of vehicles and facilities, had an average gap of 1.1281, indicating that the present physical state of physical assets is far below the expectations of passengers. These results confirm the hypothesis of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) that tangible and credible service attributes have a significant impact on the overall service quality and satisfaction perceptions.

The second hypothesis, which claims that passenger happiness is significantly and quantitatively impacted by the quality of service, is strongly refuted by the findings of the SERVQUAL study. The gap scores are high, and it means that the enhancement of service quality is not only positive but also needed to increase passenger satisfaction. These results indicate that the urgent need is to concentrate on service tangibles upgrading and enhancing reliability to match and surpass passenger expectations, which may result in greater satisfaction and potentially greater ridership loyalty. Therefore, the critical analysis of service quality according to the SERVQUAL model shows the spheres of improvement that can greatly improve the experiences and satisfaction of passengers in the public transport systems.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The research found that there were evident expectation-perception gaps in all dimensions. The largest shortfall was registered under reliability, which indicated chronic lateness, inconsistent schedules, and low reliability of services. Physical aspects like the condition of the vehicle and its cleanliness were also lower than what the users expected. Responsiveness and assurance were rated slightly higher, yet they also had considerable gaps, and empathy, particularly individualized attention, was lacking. These results affirm that passengers are not satisfied with key dimensions of service quality, particularly reliability and tangibles, which have a strong influence on overall satisfaction.

#### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are directed to drivers as frontline service providers:

- **Commit to Reliability in Operations:** Drivers should adhere strictly to agreed departure times and maintain consistent schedules. Avoiding unnecessary delays, minimizing unscheduled stops, and ensuring punctuality will help reduce the wide service reliability gap identified in the findings.
- **Maintain Vehicle Condition and Cleanliness:** Drivers should take responsibility for basic cleanliness and report faults promptly for timely repairs. Keeping vehicles tidy and safe each day not only improves tangibles but also builds passenger confidence in service quality.
- **Demonstrate Professionalism and Responsiveness:** Drivers must improve their interaction with passengers by communicating clearly, responding promptly to questions or complaints, and showing patience in difficult situations. A professional attitude can close the assurance and responsiveness gaps revealed in the study.
- **Practice Empathy and Care for Passengers:** Drivers should be attentive to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, pregnant women, or people with mobility needs. Offering priority seating, waiting briefly for those boarding, and showing respect to all passengers will reduce dissatisfaction with empathy.
- **Support Service Standards through Compliance:** Drivers should cooperate with regulatory agencies by following traffic rules, submitting to inspections, and avoiding reckless driving. Compliance ensures safety, reduces accidents, and aligns with efforts to strengthen public trust in intra-city transport.

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