



# **Service Quality and Customer Buying Behaviour in transport industry in Cameroon: The Case Inter Urban Transport Services Mile 17 Buea**

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**Abstract**— This study assesses the effect of service quality on customer buying in inters urban transport agencies Buea. A cross sectional data was used and the estimation technique used for the study was the stratified sampling technique. In order to obtain data for this study, a survey was conducted covering sample of 231 customers of various travelling agencies using stratified random sampling technique. Estimation technique was used with Ordinary Least Square and STATA software to regress the variables. The findings reveal that only 37.28% of service quality affects customer buying behaviour which therefore implies 62.72% of the factors which include competence, courtesy, credibility, customer security and customer loyalty on bus services.

**Keywords**— Service quality, Customer Buying Behaviour, Service Industry, Inter Urban transport bus services.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the business environment today without the customer the company will not be able to know what to produce, how to produced, when to produce and to whom to produce. This has made customers to be at the center of every business where their point of view is taken into consideration and companies try as much as possible in building long lasting relationship by satisfying and making customers becoming loyal to their services especially in inter urban transport agencies. Customer buying behaviour is the main issue company target where they design marketing concept especially in service industry and considering building long lasting relationship by implementing strategies that will satisfy customer needs and beat out competitors out of the business Robert Katai (2021).

Moreover, studying customer buying behaviour have help businesses to cope since there is continuous change in the living standard trends, fashion and change in technology, customer attitude toward services also varies from time to time especially towards services in transportation agencies Satvik Sawhney (2017). Public transport has been viewed as an inevitable need in several parts of the world. This implies that movement of people and goods affects the daily endeavors' of human beings particularly the economic aspect Cerero & Gulub (2007).Transportation sector are classes of companies that provides services by moving customers from one location to another and this might come as the result of customers not only being customers of that business, they also carry out other business activities.

A good transport system cannot be attained if there is no effective and efficient inter urban transport bus services that enhances people's standard of living and gives them satisfaction through features such as affordability,



efficiency, availability, and economically important for the development of bus services that gives commuters the satisfaction they want.

Inter urban transportation is an essential element of development and socio- economic growth. As engines of economic integration, inter urban transport facilities constitute a precondition for facilitating trade and movement of goods and persons. Long perceived for assessing national and regional trade and a radically changing global environment, transport infrastructure remains a pillar of development with a view of accelerating growth and reducing poverty. Given the challenges of globalization, Africa is lagging significantly behind in the development of regional trade, particularly, because of the lack of reliable and adequate transport. Indeed, the existence of transport facilities for trade are completely out ward looking with results that transport infrastructure and services have been little developed and the physical network poorly integrated.

Transport services, particularly inter urban agencies compete in the market environment with general undifferentiated activities, service quality which becomes to a primary competitive weapon. Agencies that succeed and become market leader are the ones that their service quality can have a distinct marketing edge because they are not just offering services but service level with different which make them to have competitive advantage over her rivals. Better service quality make businesses to have increased in customer retention rate, higher sales and cross sell ratios and also have the higher market share Royne Stafford, M.(1996).

African countries such as Ghana, Zambia, Taiwan face so many challenges when it comes to inter urban because they have common phenomenon in the cities which is plague by challenges such as traffic congestions, parking scarcity, car dependency and many others. It is this challenge of the continual effort to improve service quality in inter urban in order to retent customers in the various different agencies, Jean Rodrigue(2020).

Cameroon road infrastructure consist of some 50000km roads including 30000km of rural roads and 20000km of national, regional and local roads. However, only 10% of these roads are appropriate for traffic although these are often blocked due to installation of toll post over small distances and the passing of huge goods vehicles. There are over 34 businesses in the sector of inter urban and urban transport agencies in Cameroon. Each agency though provides similar activities are geared towards keeping and growing customers Jean Todt, (2018). Also, Cameroon road network is account to 85 percentage of transport in the country facing challenges that is hampering inter urban mobility which include issues such as urban sprawl contributing to increase in mobility needs, neglected and unsafe walking conditions, we also have poor road safety records with about 20 fatalities per year 100,000 inhabitants countywide,, high traffic congestion due to unregulated abusive use of roads, inefficient traffic regulation at junctions as well as poor road infrastructures condition, obsolesce of motor taxis, taxis and mini buses which act as sources of pollution and GHG emissions and lack of an inefficient and massive public transport ( Jean Todt, 2018).

Many service providers of inter urban transport agencies especially the drivers lack attention and are always distracted, speeding and lack of control which leads to customer being skeptical of putting their live at risk when



travelling to another city. This is because there are a lot of accidents when it comes to inter urban transportation. Since every service agency focus towards fulfilling customer's needs and wants in order to maintain a long lasting relationship with their customers. Price of the services is the most important determinant of customer buying behaviour this is because customers will behave negatively towards high price once they know that services rendered is not prior as they are in quest of security, comfort and satisfaction (Gerrard& Cunningham,2004).

Buea, specifically Mile 17 inter urban transport services have different agencies that were founded in different years with their registered offices in different regions. Amour Mezam Company LTD, Musango bus service Co LTD, Grand Jean Jeannot , Mondial Traveling, Guarantee, Diamond, Nso Boys and many individual bus agencies that carry on inter urban transport agencies with the aim of offering quality services to their passengers. The behaviour of inter urban agencies as regards the bus service is still quite cautious in Cameroon. Most inter urban transport services are still backward in the adoption and implementation of service quality activities. The transportation sector is remarkable in the implementation of service quality especially their service providers. However, there is still significant room for improvement regarding service quality within the transportation industry. The reason for conducting this research is because it is important for customers' experiences to meet their expectations in the manner in which service providers does offer services to them. Inter urban transport have to know that it cost the agency less in keeping existing customers than engaging new ones. Keeping old customers reduced cost of advertisement since they are already familiar with the type of services the agency do offer because they are satisfied with the product and services offered Oke and Parinda (2015). If customers are not satisfied, the agencies has to look for strategies that will keep and grow customers.

For example, a case witnessed of how a customer bought a ticket to travel by night from Buea to Bamenda and the seat number written on the ticket indicates that the customer will travel using 70 seater bus but it was later realized that the bus was a 45 seater bus and the seat given to that customer was not comfortable. This incident made the customer feel disappointed with the services.

Another experience was that a customer paid for a ticket knowing well that he will sit on a comfortable seat but was given a tool to sit in the bus to travel from Buea to Bamenda. Providing the right level of service delivery to the right customer in the right market segment is comparative advantage for an industry offering inter urban bus services.

This study intends to assess the effect of service quality on customer buying behaviour and thereby attempts to increase perceptive of service quality as marketing instrument on customer buying behaviour. Also to know the gap between what customers expect as far as inter urban transport services is concerned.

The main research question of this study points to what is the effect of service quality on customer buying behaviour in inter urban transport services at Mile 17 Buea? The hypotheses of the study is reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and assurance does influence customer buying behaviour in inter urban travelling agency.

## **THEORETICAL LITERATURE**

### ***The economic theory***

The economic theory by Adam Smith (1776), states that in order to build a better understanding of individuals, taste and income should be considering as important factor that impact the shape of the overall economic. The theory also states that customers have the freedom to choose between alternative of goods and services that bring them the greatest benefits and they will purchase once satisfied. But will lose satisfaction in the products or services the more they consume.

The relevance of this theory to the study is that inter urban travelling agencies are supposed to provide excellence services to customers that will bring them satisfaction. This is because excellence service will give customers more reason to spread good words of mouth about the company to others and this will give a very good image about the agencies.

The theory informs the dependent variable which is customer buying behavior in that if the agency is not reliable, responsive, assurance, empathy and the physical environment not attractive, customer will feel dissatisfied and turn to spread bad words of mouth.

### ***Howard Sheth Theory***

The Howard sheth according to Howard and Jagadish (1969), states that individual customers belong to a particular social group of individuals therefore, a business organisation has to analyse marketing factors on the buying preference of the customers and the industrial buyer into a logical order of information processing.

This theory is relevance for this study because it will make inter urban travelling agencies to understand customer's decision making in selecting a particular brand. Especially in the case where there are new buyers that have limited information and will like to have more information on their services rendered.

### ***Social Exchange Theory***

Social exchange theory according to Blau 1964, referred to social exchange theory as the voluntary actions of individual that are motivated by the returns they will likely to bring and typically do in fact bring from others. According to Blau reciprocity is the key mechanism of this theory. Most business centers especially service agencies have to demonstrate and encourage the desire for reciprocity through contributing to the long lasting relationship.

According to Dyne and Ang (1998), social exchange goes with durable relationship of mutual contingency, tangible and intangible exchanges. It recognizes situations under which individuals feel obligated to reciprocate when they personally benefit from another action ( Laambert, 2000).

The relevance of this theory is for the is for both the agencies and customers because once the agencies rendered quality services to customers, customers will be satisfied and become loyal not only that but will spread out



positive image to unknown customers who will as well love to come to the agency and experience excellence services as well. Parasumann 1 year.

### ***Expectancy Theory***

Vroom, (1964) expectancy theory tries to explain the motivated behavior as goal oriented. He argues that people tend to act in a hedonistic way preferring the actions that will bring the highest subjective utility.

Essentially, the expectancy theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual (Robbins, 1993).

As a consequence, behavior could be oriented towards anticipated and individualized goals. Vroom's theory states that the 'choices made by a person among alternative courses of action are lawfully related to psychological events occurring contemporaneously with the behavior' (Vroom, 1964, p. 15).

This theory is relevance to this study in that it will inter urban agency to understand that since people choose among alternatives in a conscious manner and the choices are systematically related to psychological processes, particularly perception and the formation of beliefs and attitudes (Pinder, 1984), service providers have to work closely with their customers in order to understand how they selected among several travelling agencies.

### ***Empirical Literature***

Empirical students have identified that service quality is one of the main determinants that affects customer buying behavior in service industries (Amponsah and Samnuel Adams, 2016).

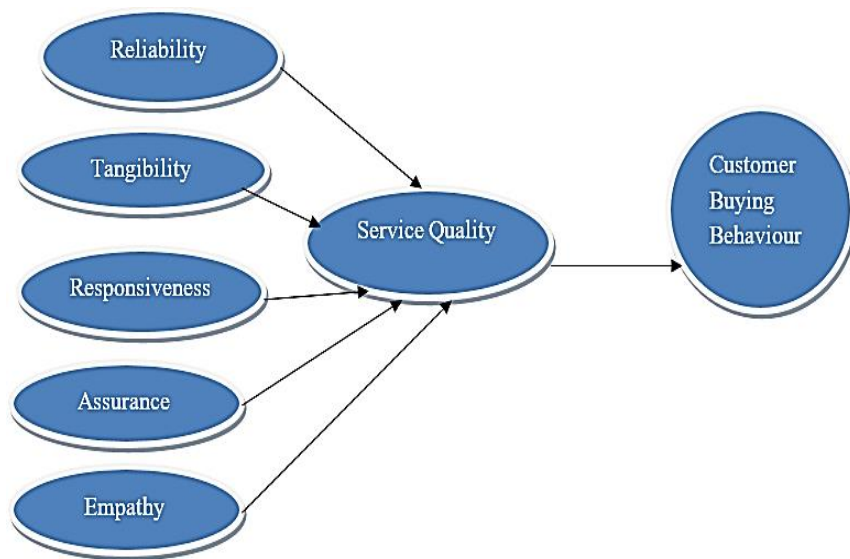
Many scholars have agreed to the fact that service quality is very important to implement in every travel industry because, without it, customers will continue switching from one travel agency to another, while dissatisfied customers will even go to the extent of tarnishing the company's image by spreading negative word of mouth, which has a great impact on customers' reactions ( Chiosa and Bogdan, 2017).

On the other hand, others are of the opinion that quality contributes to the extent that there are other factors that affect customer buying behavior in interurban transport services.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

Based on the past literature review, this research concentrates on the conceptual framework of customer buying behavior by using Grönroos's SERVQUAL model. This framework emphasizes the dependent variable, which is customer buying behavior, and the independent variables, such as reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

This is to verify if these independent variables are significant for the buying behavior of customers in interurban transport agencies. The diagram of the framework is given below.



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework | Source: The Researcher**

From the above conceptual framework, researchers have the independent variable and the dependent variable, which are useful in this study. In this research, the independent variable is customer buying behavior, and the dependent variables are five dimensional elements of service quality, which are reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy in SERVQUAL, that influence customer buying behavior towards the service quality of the interurban transportation bus agencies.

#### ***Data and sample***

The data used is primary data collected from the four different bus services in Mile 17 Buea, in the south-west region of Cameroon.

This study made use of stratified sampling techniques, and each agency was considered a strata. The target population for the study was students, housewives, civil servants, and businessmen that use interurban transport services. The sample size of the study was 400 respondents, and the questionnaire return was 231.

As explained by Agyapong (2010) and Fimbo (2008), the transportation firm has to improve their service quality so as to acquire a sustainable competitive advantage over its rival, and business success depends on the firm understanding and meeting the needs and demands of the customers.

#### ***Method of Analysis and Econometric Strategy***

The model specification was inspired by the work of the Gronrose SERVQUAL model in 1984, using multiple regression models. Reliability of Bus Service, Responsiveness of Bus, and Empathy of Bus Service: The equation is:



$$CBB=f(RBS, TBS, RBS, ASB, EBS..... (3.0)$$

$$CBB=\alpha_0+\alpha_1X_1+\alpha_2X_2+\alpha_3X_3+\alpha_4X_4+\alpha_5X_5+ u .....(3.1)$$

Where:

CBB = Customer Buying Behavior

X1 = reliability of bus service

X2 = tangibility of bus service

X3 = Assurance of Bus Service

X4=Assurance of Bus Service

X5 =Empathy of Bus Service

U = Error Term

$\alpha_1, - \alpha_5$  = regression coefficients of reliability of bus service, tangibility of bus service, responsiveness of bus service, assurance of bus service, and empathy of bus service, respectively.

***Apriori expectation***

Emphasis was placed on the effect of service quality on customer buying behavior. The econometric model was derived from the Cobb-Douglas production function. This production function directly gives elasticity and permits the calculation of the return to scale.

The researcher used the Ordinary Least Square because it is intuitively appealing and mathematically much simpler.

By regressing service quality on customer buying behavior, a service quality model and customer characteristics (age, gender, marital status, educational level, agency preferred, reliability, physical environment, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) were used.

This made it possible to measure the contribution of each factor to customer buying behavior. The STATA program was used to regress the variables. The test of heteroschedulity was used to determine if the variance was the same for all observations. The variance inflator factor was used to test for the presence of multi-collinearity.

Statistical and econometric techniques were employed to establish an association between service quality and customer buying behavior. To verify the validity of the model, two major assessment criteria were used, namely:

Statistical criteria, which are based on statistical theory, are also referred to as the Ordinary Least Square (OLS), which consists of the R-Square (R2), F-statistics, and T-test.

The R-square (R2) and adjusted R-square are concerned with the overall explanatory power of regression analysis, and the F-statistics are used to test the overall significance of regression analysis, while the P-value is used to test the significant contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable.



## RESULTS

### *Descriptive statistics*

**Table 1: General Reliability Test**

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.877	22

Cronbach's alpha in Table 1 above shows how closely dependent and independent variables are. A reliability test has been conducted on five dimensions, which are: service reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. From the study, the alpha of the five dimensions is 0.877, implying that the internal consistency was good because it shows that the variables are consistent.

### *Customer characteristics*

#### *Distribution of Customers by Their Characteristics*

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
<b>Age</b>		
15-30	106	45.9
35-55	110	47.6
55 >	15	6.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	108	46.8
Female	123	53.2
<b>Educational Background</b>		
FSLC	24	10.4
"O" Levels	29	12.6
"A" Levels	47	20.3
HND	14	6.1
Degree	99	42.9
Others	18	7.8
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	98	42.2
Single	128	55.4
Divorced	5	2.2
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	102	42.2
House wife	22	9.5
Civil Servant	48	20.8
Business owners	39	16.9
Others	20	8.7





<b>Agency preferred</b>		
<b>Amour Mezam</b>	59	25.5
<b>Musango</b>	100	43.2
<b>Others</b>	72	31.3
<b>Duration of travel with the agency</b>		
<b>&lt; 5Years</b>	76	32.9
<b>5-0 Years</b>	148	64.1
<b>20-30 years</b>	7	3.0

In table 4.1.1 above, age was divided into three ranges, including range 1 (15–30 years), range 2 (35–55 years), and range 3 (55 years and above). The result from the table reveals that the majority of the respondents are aged 35–55 years (47.6%), followed by 15–30 years (45.9%), and 55 years and older (6.55%), respectively.

The majority of the respondents are female (123 respondents), who account for 53.2% of the total respondents. The rest are 108 male respondents, who accounted for 26% of the total respondents.

The educational background was divided into 6 ranges, including range 1 (FSLC), range 2 ("O" level), range 3 ("A" level), range 4 (HND), range 5 (degree), and range 6 (others). The descriptive analysis result from the table indicated that the majority of the respondents held a bachelor's degree (57.5%), followed by the "A" level (20.3%), "O" level (12.6%), FSLC (10.4%), Others (7.8%), and HND (6.1%), respectively.

The majority of the respondents were single (128 respondents), which accounted for 55.4% of the total respondents, followed by married (98 respondents), who accounted for 42.4% of the total respondents, and five respondents, who accounted for 2.2% of the total respondents, respectively. The occupational level was divided into 5 ranges: 1 range (students), range 2 (housewife), range 3 (civil servants), range 4 (business owners), and range 5 (others). The descriptive analysis result from the table indicated that the majority of the respondents were students (57.5%), followed by civil servants (20.8%), business owners (16.9%), housewives (9.5%), and others (8.7%), respectively.

The majority of the respondents preferred Musango (100 respondents) accounted for 43.2% of the total respondents, followed by other agencies (72 respondents), which accounted for 31.3% of the respondents, and 59 respondents preferred Amour. Mezam accounted for 25.5% of the total respondents and 59 respondents, respectively.

The duration of the preferred agency was divided into 3 ranges: range 1 (< 5 years), range 2 (5–10 years), and range 3 (20–30 years). The descriptive analysis from the table indicates that the majority of the respondents have been dealing with the preferred agency: (5–0 years) accounted for 64.1% of the total respondents, followed by (< 5 years) accounted for 32.9% of the total respondents, and finally (20–30 years) accounted for 3.0% of the total respondents, respectively.



**Table 2: Reliability Test on the Variables**

Variables	Cronbachs Alpha
Customer buying behavior	0.622
Reliability of bus services	0.730
Tangibility of bus services	0.620
Responsiveness of bus services	0.577
Assurance of bus services	0.667
Empathy for bus services	0.855

Table 2 above presents the reliability of all variables. The Cronbach alpha reliability test was applied to confirm the inter-item consistency of the variables. Normally, ( $r > 0.7$ ) is said to be acceptable in general; this therefore implies that empathy for empathy for bus services (0.855) is excellent, while reliability of bus services is accepted. ( $r > 0.730$ ). Customer buying behavior (0.622), tangibility of bus services (0.620), assurance of bus service (0.667), and responsiveness of bus services (0.577) show that the reliability test is not really good because it is lower than the normal reliability test. All the reliability values demonstrated the reliability of the instrument used in this study.

**Table 3: Pair-wise correlation results**

	CBB	RS	TBS	RBS	ABS	EBS
CBB	1.0000					
RS	0.0636	1.0000				
TBS	0.0486	-0.0576	1.0000			
RBS	0.6086	0.0053	-0.0327	1.0000		
ABS	-0.0958	-0.0459	0.0461	-0.0293	1.0000	
EBS	-0.1189	-0.0519	0.0475	-0.0565	0.7334	1.0000

Table 3 shows the degree of relationship existing between the dependent and independent variables.

CBB =RS = reliabilityReliability of service, TBS=tangility of bus service, RP= responsiveness of bus service, Ass = assurance of bus service, E = empathy for bus service.

It is observed in Table 10 above that there exists a positive correlation between customer buying behavior and the reliability of bus services (0.0636), indicating a positive and insignificant relationship between these variables. Again, customer buying behavior is positively correlated to the physical evidence of the agencies (0.0486) and employee responsiveness (0.6086). Also, it was found that customer buying behavior is weakly correlated to assurance (-0.0958) and empathy (-0.1189). Thus, it influences customer buying in interurban transport bus services, and it therefore implies that a poor response from the service provider and a service provider not taking customer complaints seriously will lead to an increase in customers changing their buying behavior from one bus service to another.



Reliability of bus services is positively correlated to responsiveness (0.0053) and statistically insignificant to physical evidence of the agency (-0.0576), employee assurance (-0.0459), and empathy (-0.0519). On the other hand, there exists a weak and negative correlation between the tangibility (physical evidence) of the agency, assurance, and empathy opposed to customer buying behavior. This implies that the variables do not, to an extent, influence customer buying behavior in interurban transport bus services.

The tangibility of the agency is positively and insignificantly correlated to employee responsiveness (-0.0327) but positively correlated to employee assurance (0.0461) and employee empathy (0.0475). Again, we can see that the responsiveness of employees has an insignificant correlation with customer buying behavior as opposed to assurance (-0.0293) and empathy (-0.0565). Finally, assurance has a positive correlation with customer buying behavior (0.7334) as opposed to empathy.

**Table 4: Regression Results**

	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P&gt; t </b>
<b>Reliability</b>	0.092501	0.0412058	0.24	0.002
<b>Tangibility</b>	0.1118749	0.0398569	0.81	0.048
<b>Responsiveness</b>	0.6376545	0.1613947	0.95	0.017
<b>Assurance</b>	0.0059429	0.1408437	0.04	0.968
<b>Empathy</b>	-0.1271688	0.1886826	-0.67	0.537
<b>_cons</b>	0.6166	0.7620788	0.81	0.464
<b>R-Squared</b>	0.3728			
<b>F( 5, 225)</b>	28.35			
<b>Prob&gt; F =</b>	0.0000			

The regression analysis was used for the service quality model to examine and explore the effect of service quality on customer behavior in interurban bus services (reliability of bus services, tangibility of bus services, responsiveness of bus services, assurance of bus services, and empathy of bus services). This was important in measuring the extent to which changes in one or more variables jointly affected changes in another variable. Regression analysis was used to generate an equation applied to the independent variables in order to predict the dependent variable in the model. Each independent variable is associated with a regression coefficient describing the strength and sign of that variable's relationship to the dependent variable. The regression analysis was applied to test the hypothesis of this research after the extraction of five independent variables from the factor analysis.

This was applied to test the hypothesis of this research after the extraction of five independent variables from the factor analysis. Based on the empirical linear results, it was found that the coefficient of reliability of bus service is positive; when its index increases by 1 standard unit, the reliability of bus service as a measure of customer behavior increases by 0.093 standard units. The coefficient is significant at 1% since the p-value (P>|t|) of 0.002 is less than 1% when multiplied by 100. Thus, we reject the hypothesis, which states that the reliability of bus



services provided does influence customer buying behavior, and conclude that the reliability of bus services has a positive and significant effect on customer buying behavior.

The coefficient of tangibility of the bus services of the agency is 0.111, with the ( $P > |t|$ ) being 0.048, which implies that it has a positive and significant effect on customer buying behavior at the 5% level. This means that an increase in probability value will lead to 11.11 increases in customer buying behavior and vice versa.

Responsiveness of bus services has a positive and significant effect on customer buying behavior if a unit change in responsiveness leads to 0.637 standard units in buying behavior. The coefficient is significant at the 10% level since ( $P > |t|$ ) being 0.017 is less than 1 or 10% if multiplied by 100. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis, which states that the responsiveness of bus services does not influence customer buying behavior.

From the coefficient of assurance of bus services, it has a positive effect on customer buying, which is 0.00594 with a ( $P > |t|$ ) of 0.968, implying that it is insignificant at 10%. We also reject the null hypothesis, which states that assurance of bus services does not influence customer buying behavior.

The result further showed that empathy for bus services has a negative effect on customer buying behavior. Specifically, when the empathy index increases by 1 standard unit, empathy as a measure of service quality on customer buying behavior will fall by 0.127 standard units. The coefficient is insignificant at 1% when multiplied by 100. Thus, we accept the hypothesis, which states that empathy for bus services does not influence customer buying behavior, and conclude that empathy has a negative but insignificant effect on customer buying behavior.

The adjusted R squared is 0.3728, which means that the independent variables affect customer buying behavior. The results in Table 11 show that reliability of bus services, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy of bus services account for only 37.28% of the variation in customer buying behavior, implying that the remainder percentage, which is 62.72%, accounted for other factors influencing customer behavior not included in the model. These factors include competence, courtesy, credibility, customer comfort, prestige, accessibility, communication, customer security, and understanding of the customers on bus service.

Finally, an F ratio of 28.35 and its probability value of 0.0000 showed that the entire model is significant at 1%, meaning that the predictions based on it could be held with 99% confidence.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### ***Assessing the effect of the reliability of bus services on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services***

The study sought to assess whether the reliability of bus services influences customer buying in interurban bus services in Mile 17 Buea, the south-west region of Cameroon. Reliability is concerned with the delivery of bus services in proper condition. From the study, reliability of bus services has a positive and significant relationship with customer buying behavior in interurban bus services. This result is in line with the results of Tabi and Adams (2016), whose findings show that reliability of service is of greater importance for interurban transport services.



Hence, the higher the involvement of the service provider in improving service reliability, the higher the reduction in customer switching buying behavior from one interurban bus service to another.

***Assessing the effect of the tangibility of bus services on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services.***

This study was required to assess whether the tangibility of bus services does not influence customer buying behavior in interurban bus services in Mile 17 Buea, the South West Region of Cameroon. Manikandan & Vanniarajan (2016) found that there was a positive relationship between bus services and passenger satisfaction. This finding is also in line with the present study, which states that the tangibility of bus services has a positive and significant effect on customer buying behavior at the 5% level. This means that an increase in probability value will lead to 11.11 increases in customer satisfaction. This therefore implies that if the tangibility of the bus services is in order, it will increase the number of passengers who will become loyal to the service.

***Assessing the effect of responsiveness of bus service on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services***

The study requires establishing the responsiveness of bus services in relation to customer buying behavior in interurban bus services in Mile 17 Buea, the south-west region of Cameroon. The responsiveness of bus services was found to have a positive and significant effect on customer buying behavior. This result confirms the literature that the responsiveness of service providers is positively related to customer buying behavior. That is, the higher the level of service responsiveness, the more customer switching behavior from one bus service to another would reduce. This result was consistent with numerous studies.

***Analyzing the influence of assurance of bus services on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services***

The study sought to determine how assurance of bus services does not influence customer behavior in interurban bus services in Mile 17 Buea, the south-west region of Cameroon. Ojo 2014 findings revealed that in Ghana interurban bus transport, there is a difference between customer perceptions that is higher than the mean expectation. This implies that as customers feel safe in the bus service with their service providers, there will be an increase in positive word of mouth from loyal customers to other customers.

***Evaluating the effect of empathy in bus services on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services***

Empathy for bus services is part of service quality, which refers as a politeness in the behaviour of the service provider to treat customers with dignity and respect, which have a positive influence on the customer's behavior.

This contradicts the study of Oyeobu et al. (2014 states that there is a positive relationship between empathy and customer buying behavior, saying that empathy for bus services has a negative effect on customer behavior by - 0.127.

This implies that empathy for bus services does not influence customer buying behavior and has a negative but insignificant effect on customer buying behavior. Meaning a decrease in empathy will not affect customer buying behavior in interurban bus services.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is concluded that a significant and positive relationship exists between the above-discussed effect of service quality on customer buying behavior in interurban bus services in Mile 17 Buea, South West Region of Cameroon.

In order to enhance customer buying behavior in bus services, the reliability of bus services must come first. When there is an increase in bus reliability, there will be an increase in passenger buying behavior and inter-urban bus services. Reliability of bus services can only be ensured if there are enough interurban vehicles or buses to ferry passengers from one city to another. This also helps to enhance certainty and proper planning for customers, thereby leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Tangibility, responsiveness, and assurance of bus services will ensure that longer travel times are minimized by creating lanes for interurban bus services. These three models need to improve their bus services because they will maintain the existing commuters and attract more.

Empathy toward bus services, especially driver behavior in relation to bus services, has an impact on customer buying behavior.

Customers may form their overall perceptions of firm based on their Service encounters, and the latter can influence success of a firm with respect to this fact. Marketing researchers have found that personal sources play a particularly influential role in affecting service choice, the selection of service providers, and the diffusion of information regarding new bus services. Personal sources are rated by consumers as the most important source of information, especially when the information seekers perceive high risk or when consumers are generally susceptible to interpersonal influence. One of the most widely accepted notions in consumer behavior is that word-of-mouth communication plays an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors, and a negative word of mouth spreads so easily as compared to a positive word of mouth. Also, managers are very interested in word-of-mouth communication because they believe that a new bus service's success is related to the advertisement that it generates. Thus, the present study aims to assess the effects of service quality on customer buying behavior in interurban transport bus services. Based on all investigations conducted in the present study, it can be concluded that reliability of bus service, tangibility of bus services, responsiveness, and assurance have an influence on customer buying behavior. While empathy for bus services does not influence customer buying behavior in inter-urban bus services, Therefore, it can be concluded that good service models can lead to loyal customer buying behavior. With respect to the results, it can be argued that positive service models contribute to creating a group of satisfied customers and promote overall satisfaction with the interurban transport bus service. Customers are motivated to recommend the studied interurban bus services to others. This study shows that service models can affect overall customer buying behavior. So, service quality differentiates a firm from others and creates a competitive advantage. Service quality can influence customer satisfaction. Overall, the researcher concluded that high service attracts the customer, and services that do not meet customer expectations may lead to switching behaviors. If a firm wants to



have completely satisfied customers, it should promote its service quality. The results obtained in this research are in line with other research findings. They confirmed the relationship between service quality and customer buying behavior highlighted in the previous research, Relationship between service reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy of bus services on customer buying behavior

Specifically, service quality is positively associated with service quality models and customer buying behavior, confirming the importance of personal customer-employee interactions in developing positive emotional judgments and longer-term perceptions towards bus service agencies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends the following: Based on the findings and conclusions made from the results, the reliability of bus services is very important to implement in interurban transport services because it gives a positive impression or perception in the mind of the customers. Bus agencies have to improve time management, make sure they handle customer problems as promised, and staff should satisfy passengers right the first time. This will create long-lasting relationships between customer buying behavior and bus agencies. Customers always want their service expectations to meet their experience. Although some go in for agencies with good facilities such as good buses, appealing installations, good health and sanitation conditions, and professional service providers who make sure that services are rendered to customers in the best way, this will enable customers to become loyal to a particular interurban bus service.

Also, service providers should keep in mind that they represent the bus services, meaning they are the representatives. This therefore implies that the bus service image depends on how well or poorly the service provider provides interurban bus services. If poor bus services are rendered to customers, they will have a bad impression of the bus service, not the service provider. Therefore, good responsiveness, assurance, and empathy for bus services will prevent customers from switching from one bus service to another.

The interurban bus owners should ensure the condition of the bus is checked to ensure passengers do not suffer any physical distress while traveling. Proper ventilation, ample seating space, a reasonable volume of music played, and a friendly crew to handle the passengers should be observed. If the bus services are to have sustainable interurban bus services, all the service qualities need to improve by carrying out passenger surveys to get an indication of what should be improved on to maintain the current passengers and attract more from the private owners into interurban bus transport.

The interurban bus services should try as much as possible to computerize their bus services, as one of them is presently doing. They should not only key in passenger names on the computer but also get data based on their customers so that it will enable them to easily get to them individually. Also, CCTV cameras should be placed on all inter-urban buses to check onboard security. All commuters would like to feel safe on board and at the bus stops. Pickpocketing while boarding the bus and, when on board, attacks at bus stations and road accidents are some of the challenges mentioned that should be brought to zero for passengers to be satisfied with interurban



bus services. This will help to identify the passengers drivers pick on the way where the money goes into their private pocket.

The government should construct more urban link roads, especially in the newly developing areas, and maintain the existing ones to increase accessibility. The central area of the city should be decongested by relocating some facilities, such as markets, motor parks, government offices, and the like, to the city peripheries to increase economic and social activities there, which will generate more demand for bus services and thus encourage bus operators to ply the routes in such areas. Where governments cannot provide the facilities for inter-urban bus services themselves, they should subsidize those enterprises who have proved, beyond reasonable doubt that they can provide bus services. This will encourage private bus enterprise operators to have their own offices in the Mile 17 Park, as may be directed by the government.

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Some clear managerial implications emerge from the findings. First, it is apparent that a multidimensional construct of service quality explains consumer buying behavior in interurban bus services. Managers should therefore be aware of the need to include all service quality dimensions in their efforts to improve service quality. This finding should encourage marketing managers to develop a deeper understanding of the various components of this construct in order to improve their service to consumers. The finding that service quality has a significant effect on the behavioural purchase of the customer justifies expenditure on the design, communication, and delivery of service quality. In particular, expenditure on sales and promotion strategies and employing training programs is justified on the basis that consumers actively seek service quality. With regard to employee training programs, leadership and teamwork are essential in improving services, and employees must understand how the enhancement of customer-oriented service activities can benefit all stakeholders.

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