UNRAVELLING PUBLIC TRANSPORT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION DYNAMICS IN THE HIGH-END MIDDLE CLASS MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Recent improvements to the public transport offerings available to South African commuters are managing to attract a small but loyal patronage from among the car-owning public. The improved services provide opportunities for studying the requirements and satisfaction criteria of choice users, in order to enable the design of services that are able to attract and retain them. Qualitative and quantitative surveys were conducted on users and non-users of the upmarket Tshwane Business Express public transport service, comprising all-in-one park and ride, rail overhaul service as well as feeder and distributor buses. The users of the public transport service have their own cars but opt to use public transport. They are compared with a control group of non-users, who also have cars and similar journey origins and destinations as users, but choose to drive. The paper focuses mainly on the results of the qualitative survey. The survey firstly demonstrates the applicability of some theoretical concepts developed in the consumer science literature. Customer satisfaction, even in public transport services, is a dynamic phenomenon. For both users and non-users, perceived service staff respect, level of security and service reliability are seen as fundamental satisfaction attributes. Public transport fare appears to be a satisfaction trade-off variable within the user group, and non-users generally tend to have higher service quality expectations than the users. The heterogeneity of personal needs and socio-economic backgrounds among users, as well as non-users, is not a strong source of conflict or trigger for dissatisfaction unless in cases of poor personal hygiene.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to estimate a customer satisfaction model, a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys were conducted on the users and non-users of the Tshwane Business Express (TBE) public transport service that operates between the cities of Tshwane and Johannesburg. The paper reports on the results of a qualitative survey the purpose of which was to identify service attributes that should be the focus of a subsequent quantitative survey aimed at quantitatively profiling the dynamics of the attributes for modelling purposes. The results of the qualitative surveys were also used to provide preliminary confirmation of the application validity of selected customer satisfaction modelling frameworks, derived from consumer science, within the public transport service context. A review of some of these consumer science modelling frameworks is also provided. The results of the study are largely limited to the upper middle class target market.

2. BACKGROUND

Upper middle class consumers in South Africa are almost exclusively associated with the use of private cars for trip making (Lombard, 2006 and Venter, 2007). On the other hand, public transport use in the country is associated with being poor. Instances where upper middle class travellers use public transport are therefore bound to generate special interest. From a transport planning perspective, understanding such cases would assist with reaching the planning goal of reducing per capita vehicle kilometres for a given travel demand. Even more important, however, is to understand the upper middle class customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction triggers, in order to enable the design of services that are able to attract and retain them. With the advent of performance-based public transport contracts, the monitoring of customer satisfaction becomes an essential component of service management. Theoretically, understanding the dynamics of service attributes should allow for correct specification of the attributes in performance-based contracts, especially if public transport operator performance is legally linked to some form of remuneration.

The Tshwane Business Express (TBE) public transport service, operating between the City of Johannesburg and the City of Tshwane, was used as a case study. TBE users and non-users were targeted for survey purposes. From a predetermined list of customer service attributes, the current study investigated the individual impact of the attributes on customer satisfaction. Within the context of the study, TBE users have their own cars but opt to use public transport. They are compared with a control group of non-users, who also have cars and similar origins and destinations as users, but choose to drive. The TBE service is profiled in Table 1.

Table 1: Tshwane Business Express train service parameters

| Service parameter	Service details
Service frequencies	One train providing the following services: ▪ Two services from the City of Tshwane, the first one departing at 6:15 am and the other one at 14:30. ▪ Two services from the City of Johannesburg, the first one departing at 07:30 and the second one at 17:30.
Fares	▪ Monthly tickets priced at R750, and one way cash fares priced at R35 per trip. Monthly tickets are sold on a specific day in a month and cash is the only accepted means of payment.
On-board services	On-board services include: ▪ Security guard per coach. ▪ Service hostess per coach. ▪ Newspapers provided per coach without additional charge. ▪ Warm beverages served on request without additional charge. ▪ Wireless internet services without additional charge.
Other service parameters	▪ All passengers are seated (No standing is allowed). ▪ Park and ride services provided at no extra charge. ▪ A limited route collector and distributor service is provided in the form of contracted bus services at no extra charge.

Briefly described, the TBE service comprises a rail overhaul service, with supplementary services that include park and ride, as well as feeder and distributor buses. The service is one of the many passenger transport services offered by the state owned Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA). The train service itself comprises a single train servicing a line between the two cities. Besides the Tshwane Business Express, the operator (SARCC-Metrorail) runs trains that are priced less than the Tshwane Business Express

but at higher frequencies and comparatively lower service quality (for example crowding). In fact, where there is service conflict between the Tshwane Business Express and other train services, the former takes precedence.

3. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MODELS

This section of the paper reviews some selected customer satisfaction modelling frameworks, and topical issues in the modelling of customer satisfaction.

Figure 1 shows the customer satisfaction profile for train users in South Africa obtained from the 2003 national household travel survey data. From the figure it is concluded that respondents are more likely to be satisfied as opposed to being very satisfied about train service attributes. Also, respondents are likely to be dissatisfied rather than very dissatisfied about the service.
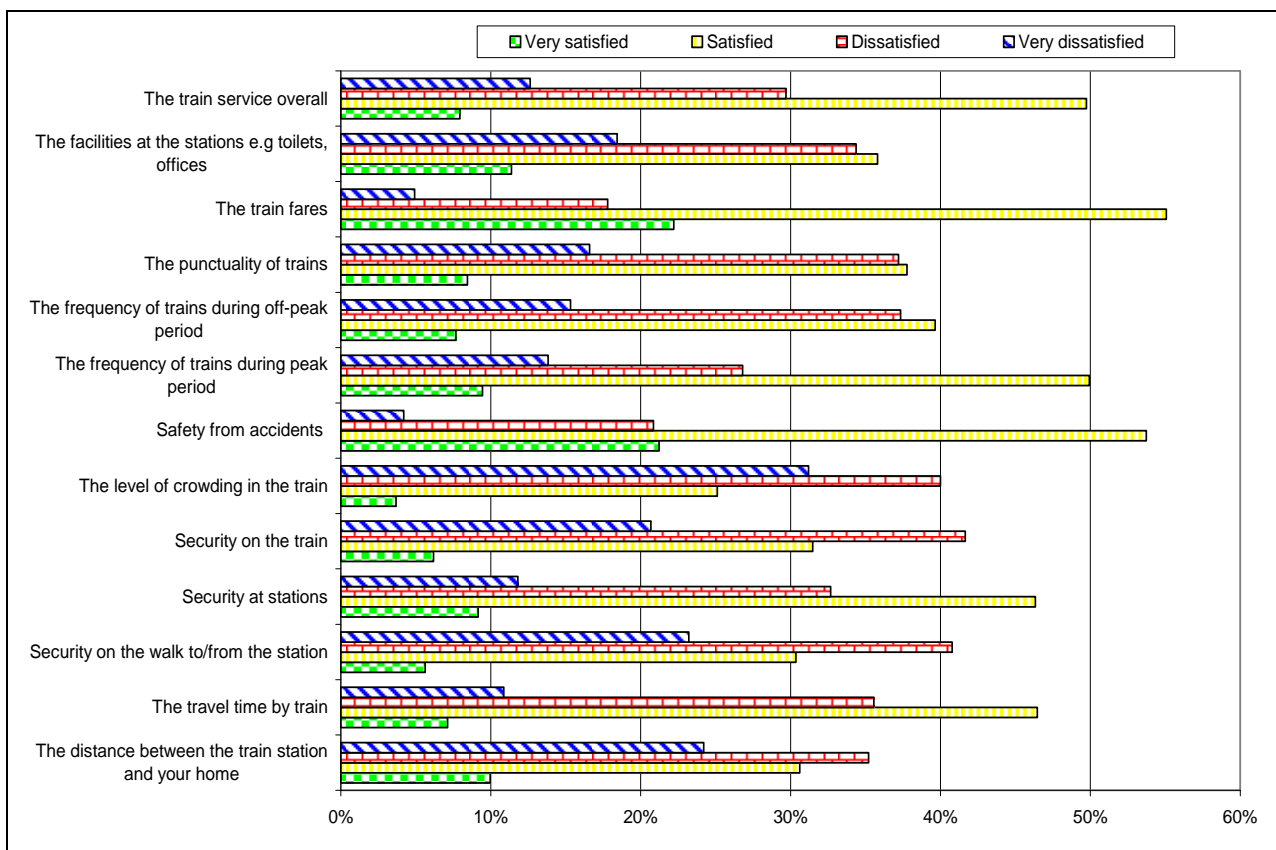
Figure 1: Satisfaction of South African train users with service attributes

With regard to specific attributes, train users are relatively more dissatisfied about distance to stations, security on the way to stations, security on trains, as well as crowdedness of trains. However, customers continue to use the service, implying that that dissatisfaction does not necessarily lead to mode switching. This behaviour is confirmed by the model developed by Artis (2004) shown in Table 2. The matrix in Table 2, based on the relationship between dissatisfied-customer coping tactics and customer dissatisfaction goal, explains customer behaviour emanating from dissatisfaction encounters. Time-based potential reactions of a dissatisfied customer given a coping tactic adopted by the customer and the customer's intended goal are shown. For example, a combination of "external self directed coping strategies" and "retaliation goal" results in private vindictive behaviour. The matrix could be used as a quality measure to estimate the intensity of the state of customer dissatisfaction with passenger transport services.

Table 2: Dissatisfaction related tactics and dissatisfaction related goals matrix

|	Prevention goal Prevent a future dissatisfying event.	Accommodation goal Accommodate a current or past dissatisfying event.	Redress goal Seek redress for a current or past dissatisfying event.	Retaliation Goal Retaliate because of a current or past dissatisfying event.
Internal self-directed coping tactics.	**Anticipate problems** Customer mentally braces self for dissatisfaction: worry, concern, avoidance, etc.	**Modify expectations** Customer modifies their desired outcomes to fit situation.	**Resolve to act** Customer mentally commits to dealing with injustice.	**Hold a grudge** Customer feels deep resentment towards seller.
External self-directed coping tactics.	**Risk reduction** Customer acts to minimise potential problem by taking action: save receipts, request guarantees, etc.	**Accept situation** Customer acceptance of seller offer e.g. purchase.	**No repurchase.** Customer refuses to support seller in the future e.g. exit, switching, etc.	**Private vindictive behaviour.** Customer anonymously attacks seller e.g. vandalism and theft.
Voice coping tactics involving the seller.	**Informative voice** Customer tells wants and concerns to seller in advance	**Refuse to complain.** Customer elects not to complain e.g. silence, white lies, etc.	**Complaining** Customer openly communicates dissatisfaction with seller.	**Public vindictive behaviour** Customer attacks seller e.g. verbal abuse and physical attack.
Voice coping tactics involving peers.	**Seek advice from non-experts** Customer seeks advice from family, friends and co-workers.	**Avoid discussing with peers** Customer elects not to discuss with peers.	**Negative word of mouth** Customer shares negative experience with others e.g. warns others, seeks emotional support, etc.	**Sabotage word of mouth** Customer encourages other customers to hurt seller e.g. rumours, lies, and exaggerations.
Coping tactics involving third parties.	**Use experts** Customer seeks advice in advance of purchase.	**Avoid assistance from expert** Customer elects not to use experts when assistance is offered	**Use of mediators** Customer uses third party to restore equity, e.g. hire an attorney.	**Consumer activism.** Customer seeks regulatory and legal remedies to restrict and punish the seller.

Source: Artis (2004)

Ordinal scales such as the one used in Figure 1, are usually used to measure customer satisfaction. The scales provide some form of ordering between response categories but without indication of the inherent relative differences between the categories, unlike with ratio scaled data. In fact, Matzler and Hinterhuber (1998) found that customer loyalty differed significantly between satisfied and very satisfied customers, and in some industries customer who are very satisfied were six times more likely to repurchase than the satisfied ones. In order to correct this shortcoming, some of the literature on the specification of ordinal scales promotes the use of questions that elicit pseudo-behavioural answers from respondents in order to illustrate the intensity of the response. Westbrook (1980), for example, argues that rating scales are usually not particularly sensitive to customer sentiments and shows that the use of scales such as Delighted-Terrible provides a better estimate of customer behaviour. Delighted-terrible scale provides a scale that includes the following scale measures in the order of good to worse: Delighted, Pleased, Mostly satisfied, Mixed, Mostly dissatisfied, Unhappy and Terrible (Westbrook, 1980).

The gap model referred to as Servqual, shown in Figure 2, falls under a category of models classified as confirmation-disconfirmation models, in which satisfaction is a function of the gap between perceived and expected performance, where expected performance is informed by word of mouth, personal needs and past experience. In the Servqual model, Parasuraman et al. (1988) identify ten criteria used by consumers to evaluate service quality (which is directly correlated with customer satisfaction):

- **Reliability:** Consistency of performance and dependability.
- **Responsiveness:** Ability of service provider employees to provide timely feedback.
- **Competence:** Possession of the required skills by the service provider employees.
- **Access:** Measure of ease of contact with the service.
- **Courtesy:** Entails aspects such as friendliness, politeness, and respect afforded the customer.
- **Communication:** Informing customer in an understandable language as well as listening to the customers.
- **Credibility:** Entails aspects such as believability, trustworthiness, honesty and sympathising with the customer.
- **Security:** The need to minimise risks and dangers for the customer.
- **Understanding and knowing the customer:** Entails making an effort to understand the needs of the customer.
- **Tangibles:** Entails the appearance of the physical aspects of the service presented to the customer.

The absence of cost of service as an attribute in the Servqual model, however, somewhat limits its application in the modelling of public transport services.
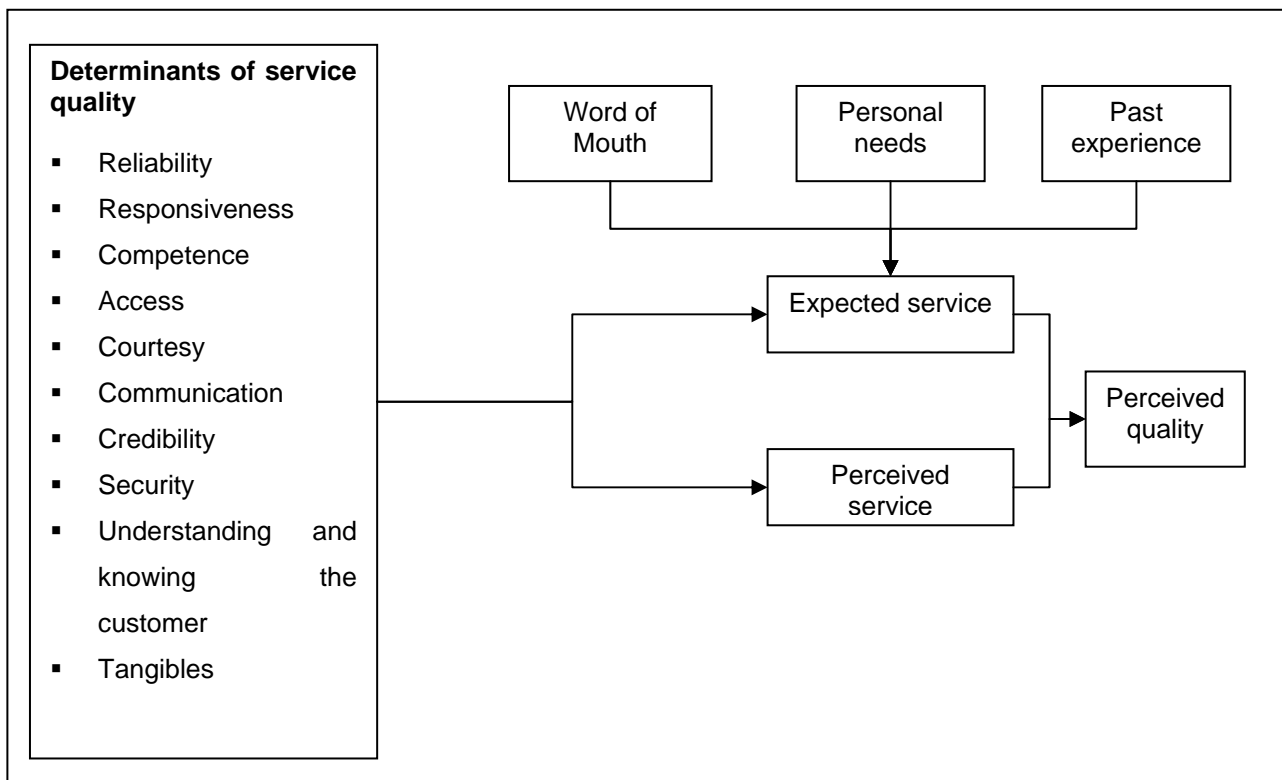
**Figure 2: Servqual model**   Source: Adapted from Parasuraman, et al. (1988)

Herrmann et al. (2000) present a means-end theory model in which satisfaction is an evolutionary function of attributes, utility and set of customer values.

The Kano model, presented in Figure 3 was developed in the 1980's by Professor Noriaki Kano at the Tokyo Rika University in Japan (CQMJ, 1993). The model can be used to identify service attributes and classify them in terms of their impact on customer satisfaction. It is based on the notion that not all customer needs are created equal and therefore the resolution of all needs does not have the same impact on customer satisfaction (Ramaswamy, 1996).

The Kano model comprises three types of customer needs, namely, basic or fundamental, performance or spoken as well as excite and delight attributes, described as follows:

- **Basic or fundamental attributes (M):** These are basic expectations that a customer has from the service. Customers become increasingly satisfied when these are achieved but the rate of level of satisfaction tends to level off as the degree of achievement increases. However, should these needs not be addressed the level of satisfaction drops at a high rate.
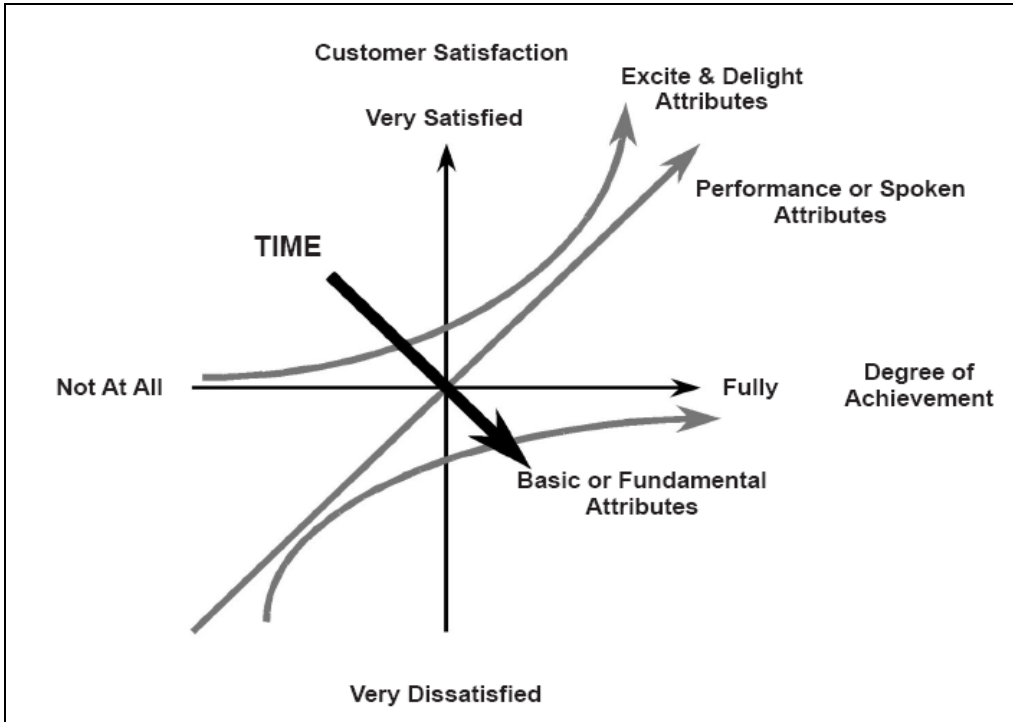
Figure 3: Kano model of customer satisfaction   Source: Matzler & Hinterhuber (1998)

- **Performance or spoken attributes (O):** Satisfaction of these needs increases linearly with the satisfaction of customers. Over time, however, these needs may become basic.
- **Excite and delight attributes (A):** Satisfaction of these needs results has disproportionately high customer satisfaction for a given marginal input. Overtime, however, these needs may become satisfiers or basic.

A fourth classification, referred to as "indifferent" (I) is a special case in which the respondent is neutral irrespective of the level of the service attribute. A fifth classification referred to as the Reverse attribute (R), which is an attribute customers would not prefer to have, and may even be willing to pay in order not to have them (Zultner and Mazur, 2006). The reverse attribute is usually represented graphically as a linear inverse of the performance or spoken attribute. Over time, within the same market segments, some of the attributes may change their classification as a result of factors that include competition with other services. In order to classify the attributes into each of the categories, respondents are asked to complete a Kano questionnaire, prepared by the analyst, for each attribute. Basically, from the list of identified service attributes, for example from focus groups, the questionnaire asks for each attribute two questions, firstly a functional form and secondly a dysfunctional form of the question. For the functional form the question respondent is asked to provide feedback on how they would feel if the attribute was in order and the opposite is in the dysfunctional form of the question. Based on the responses received, an attribute is classified using a Kano matrix into one of the five attribute types (A, M, O, R, I).

Based on the above limited review of the customer satisfaction models, it is clear that customer satisfaction is a dynamic phenomenon. This therefore calls for a better understanding of customer satisfaction within the public transport service context, especially among users with available travel alternatives.

4. STUDY DESIGN

Survey respondents comprised the users of a commuter train service between the City of Tshwane and the City of Johannesburg, as well as people who do not use the service but with trip making patterns similar to those of users. The train service, referred to as the Tshwane Business Express (TBE), was designed especially for commuters travelling between the City of Tshwane and the City of Johannesburg, who have access to a private car (most own the cars), but willing to use a train service in order to avoid peak period road traffic congestion between the two cities. From the perspective of the study, and by making a conscious choice of making use of public transport over private transport, this market segment is potentially sensitive to travel service quality parameters. The qualitative survey responses from this market segment therefore would allow for improved dynamic understanding and specification of service attributes in the subsequent quantitative study.

For the TBE service users, five groups of three members each made up the user group respondents. Two groups of four members each made up the non-user groups. For group-based qualitative surveys, it is advisable to have at least three groups of respondents. This is because three opinions are able to detect a non-linear response. In total, 15 TBE service users and 8 TBE non-users made up the survey respondents. By nature, due to the time and labour intensive nature of qualitative surveys, the subject sample in qualitative surveys is targeted, and surveys do not seek to be representative but attempt to understand the complexity of issues within the selected sample, and a sample containing about 20 respondents is recommended for exploratory research (Mehndiratta, et al., 2001).

Both the users and non-users were recruited by a professional market research firm, with instructions to only consider respondents in the Living Standards Measure (LSM) 7 or above. LSM measure is used by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF, 2010) to profile consumers and their purchase behaviour, and LSM 7 and above is most likely to consist of the high-end middle class market. With prior consent of the train operator (SARCC-Metrorail – a subsidiary of PRASA), the users were recruited from the Tshwane train station the day prior to the interviews, each time from a different train coach. While the target was three members per group, five people were recruited per group in order to minimise the risks of the minimum number not turning up. For the recruitment of non-users the market research firm used a combination of a snowball technique and sourcing respondents from a pre-existing database. All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed by the market research firm. Slightly different questionnaires for users and non-users were adopted, with users being probed relatively more about the existing service experiences.

The respondents were guaranteed identity protection, especially the train users. Respondents' personal attributes such as names, race, gender and age, while inferable from the recordings, were therefore not explicitly interrogated. Attributes such as gender and age influence the decision making processes and opinion formation and this omission somewhat limits the depth of analysis presented in the paper. For the train users, the interviews took place in the train while it was moving. Therefore, only respondents who travelled the longest (duration of 1 hour) were recruited.

Through moderator-led structured discussions, the qualitative questionnaires were designed to help the researchers to understand the following:

- The long term effect of incidents that previously resulted in public transport service dissatisfaction and satisfaction.
- Perceptions of what a good public transport service comprises.
- Triggers that resulted or would result in travel mode shift.
- Importance of selected predetermined service quality variables and thresholds that determine different levels of dissatisfaction or satisfaction.
- Determining whether some variables are more important than others and their nature of influence on customer satisfaction.
- How the importance of service attributes change with time and changes in travel modes.
- How the service attributes should be specified in the subsequent quantitative survey.

5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

TBE users began using the service after hearing about it on radios as well as from other people who use it. The positive experiences from existing users and the promise of a good service through marketing campaigns made the service even more attractive. Other push factors such as increased fuel prices and road traffic congestion between the City of Johannesburg and the City of Tshwane were instrumental in their final travel mode choice decision. Subsequent to using the TBE service they are able to plan their day with more accuracy, and their quality of life has improved markedly, for example reduced stress levels and spending more time with family.

Asked first to generally describe how they would know if they are valued as customers in any service setting, respondents mentioned the following variables as key: respect to customers, service reliability and empathic communication with customers. When asked to describe how they would know that they are valued as customers in a public transport setting, respondents used their negative experiences to illustrate what they would not like to see happen to them to feel values as public transport customers, confirming the assertions of the critical incident theory (Friman et al,. 2001) that negative incidents are strong memory triggers. Examples of lack of respect included "*Poor treatment received from minibus taxis*", because "*they talks to you anyway they want*" and "*they don't care about what you think or how you feel*". Keeping promises as a service is valued by TBE non-users. Asked about the acceptable number of criminal incidents a month, respondents said even one incident would stop them from using the transport service. Their personal cars are seen to offer security superior to that of any form of public transport. In fact, some TBE non-users thought there was no form of train service that could be secure irrespective of what it is called. In addition, TBE non-users thought their cars would not be safe if parked at a train station.

Respondents associate the reliability of a transport service with their personal time management. An unreliable service could cost them "*clients*" and also disrupt their personal errand schedule. Reasonable explanation for poor service reliability is acceptable provided that it does not occur frequently. A frequently non-reliable service would stop them from using the transport service. TBE non-users do not believe there is any form of reliable public transport in South Africa. For TBE non-users, even roads are not reliable as a result of road traffic congestion.

TBE users did not regard safety, which includes malfunctioning of equipment, as a critical service variable. In fact one respondent said "*it never crossed my mind*". Increased number of poor safety incidents would make them reconsider using the service. While TBE users were not concerned about current levels of safety on the train, they expressed the need for an on-board health and safety official. TBE non-users thought the train service must be safer than using the roads given its right of way, compared to their personal cars that share road space with heavy vehicles. In fact, TBE non-users think road traffic accidents are guaranteed.

TBE users did not have particularly strong feelings about air conditioning inside the train, and attribute this to lack of overcrowding inside the train. TBE non-users on the other hand thought air conditioning was "*very important*" because they "*do not want to get to work sweating*". For TBE non-users even cars without fitted air conditioners allow the user to "*open the windows*". Respondents felt there are racial differences in response to weather conditions, where white people have a deeper tolerance of cold conditions than black people, and this often is a source of conflict. Another source of conflict is what is seen by black passengers as a seat reservation practice by white people in the train, in which the person(s) who normally sits adjacent to them uses the seat, and therefore cannot be occupied by a different person before the train departs. Seat reservation policy, in particular, is generally disliked by TBE users, in contrast to TBE non-users who welcome it.

Method of payment was seen as very important by both TBE users and non-users. TBE users were not satisfied with the current method of payment (cash only) and wished they could use electronic forms of payment, including credit cards and internet-based ticket sales. For users, carrying cash on one specific day to buy tickets (as is currently done) is seen as attracting criminals, and this is exacerbated by perceptions that "*business express people have a lot of money*". Some TBE users reportedly miss their train service because of waiting in long ticket sales queues. With regard to alternative payment methods, a TBE non-user respondent said "*It is important because as a working woman you don't want to be standing in a queue as we have a lot of things to do. You leave office and you still have to fetch your kids, make supper for them and you still have meetings to attend, hence you don't want to queue*".

According to TBE users, increased number of stops should not compromise the total travel time on the train. For TBE non-users speed of travel is important but they are unable to achieve acceptable levels on the road unless they either leave very early in the morning or much later, and even so, travel time is never guaranteed.

For TBE users, service frequency is not particularly a problem except for Fridays where they would like to have more services to accommodate early departures from work. In fact on Fridays, many TBE users opt to use their own cars instead of the train service. TBE non-users cited their often unpredictable schedules as a reason for the need for increased public transport service frequency.

Increase number of transfers would dissatisfy respondents. For TBE users more than three transfers would be unacceptable, and if that happened they would stop using the service.

TBE users feel that for the price they pay for the service, no standing passengers should be allowed. Moreover, crowing is seen as creating poor security conditions. TBE non-users felt that in a crowded place you "*lose respect and dignity because other people push you around without even apologising*".

TBE users evaluate the cleanliness of the service in its entirety, including the parking areas and station facilities. Both TBE users and non-users, however, thought cleanliness was the responsibility of passengers.

TBE users would consider stop using the service if the staff becomes hostile, "*similar to those of taxis*". Nonetheless, "*plastic smiles*" as opposed to "*real smiles*" are not appreciated. Moreover, TBE users expect to be greeted by hostesses, because "*in our culture when you find people in a room you greet them*". The name "business express" is held in high regard by TBE non-users, and is likened to a professionally rendered service.

Mixing with between people from different backgrounds is not seen as a problem. In fact, respondents thought mixing with people from different backgrounds increased chances of meeting business associates. However, both TBE users and non-users vehemently expressed their dislike of "*untidy people*" or "*unhygienic people*" and would not want to sit next to them.

TBE users did not express strong sentiments about on-board entertainment, but where they thought it was important, they disagreed on the actual content which included different genres of music, news and sports. TBE non-users on the other hand regard on-board entertainment as "very important", because it would allow them to "*listen to the news and business news*". In fact, for one TBE non-user "*if newspapers are provided in public transport I will consider using it".*

Interior furnishing that included cup holders, foldable tables, electric power point, and curtains to bar sunlight are appreciated by TBE users. Furthermore, TBE users cannot agree on the installation of toilets. There are three groups of respondents: (i) Those who would like to have toilets given the one-hour journey length, (ii) those who want toilets on condition their number will be minimised or located in far away compartments, and (iii) those completely against having on-board toilets on grounds of foul smell and hygiene risks. For TBE users having self service water points inside the train, especially in summer, would be appreciated. For some TBE users, removing hostesses, free newspapers and free beverages as part of the service would make them consider stop using the service.

For TBE users any form of fare increase should be supplemented by improved service, for example door-to-door shuttle services or increased service frequency, failing which they would consider stop using the service. Somewhat paradoxically, any service improvement is welcome as long as it does not affect the fare. Generally, any fare increase to above R1500 per month, from the current R750 monthly fare, would make TBE users consider alternative form of transport, even though the total cost of using a car for the same journey costs more than R1500. Similarly, TBE non-users had lower fare increase acceptance thresholds, even lower than that of TBE users.

Generally, both TBE users and non-users would rather have public transport services brought closer to their places of residence than moving closer to public transport facilities. Also, respondents would rather change their work places than move their places of residence closer to work. The difficulty associated with moving place of residence was

cited as the main reason cited for refusing to move their homes. Many of the respondents living in the City of Tshwane said that they would never want to live in the City of Johannesburg as a principle.

The ability to complain about the service, and see their complaints addressed, is seen as very important by TBE users. In fact, they regard the ability to complain as the one service attribute that they are now used to that they never thought was possible in public transport services. This is in contrast to keeping quiet when experiencing a bad service when using a minibus taxi in fear of being persecuted by the taxi driver or other service staff. However, TBE users had in the past complained about some aspect of the service, for example unavailability of shades for their cars and payment methods. The lack of positive response from TBE management in this regard is a source of much dissatisfaction. The TBE users also felt that the presence of a specific person to direct complaint to, as opposed indirect communication methods, is better.

5. DISCUSSION

The service attributes identified in the Servqual model, as well as the service quality expectation build-up model, are confirmed for public transport services in the high-end South African middle class market. However, while respondents tend to evaluate service quality as a package of attributes rather than individual attributes, there are service attributes that drive satisfaction more than others to such an extent that they could force mode choice on their own. This could be a confirmation of the presence of customer satisfaction behaviour that resembles the Kano model. For example, aspects such as "security" and "respect" would likely be "basic or fundamental" attributes. Method of payment and some features of interior furnishing would likely to be "excite and delight" attributes. However, it is not particularly clear how to distinguish "excite and delight" attributes and "performance or spoken" attributes from the qualitative data, and for this the Kano questionnaire would need to be used. It is also evident that customers exhibit their dissatisfaction differently, and the matrix proposed by Artis (2004) is useful for distinguishing between various forms of customer dissatisfaction expressions.

The above observations, while limited in terms of the extent of benchmarking against many other customer satisfaction models, indicate that customer satisfaction is a dynamic phenomenon. This, therefore, requires equally dynamic methods of specification of service attributes in performance-based public transport contracts. The investigation into dynamic specifications of service attributes is the subject of on-going research work.

Some preliminary implications for the TBE operator can be drawn from the investigation:
▪ Promises made in the marketing campaigns must be kept.
▪ It is essential to continuously train all service staff on proper customer care.
▪ Customers evaluate the service as whole and not just the lengthy part of the journey. Aspects such as park-and-ride facilities and shuttle service form part of the total service evaluation. This further implies that the concept of integrated transport needs to be supplemented by integrated service management, even when many operators are involved, since one weak link in the chain could compromise the entire service.
▪ Incentive packages for passengers, while sometimes designed as short term measures to attract passengers, they are over time seen as an integral part of the service by customers. Once they are removed, they can be the source of intense customer dissatisfaction and lead to loss in the customer base. If the incentives are temporary, they need to be communicated clearly and continuously as temporary measures.

- Fare increases should be made as transparent as possible. Comparing fare changes to the equivalent cost of making the same trip by car, in the communication process, may lessen customer disgruntlements.
- Any changes to the service should not compromise the quality of the whole service.
- Customer needs are often conflicting. The operator should take cognisance of these conflicting needs when designing the service.

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