

Assessing service quality in public transport: the causal role of demographic characteristics and any perception difference among the subcategories

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Abstract

Purpose

This paper first seeks to evaluate customers' service quality in public transport, and then identifies potential demographic characteristic factors that may influence customer perceived service quality as well as any behaviour differences among the subcategories.

Design/methodology/approach

Manager interview and random sampling method was used to survey 288 consumers of public buses. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to confirm the scale validity. Thereafter, Structural Equation Modeling, U de Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to assess the causal paths and the behavior differences among the subgroups.

Findings

The three dimensions of functional, convenience and physical environment quality were confirmed as underlying factors to assess customer perceived quality in public transport setting. Age and owning a driving license are factors that directly and positively affect service quality whereas education was negatively related to perceived quality. In contrast, the relationships between being a car user, gender and perceived quality were not supported. The results also showed that service quality have less importance for younger commuter as compared to adults. However, the current study does suggest that people with university education and above may be a better audience for advertising appeals focusing on one of these three significant dimensions of service quality.

Originality/ value

This study is the first to propose service quality scale based on real user of public service transport as well as to provide definitive insight on the direct role of demographic characteristics on perceived quality.

Keywords: Service quality, Age, Education, Driving license, Public transport service