



Research Article

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Commercial Transportation Services in Gombe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The growing concern on the issue of customer satisfaction in commercial road transportation services is one of the fundamentals facing commuters in Nigeria. As public transport services such as buses and taxi's inability to provide door-to-door services, this has left residence with no option rather than to accept commercial motorcycles and tricycles with all its consequences. This study assessed the influence of SERVQUAL dimensions on customer satisfaction of Commercial Motorcycle and Tri-cycle businesses in Gombe State. Survey design was used, with the aid of structured questionnaire in collecting the required data conveniently from a sample of 400 respondents from the three senatorial zones of the State comprising of; Billiri, Akko, and Gombe Local Government each of which represent; Gombe South, Gombe central and Gombe North respectively. The collected data was analyzed using AMOS SEM with the aid of SPSS Version 23.0 to obtained the desired results. Four set of Hypotheses were raised and answered based on the research findings. Findings from the study indicated that, three of the hypotheses were accepted and significant toward influencing customer satisfaction of Commuters in Gombe State, except that of reliability which was rejected but significant towards the Dependent variable. Moreover, it was recommended that, government mechanisms should be used in addressing the challenges anchored by operators of this mode in Nigeria and in Gombe state to be precise, by providing more motorcycles ad tricycles and likewise favorable infrastructures for effective and efficient service delivery to people living in an un-motorable locations.

Keywords: Service quality, Customer satisfaction, Gombe state, Nigeria.

Introduction

Transportation connote, movement of people and goods from one location to another. It is one of the essential parts of human activities, and in many ways, form the basis for which, all socio-economic interactions and, political ties among various places around the World revolves. Indeed, two locations can interact effectively when there is an intervention of transportation mode, as it provides or improve access to business locations and aid individual freight and personal movements (YOO, 2020). The emergence of Motorcycle and tricycle taxi in the road transport has brought a revolution in the sector. The trend in the service provision, has being supporting vast majority of people in many countries (Olvera, et'al, 2007). It is mostly operated by young, middle, older men and few women in other regions in Nigeria (Aladegbola, 2018). Its proliferation according to Jolaoye et'al, (2022) was to provide support to people as an off-farm employment, to raise income, and as a way of livelihood to the teeming unemployed and to the rural-urban migrants who have no choice, but to adventure into the self or casual employment in the informal sector of the economy, which the sub-sector readily offered.

The key issue for survival in any business environment lies within the level of satisfaction customers derived from the usage of a product, or services offered. Customers who are dissatisfied, do not mostly return to the same provider and likewise complain to more people about poor quality of the service they received (Chicu et'al, 2019) as such, tthe greater the level of user satisfaction, the greater the performance of a business.

SERVQUAL dimensions has being the most useful technique to identify the various successes and failure points within which the whole service processes revolved. Although, there was no extensive studies on service quality in relation to customer satisfaction in transportation sector (Stradling et al., 2007). In the face of the few publications made on the area of Service quality and Customer satisfaction in public transport services, more were concentrated on; buses, taxis, and light rails, while others were on airplanes (Mazak, 2020). However, much were not being reported on commercial motorcycle and tricycle services in spite of its importance to the socioeconomic advancement of a society.

In developing countries where the rate of population is increasing and the largest transportation option is served by buses and light rails, customers were unable to be served to the last mile, as these mobility modes stopped at bus stops or rail stations (Wawira, 2017). These unsatisfied need according to Fortune Business Insights (2020), calls for the usage of other alternative means such as; taxis, motorcycles, and tri-cycles that can serve commuters to the last mile, as they are easy to hire and provide door to door connectivity.

However, in spite of the acceptability of commercial motorcycles and tricycles in Nigeria by commuters, it was reported that, most of the accidents experienced in recent times in most part of the metropolitan cities in Nigeria, were caused by commercial motorcycle and tricycle operators as a result of; over speeding, careless riding, substance abuse and neglect to traffic regulations (Bello et'al, 2016). Apart from lack of respect for traffic laws as it was observed, commercial motorcyclists and tricyclist were accused of indulging into acts such as; theft, handbag and mobile phone snatching, rape and, kidnapping (Ologbomehin 2012, & Okache 2021). The symmetrical increase in crime with the aid of motorcycles and tricycles, has created tension in the minds of people, as it has become difficult to understand genuine commercial motorcycle operators with that of criminals.

It was as a result of these and many other issues revolving around the usage of motorcycle and tricycles that, many states of the federation categorically ban their usage as a way of curtailing these acts. Considering the above challenges, there is need to assess the level of satisfaction by commuters in relation to the services provided by these operators, to assess whether or not, there services in Gombe State is up to the expectations of commuters based on; tangibility, reliability, affordability, as well as safety and security of their services. These shall assist in enhancing the delivery of the operations that will protect commuters from the widespread effect of poor service delivery by operators thereby, suggesting appropriate measures to be taken by all stakeholders in relation to the sub-sector.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Transportation.

Tangibility

Tangibility are physical facilities, equipment, and it appearances in a certain location (Parasuraman et'al, 1988). One of the appealing needs of transport service providers is the cleanliness and comfort which are focused on the cleanliness of the transport mode in terms of; seats, interiors and exterior that include; windows, headlight, mirror, tires, and whether service providers were properly in good hygienic condition. According to Berry et'al (1990), the tangibility factors is what gives passengers their initial impression, so it makes sense that this aspect should be measured first before any other factors.

There were many reports that suggested cleanliness as the most central among the several other factors that may influence satisfaction (Islam et'al, 2014). Tangibility indicates the physical attributes for instance, the equipment, facilities used by a service company. According to the Govender (2014) tangibles describe as the physical signals that there is an element of good service offering process. The passengers measured their perceived satisfaction through experience using the attributes that were seen which reflects how the motorcycles and tri-cycles are preserved and the ability to accommodate various users, including people with disabilities, and their luggage.

Reliability

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), reliability is the ability of a product/service to offer the desired satisfaction as promised consistently and correctly. The fundamentals of reliability are regularity and the promptness of a transport providers to arrive on time as demanded by users and able to fulfil the passenger prerequisite. In many studies, the reliability dimension centers on the frequency and punctuality of transport service to arrive on time and to meet the perception or expectations of customers. For instance, Nutsugbodo, (2013) stated that, dependency and unreliable information on arrival and departure time will be the main reason why customer felt discouraged to use public transport. The reliability dimension of service quality in motorcycle and tricycle transport service is referred to how the operator execute and implement their assured services, quality and correctness within the given usual necessities amid the customer need (Zeithaml, 2000).

Affordability

For any service industry to be affordable, it could be explained as the capacity of the customer to pay for what they consumed or used (Saukar, 2005 and Kundi, 2013). In this sector, affordability means the ability of the passengers to pay for their transit service (Carruthers & Dick, 2014). Litman (2019) state that, affordability refers to people's ability to pay and get essential goods and services from providers. Many researchers outlined that, affordability is defined as the capability of the household to incur cost for transport service (Covender, 2014).

In 2003, the Institute for development and information on transport and the institute of applied economic research, conducted a research to dig deeper on the issues related to urban mobility and lack of possible access to public transport services by low income earners in heavily populated urban centers. It was revealed that, low earners within the population who live in the metropolis were denied access to public transport due as they cannot afford the fare charged for movement. Alan (1987) stated that, expenditures on travels is the most important factor to measure when travelling by commuters with low income. If the mode of transport is too expensive for them, they consider other available options. He further emphasized that, the extent of affordability of a transport mode, depends on the income level of commuters. He emphasized on taking into consideration the transportation affordability of people when designing transport policies and strategies, very curtail particularly in remote or isolated areas (Panou et al, 2007).

Safety and Security

Safety and security are the fundamental concern for transport, both as the basis of a citizen's right to travel without fear, and as a condition for reliable and efficient transportation of goods. Nearly 3,500 lives were reported during safety and security summit in 2018, lost their lives each day to road crashes across the globe. It was generally believed that safety and security aspect of a transport operation is the most important factor in the sector, as it is closely related to human lives on a larger scale as many passengers happen to be riding in one facility (Joewono, 2006). Raynor and Mirzeov (2014) mentioned that reckless driving and over speeding always lead to accident which could have been prevented.

Safety issues were found by Smith and Clark (2000) as a constraint for people to choose a transport mode for travelling. Pick-pocketing, over charging by over-crowding and lack of supervision are other constraints. The study of Hundal and Kumar (2015) assessed the service quality of Northern Railway by using SERVQUAL Model. The study objective was to evaluate the determinants of passengers' satisfaction with service quality of Indian railway. It was reported that, facility, safety, security, punctuality and employee behaviours were considered as the factors which affects customers' satisfaction.

Conceptual Model

Based on the previous literature review, several possible efforts were made in relation with the determinants of Customer satisfaction in commercial transportation modes. Figure 1 below, represent the conceptual framework of the study showing the relationship between Customer satisfaction as the dependent variable, and its determinants as the independent variable that appear mostly in commercial road transportation literatures.

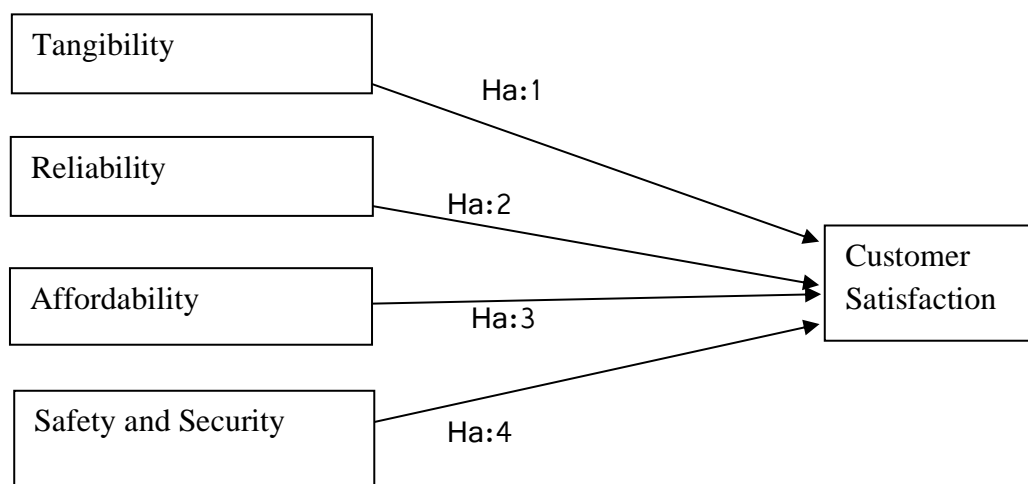


Figure 1: Adapted from the works of; Caleb, 2021; Sharmila, et al, 2022; & Sebastine, 2023).

Theoretical Review

Expectancy Dis-confirmation Paradigm

Depiction on the limitations of the theories of consumer satisfaction, Oliver (1977; 1980) proposed the Expectancy Dis-confirmation Paradigm (EDP) as the most capable theoretical framework for assessing satisfaction of customers. It implies that, purchasing goods and services by consumers is with some pre-purchase expectations on its performances. The pre-purchase expectation level then becomes the yardstick for measuring the satisfaction of the product/services. That is, once the product or service has been purchased/offered, outcomes are associated against expectations. If the result matches the expectations, confirmation transpires.

Dis-confirmation will happen, where there is a variation between expectations and outcomes. A satisfaction or dissatisfaction will occur, as a result of positive or negative difference between expectations and observations. Thus, when service expressed is better than what the customer had initially expected, there is a positive dis-confirmation between expectations and performance which results in satisfaction, however, when service performance is as expected, there is a confirmation between expectations and perceptions which results in satisfaction. In contrast, when service performance is not as good as what the customer expected, there is a negative dis-confirmation between expectations and perceptions which causes dissatisfaction. This type of discrepancy theory has a long history in the satisfaction literature dating back to Howard's & Sheth's (1967) definition of satisfaction which states that, it is a function of the degree of congruency between aspirations and perceived reality of experiences.

Empirical Review

Mahapatra & Telukoti (2018) conducted research on the Obstacles and Experiences of Uber Drivers and Consumer Satisfaction in Pune City. It was found that, drivers experience manageable challenges and are generally satisfied with the firm's services. Customers hire Uber for its efficiency, but this is only one of several reasons. According to V. H. Kumar and Sentamilselvan (2018), customers consider cost, comfort, convenience, service quality, and customer care while selecting a taxi service provider. The study was based on a survey conducted in Chennai. Results represent what consumers in the Chennai market think and their happiness with taxi service providers.

Chia (2017) used the SERVQUAL model to evaluate ride-hailing service quality dimensions toward customer satisfaction in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The study aimed to identify the discrepancy between the ride-hailing service providers and the customers' expectations of the service quality provided. The findings indicated that all five service factors positively and substantially correlated with customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Levin, Kockelman, Boyles, and Li (2017) found that on-demand ride-sharing services such as Uber have the potential to reduce automobile ownership, shift traffic from single occupancy to ride-sharing, and delay travel plans during peak hours. According to Levin et al. (2017), ride-sharing services such as Uber have the potential to decrease car ownership, shift single occupancy traffic, and delay travel plans during rush hours. These impacts lessen overall traffic congestion in an urban area (Amegayibor & Korankye, 2021; Z. Li, Hong, & Zhang, 2016; Rangana, Madhushani, & Jayarathna, 2019).

Balachandran and Hamzah (2017) found that; comfort, reliability, price, promotion and coupon redemption, and reliability positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction in Malaysia. Comfort has a major impact on customers' satisfaction with ride-sharing services. Okoth, (2017) carried out an investigation on the factors that influence customer satisfaction with a focus on Matatu which is a public transport service in Nairobi central business district. The variables used are affordability, service frequency, reliability, safety and condition of Matatu on how they influence customer satisfaction. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population were all the commuters and service crew of 88 matatus plying from Gill house terminus with the sample size of 72. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS package and presented using frequency distribution tables in APA format. Based on the research findings, a unit increase in reliability of Matatus transport would lead to 0.811 increase in customer satisfaction in Kenya. While a unit increase in affordability, safety, and condition of Matatus, would lead to 0.642, 0.612, and 0.578 increase in customer satisfaction respectively. The study recommended increase in number of vehicles, operators should set prices and drivers should be trained and properly supervised to ensure commuters safety.

Inuwa et al, (2016), evaluated the effects of commercial motorcycle on health and traffic safety in Gombe metropolis, Gombe State, Nigeria. The study was carried out in Gombe Metropolis using the random sampling technique to select 500 motorcyclists as sample size. The data generated were analysed using simple percentages. findings revealed that, most of the motorcycles accidents were caused by reckless riding, drug abuse and disregard to traffic rules. Similarly, the study finds out that, Tricycles are the most important factor causing motorcycle accidents in Gombe metropolis.

Festus & Nzokuru (2014) studied the Dangers Associated with Commercial Motorcycle Transportation Business Implications for Riders in Nigeria. Where they studied Commercial motorcycle transport business as a mode public transportation been widely embraced by many Nigerians due to its perceived benefits. Its perceived benefits include its

flexibility in taking people to the last bit of their destinations, quick generation of money to meet basic life needs as well as its characteristic of cheap and easy maintenance. Despite these perceived benefits, the paper identifies dangers associated with it and sees it as unsustainable. The paper also identifies adult education programmes that are relevant for the correction of the anomaly of accepting its perceived benefits without due consideration of its dangers. The paper concludes that despite the perceived benefits of commercial motorcycle transport business, the dangers associated with it outweigh its benefits. It therefore recommends that serious attention and recognition from the government and the general public in all ramifications.

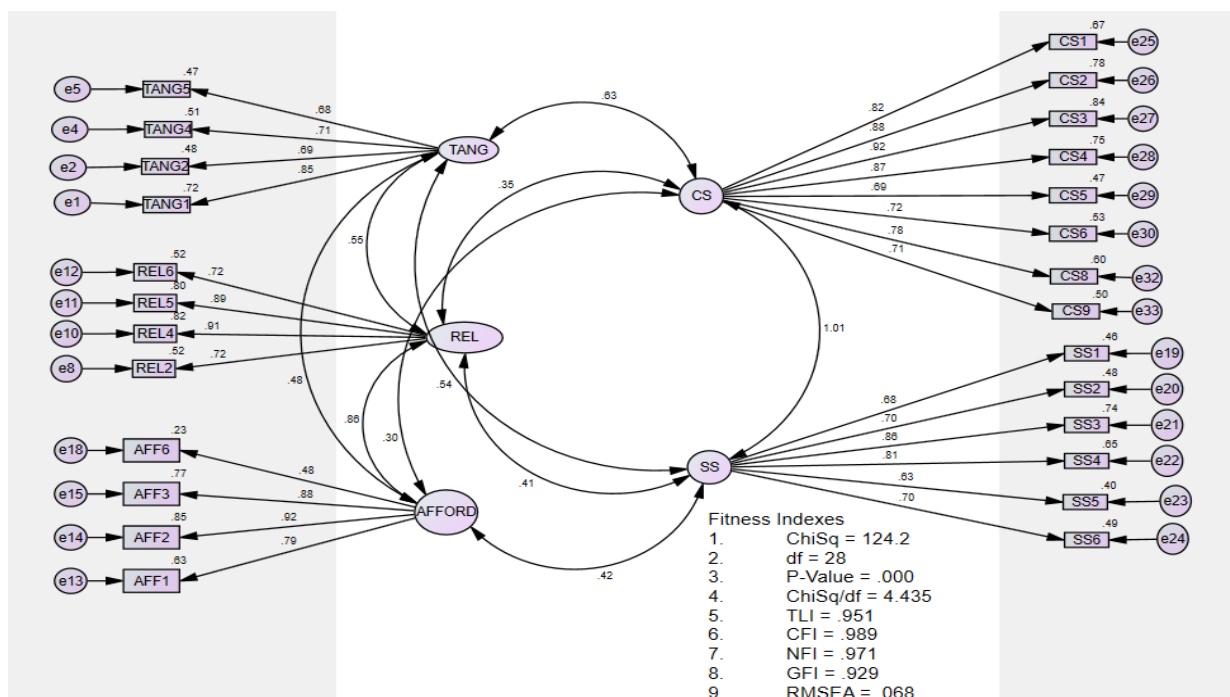
Methodology of the study

The study examined service quality indicators, and how it influences customer satisfaction in the most frequently used mode of commercial transportation that's motorcycle and tricycle services in Gombe State, Northeast Nigeria. Survey design was used to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking customers about their perceptions, experiences, behaviour and to some extent, ethical/legal consideration in relation to their expectations while using such services, with the aid of structured questionnaire used conveniently in collecting the data from a sample of 400 customers from the three senatorial districts of the State (Gombe North, Gombe Central and Gombe South) measured using 5 Likert Scale. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic data of the respondents, while Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) SEM was used in analyzing the psychological data with the aid of SPSS version 23.0 respectively.

Analysis and Results

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in the entire construct to determine the measures which indicated the validity, unidirectionality and reliability of the measurement models prior to modelling the Structural Equation Model. Square multiple correlation was used to show the strength and to enable the weaker items to be dropped from the constructs under consideration. While multiple correlation indicates the strength of the relationship between the exogenous construct and endogenous construct (Ganguli & Roy, 2011; Al-majali, 2011; Zainudin, 2012). The construct validity was achieved as the Cronbach's alpha values were 0.6 or higher for all components and for the fitness indexes; GFI were 0.90 and higher, CFI were 0.90 and higher, RMSEA were less than 0.08 and CMIN were less than 5.0 based on the criterion propounded by Zainudin, A. in 2012.

Figure 2 below, is a reflection of the items which indicated a reliable measure. The factor loadings were all within the required threshold of 0.6 and above, while the square of multiple correlation was also within the limit of 0.4 and above (Zainudin, 2012).



Source: AMOS Output, Version 23.0 (2025)

As shown in figure 2 above, all the index criteria were met. This was achieved without any form of model re-specification by either freeing off a parameter or deleting any of the items from the model.

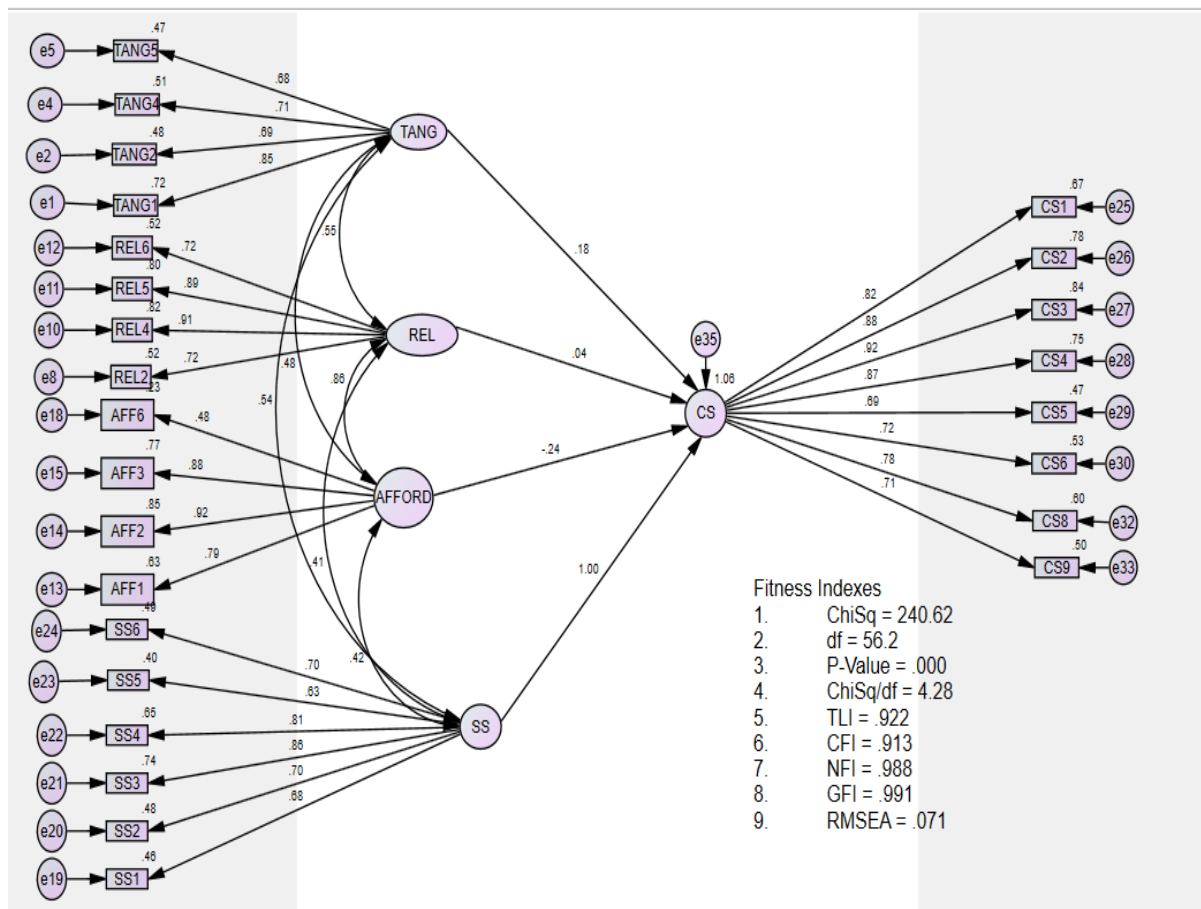
Table:1 Assessment of the fitness Indexes of the entire Constructs.

Name of category	Name on index	Index Value	Comments
Absolute fit	RMSEA	0.068	Required level achieved
Absolute fit	GFI	0.929	Required level achieved
Incremental fit	CFI	0.989	Required level achieved
Parsimonious fit	ChiSq/df	4.435	Required level achieved

Source: AMOS Output, Version 23.0 (2025)

The factor loadings for all items in the CFA is considered appropriate and has a good fit, thus ready to be subjected into SEM Analysis.

Figure: 3



Source: AMOS Output, Version 23.0 (2025)

Table:2 Assessment of fitness for the final Structural Model Equation

Name of category	Name on index	Index Value	Comments
Absolute fit	RMSEA	0.071	Required level achieved
Absolute fit	GFI	0.991	Required level achieved
Incremental fit	CFI	0.913	Required level achieved
Parsimonious fit	ChiSq/df	4.28	Required level achieved

Source: AMOS Output, Version 23.0 (2025)

Table:3 Hypothesis testing for the causal effect of all the construct

Path relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R	P. V	Remark
TANG → CS	.176	.029	6.1	***	Supported
REL → CS	.040	.049	.82	.412	Rejected
AFFORD → CS	.434	.068	6.3	***	Supported
SS → CS	1.033	.071	14	***	Supported

Source: AMOS SEM Output Version 23.0 (2025)

The hypotheses tested using CFA SEM path modelling results, supported Hypothesis I and in significant toward influencing customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.176$; CR= 6.1; P= 0.00). This simply mean that, all other variables held constant, Tangibility factors predict Customer satisfaction by 18%, which appeared in the hypotheses tested as supported and also, the first objective. Hypothesis II was significant toward predicting customer satisfaction but rejected according to the findings; as it ($\beta = 0.40$; CR= 0.82; P= 0.412), this mean that, the services provided by these modes of transport is to some extent not reliable as the result indicated, it does not have any influence on the satisfaction customers were enjoying from these services. As indicated, the total contribution of Reliability to the Customers' satisfaction in the sector is 4% and as such, it appeared in the hypothesis result tested as not supported or too weak to predict any significant influence on the dependent variable with a P-value of 0.412. So therefore, the result rejected the second hypothesis and also, the second objective.

Hypothesis III and IV were both supported with a ($\beta = 0.434$; CR= 6.3; P= 0.00 & $\beta = 1.033$; CR= 14.0; P= 0.00 respectively). The result as shown, commercial motorcycle and tricycle modes of transportation in Gombe state were affordable, safe and secured, so however, the result supported both the hypothesis and likewise objective III & IV respectively, as they are both significant toward influencing the satisfaction customers derived from the usage of these mode of transportation in Gombe state.

On a general note, the value of R^2 for the entire contributions of the Four (4) factors studied on Customer satisfaction in the commercial motorcycle and tricycle services in Gombe state is ≥ 100 . Although, this research has gotten $\geq 100\%$ contributions on the dependent variable specifically, Tangibility, Reliability, Affordability, Safety and Security contributions were 18%, 4%, 24% and 100% respectively, this suggested that, researchers can as well look into other variables, other than the Four Service quality indicators used in this work.

Conclusion and recommendation

This paper, provides an overview of some of the influential factors among the service quality dimensions that predicts customer satisfaction in commercial motorcycle and tri-cycle transport services in Gombe State. It addresses issues related to customer satisfaction in the most attractive mode of commercial road transportation in used in the state. As government mechanisms in addressing the challenges anchored by operators of this mode in Nigeria and in Gombe state to be precise, through mandatory registration ad obtaining means of identity, possession of reflective jackets, etc. but it failed to give a satisfactory result on issues related to the reliability of the service provision. However, as a way of recommendation government should prioritize the availability of more motorcycle's ad tricycles on our roads through Hire purchase, that will aid the availability of the vehicles for effective and efficient service delivery to people living mostly in an un-motorable locations.

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