

## **A SURVEY OF PASSENGERS SATISFACTION ON SERVICE QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR: THE CASE OF SNNPR, ETHIOPIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Transportation in general, among other modes, and road transport in particular is the most widely used transport sector all over the world. The Ethiopian Federal Transport Authority EFTA (2011) report reveals that the sector is facing certain challenges because the entire people of the nation highly lie on road transport than other alternative modes. There is also a prevalence of poor quality of services in the sector which makes the road transport passengers of the nation dissatisfied. Therefore, this study was intended to assess passengers' satisfaction on service quality of public transport sector in SNNPRS of Ethiopia. To attain this objective, the researchers used a descriptive survey research design. The probability sampling (clustering) was used. The data sources included both primary and secondary ones. Primary data were directly collected from the respondents while secondary data were found from published and unpublished materials such as books, journals and etc. The findings imply that bus stations are not acquainted with basic physical facilities and equipment, such as toilet, shower, waiting place, cafeteria, etc. and presence of problems in personnel service delivery. Most passengers in the data collection sites were complaining about the lack of basic facilities in the bus stations. In conclusion, the quality of services in the bus stations, the contemporary knowledge and skill of drivers and the ethics of service providers need to be intervened. Almost all of the respondents in each category worry about the quality issues at public transport sectors. Therefore, limited service in quality dimensions lead to customers' dissatisfaction at transport sector.

**Keywords:** Passengers Satisfaction, Service Quality, Public Transport.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Transport plays greater roles for economic growth and social development of nations. Transportation in general, among other modes, and road transport in particular is the most widely used transport sector all over the world. It also provides a base for local, national, regional and international flow of goods and passengers. Asnake (2006) states that road transport sector plays significant role in national economy of developing countries through direct contribution to GDP and employment. Indirectly, it also provides services that are indispensable. In Africa, road transport is the most dominant mode of motorized transport

that accounts for 80 per cent of the goods traffic and 90 per cent of the passengers' traffic in the continent (Fekadu, 2013). There are three modal systems of transport that exist in the nations (road, air and rail). Nonetheless, studies conducted by Ethiopia Roads Authority (ERA, 2005) and Ethiopian Federal Transport Authority (EFTA, 2011) show that about 99.31 per cent of the total passengers use road transport for their mobility, 0.65 per cent use airline and 0.04 per cent use railway transport. This indicates that the mobility trend of the society highly depends more on road transport industry than other modes (ERA, 2005). The Ethiopian Federal Transport Authority EFTA (2011) report reveals that the sector is facing certain challenges because the entire people of the nation highly lie on road transport than other alternative modes. There is also a prevalence of poor quality of services in the sector which makes the road transport passengers of the nation dissatisfied. Of these occurrences, the most dominant ones are the punctuality of buses when they begin the travel, comfort of the seat, cleanness of the bus, and bus terminal, and mechanisms to entertain the customers, and others. (Fekadu, 2014). SNNPRS has a coverage area of approximately 118,000 square kilometers with the total population of above 15 million and becoming the home of more than 56 nations and nationalities and peoples. After the Proclamation of 90/2006 to establish the executive body in the Council of SNNPRS, the Trade, Industry, and Urban Development Bureau, incorporating Transport Sector, was established from 2006 to the first mid of 2007. Following the revised Proclamation 106/2007 to decide the duties and responsibilities of the executive body of SNNPRS, Trade, Industry and Transport Bureau was formed. After the revised Proclamation 127/2009 to decide the duties and responsibilities of the executive body of SNNPRS, Southern Transport Authority was established under the Trade and Industry Bureau.

Customer satisfaction is defined as a judgment that a product or service is provided at a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. Also there are two levels of individual consumer's satisfaction: transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction or encounter satisfaction is identified as a fulfillment response to a single transaction or encounter, whereas cumulative satisfaction is a judgment based on many occurrences of the same experience and not just one-time experience. For cases (encounter satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction), satisfaction is either defined as an overall judgment of satisfaction or decomposed into satisfaction with performance or quality attributes (Oliver, 1997; 2010). The growth of the passenger road transport and the adequacy of transport sector focus more on the supply and demand situations. The demand can be seen from the passengers' side and the supply is from the side of operators. On the other hand, it shows the ease of use of the supply and demand of transport and other related issues in the sector. Here, between the two, customers' satisfaction is one of the important issues and it may be challenged by different factors. Identifying these factors from both sides and forwarding intervention mechanisms for the problems are necessary to provide quality transportation service.

Existing studies on transport carried out in the nation do not properly address the issue under investigation. For instance, ERA (2005) in designing national urban transport policy examined only the general nature of road network rather than service quality and customers' satisfaction. Mintesnot and Takano (2007) made a diagnostic evaluation of public transportation mode choice in Addis Ababa with a special focus on intra-urban government bus transport. Among these and other studies, no one can investigate in areas of transport service quality and customers' satisfaction along public road transport sector in a country level and also at regional level. Therefore, this study was intended to assess passengers' satisfaction on service quality of public transport sector in SNNPRS of Ethiopia.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Concepts about Public Transportation**

Transportation is the movement of people with goods from one place to the other. It is a means by which goods (raw material, production equipment, operating inventories, semi-finished goods and finished goods) as well as people are able to get to or be made available where they are needed for commercial or non-commercial purposes, as at when desired. To achieve the welfare of human being the mobility (transportation of people and materials) is vital for social interaction, co-operation, production activities, economic and other types of development. This is the reason why road transport is popularly referred to as the engine and wheel of the society and it helps the world to go round and function actively. (Olakunori; 2006). Movements of people, goods and information have always been fundamental components of human societies. Contemporary economic processes have been accompanied by a significant increase in mobility and higher levels of accessibility. Although this trend can be traced back to the industrial revolution, it significantly accelerated in the second half of the 20th century as trade was liberalized, economic blocs emerged and the comparative advantages of global labor and resources were used more efficiently. However, these conditions are interdependent with the capacity to manage, support and expand movements of passengers and freight as well as their underlying information flows.

### **Concepts about Customer and Customer Satisfaction**

The term customer is used to explain the end users of a product or a service. Customer is a generic term referring to a person or business that purchases a product or service from one company or another person. It is also further explained as the end user of a product or organization. Generally, there are primary customers where an organization's work is primarily focused (Teikake, 2012). Customers are divided in to two forms; these are internal and external customers. Internal customers refer to staff or employees within the company whereas external customers refer to stakeholders of the public road transport sect (Kossmann, 2006). Satisfaction is further defined as an experience of fulfillment of an expected outcome. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a program or facilities is influenced by prior expectations regarding the level of quality (Sigala, 2004). Satisfaction depends on numerous factors, and there is no dearth of literatures on this point. Studies conducted show that customers want the best service quality and responses as well to what they want (Zheng and Jiaqing, 2007; Rabiul et.al, 2014).

Satisfaction can be characterized on different levels as per customer judgments. For instance, some customers may express a positive feeling towards a service or a product while others may express a negative feeling towards a service or a product towards it. Different customers evaluate a product or a service differently making them either highly satisfied while others may feel highly dissatisfied (Teikake, 2012). Literature on customers' satisfaction also clarifies the concept of dissatisfaction. For some researchers, these two concepts are totally different while for others dissatisfaction is on one end and satisfaction is on the other end of the same continuous line, and it is stated that some of the determinants are primarily a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Fonseca et.al, 2010). So, this study was also intended to assess passengers satisfaction on service quality of public transport sector in SNNPRS.

## Concepts about Service & Service Quality

Quality is defined as an adherence to customers' specifications (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) which are sought to meet the criteria that customers want. Measuring the quality of service is important to ensure that customers continue to visit the business for repeat purchases. In the transport business principles apply. If the customer is satisfied with the performance of the bus, the he/she will return and use the same passenger transport. Also likely customers will continue to use the bus service which they feel will satisfy their needs. Eboli and Mazulla (2007) investigated service quality attributes important for customer satisfaction with a bus transit service in Cosenza, Italia. According to them, respondent were asked to rate the importance and satisfaction with 16 service quality attributes (bus stop availability, route characteristic, frequency, reliability, bus stop furniture, bus overcrowding, cleanliness, cost, information, promotion, safety on board(drivers character), personal security, personnel, complains and its handling, environmental protection and bus stop maintenance). According to the result of the research customers' satisfaction is closely related with transport service planning which is reflected in reliability, frequency, information, promotion, personnel and complaint.

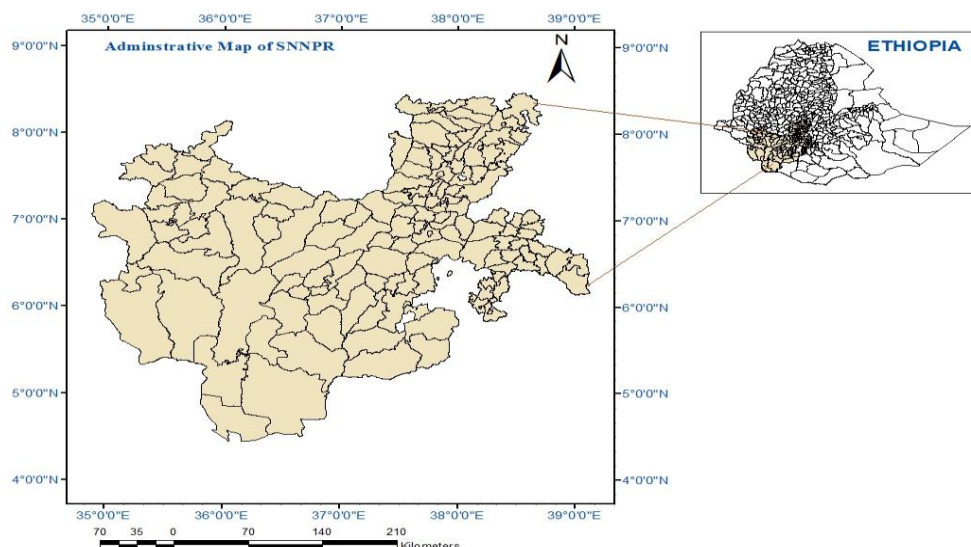
According to Budiono (2009), one of the problems regarding public transport sector in developing countries is regarding majority unit composed by small-sized vehicles, owned and operated (or leased) by single individuals. Most drivers are low-skilled young men who have migrated to cities from the countryside. Over abundance of idle labor in developing countries makes informal transport an attractive employment opportunity. This condition leads to ignorance of passengers' safety and discipline in using roads. This situation has become one problem for Ethiopian passengers' road transport system and is also true in SNNPRS.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Area/Setting

The Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPR) is one of the nine regional states in Ethiopia. This region comprises fifteen Zones, one City Administration and four special districts (*Woredas*). The administrative map of the region is as follows:

**Figure 1: Administrative map of study area**



## Research Design

As it is clearly stated in introduction part, the main purpose of this study was to assess the level of customers' satisfaction on service delivery of public transport sector in SNNPRS. To attain this objective, the researchers used a descriptive survey research design. In order to carry out this research, the researchers contacted the passengers of public transport sector, government officials and other concerned bodies with regard to the study theme.

## Sampling Method and Samples

The main sampling method for the research adopted was probability sampling (clustering). Specifically, the study clustered four research categories in the region (Central One, Central Two, South Cluster and West Cluster). Each cluster has zones and special districts (*woredas*). The Central One includes Gedio Zone, Sidama Zone, Hawassa City Administration, Alaba Special *Woreda* and Wolaita Zone. The Central Two includes Kambata and Tambaro Zone, Hadiya Zone, Guraghe Zone, Yem Special *Woreda* and Siltie Zone. The South Cluster includes Gamo Gofa Zone, South Omo Zone, Basketo Special *Woreda* and Segen Area People's Zone. The West Cluster includes Kaffa Zone, Benchi Maji Zone, Konta Special *Woreda*, Dawuro Zone and Sheka Zone. Out of 117 bus stations, 281 passengers were selected randomly from the zones and special *woredas* stated above.

## Data Sources and Data Collection Tools

The data sources included both primary and secondary ones. Primary data were directly collected from the respondents while secondary data were found from published and unpublished materials such as books, journals, reports, magazines, internet, etc. To collect information from respondents, researchers used questionnaires, and interviews.

## Questionnaire

A questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended items was originally prepared by researchers. It was initially developed in English and then translated into Amharic to collect information from passengers in the bus stations. The reliability of the questionnaire for passengers for customers (satisfaction=, 0.77 and service quality= 0.76).

## Interview

Structured interviews were employed to some selected passengers to validate the data collected through questionnaire, and unstructured interviews were used for daily customers from the stations.

## Techniques of Data Analysis

Data gathered using both primary and secondary sources were analyzed by employing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) was used for data analysis.

## Data Collection Procedures and Ethics

Twenty experienced data collectors were trained on how to handle passengers and collect valid data. Concerning data collection procedures, consents and ethics-detailed emphases were given during data collection. In addition there was continuous follow up and supervision during data collection sessions.

## RESULTS

The main objective of this research was to assess passengers' satisfaction on service quality of public transport sector *in SNNPR of Ethiopia*. With this regard the following results are explained.

**Table 1: Background information of passengers**

No	Variables	Category	Frequency	( %)	Remark
1	Sex	M	226	80.4	
		F	55	19.6	
		Total	281	100	
2	Age	Below 18	25	8.9	
		18-24	133	47.3	
		25-30	77	27.4	
		Above 30	46	16.4	
		Total	281	100	
3	Education	Uneducated	6	2.1	
		1-4	6	2.1	
		5-8	49	17.4	
		9-12	73	26.0	
		Diploma	68	24.2	
		Degree	79	28.1	
		Total	281	100	
4	Marriage	Single	163	58.0	
		Married	111	39.5	
		Divorced	4	1.4	
		Widowed	3	1.1	
		Total	281	100	
5	Family size	1-3	162	57.7	
		4-6	71	25.3	
		Above 6	48	17.1	
		Total	281	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2015

## Responses of Passengers on Service Quality Indicators

Table2: Responses of passengers on service quality indicators (N=281)

No	Items	Responses										
		Strongly Disa.		Disagree		No comment		Agree		Strongly Agree		Quality Index
		Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fr e.	%	Fr e.	%	
1	There are adequate physical facilities and equipments (toilet, shower, stay place, cafeteria, etc) in the bus stations	122	43.4	76	27.0	22	7.8	34	12.1	27	9.6	2.17
2	Personnel in the bus stations appear as the standards of the transport service sector	83	29.5	65	23.1	25	8.9	73	26.0	35	12.5	2.69
3	Personnel in the bus stations perform activities accurately and dependably	115	40.9	45	16.0	33	11.7	58	20.6	30	10.7	2.44
4	Personnel in the bus station show willingness to help the customers	90	32.0	62	22.1	39	13.9	55	19.6	35	12.5	2.58
5	Personnel in the bus stations provide prompt services	78	27.8	68	24.2	57	20.3	48	17.1	30	10.7	2.59
6	Personnel in the bus stations have knowledge and courtesy of employees	76	27.0	82	29.2	49	17.4	52	18.5	22	7.8	2.51
7	Personnel in the bus stations inspire trust and confidence in delivering services	80	28.5	58	20.6	41	14.6	63	22.4	39	13.9	2.72
8	Personnel in the bus stations are caring	100	35.6	71	25.3	38	13.5	46	16.4	26	9.3	2.38

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Average index=2.51

**Responses of Passengers on Service Satisfaction****Table 3: Responses of Passengers on Service Satisfaction (N=281)**

No	Items	Responses										
		Strongly Unsa.		Unsatisfied		No comment		Satisfied		Strongly Satisfied		Satisfaction Index
		Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	
1	Comfort of seats on bus	73	26.0	109	38.8	27	9.6	51	18.1	21	7.5	2.42
2	Cost effectiveness, affordability and value	102	36.3	74	26.3	32	11.4	45	16.0	28	10.0	2.37
3	Explanations and announcement delays	75	26.7	85	30.2	47	16.7	53	18.9	21	7.5	2.50
4	Frequent service so that wait time are shorter	73	26.0	77	27.4	64	22.8	48	17.1	19	6.8	2.51
5	Friendly, courteous and quick service from personnel	63	22.4	98	34.9	41	14.6	60	21.4	19	6.8	2.55
6	Route/direction information visible on buses	89	31.7	75	26.7	45	16.0	46	16.4	26	9.3	2.44
7	Safe and competent drivers/conductors	90	32.0	72	25.6	62	22.1	43	15.3	14	5.0	2.36
8	Safety from crime at stations	106	37.7	61	21.7	49	17.4	53	18.9	12	4.3	2.30
9	Safety from crime on buses	91	32.4	64	22.8	59	21.0	52	18.5	15	5.3	2.42
10	Signs or information in mother tongue as well as Amharic	105	37.4	80	28.5	46	16.4	46	16.4	4	1.4	2.16
11	The bus traveling at a safe speed	98	34.9	94	33.5	36	12.8	41	14.6	12	4.3	2.20
12	Buses carry as per the specified capacity	166	59.1	61	21.7	18	6.4	24	8.5	12	4.3	1.77

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Average Index=2.33



## DISCUSSION

### Discussion of Quantative Data

According to Table 1 above, 80.4% of the respondents were males while the rest 19.6% were females. Concerning the age of respondents, below 18 were 8.9%, 18-24 were 47.3%, 25-30 were 27.4%, and respondents above 30 were 16.4%. From this, it can be seen that almost 85% of the respondents' age is 30 and below it. Concerning the educational status of passengers, nearer to 30% are degree holders, followed by respondents within 9-12 graders (26%), while 24.2% of the respondents were diploma holders. As depicted on Table 2 the availability of adequate physical facilities and equipment in the bus stations, 70.4% of the respondents said that they disagreed with the presence of basic services in the bus stations. This data implies that bus stations are not acquainted with basic physical facilities and equipment, such as toilet, shower, waiting place, cafeteria, etc. With regard to the expected standards of personnel in the bus stations, 52.6 % of the respondents disagreed with personnel service qualities in the bus stations. On the contrary, 38.5 % of respondents agreed with personnel services in the bus stations. It implies the presence of problems in personnel service delivery. Concerning accuracy and dependability of bus station personnel, almost 57% of customers disagreed with services. Hence, it can be said that the services provided by personnel are not dependable and accurate. Willingness of the personnel to support passengers in the bus stations was found to be the issue of a big concern (54.1 %). Almost half of the passengers (49.1%) responded that they have no trust and confidence with personnel providing services in the bus stations, while the issue of taking care for passengers property and goods was less considered. The result shows that 60.9 % of respondents disagreed on the issue. Average service quality level in bus station is 2.51(50.2%). This reveals that the service quality provision in all visited bus satiations have problems in service quality.

As indicated in Table 3 the bus seat comfort-ability, the result shows that 64.8% of respondents were dissatisfied, while only 25.6% of the respondents were satisfied on the quality of the seats on the public transport. This figure implies that bus seat comfort-ability is one of the factors for customers' dissatisfaction in the public transport sector. With regard to cost-effectiveness and affordability of tariff, 62.6% of the passengers were dissatisfied, while only 26% of the passengers were satisfied with it. From this, it can be implied that the tariff in charge is not affordable for passengers. For issues related with timely announcement and explanation of buses' departure, nearly 57% of the passengers responded their dissatisfaction. This figure shows that personnel in the bus stations do not stick themselves to the times of buses' departure. On the other side, 57.3% of the respondents replied that they were dissatisfied with the fact that there was no friendly, courteous and quick service from the personnel in the bus stations. It can be induced from these data that services provided by the personnel in the bus stations are not friendly, courteous and quick.

Concerning the presence of direction indicators on buses, 58.4% of the passengers replied the absence of route or direction indicators. This shows that most buses do not have route or direction indicators on them. With regard to the competence of drivers or conductors, 57.6% of the respondents said that they were not satisfied, while only 20.3% replied their satisfaction with the competence of drivers or conductors. From these data, it can be inferred that competence of most drivers or conductors is not safe for the passengers. On the other hand, 59.4% of the passengers replied that there were crimes at bus stations, and 55.2% replied the presence of crimes on buses especially on departure and destination points. From

this, it can be inferred that there are crime acts in the stations as well as within buses in departure and destination points. Nearly 66% of the passengers indicated the absence of signs and information indicators (sign posts) in the bus stations. So it can be said that passengers get information by asking people who may not provide the right directions. On the other hand, 68.4% of the passengers were not satisfied with the speed of buses. This shows that most drivers do not abide themselves to the speed limit. With regard to carrying capacity of buses, 80.8% of the respondents said that buses carried above their limits. From this figure, it can be seen that passengers do not get appropriate and comfortable seating service from public transport. Average customers' satisfaction level of passengers is 2.33(46.6%). Based on literature review service quality in general consists of five distinct dimensions: tangibles (Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customer and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (caring, individualized attention the firm provide its customer) (Budiono, 2009). The result shows that the absence of these mentioned service quality components has its own negative impacts on customers' satisfaction on public transport sector.

### **Discussion of Qualitative Data**

Most passengers in the data collection sites were complaining about the lack of basic facilities in the bus stations. In addition, they stressed that even if the basic facilities present they are charged for using them (especially toilet). Passengers claim that buses do not depart on time from stations. The worst case all passengers in the bus stations stated was that buses carry beyond the specified capacity and also tariff set by the government is not usually put in place. On the other hand, some drivers and assistants lack professional ethics in serving customers. As to unstructured interview data, passengers pointed out that there were drivers who do not obey the speed limit set according the nature of the roads. Lastly, passengers worried about the lack of appropriate responses for their complaints from concerned personnel in the bus stations and public transport departments.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The study showed that drivers and their assistant-drivers have problems related to professional ethics in handling passengers. Almost all of the bus stations are not equipped with basic physical facilities (such as toilets, water, showers, waiting rooms, etc). The study reveals that there should be a lot to be done to increase the satisfaction level of passengers in public transport sector in the region. In general, the quality of services in the bus stations, the contemporary knowledge and skill of drivers and the ethics of service providers need to be intervened. Almost all of the respondents in each category worry about the quality issues at public transport sectors. Therefore, limited service in quality dimensions lead to customers' dissatisfaction at transport sector.

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