

Passenger Satisfaction In Inter-City Coach Travel: Antecedents And Consequences

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between service delivery process, customer satisfaction and loyalty in the express coach industry in Malaysia. Five components of service delivery area were identified: experience before travel, experience during travel, experience after travel, terminal facilities and bus operations. These factors were examined when identifying some significant relationships with passengers' satisfaction. Finally, the satisfaction levels of passengers were correlated with their loyalty to certain bus operators. Empirical findings of this study were based on information gathered from a survey of two hundred respondents. Using structured questionnaires, the data was solicited from passengers of one express coach service following the route from Kota Bharu to Kuala Lumpur. Using a multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that three out of five process areas are significantly related to passenger satisfaction. Terminal facilities emerged as the best indicator for passenger satisfaction, followed by the bus operator's and experience after travel. The analysis also indicates a statistically significant correlation between passengers' satisfaction and loyalty. The managerial implications of these results are discussed and opportunities for future research are provided.

Introduction

Most cities in developing countries rely heavily on the use of buses as a major means of transport, particularly in the urban areas. People in urban areas rely very much on buses for their daily movement either traveling to and from work, shopping and for recreational trips. Even in cities with extensive rail networks, the majority of trips are made on buses or minibuses. An estimated of 600 million trips a day in 1980 were being made in buses in the developing cities and by 2000, this figure will have at least doubled. With so many people affected, it is not surprising to find the quantity and quality of bus services as a worldwide topic of considerable concern among passengers, service operators and policy-makers (Amstrong-Wright and Thiriez 1987).

Better services are provided for the public when passengers were given the opportunity to make choices based on comfort, reliability, frequency and price. Experience indicates that many people are willing to pay more for better services. As income rises, improved services can help to retain high levels of patronage, thereby avoiding a switch from public transport to private cars. Given the freedom in the choice of buses, operators are able to respond more closely to the preferences of passengers, which are likely to range from vehicle offering basic

