Comparative Study of Intercity Transport Companies in Benin City, Nigeria

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Abstract–This study examined comparative study of intercity transport companies in Benin City, Nigeria. The study sample consists of four hundred respondents drawn from across the four leading interstate transport companies in Benin City. A questionnaire instrument was used to gather the needed information and the analytical techniques employed include simple percentage, t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA). All tests were performed at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. The findings revealed that God is Good Motors was rated far higher than the other transport companies by passengers while Iyare Motors was rated the least. Furthermore, we found that there is no significant relationship between respondents' gender and customer perception of service quality in interstate transport companies. However, educational qualification and age had a significant relationship with passengers' perception of service quality. We recommend that interstate transport companies should concentrate more on issues such as safety, comfort on the road, respect for passengers and regular maintenance of vehicles as well as replacing unserviceable vehicles with new ones to avoid frequent vehicle breakdown on the highway.

 Keywords: Companies, customer, demographic variables, intercity transport, perception, service quality

1. Introduction

Transportation involves moving people or goods from one location to another. In Benin City and in fact all over the world, people travel a lot on a daily basis. This travel includes many intercity and other long distance journeys that cut across one or more states. Intercity travel is the travel between cities or other points of interest that are separated by some significant distance. The transportation literature generally refers to long-distance travel as intercity travel. The term long-

distance travel is defined as trips of a certain minimum distance (Declan, Ibe , Ejem, Erumaka, 2018). With the development and gradual industrialization of the country, the number of commuters travelling intercity for work, personal interest, business dealings, visit to friends and family members or education is increasing day by day (Oseyomon & Ibadin, 2016; Rahman, Chowdhury, Haque, Rahman, & Islam, 2017; Mahfuzur, Sedigheh, Thinaranjeney & Muhammad, 2020; Muhammad & Kaniz, 2021). Road, rail, air and river are the main system of transportation in Nigeria. However, road transportation is the major means of transport in Nigeria by the middle and lower classes, accounting for the huge preponderance of freight and passenger travel.

Intercity transportation is an indispensable element in any nation and productivity relies extremely on its efficiency to move labour, consumers and goods between several destinations. It links individuals; makes people and places accessible and enhances social, economic and cultural interactions. Transportation has been going on for decades though the exact data of its commencement is not known (Babbie, 2004; Tomislav Bubalo & Marijan Rajsman, 2020).

Intercity transport is an essential service that people utilise to fulfil their travel needs. In Nigeria, transport operation is the primary responsibility of both public and private sectors (Amamilo & Agbor, 2018). However, the operators in private sector are the foremost provider of passengers' services. The sector according to Aworemi and llori (2008) is responsible for over ninety percent of all municipal passengers' transportation services in Nigeria.

According to Oseyomon & Ibadin (2016), Benin City which is the focus of this research provides passage routes to Lagos, Easthern, Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria. Transportation business in Benin City has developed immensely that the city can pride itself of numerous organized private transport companies. Consequently, passengers are beleaguered with the choice of which transportation company to travel with. Evidently, the level of competitiveness among the transport providers has increased by the various strategies they adopt to attract patronage (Amamilo & Agbor, 2018). This solid rivalry in this industry has forced transportation companies to go the extra mile of introducing customer-friendly marketing techniques in order to retain or win new customers. Some of the marketing techniques introduced include; reduced fares, frequent replacement of worn out buses/cars, regular training of drivers and improved customer services.

A review of literature reveals a limited investigation in the area of comparative study of intercity transport companies in Benin City in particular and Nigeria in general. Ali (2014), investigated assessment of passenger satisfaction with intercity public bus transport services in Abuja, Nigeria; Adekunle & Odia (2011), conducted a study on service delivery and customer satisfaction in the road transport industry in Benin City; similarly; Oseyomon & Ibadin (2016), examined perceived customer patronage of transport companies in a developing country; Agbi & Adekunle (2018), examined service quality and customer loyalty in road transport industry while Amamilo & Agbor (2018), worked on competition and choice among intercity bus operators in Nigeria; Declan, Ibe, Ejem, Erumaka, (2018), conducted a study on the estimation of intercity travel demand for public road transport in Nigeria. Outside Nigeria, Syed, Afzal, and Ali (2020) worked on comparative

analysis of public transport modes available in Karachi, Pakistan. However, none of these studies compared intercity transport companies using service quality scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry in 1985. Also, in view of the rising increase competition in the transportation industry; it is necessary to understand how passengers' evaluate the services provided by these companies that influence their choice.

Therefore, the focus of the study is to compare intercity transport companies in Benin City. The other objectives are to determine the perception of customers of service quality in selected interstate transport companies in Benin City; investigate if there is any significant difference in customers' perception of service quality of the selected interstate transport companies (Iyare Motors, God is Good Motors, Edegbe Motors and Big Joe Ventures); and ascertain the influence of demographic variables (gender, age and educational qualification) on customer perception of service quality in selected interstate private transport companies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Service Quality

Service quality can be understood as a comprehensive customer evaluation of a particular service and the extent to which it meets their expectations and provides satisfaction (Al-Jazzazi, Sultan, 2017). Service quality is the result of comparing customer expectations about the services made by customers with their perceptions of the services delivered by the company (Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985). If the customer's expectations for the service are more than the perceived service performance, then the perceived quality is unsatisfactory, so the customer will feel dissatisfied.

In a user-based approach, quality corresponds to satisfaction; the highest quality means the best satisfaction of consumers' preferences (Yarimoglu, 2014; Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp & Oláh (2019) Organizations have realized that service quality brings a sustainable and competitive advantage. Service quality and customer satisfaction are critical success factors for companies that are thinking about competitiveness, development and growth in the market (Angelova, & Zekiri, 2011).

Quality including service quality has been found to have a positive and strong relationship with a customer's level of satisfaction in different settings (Isibor & Odia, 2014; Agbonifoh & Agbonifoh, 2015; Bella & Adekunle 2018, Agbonifoh, Isibor, & Okere, 2016; Evbayiro-Osagie, Isibor & Ihemefor, 2017; Okhawere, Isibor & Otoghile, 2017; Isibor & Adjaino, 2019).

Many service and retail companies use the SERVQUAL approach to measure the service satisfaction (Parasuramman, Zeithaaml & Berry 1988; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991). Furthermore, Parasuraman et al. (1988) compiled a conceptualization of service quality or the SERVQUAL instrument covering 22 attributes, and grouped these attributes into five dimensions, namely: reliability, tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. Several studies have tried

to use the SERVQUAL approach. This approach has very broad service attributes and is very practical for use in various service companies. This instrument was created to measure the quality of services such as hotels (Rao & Sahu), hospitals (Agbonifoh & Agbonifoh, 2015), telephone companies, transport companies, insurance companies, banks (Parasuraman et al., 1991) and tourism (Wantara, & Irawati, 2021). According to Bello & Majebi (2018), the SERVQUAL model can be employed to measure service quality in all the service based industries. In this study, the researchers used the SERVQUAL approach as an instrument to compare intercity transport companies in Benin City, Nigeria. The above literature can come up with the following hypothesis:

H1: There is no statistically significant difference in customers' perception of the quality of services rendered by the selected interstate transport companies (Iyare Motors, God is Good Motors, Edegbe Motors and Big Joe Ventures)

2.2. Demographics Variables and Customers' Perception of Service Quality

Demographics is the study of universal and specific population factors such as race, gender, income, religion, marital status, occupation, as well as population density, size and location. Demographics are the quantification of statistics for a given population and are used to classify the study of measurable sub-sets within a given population (Amangala, 2013). Odia and Adekunle (2011) examined the nature of service quality delivery and customer satisfaction in the road transport industry in Benin City and found that the relationship between educational qualification, marital status, and age and customer satisfaction of the respondents is statistically significant. On the contrary, Anajemba (2015) detects that demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualification and income of customers do not significantly influence the level of satisfaction with the services provided. Similarly, Salami and Ajobo (2012) found that gender has no significant influence on customer perceptions about quality of service in fast food restaurants. Given the evidence in the reviewed literature the following hypothesis is proposed that:

H2: There is no statistically significant difference in customers' perception of the quality of services rendered by the selected interstate transport companies (Iyare Motors, God is Good Motors, Edegbe Motors and Big Joe Ventures)

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

In terms of measurement methodologies, an in-depth review of the literature provides ample of service quality evaluation scales (Abdullah, 2006). It reveals that the most popular scales used to measure service quality are SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and service performance SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Notably, the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF instruments have attracted the greatest attention.

Parasuraman et al., (1985), developed a model of service quality after carrying out a study on four service settings: retail banking, credit card services, repair and maintenance of electrical appliances, and long-distance telephone services. SERVQUAL has its theoretical foundations in

the gaps model and defines service quality in terms of the difference between customer expectations and performance perceptions (Brochado, 2009). The variation between expected and perceived services is defined as a gap (Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, & Hon-Tat, 2011). The SERVQUAL scale conceptualizes service quality as containing five dimensions measured through the 22 items under five headings that is, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Brochado, 2009). These dimensions are discussed as follows:

Tangibles
Parasuraman *et al.* (1985), identify tangibles as physical facilities (equipment, personnel, and communications materials). It is the physical image of the service that customers will use to assess quality. In the transportation industry tangibility will refer to modern looking structures such as offices, new vehicles, well dressed employees (office staff and drivers), and a visually appealing environment. More specifically, such tangibles are measured using 4 items of the tangible dimension of the 22-item SERVQUAL

Reliability
Reliability is the ability of the organization to perform the service right the first time. It also shows that organizations strive to keep promises and pay attention to the results. Studies of Lam (2002) ranked reliability as first in the dimensions of the service quality model. In the transportation industry, the state of performance of the vehicles in transporting passengers from one location to another, consistently adhering to the stipulated departure time, keeping accurate records and error free billing system will be a measure of reliability. This is measured using 5 items of the reliability dimension of the 22-item SERVQUAL (Agbi & Adekunle, 2017)

Assurance
Assurance has been defined as employees' courtesy and knowledge, and their ability to transfer confidence and trust to customers (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Assurance means keeping customers informed in their native language and listening to them, regardless of their educational level, age, and nationality. The assurance dimension includes the following items: a courteous and friendly transport official; courteous and friendly support staff; confidentiality of customers' information; the ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence in a customer; the thoroughness of explanation of vehicle condition; how the staff make customers feel safe and relaxed in their transactions; and the honesty of employees. It also includes the interior comfort of the vehicle.
Responsiveness
The dimension of responsiveness illustrates the willingness of employees (drivers and other members of staff) to help passengers and are willing to deliver prompt service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). More specifically, in the transport sector, it indicates understanding the needs and requirements of the customer, easy operation time, attention to complaints and customers' safety in their dealings. This is measured using 4 items of the responsiveness dimension of the 22-item SERVQUAL
Empathy

Empathy means caring, paying personal attention, and providing services to customers (Parasuraman, *et al.* 1985). The core of empathy is conveying the feeling that the customer is unique and special. Empathy in the transportation sector will include understanding the specific needs of each customer and paying attention to them, making the customer feel welcome and operating convenient business hours (Agbi & Adekunle, 2017). This study uses 4 items of the empathy dimension of the 22 item SERVQUAL.

3. Methodology

The study employs a survey research design. The adoption of survey research design is due to its high flexibility of data collection, potential to build a relationship, and a high degree of diversity of questions to capture different perceptions of respondents (Malhotra, Birks &Wills, 2013). The population of this study comprises all passengers that patronize intercity transport companies in Benin City. As a result of the impossibility of studying the entire population due to time, financial and other constraints, a representative sample was therefore selected from the population and used for the study. A sample of one hundred (100) passengers each for four transport companies namely: Iyare Motors, God is Goods, Edegbe Motors and Big Joe Ventures were taken to have sample size of 400. The rationales for the selection of these companies were due to their size, popularity, visibility in Benin City and are known over the years for long distance journeys.

With the aid of Google Form, convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select passengers of transport companies. Convenience sampling was used because it gives room for easy access and interaction with respondents. The research instrument used in this study was the questionnaire because the type of information sought could not be gathered otherwise. This instrument according to Agbonifoh and Yomere (1999) can be used to measure behaviour, past, present or even intended; other characteristics such as age, gender and level of formal education, attitudes and opinions. The questionnaire used in this study contains structured questions. The structured type of questions limits respondents to a set of replies. In these questionnaires, the investigation used the Likert-type scale because they require less skill, are easier to use and the data they yield are more easily analyzed and compared. The questionnaire consists of two parts which include the classification section requesting profile information about the respondent and the last section which contains 22 question-items adopted from SERQUAL model with five dimensions namely: tangibility, reliability. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS computer software. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages and mean. The relationship between demographic variables (gender) and customers' perception was analyzed using T-Test because the variable has two categories. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to establish the relationship between educational qualification, age and customers' perception. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to compare the four-interstate transport companies.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Result

This segment comprises the analyses of the data collected from the investigation in accordance with the objectives of the study. In order to achieve the objective of establishing the perception of customers towards service quality of some selected interstate private transport companies in Benin City. Weighted mean was calculated for every construct (tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy). Each of the dimension was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4) neutral (3), disagree (2) to strongly disagree (1) respectively and divided by the total number of respondents. The implication of the result is that the higher the weighted mean, the higher the perception of the customers and vice versa. Details of the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean perception of customers towards service quality in selected interstate private transport firms

S/N	Dimensions	Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach Alpha)	Iyare Motors	God is Good Motors	Edegbe Motors	Big Joe Ventures	Dimension Rating
1	**Tangibles**	0.677	3.273	3.595	3.283	3.403	**3.388**
2	**Responsiveness**	0.737	3.147	3.429	3.217	3.160	**3.238**
3	**Reliability**	0.730	3.169	3.411	3.264	3.253	**3.274**
4	**Assurance**	0.796	3.325	3.678	3.395	3.241	**3.410**
5	**Empathy**	0.782	3.149	3.422	3.239	3.220	**3.257**
	Aggregate		**3.213**	**3.507**	**3.280**	**3.255**	

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

The result of the Cronbach test presented in Table 1revealed that there exists internal reliability among the constructs measuring the key variables. The alpha coefficients for every variable are more than the disputed value of 0.6 (George & Mallery, 2003). Table 1 shows the reliability coefficients for the constructs. In assessing the interstate private transport companies, assurance dimension has the highest score (3.410), this is immediately followed by tangibles (3.388), reliability (3.274), followed by empathy (3.257) and lastly, responsiveness (3.238). In terms of customers' perception of the various dimensions, it can be inferred that interstate private transport companies performed comparatively better in the areas of assurance and tangibility. But interstate private transport companies were evaluated last on responsiveness. In comparing the different interstate private transport companies with respect to the above-mentioned dimensions, the result in Table 1 shows that God is Good Motors (3.507) was rated best; followed by Big Joe Ventures (3.255); next were Edegbe Motors (3.280) and lastly Iyare Motors, with the least mean value of (3.213).

In order to ascertain if there is any significant difference in customer perception of service quality of the selected interstate private transport companies on the basis of the various dimensions of service quality. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed. The result is presented in Table 2.

4.1. Comparison of Disaggregated Service Dimensions in Selected Interstate Private Transport Companies

Here, the four transport companies are compared separately with the five dimensions of service quality.

Table 2: Comparison of Disaggregated Service Dimensions in Selected Interstate Private Transport Companies

Dimensions of Service Quality		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangible	Between Groups	8.197	3	2.732	5.892	.001
	Within Groups	183.658	396	.464		
	Total	191.855	399			
Responsiveness	Between Groups	6.501	3	2.167	4.116	.007
	Within Groups	208.490	396	.526		
	Total	214.991	399			
Reliability	Between Groups	3.866	3	1.289	2.143	.094
	Within Groups	238.119	396	.601		
	Total	241.984	399			
Assurance	Between Groups	12.992	3	4.331	7.511	.000
	Within Groups	228.341	396	.577		
	Total	241.333	399			
Empathy	Between Groups	5.208	3	1.736	3.379	.018
	Within Groups	203.441	396	.514		
	Total	208.649	399			

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

The result (F = 5.892; p=0.01); (F = 7.511; p = 0.00) and (F=4.116;p= 0.007) shows that there is a statistically significance difference in the perception of customers with respect to the services rendered by the four interstate private transport companies based on tangibility, assurance and responsiveness respectively. But, reliability and empathy with (F=2.5143) and (F=3.379) and p=0.094 and p=0.018 respectively show that there is no statistically significance difference in the perception of customers with respect to the services rendered by the four interstate private transport companies. Post-hoc test using Students-Newman-Keuls (S-N-K) was carried out to categorize the interstate private transport companies as perceived by the customers on the basis of each dimension of service quality.

Table 3: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls for Tangibles

Transport Company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Iyare Motors	102	3.2725	
Edegbe Motors	70	3.2829	
Big Joe Motors	76	3.4026	3.4026
God is Good Motors	152		3.5947
Sig.		0.401	0.057

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

For tangibles, the result in Table 3 shows that Iyare Motors, Edegbe Motors and Big Joe Motors are perceived to be of the same category (Category 1) while God is Good Motors belongs to Category 2, which means God is Good Motors is rated or perceived higher than other transport companies in terms of tangibility.

Table 4: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls for Responsiveness

Transport Company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Iyare Motors	102	3.1474	
Big Joe Motors	76	3.1599	
Edegbe Motors	70	3.2171	
God is Good Motors	152		3.4291
Sig.		0.793	1.000

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

For responsiveness, the result presented in Table 4 shows that Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors, and Edegbe Motors are perceived to be of the same category (Category 1) while God is Good Motors belongs to Category 2, which means the transport firm is rated or perceived higher than others in terms of responsiveness.

Table 5: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls for Reliability

Transport Company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1
Iyare Motors	102	3.1691
Big Joe Motors	76	3.2533
Edegbe Motors	70	3.2643
God is Good Motors	152	3.4112
Sig.		0.152

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

The next dimension is reliability. The result shows that Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors, Edegbe Motors and God is Good Motors are all perceived to be of the same category (Category 1), which means Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors, Edegbe Motors and God is Good Motors are rated or perceived equally on the basis of reliability dimension.

Table 6: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls for Assurance

Transport Company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Iyare Motors	76	3.2413	
Big Joe Motors	102	3.3249	
Edegbe Motors	70	3.3954	
God is Good Motors	152		3.6778
Sig.		0.357	1.000

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

With respect to assurance, the result displayed in Table 6 shows that Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors and Edegbe Motors are perceived to be of the same category (Category 1) while God is Good Motors belongs to Category 2, indicating that God is Good Motors is perceived or rated higher than other transport companies in terms of assurance.

Table 7: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls for Empathy

Transport Company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1
Iyare Motors	102	3.1487
Big Joe Motors	76	3.2196
Edegbe Motors	70	3.2393
God is Good Motors	152	3.4218
Sig.		0.051

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

The last dimension of service quality is empathy. The result shows that Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors, Edegbe Motors and God is Good Motors are all perceived to be of the same category (Category 1), meaning all the transport companies are rated or perceived equally by customers with respect to empathy.

4.2. Comparison of Aggregated Customer Perception of Interstate Transport Firms

Here, the four transport companies are compared jointly with the five dimensions of service quality.

Table 8: ANOVA result of customer perception of the four interstate transport firms

Transport Company	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.689	3	2.230	5.952	0.001
Within Groups	148.348	396	.375		
Total	155.037	399			

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

Using the five aggregated service dimensions of tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy, the results in Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference in customer perception of service quality provided by Iyare Motors, Edegbe Motors, Big Joe Motors and God is Good Motors. The F-value (5.952) and p-value (0.001) are clear indications that the difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 9: Post-hoc test using Students -Newman-Keuls

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Transport Company	**N**	**1**	**2**
Iyare Motors	102	3.2126	
Big Joe Motors	76	3.2557	
Edegbe Motors	70	3.2797	
God is Good Motors	152		3.5072
Sig.		0.740	1.000

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

Since the ANOVA result is found to be significant, post-hoc test using Post-hoc-test using Students-Newman-Keuls (S-N-K) was conducted to categorize the transport firms as perceived by the customers. The result shows that Iyare Motors, Big Joe Motors and Edegbe are perceived to be of the same category (Category 1) while God is Good Motors belongs to Category 2, meaning the transport company is perceived or rated higher than others.

4.3 Influence of Demographic Variables on Customers' Perception of Service Quality of Interstate Private Transport Companies

The demographic variables of the respondents are presented below in terms of gender, educational qualification and age. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Demographic variables of respondents and test statistic

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Freq.	%	Mean	Test Statistics	Decision
Gender	Male	187	46.75	3.3037	t=3.569 (0.060)	Not Sig.
	Female	212	53.13	3.3788		
Educational Qualification	SSCE/GCE	128	32.00	3.2364	F=4.021 (0.008)	Sig.
	NCE/Diploma/OND or Equivalent	54	13.5	3.3393		
	HND. /B.Sc. or Equivalent	182	45.5	3.4536		
	Postgraduate	36	9.00	3.1843		
Age	18-24 years	242	60.50	3.4224	F=3.682 (0.012)	Sig.
	25 -31years	115	28.75	3.1911		
	32-38 years	34	8.50	3.3194		
	39 years and above	9	2.25	3.3044		

Source: Researchers' fieldwork (2021)

T-Test was conducted to find out whether significant differences exist between gender and customers' perception of service quality towards interstate transport companies. The result shows that gender (t= 3.569; p= 0.060) does not significantly influence customers' perception with interstate transport companies at 5 % level of significance. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether significance differences exist between the other two demographic variables (educational qualification and age) and customers' perception of service quality towards interstate transport companies. The result in Table 10 shows that educational qualification (F=4.021; p= 0.008) and age (F=3.682 (0.012) significantly influence the perception towards the quality services provided by interstate transport companies. We can therefore conclude that demographic variables such as educational qualification and age significantly influence customers' perception of service quality of interstate transport companies.

5. Discussion of Findings
The study showed that the transport companies performed better in the area of assurance tangibility. The possible reasons for this could be the fact that employees are trained to be polite with passengers; the behaviour of employees instill confidence in passengers and feel safe in their transaction with employees of the transport company. With regards to tangibility, it could be that the companies have up-to-date equipment such as latest safety gadget and busses/cars; the physical facilities of the companies are visually appealing; employees are well dress and neat in appearance as well as clean physical environment.

It was not surprising that God is Good Motors was rated best among the four transport companies. It was rated best on the five dimensions of service quality. The physical facilities of God is Good Motors is top notch compared to Big Joe Ventures, Edegbe Motors and Iyare Motors. Employees of God is Good Motors are always well dressed and neat in appearance and the physical

environment of the company is always clean. It provides services as promised and at the promised time. This finding is at variance with the study by Oseyomon and Ibadin (2016), who found that Edegbe Motors was the preferred choice of Transport Company by passengers over God is Good Motors in Benin City.

The study also found that educational qualification and age had a significant relationship with passengers' perception of service quality in selected interstate transport companies. However, gender was found not to have a significant relationship. Both males and females viewed service quality in the same way. The possible reason for this was because both males and females go through similar process and get the same kind of customer service and treatment in these transport companies. The finding from this study supports previous finding by Anajemba (2015) who found that demographic characteristics such as (gender, age, educational qualification and income had a significant relationship with perception of service quality. Similarly, the study by Odia and Adekunle (2011) revealed that educational qualification had a significant relationship with perception of service quality.

6. Conclusion
The information generated in the various designated interstate transport companies in Benin City was analyzed and the findings are as follows. First, customers' perception of each of the interstate transport companies is above average for all the five dimensions of service quality, that is, tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. Assurance and tangibility are the dimensions that are most positively perceived by passengers while responsiveness is perceived least. Secondly, God is Good Motors was rated far higher than the other transport companies by passengers while Iyare Motors was rated least. Lastly, there is no significant relationship between respondents' gender and customer perception of service quality in interstate transport companies. However, there is a significant relationship between educational level of the respondents and age with customer perception of service quality.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: the result shows that assurance and tangibility are the most important dimensions of service quality to the passengers of the four transport companies. We recommend that interstate transport companies should concentrate more on issues such as safety, comfort on the road, politeness, respect for passengers and regular maintenance of vehicles as well as replacing unserviceable vehicles with new ones to avoid frequent breakdown of vehicles on the high way. Passengers' rating of responsiveness as the least dimension of service quality should serve as opportunity for interstate transport companies to be more responsive to passengers' complaints and should never be too busy to respond to their needs. Also, employees of these companies should be willing to make information easily obtainable by passengers.

Edegbe Motors, Iyare Motors and Big Joe Ventures should embark on regular training of employees to equip them with professional, technical and interpersonal skills and knowledge that would help them to perform their duties effectively. This will in the long run improve the quality of services provided by the transport companies and by extension, improve quality service delivery. Recognition, rewards and incentives for employees can also boost employees' moral and improve their quality of service delivery. In addition effective supervision of employees that provide guidance and support for day-today activities would improve the quality of services rendered by the employees

Lastly, we recommend that interstate transport companies in Benin City in particular and Nigeria in general should from time to time engage in passengers' research to find out their perception of the quality of service delivery on each SERVQUAL dimension and also to get suggestion from the passengers on how the company can better satisfy their passengers.

8. Limitations of the Study
The study is limited to only four transport companies in Benin City, Nigeria and this renders the result of the study applicable mainly to these companies. Another limitation of this study was the inability to use a simple random sampling.

9. Suggestions for Future Research
Based on the limitations of the study, it is important for future studies to expand the scope of the study area and also collect information from both management and employees thereby giving a deeper insight into the subject matter. Again, futures studies should use other models for measuring service quality such as performance only model to see how this would affect the result.

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