

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND CONSUMER SATISFACTION IN KADUNA RAIL TRANSPORT, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Customer is the real asset for an organization that ensures long-term profitability even in the era of great competition. Railway corporations in Nigeria today face poor administration systems which hinders the quality of rail service customer expected. The objective of this paper is to examine whether perceive service quality has significant relationship with customer satisfaction in Kaduna rail transport. Findings of the research show that there is positive relationship between service quality delivery and customer satisfaction at the Kaduna rail transport. The study recommended that. Management of rail cooperation should ensure that comfortable seat, parking facility are provided and procured as at when due, and replace dilapidated equipment at the rail so as to deliver quality services and rail facilities should be upgraded to meet up with the capacity of the customers that travelled from time to time.

Keywords: Service quality, comfort, connectivity, customer satisfaction and rail transport.

Introduction

Consumers who are satisfied tend to be less affected by the competitors, less sensitive to the price and their loyalty last longer (Ramlawati & Putra, 2018: Murdifin, Pelu, Putra, Arumbarkah, Muslim, & Rahmah, 2018). Armstrong, Adam, Denize and Kotler, (2014) view that, customer Satisfaction is the feeling of being happy or disappointed someone who appears after comparing the performance of the service that is thought of the expected return . Customer satisfaction relates to the quality of the products offered by them. The achievement of consumers has their respective levels depending on what they get (Kim & Shim, 2014: Kim & Yoo, 2015: Zehir & Narcikara, 2016). This means common reasons for rail transport users to stop using the system include becoming dissatisfied with service.

The delivery of high-quality service is the key to success in service industries. In the present era of intense competition, monitoring and improving service quality is highly essential for developing efficiency and business volume (Anderson & Zeithamal, 1984; Babakus & Boller, 1992; and Garvin, 1983). Namukasa (2013) Ong and Tan (2010) view that, better service quality is a critical factor which can be useful for distinguishing and improving organization's performance in the era of intense competition. In both manufacturing and service industries, quality improvement is the principal factor that impacts consumer satisfaction and consumer's patronage (Oliver, 1980). Several scholars agree that the quality is critical to consumer's satisfaction (Omar & Schiffman, 1995; Gremler et al., 2001; Radwin, 2000). Kumar et al. (2008) argues that, several business organizations focus on service-quality issues to drive customer's satisfaction above the rest.

Customer satisfaction and its measurement play a vital role in any business and service provider in their effort of achieving and improving competitive advantage (Ramlawati & Putra, 2018).

The issue of rail transportation in our modern days is such that should be of interest to all. Rail transport is very important to industrial development in terms of human and goods conveyance. However, railway corporations in Nigeria today face poor administration systems which hinders the quality of rail service customer expected. This study is not only limited in its incompetence management, but also introduces physical environment, timeliness, connectivity, safety and cleanness and. The operation at Nigeria Railway Corporation, Kaduna state chapter is critically facing administrative, connectivity, timeliness and communication problems. The poor administrative system is combated with low response to customers' enquiries, and inability to meet high proportion of booking. Providing adequate and appropriate rail transportation services is a challenging task faced by all most all the cities in the world (Vijay, 2013).

Perk, Flynn and Volinski (2008) Kongere (2013) stresses that, measuring customer satisfaction provides an indication on how well an organization is performing or providing services. Asyraf ,Zainudin, Norfadzilah , Hazimi and Puspa (2019) revealed that, quality of service had a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Therefore, customer satisfaction can measure the success to all the organizations including public sector as well. Besides that, Napitupulu, Rahim, Abdullah, Setiawan, Abdillah and Ahmar(2018) Simarmata, Hidayat, Nurdyanto and Pranolo (2018) showed that perception and expectations of the respondents have a negative value for existing service facilities. High quality public transport services not only makes the customer to continue using the public transport but also fulfill their demands so as to attract them (Miller 2013).

Previous studies conducted for instance, thesis conducted by Oktiani (2009) report that prior to empirical studies, measurement of service quality has received a great deal of attention because, and findings are rather mixed and inconclusive. Also, variable of service quality on customer satisfaction varied widely for instance responsiveness, tangibility, empathy, reliability and assurance were used by Solimun and Rinaldo (2018) Jamil , Rima and Ibrahim (2018) Taqdees, Shahab and, Asma (2018) Saad and Fatima (2018) Murdifin , Imaduddin , Zulfikar ,Aditya and Perdana (2019) Physical environment ; Contact personnel were used by Diena, Edmund and Jie (2019) yet service quality on customer satisfaction is still not understood and requires a thorough investigation. Thus, this study becomes necessary to bridge this gap by adding comfort and connectivity with assurance, empathy and reliability frequency, comfort, travel time and safety are the four most important attributes that have strongest relationship with the overall satisfaction. Corporation (2016) surveyed cleanliness in various railway stations, Corporation further revealed that, customers as well as vendors are not satisfied with the cleanliness maintained in the trains and stations. In the passenger satisfaction survey conducted by Dube (2012) has shown that the areas that should be given priority are the cleanliness, security and timely scheduling of trains. For that reason, this research attempt to examine whether perceive service quality have significant relationship with customer satisfaction in Kaduna rail transport.

Literature Review and Theoretical Studies

This chapter reviews related literature as regards the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Thus, it attempted to position the work within the scholarly context which is done under frameworks namely; Conceptual framework, which considers the various variables related to the topic and theoretical framework which considers some theories as they relate to this research work.

Customer Satisfaction

Mejabi (2006) quoting Davidow and Uttal; or as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to her expectation (Kotler, 2015). In addition Al-Alak (2009) Jeong, Cha and Jang (2016) see customer satisfaction as customer's situation of being effectively compensated in a purchasing circumstance in exchange of certain cost.

Mowen (1995) define consumer satisfaction as "the overall attitude regarding a good or service after its acquisition and use". While, Bergman and Klefsjö (2010) Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000) argued that satisfaction is viewed adequate when the comparison is made between past buying and consumption practices with that of expected benefit from a product or service brand regarding its expected potential to fulfill consumer's objectives .

The concept of consumer or customer satisfaction is often discussed in relation to quality. Customer satisfaction is said to be a key objective or a product of quality and it could be argued that customer satisfaction, in essence, define quality (Rice, 1997) because customers, where ever they are, want satisfaction (Cole, 2006) and organizations should aim to 'delight' the customers by delivering more than was expected (Kotler, 2015).

In addition, any service organization such as the transportation service, need to improve or enhance service quality is a serious business. This is because it is through service quality that customer satisfaction can be enhanced while satisfied customers are the prime determinant of sustainable competitive advantage for such organization.

Consumer Satisfaction in the Public Transportation Industry

The success of public transportation depends on customer satisfaction attracting and retaining customers to use or support its services. If there are no customers, there is no need for public transportation services. Like many private sector services, public transit has two types of clients: Consumers – the people who use the service and Stakeholders–the general public who are tax-paying investors in the service (Andrle,2004).

Principles for ensuring Customer Satisfaction in the Public Transportation System

Seven principles for ensuring customer satisfaction in the public transportation system have been suggested by Stephen (2004) firstly, put customer first – know your customers and respond to their expectations. Also, manage and improve processes according to Stephen explained that improving operations, quality of services can be raised. Manage by fact requires the use of facts and data, such as market research to achieve customer satisfaction, also cultivate organizational Learning i.e without learning, organizations and their members repeat old behaviour and practices which may not meet the changing need of customers. Stephen (2004) further state that employees' value must be protected and enhanced i.e. training employees to identify and solve problems that cause customer dissatisfaction. Improve labour-management teamwork is another principle according to Stephen (2004) Stephen argued that customers satisfaction will be difficult to achieve where rancor and grievances between labour and management is the order of the day. Lastly, lead the change in organizational culture; this means the leadership must be committed to customers' satisfaction (Stephen, 2004).

Hence, the future state of rail transport system is expected to be efficient, affordable, adequate, safe, well connected, good administration and environmentally sound. In line with the realization of these expectations and visions, potential investment opportunities for rails must be effectively harnessed.

Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality

It is generally agreed that the relationship between satisfaction and service quality is a complex issue characterized by confusion about the distinction between the two constructs as well as the casual direction of their relationship. According to researchers such as Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) views that, both service quality and consumer satisfaction are concerned with the difference between expectations and perceptions. This is supported by Jamil, Rima and Ibrahim (2018) who revealed that, reliability, efficiency, responsiveness, communication security and privacy all have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, with reliability being the dimension with the high positive impact. Seoki, Kyung, Luorong and Qu (2018) also investigated the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction and found that, there is relationship between the two construct.

According to Cronin and Taylor (1994), admits that, a useful starting point would be to restrict the domain of service quality to long-term attitudes and that of consumer satisfaction to transaction-specific judgments. Besides that, Rowley, (2005) agreed that perceived service quality is a global judgment whereas satisfaction is related to a specific transaction. While Arlyn (2018) revealed that service quality does not have link with customer satisfaction because the organization did not meet the expectations of the customers by comparing the desired service level vis-a-vis with observed actual service performance level provided

Based on the above argument the two constructs are conflicting each other, thus this paper seek to investigate the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Service Quality

One attribute that has gained the attention of researchers in services marketing is service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988) The existing literature suggests that service quality is determined by the difference between customer expectations of service provider's performance and the evaluation of the actual service received (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Service quality has also been conceptualized as a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of specific dimensions of service (Hinson *et al.*, 2006). In addition, Parasuraman, *et al.*, (1985; 1988) defines service quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumer's perception and expectations in terms of different but relatively important dimensions of service. Roberts, Varki and Brodie (2003) submitted that perceived service quality improves the firm-customer relationship leading to customers' intention to share information with the service firm and spread positive word-of-mouth among friends and peers. Also Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler (2002) Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argued that service quality is considered to be a significant determinant of the firm customer relationship and customer experience.

Bitner and Hubbert (1994) see service quality as consumer's overall impressions of the relative superiority of the organization and its services. Customer satisfaction is the instant reaction of the customers toward the services of an organization; alternatively service quality is the shopper's judgment that helps to differentiate between predictable services and alleged services (Culiberg, 2010). Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry . (1985) suggested that service quality is the transformation between expected services and offered services. If the obtainable services are greater than the expectations then it leads to customer gratification (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1985). In addition, Hoffman and Bateson (2010) agreed that, if there is absence of correspondence between the customer gratification and the offered services then it leads to short term customer's satisfaction while service quality build long term attitude of the customers toward the organization. In particular, recent research calls for an examination of customer experience, taking into account

customer engagement, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Shahid, Masood & Ume, 2018). Hence, it is reasonable to consider service quality as a motivational driver of consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, efficient service quality delivery is imperative in any organization to remain business and increase market share.

Relevance of Service Quality Model to Consumer Satisfaction

Having discussed the relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction, it is important to discuss the relevance or application of service quality model to consumer satisfaction. According to Rice (1997) customer's satisfaction defines quality. One is then tempted to argue that model on service quality would also be useful in explaining the concept of consumer satisfaction. While, Cronin and Taylor (1992) asserts it is enough to evaluate the perceptions of the customers about the performance of the service. The authors developed the SERVPERF scale. In SERVPERF, the focus is only on the true performance of the service through the perceptions of the customers, thus discarding any attempt to use the expectations of the customers in the measurement of service quality.

SERVQUAL is the appropriate measuring instrument to assess service quality in the public transport industry, since they consider it "more humanistic, or customer oriented". The authors extend the SERVQUAL instrument to make it more suitable for evaluating rail passenger service by adding three more dimensions: comfort, connection, and convenience (Eniola & Alo, 2018). Cavana et al., (2007) identifies eight service attribute-s which may be useful to consider. They are: reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, tangibility, comfort, connection, and convenience (Cavana et al., 2007; Sandra, Patrícia & Rita, 2017; Dada, Eniola & Alo, 2018).

Moreover, these models are good because of its unique characteristics being applicable to both constructs (service quality and consumer satisfaction) which is adopted in this study.

Hence, in line with the review of literature the above model proposed research hypotheses were raised in null form to guide the study; firstly, assurance does not have relationship with customer satisfaction, secondly, empathy does not have direct relationship with customer satisfaction, thirdly, reliability does not have relationship with customer satisfaction, fourthly, comfort does not have relationship with customer satisfaction, and lastly, connectivity does not have relationship with customer satisfaction (Figure 1.1).

Conceptual Frame Model

Figure1 shows the model which influences the relationship between assurance, empathy, reliability, comfort and connectivity on customers' satisfaction. Based on the evidence above from the prior research (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1995; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2012) have been used to formulate this model.

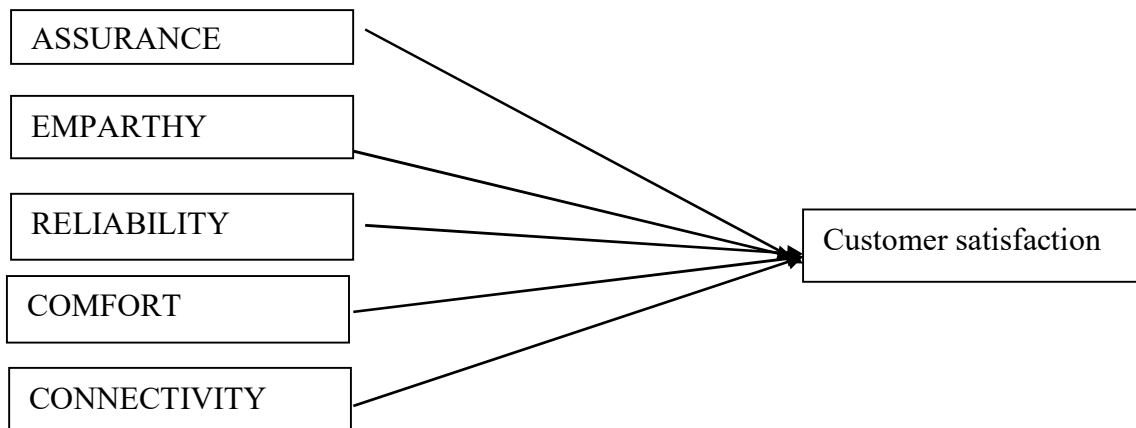


Figure 1.1: Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction Model

Source: Author's proposed research model of the study (2019)

The above model suggested that all the above mentioned service quality practices have a greater effect on customer satisfaction in rail transport. Therefore, this means there is a positive relation between dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Theories of the Study

SERVQUAL Model

Two models dominate the research on the quality of service. The first model, SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, 1988), is based on the theory of disconfirmation of expectations and relies on the gap between the customer's expectations about a given service and the evaluation of the sensitivity about the service. The SERVQUAL is a multidimensional approach which is discussed below:

Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence

Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides to its customers

Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately

Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service

Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel communication materials (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

SERVPERF Model

The second model, the SERVPERF approach (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), assumes that the quality of service only needs to be measured by using the customers' awareness of quality. The latter is a one-dimensional approach. Both models attest to the existence of a relation between the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

Several authors have compared the two models in order to identify the superiority of one over the other. There are favorable arguments for each of these positions, and Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1994) that both have similar predictive power. Cavana, Corbett, and Lo (2007) highlight the need to further explore the application of the SERVQUAL instrument on the railway transport

industry. Cavana et al. (2007) develop and empirically test an adaptation of the SERVQUAL scale to the context of the rail service industry that has three new dimensions (comfort, connection, and convenience). Several authors have emphasized that modifying the SERVQUAL scale to improve its usefulness in different contexts and research settings is beneficial (Carrillat et al., 2009).

Cronin and Taylor (1992) assert it is enough to evaluate the perceptions of the customers about the performance of the service. The authors developed the SERVPERF scale. In SERVPERF, the focus is only on the true performance of the service through the perceptions of the customers, thus discarding any attempt to use the expectations of the customers in the measurement of service quality. Dada, Eniola and Alo (2018) consider SERVQUAL as the appropriate measuring instrument to assess service quality in the public transport industry, since they consider it “more humanistic, or customer oriented”. The authors extend the SERVQUAL instrument to make it more suitable for evaluating rail passenger service by adding three more dimensions: comfort, connection, and convenience.

The study adopt SERVQUAL and SERVPERF model adapted by Cavana et al.(2007)used by (Sandra, Patrícia & Rita, 2017; Dada, Eniola & Alo, 2018) because SERVQUAL model is too service-oriented and lacks information about the service offering. Therefore the combination of the dimensions from these two different aspects of measuring service quality could increase the understanding of the quality construct for the railway service sector

In view of above, this study examines the relationship between assurance, empathy, reliability, comfort and connectivity on customers’ satisfaction.

Methodology

This section present the methodology adopted in this study. It examines the population of the study, procedure for data collection, sample size, measure of the study and method of data analysis.

Population of the Study

The target population consists of all the existing customer of railway transport in Kaduna metropolis. The population was obtained from railway ticket department of the cooperation. The study target mainly passenger that travelled on weekly basis in other to obtain required larger population. Train can carry up to 5,000 rail users but the highest number of customers that travelled weekly was 2101 commuters.

Kaduna metropolis comprises of Kaduna South and Kaduna North, local government areas of Kaduna State has its constituent. Train was situated at Rigasa metropolis of Kaduna.

Sample size of the Study

The target population consists of all the existing customer of railway transport in Kaduna metropolis. The population was obtained from railway ticket department of the cooperation. The study target mainly passenger that travelled on weekly basis in other to obtain required larger population. Train can carry up to 5,000 rail users but the highest number of customers that travelled weekly was 2101 commuters.

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A sample size of 176 commuter was chosen to represent the entire population stood at 2,101. Hence, the sample size was calculated using Krejcie and Morgan formula as calculated below;

$$n = \frac{X^2 NP (1 - P)}{d^2 (N - 1) + X^2 P (1 - P)}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.84) (2,101) (0.5) (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2 (2,101 - 1) + (3.84)(0.5) (1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n = 175.96$$

$$n = 176$$

Thus, 176 copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents in Kaduna rail cooperation with the help of research assistants, making a total of 176 respondents.

Method of Data Collection

Survey method of data collection was adopted to enable the researcher obtained raw fact from the commuters. Furthermore, primary data was obtained through a carefully design questionnaire. The items contained in questionnaire are related to the variables of interest in this study.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using correlation analysis with the aid of SPSS. Due to the nature of the objectives of this study, correlation analysis was used to further answer the research hypotheses. This study used an Ordinary Least Square (OLS) analysis as a main method to assess the proposed hypotheses.

Model Specification

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

To convert the correlation to a researchable form, t-test statistics was used

$$T\text{-test} = \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r^2}}$$

Hypothesis - there is no relationship between service quality and consumers satisfaction

Method

In order to study the relationship between service quality and consumers satisfaction, multiple correlation model was employed. It is used to measure the degree of relationship between independent variable and the dependent variable.

Decision rule: the correlation models show the degree of relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The probability (P) value shows the statistical significant co-efficient of the relationship.

Test of hypothesis: There is no relationship between Service Quality and Consumer Satisfaction

Table 1.2 : Correlation

		Satisfied	Assurance	Empathy	Reliability	Comfort	Connectivity
Satisfied	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	176					
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.415**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	176	176				
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.427**	.383**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
	N	176	176	176			
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.458**	.213**	.334**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.034	.000			
	N	176	176	176	176		
Comfort	Pearson Correlation	.372**	.427**	.316**	.345**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	176	176	176	176	176	
Connectivity	Pearson Correlation	.324*	.313*	.321**	.232**	.432**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.000	.000	.024	.000	
	N	176	176	176	176	176	176

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2019.

The result of table 1.2 above shows that there is significant positive correlation between customer satisfaction variable and service quality variables (assurance, empathy, reliability, comfort, and connectivity). Table 1.2 depicted through correlation analysis with the use of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) that there is link between customer satisfaction variable and service quality variables. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that assurance, empathy, reliability, comfort, and connectivity have significant relationship with customer expectation. Considering the works of previous study on service quality and customer satisfaction (Seoki, Kyung, Luorong & Qu, 2018), it is in line with the findings of this research that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction ($r=0.458$, $n=176$, $p<0.05$), with high levels of service quality associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction. Also the findings regarding the positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction supports the collective views of some empirical findings of (Taqdees,

Shahab & Asma, 2018; Napitupulu Rahim, Abdullah, Setiawan, Abdillah, Ahmar, Simarmata, Hidayat, Nurdianto, & Pranolo, 2018).

Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidences that there is positive relationship between service quality delivery and customer satisfaction at the Kaduna rail transport. At this juncture, it is essential to draw out certain conclusions based on the findings. The major conclusions are as follows:

The level of expectation consumer experience from quality service provided by Kaduna rail transport is very strong, therefore when organizations provide safety and even staff who are knowledgeable, skillful and experienced in their fields, this will result into commuter satisfaction and invariably have greater impact on country economy. Also, the relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction is strong, therefore service provider should always meet the needs of traveler, and this will further increase the customer's satisfaction towards the Nigeria rail service. Moreover, connection between reliability and customers' satisfaction is a positive one, therefore when service provider ensure time train service to travelers, this will further result in favorable traveler's satisfaction towards the rail cooperation service. The level between connectivity and customer satisfaction is very strong, therefore when service provider ensure quality facilities, this will further encourage commuters to travel by rail

Recommendations

Consequent to the findings and conclusions drawn there from, the following recommendations are hereby offered;

- i. The research revealed that those passengers who travelled by train derive expectation from service of the cooperation. So, in order to enhance the perceived value, operational efforts to balance intangible and tangible resources are crucial. Specifically, the intangible part for instance, individual consideration to their luggage's, consistent service quality, perceived security and employees' level of knowledge and skills is suggested to be more emphasized than the tangible aspect of services, such as the cleanness of seats, and cleanness of train. This stresses the importance of training employees, so that the consistent services and sufficient information are offered to commuters.
- ii. Service provider should also have the interest of commuters at heart and quickly respond to their needs in order to get more customers and increase market share. Moreover, the reputed service firms should also take aggressive steps to let their customer know about the system they have introduced or they are going to establish soon. This would be an important factor for the success of Nigeria rail cooperation and it will also improve the customer satisfaction.
- iii. Furthermore, service provider should also maintain train time service to customer at when due in order not cause dissatisfaction among the commuters.
- iv. Kaduna rail transport must maintain high standards facilities to attain the greater confidence over the quality service rendered. The results of this study also provide insights for the service provider located in Kaduna to invest more into new technologies. As the future of the service of Nigeria rail transport depends largely on types of technological innovation they bring to better serve their customer expectation. As the coming stage is the technological period, the Nigeria rail transport must pay intensive

attention to improve their customer expectation using advanced technological boundary in other to meet the world standard.

Future Research

Additional research should be initiated to closely observe the service of the Nigeria rail transport located in some other regions as well. As this study was purely quantitative in nature, certain limitations regarding the survey based data collection exist, further research should be carried out by employing different methodological approaches and qualitative approach. Additionally, some other variables for instance, characteristics of the customer should be employed in the current model as a moderating or as a mediator variable for the future research purpose.

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