# INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF MINICAB TAXI SERVICES IN CAPE COAST, GHANA

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship and effects of service quality on customer satisfaction by applying the RESCA model (service quality) with the introduction of another variable driver behavior. The study focused on customer satisfaction towards minicab taxi services in Cape Coast, Ghana. In all six (6) variables; reliability, continuous service, safety, comfort, affordability and drive behavior were tested to examine its relationship with on customer satisfaction. Pearson correlation illustrated that all the variables had a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction. To examine the effect of these variables on customer satisfaction, six hypotheses were tested. Multiple regressions analysis result proved that continuous service, comfort, affordability and reliability had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, with safety having positive but insignificant effect. However driver behavior had negative effect on customer satisfaction. The totality of customer satisfaction towards minicab taxi services are however not only influenced by service comfort, safety, reliability, affordability, driver behavior and continuous service. As the analysis suggest these variables contributes only 53% of variances in customer satisfaction, indicating that other variables (47%) influence customer satisfaction.*

*Keywords: service quality, customer satisfaction, public transportation, taxi services, minicab*

## INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to satisfy the basic mobility need of the individual, the demand for transport services come into play. The Ghanaian transportation system includes air, rail, sea and various forms of land transport. The main intention of governments and private individuals providing public transportation services for its citizenry is to fulfill the needs of the common public with regards to providing them with accessible and affordable transport opportunities (Tran and Kleiner, 2005). An overview of the (Ghanaian) transport market clearly indicates that land transportation (dominates and) is structured with interplays of various forms like taxis, commercial mini bus services (popularly referred to as 'trotro") and other publicly owned transport facilities. This paper focuses on minicab taxi service operations and it examines the relationship and effect of service quality on customer (commuters') satisfaction by applying the RECSA model with some modification.

White (2002) defined taxi transport as "all modes of transportation available to the public, irrespective of ownership". Tran and Kleiner (2005) simply defined it as the means of providing special or general transportation services to the public not taking into consideration chartered transport services but rather scheduled transport services. Taxi services in many countries are a share responsibility of government and private individuals. Dridi, Mesghouni and Borne (2005) suggest that public transportation services should guarantee high service quality through following regular schedules and being safe and rapid. They should also be available and accessible to all manner of persons, especially the vulnerable and the physically challenged. As public transportation facilities grow older, the quality of service dwindles and commuters are left with no option but to accept what is offered (Andreassen, 1994). Mazulla and Eboli (2006) were of the view that the dwindling nature of the services being provided is as a result of public transport operators given too much importance to financial gains at the expense of ensuring service quality delivery in their operations. Bertini and El-Geneidy (2003) opined that this situation was not to be the case, but rather transport service operators should have an interest in providing good quality service to their passengers, taking into account passenger priorities and requirements.

Adarkwa (1991) asserts that public transportation in Ghanaian cities is characterized by over-crowdedness, excessive waiting times, and long and inconsistent travel times coupled with poor and unreliable services. Abane (1993) also observed that an important aspect of commuting is the quality of services offered by transport facilities. He noted in his study that commuters expressed serious concerns about the reliability of public transports, length of waiting and access times and their comfort. Further studies by (Jorgensen &Abane,1999; Abane , 2004) pointed out that public transports is faced with problems such as poor ventilation, dirty

bus conditions (interior), and the high exposure to road traffic accidents (safety). The consequence of poor transportation services is that it is likely to reduce repeat visitations of tourists to the country, thereby losing tourists to other competing destinations (Mensah, 2009).

Service quality has been established as one of the many factors that influence customer satisfaction (Hohanson, 1995). Research works on public transportation has been focused on commuter's perception on service quality (Govender, 2014 and Randheer et.al, 2011), with little to no focus on service quality influence on customer satisfaction. To close this gap in literature, the paper assesses the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction in minicab taxi services by adopting the RESCA model.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer satisfaction according to Hensenark and Albinson (2004) is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some needs, goals or desire. It is the basis upon which favorable and unfavorable perceptions are formed about firms' offerings. Satisfied customers form the foundation of any successful business because customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty and positive word of mouth (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). Businesses that seek success therefore invest in developing and implementing programs that aims at bringing satisfaction to its customers.

Many factors influence customer satisfaction. Such factors include friendly employees, courteous employees, knowledgeable employees, helpful employees, accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity and quick service (Hokanson, 1995). The service quality influence on customer satisfaction particularly on a service offering (e.g. public transport service) is very important and deserves attention from providers. Service quality variables of interest to public transport services should therefore be the focus of providers. Existing literature for example reveals that behavior of personnel and specifically behavior of bus driver, frequency of services, reliability of services as well as time and particularly waiting time seem to be the most crucial factors affecting customer satisfaction (Rabiul et al, 2014). Friendliness behavior of the bus driver can satisfy customers by developing better communication and knowledge of its customers' needs (Disney, 1998). Service frequency, reliability, convenience and responsiveness are service quality variables that are considered important in customer satisfaction (Cavana and Corbett, 2007; Taylor et al, 2008).

According to Olsen, Tse and West (1998) quality is consistently doing the right thing right. Service quality can be perceived as an evaluation of how efficiently a service delivered measures up to the expectations of consumers. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (1998) opined

that if customers' perceptions exceed their expectations, then there is service quality delivery and vice versa. Similarly, passengers compare the perceived service with the expected service (Voss, Parasuraman and Grewal, 1998). Once passengers perceive a service received as worthy of their expenditure, they would maintain the service and if not, they would prefer to use other services. It is therefore imperative for service providers to investigate the factors that impact on commuters' perception of quality in order to deliver the best to earn repeat purchase.

Nature of service is difficult to define and judge (Kotler, et al 2007). It is a complex process to measure consumer perception of service quality. Several studies have contributed immensely to the understanding and measurement of service quality (Gronroos, 1982, Brady and Cronin, 2001). However, the service quality model, SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman et al (1985, 1988) has been consistently used by marketing practitioners. The model is based on measuring the perception gap between the perceived service quality and the expected service quality. Originally 10 dimensions of service quality were proposed (reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the consumer, and tangibles). Later these were reduced to five (reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurances and tangibles) (Ravichandran et al 2010).

Whiles these dimensions are important aspects of service quality, many scholars have doubts about whether they are applicable when it comes to evaluating service quality in other service industries (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). However, other researchers have rejected the SERVQUAL model as it is seen as being based on perception. Therefore, service quality measurement tool SERVPERF has been argued to be more appropriate for the measurement of effective service quality (Boulding et al. 1993; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). McKnight et al (1986). have also proposed the RECSA model, an acronym carved from reliability, extent of service, comfort, safety and affordability. They reason that service quality dimensions should be viewed as the sum of general attributes which in turn are the sum of specific attributes grouped into clusters, as demonstrated in figure 1.

Whiles the RECSA model may be an effective tool for measuring service quality in transport services; it ignores the contribution of the driver and crew, ticket services and auxiliary services rendered by service providers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2007), a major characteristic of services is service inseparability; meaning services are produced and consumed at the same time and cannot be separated from their providers, whether the providers are people or machines. This stand to reason that the quality of service provided cannot be properly determined when the measurement is devoid of the role or contribution from the provider. This present paper therefore introduces' another dimension "driver behavior" into
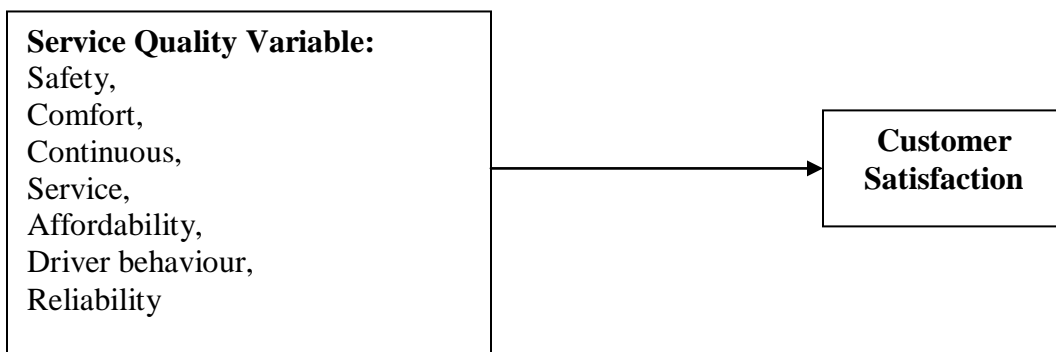
the RECSA model as indicated in figure 2. The driver was considered in this paper as the main service provider in minicab services, hence the dimension "driver behavior".

Figure 1 RECSA model
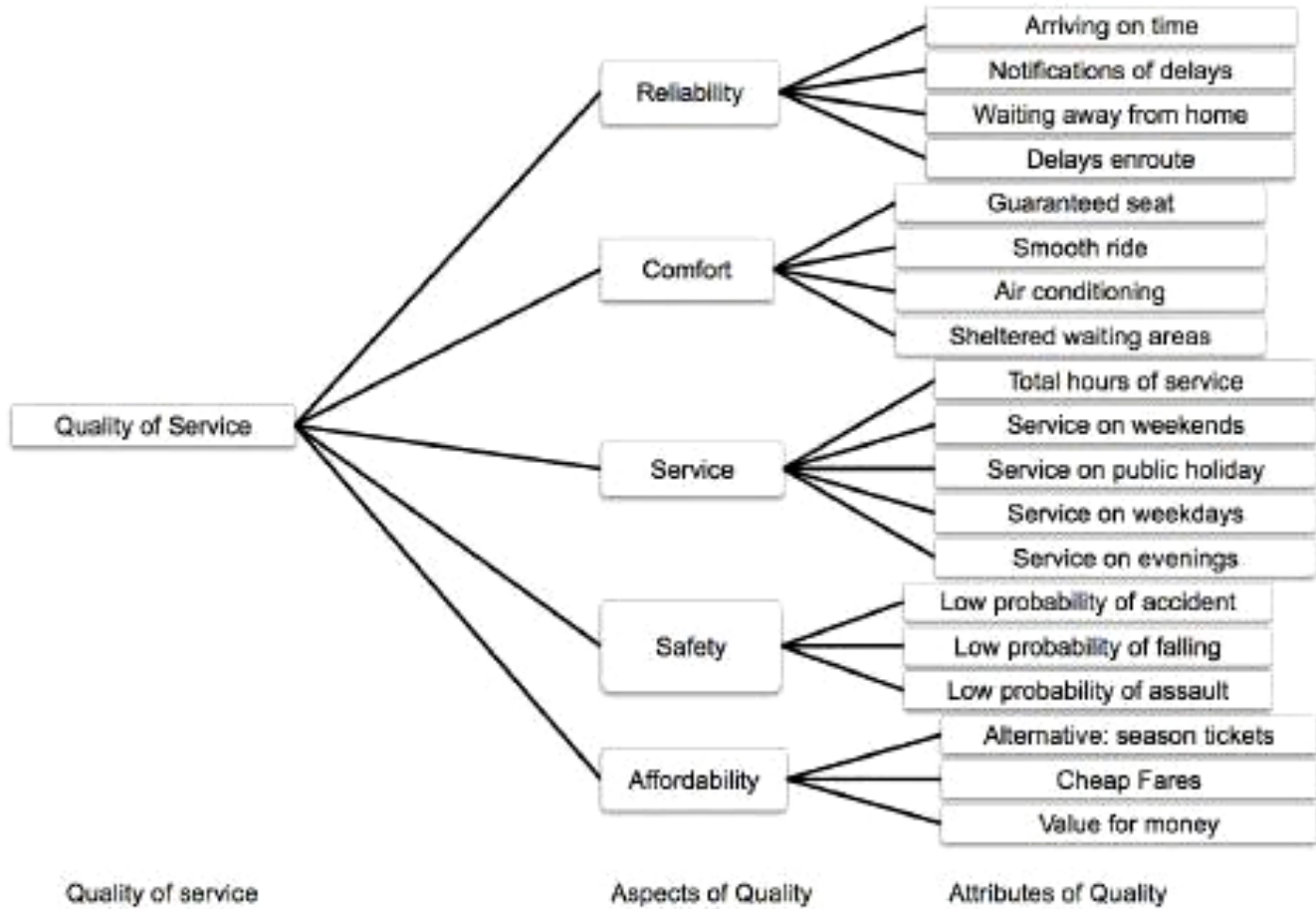


Source: McKnight, C.E., Pagano, A.M and Paaswell, R.E. (1986)

Figure 2. Clusters of Service Quality Attributes (Modified RECSA model)



**Service Quality Variable:**
Safety,
Comfort,
Continuous,
Service,
Affordability,
Driver behaviour,
Reliability

→ **Customer Satisfaction**

**Research hypothesis**

The research focused on analyzing the developed conceptual model from consumer's perspective accordingly. The following hypotheses are aimed to be tested.

$H_1$: Safety as perceived by commuters has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction

$H_2$: Continuous service as perceived by commuters has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction.

$H_3$: Comfort as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction

$H_4$: Affordability of service as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction.

$H_5$: Reliability of service as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction.

$H_6$: Good driver behavior perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction.

**METHOD**

A cross-sectional study was undertaken in the Cape Coast metropolitan area between November and December of the year 2014. Area sampling, which also known as geographical sampling was used by first identifying the taxi (minicab) stations or terminals within the city and randomly selected terminals to be included in the sample. In all, seven taxi terminals were identified and data were randomly collected from four terminals. Commuters were intercepted at the terminals while waiting to board taxi to their destinations. In all a sample of 281 commuters was selected from the four selected taxi terminals.

The questionnaire was developed based on items identified on the RECSA model with few modifications to fit the nature of mini cab operations of the metropolis. A new attribute; the service provider, was introduced to the model. Due to the nature of minicab operations in Ghana, the driver was deemed as the sole provider of the service, so therefore attributes relating to the service provider focused on the driver behavior. The questionnaires were pre-tested on a pilot group of 27 commuters in order to remove errors, including lengthy questions, ambiguities, and poorly framed sentences.

From the pilot study, the instruments were tested for reliability. The reliability test ensures that each of the scales employed are being assessed to establish the internal consistency of the present study. This system is a widely used measure of scale reliability [Peterson, 1994]. Cronbach's alpha for the scales are presented in table 1. The values indicate

a high level of reliability. Content validity was also achieved by adequately covering all the content area.

Survey method was used in collecting primary data at the selected terminals from commuters who normally travel on minicab taxi services. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis. The analysis was carried out with SPSS version 20.

Table 1. Reliability Test

| Independent Variable | Number of items | Cronbach's Alpha |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Safety | 6 | 0.751 |
| Comfort | 5 | 0.865 |
| Affordability | 2 | 0.533 |
| Driver behavior | 5 | 0.814 |
| Reliability | 4 | 0.807 |
| Continuous service | 4 | 0.783 |
| Commuter Satisfaction | 6 | 0.608 |

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

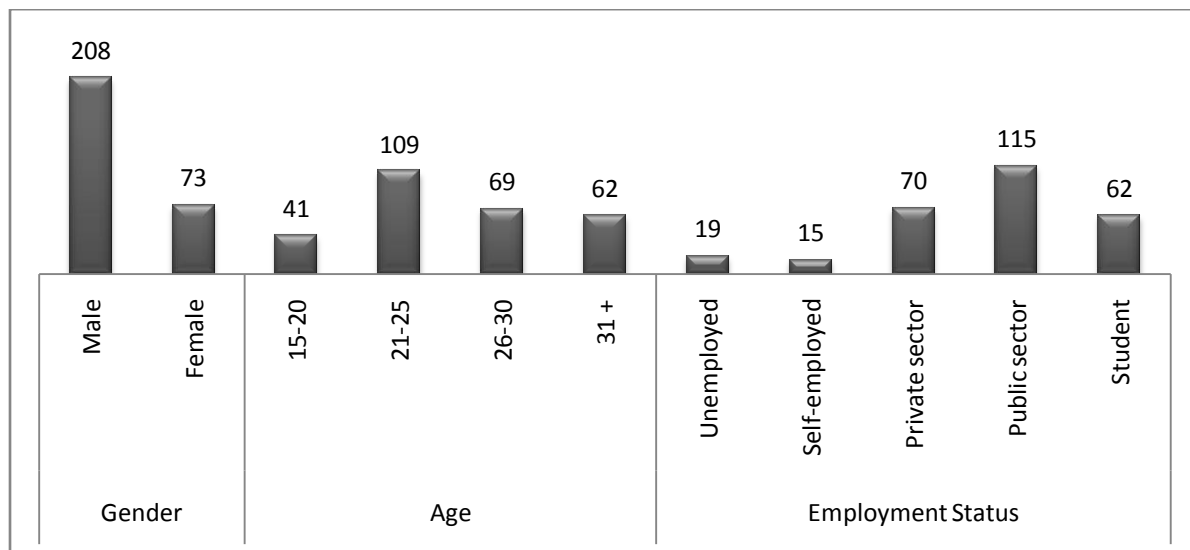Figure 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents



Figure 1, shows the demographic characteristics of respondents. The male respondents were 208 (74%) and the female counterpart were 73 (26%) of the total sample size. Most of the respondents 109 (38.8%) fell within the ages of 21-25, 69 (24.6%) fells within the ages of 26-30

and 62(22.1%) and 41 (14.6%) fells within the ages of 30 and above and 15-20 respectively. Majority of the respondents 115 (41%) work in the public sector, followed by 70 (25%) working in the private sector. 62 (22%) of the respondents are students and 34 (12%) are either self-employed or unemployed.

## Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

Table 2. Overall mean of Variables

|  | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Continuous Service | 3.9991 | .78703 | 281 |
| Safety | 3.8488 | .71211 | 281 |
| Driver behavior | 3.8363 | .78027 | 281 |
| Affordability | 3.6566 | .99752 | 281 |
| Comfort | 3.6185 | .96700 | 281 |
| Reliability | 2.8050 | .76689 | 281 |

Scale: 1-5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=indifferent, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree)

Table 2 portrays the mean and standard deviation results of six independent variables. As indicated the variable with the highest mean value is continuous service (mean= 3.99) followed by brand safety (mean=3.85), driver behavior (mean= 3.84), affordability (mean=3.66), comfort (3.62) and reliability (mean=2.81).

## Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients

| Variables |  | Customer Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|
| Comfort | Pearson Correlation | .635** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Reliability | Pearson Correlation | .625** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Safety | Pearson Correlation | .597** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Driver behavior | Pearson Correlation | 0.572** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Continuous service | Pearson Correlation | 0.562** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Affordability | Pearson Correlation | 0.539** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 indicates the correlation between six service quality variables i.e. comfort, reliability, safety, driver behavior, continuous service and affordability with customer satisfaction. All the variables have a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction. The degree of correlation however differ among the variables with comfort having the highest correlation of (0.635) followed by reliability (0.625), safety (0.597), driver behavior (0.572), continuous service (0.562) and affordability (0.539).

Comfort was the most highly correlated factor that influences customer satisfaction according to the results. In essence commuters' seek comfort whenever they board taxis. They gain satisfaction when the taxi service provides comfortable seats, clean and good conditioned vehicles, reasonable entertainment and enough air circulation. Consistent with this finding is the work Rabiul Islam et al (2014). They identified comfort, cleanliness and air condition as part of independent variable they described as "service" is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction.

Reliability of the service was the second highest influencing factor on customer satisfaction. This implied that readily availability of taxis at the stations, timely arrival of taxis when called, timely arrivals at destination and notification of delays were judged by commuters' to be positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction. The finding confirms the work of Randheer Kokku et al. (2011), which identified that commuters placed much importance on providers delivering on timely promised services and reaching destination on time.

Safety and driver behavior were the next influencing factors on customer satisfaction. Commuters usually felt safe in using the mini cab taxi services because the cars were mostly fitted with functioning seat belt and the drivers drove cautiously, had excellent knowledge of route, communicated and handled payment transactions well. Further on drivers' behavior, commuters felt the drivers showed appropriate driving behavior, were generally well behaved and normally had their vehicles in clean and good condition. These findings are quite consistent with MMResearch (2008) report on perceptions of personal safety and security amongst taxi users in New Zealand. Commuters in New Zealand perception of safety in taxi services were because the drivers drove safely, communicated well in English, had excellent knowledge of route and handled payment transaction well. They also perceived taxi driver to be very professional or very professional in their conducts.

The other influencing factors on customer satisfaction were continuous service and affordability. Continuous service refers to service being available on regular bases. The study found that commuters were satisfied with minicab taxi services because, they were available on weekdays and weekends, were available on public holidays and mostly operate on 24 hours service. This confirms Govender's (2014) work which found service availability on evening and

on public holidays as key influence of commenter's perception on service quality. On service affordability commuters perceived it as influential on their satisfaction of service because the fares charged generally reflects the services received.

## Multiple Regression Analysis

In the study, six independent variable (service quality variables) namely safety, comfort, affordability, driver behavior, reliability and continuous service were considered to influence customer satisfaction. These variables were analyzed by using multiple regression analysis. Scatter plots and correlation information were determined before the multiple regression analysis. Pearson's correlation matrix was used to determine multicollinearity among the independent variables. The results indicate a maximum coefficient of 0.741 (table. 4). The figure obtained is below 0.8, pointing that there was no threat of potential multicollinearity (Sincich T, Levine M.D and Stephen D, 2008 and Aczel D. A, 1999).

From the analysis adjusted $R^2$ value of 0.53 indicates that 53% of variances in customer satisfaction can be predicted by the six variables used in this research. Hence, there are other variables (47%) that influence customer satisfaction of commuters who use minicab taxi services.

Table 4. Multiple regression results of dependent and independent variables

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | .156 | .243 | | .640 | .523 |
| Safety | .141 | .089 | .106 | 1.581 | .115 |
| Comfort | .223 | .069 | .226 | 3.227 | .001 |
| Affordability | .177 | .053 | .186 | 3.363 | .001 |
| Driver behavior | -.017 | .083 | -.014 | -.209 | .835 |
| Reliability | .272 | .075 | .219 | 3.628 | .000 |
| Continuous service | .222 | .067 | .184 | 3.313 | .001 |

Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction
R Square:0.539
Adjusted R Square: 0.528

The multiple regression result between the six independent variables and customer satisfaction as indicated in table 4, shows a positive Beta coefficient score for five independent variables (safety, comfort, affordability, reliability and continuous service). Driver behavior however scored a negative beta coefficient. The findings also showed that, out of the five independent variables

with positive beta coefficients, comfort, affordability, reliability and continuous service were found to be significant in predicting customer satisfaction in the mini cab taxi services (*b=0.226, p=0.01), (b=0.186, p=0.01), (b=0.219, p=0.00) and (b=0.184, p=0.01)* respectively.

The above results lead to the acceptance of four (4) hypotheses and rejection of two (2) hypotheses. The outcome of the hypotheses test is summarized in table 5.

Table 5.  Results of hypotheses test

|  | Statement | *B* | *P value* | Accepted /Rejected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | Safety as perceived by commuters has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction | 0.106 | 0.115 | Rejected |
| H2 | Continuous service as perceived by commuters has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction. | 0.184 | 0.001 | Accepted |
| H3 | Comfort as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction | 0.226 | 0.001 | Accepted |
| H4 | Affordability of service as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction. | 0.186 | 0.001 | Accepted |
| H5 | Reliability of service as perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction. | 0.219 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H6 | Good driver behavior perceived by commuters is positively and significantly related to customer satisfaction. | -0.14 | 0.835 | Rejected |

## CONCLUSION

The present paper tried to examine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction in minicab taxi services in the city of Cape Coast by using a modification of the RESCA (service quality) model. The findings indicated that service quality variables reliability, continuous (extent of) service, safety, comfort, affordability and driver behavior influence the customer satisfaction. Pearson's correlation results revealed that customers (commuters) satisfaction is highly influenced by comfort. Comfort derived from the provision of comfortable seat, clean and good conditioned vehicles, reasonable entertainment and enough air circulation. Similarly comfort, service reliability, driver behavior and safety highly influence customer satisfaction. Commuter's estimation of satisfaction involves readily availability of taxis at the stations, timely arrival at destinations and safety factors like vehicles having functioning seat belt, drivers driving cautiously and having excellent knowledge of route. Continuous services which are described in RESCA model as extent of service and affordability are the other variables that influence customer satisfaction. Taxi service available on weekends, public holidays and operating mostly every hour of the day at fares reflective of service received influence customer satisfaction.

The effects of comfort, reliability, safety, driver behavior, continuous service and affordability on customer satisfaction were tested by using multiple regression analysis. Comfort, continuous service, reliability and affordability had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. Safety had positive but insignificant effect on customer satisfaction; whiles driver behavior had a negative effect.

The totality of customer satisfaction towards minicab taxi services are however not only influenced by service comfort, safety, reliability, affordability, driver behavior and continuous service. As the analysis suggest these variables contributes only 53% of variances in customer satisfaction, indicating that other variables (47%) influence customer satisfaction.

The study identified minicab taxi services as an important means of public transportation for many Ghanaians. It is therefore recommended that stakeholders develop a high level of interest in improving the sector, making it more attractive to commuters. Government agencies, including DVLA, the police, municipal and district assemblies should endeavor to ensure that minicab taxi drivers who operate in the city have the required qualifications and documentations to operate. The Ghana Private Road and Transport Union (GPRTU) should be encouraged to ensure the industry's best practices among its members. Periodic training and workshops on road safety, acceptable driving behavior and customer service should be put in place for union members to continuously improve their operations.

It should be noted that the study had inherent limitations which are due to its focus on minicab taxi services and data collected only from commuters in Cape Coast. One must therefore be cautious to generalize the finding to include commuters from all parts of the country and all public transport services. Thus, for greater generalizability data from a larger sample selected from across all the regions of Ghana could shed more light on the commuters' satisfaction across the country. Future study can focus on further examining the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction in the intercity bus services and other public transportation.

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