

An Integrated Model of Perceived Quality, Price, Satisfaction and Loyalty: The Case of Taxi-Brousses

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Abstract:- In this article we are interested in the links between the dimensions of perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty in the context of taxi-brousses. In addition, we investigate the moderating role of price on the link between satisfaction and loyalty. After a clarification of the concepts of perceived quality, satisfaction, fair price and loyalty, we propose a research model. The model is constructed on the assumption that in the bush cab transport context, perceived quality has an impact on satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, fairness of price moderates the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Data from a survey of 112 passengers from Antananarivo-Antsirabe destination were processed using structural equations. The results partly confirm our hypotheses, in particular the influence of quality dimensions on loyalty and the moderating role of fair pricing. We conclude our article on the limitations of the study and the prospects for future research.

Keywords:- Perceived quality, satisfaction, loyalty, price, taxi-brousse.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Madagascar, the bush cab is the most popular means of transport for travel outside the city and in the provinces. Indeed, the price of an almost inaccessible plane ticket that only a few privileged people can afford. Moreover, rail transportation has not been in operation for a long time. In a highly competitive market, such as bush cab transportation, carriers need to identify the elements that contribute to long-term success. Investigations have shown that, in order to achieve sustainable success, providers need to identify and satisfy customer needs and desires more effectively than competitors [1]. Satisfaction is synonymous with long-term profit [2] because it is strongly related to post-purchase consumer behavior such as loyalty [3]. Moreover, satisfaction is closely linked to many dimensions of relationship marketing and marketing instruments such as trust and price or distribution [1].

The marketing literature emphasizes that price is an important factor in consumer satisfaction. Indeed, the evaluation of the value of a prize or service generally involves price [4]. However, although price is recognized as an antecedent of satisfaction, it has not received the degree of empirical attention given to other concepts such as perceived quality. Cost-effectiveness is considered to be one of the important criteria in consumer behaviour and the fact

that price has received little attention in the analysis of customer satisfaction is surprising [1]. Moreover, in a Malagasy context where the population's purchasing power is low, price is mainly an unavoidable element for consumers. These ideas mean that empirical investigations must be conducted in order to understand the role of price in satisfaction. Furthermore, although investigations of satisfaction have been carried out in the context of services, little research has been carried out in the transport sector and none in bush cab transport.

This paper attempts to respond to this call for research. The objective of this research is to investigate the role of price in the formation of satisfaction and loyalty. On the theoretical level, our study makes several essential contributions to the literature. First, we empirically validate the notion that perceived quality impacts satisfaction and loyalty. Second, we analyze the moderating effect of price equity on the effects of quality and satisfaction. Methodologically, more investigations in fields such as bush cab transport and other cultures are needed to establish the validity of the research.

The paper begins with the conceptual background and hypothesis development. We then discuss the methods used and the results of hypothesis testing. Finally, we present a discussion of the management and research implications of the results, as well as an identification of the inherent limitations of the research.

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

A. Service quality

According to the definitions of Martínez-Tur et al [5], widely proposed in the literature, service quality refers to an overall assessment of the attributes of the product or service. In the same way as satisfaction, perceived quality mobilizes the model of the disconfirmation of expectations. However, the latter differs from satisfaction. Perceived quality is a long-term global assessment, whereas satisfaction is a transaction-specific measure.

In the literature, there is some consensus on the link between perceived quality and satisfaction. Bagozzi's idea [6] on the "result-desire" relationship can be used to explain the relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction. Indeed, individuals generally engage in activities (for example, buying a product or service) out of a desire to

achieve certain results. If the individual assesses that the desired result is achieved, then the "result-desire " is achieved, which is then followed by an effective response (such as satisfaction) [6]. From this perspective, individuals engage in the activity of purchasing a service or good because they desire a certain level of quality in relation to those they purchase. Following an evaluation, if the required quality (result) is achieved, satisfaction will follow. These ideas are based on the following hypotheses:

H1a: Onboard amenity is positively associated with customer satisfaction

H1b: Crews' attitude is positively associated with customer satisfaction

H1c: Station performance is positively associated with customer satisfaction

H1d: Operational performance is positively associated with customer satisfaction

In addition, quality of service reinforces the propensity of customers to buy again, buy more, purchase other services, become less price sensitive and talk about their positive experiences. Empirical investigations have identified a positive relationship between perceived quality and loyalty [7], [8]. Indeed, there is a relationship between service quality and intention to buy back, recommendation and resistance to better alternatives. These ideas are based on the following hypotheses:

H2a: Onboard amenity is positively associated with customer loyalty

H2b: Crews' attitude is positively associated with customer loyalty

H2c: Station performance is positively associated with customer loyalty

H2d: Operational performance is positively associated with customer loyalty

B. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a central concept in marketing and has therefore been the subject of numerous investigations over the years. The concept is of real importance in both the academic and business worlds. In the academic world, its importance is evidenced by the increasing number of investigations on the subject over the years [8]-[10]. In the business world, it has become a key intermediate objective because of the benefits it brings to organizations [11]. [11] Indeed, satisfaction is synonymous with long-term profit [2] as it is strongly linked to consumers' post-purchase behaviors such as loyalty [3]. It also serves as an exit barrier, helping a company to retain its customers. Moreover, it allows indirect advertising for the company through positive word of mouth from satisfied customers.

Despite a good number of writings on the subject, the authors have not found any consensual definition of the construct. The divergence manifests itself above all on its apprehension in a temporal framework rather than on its very nature. From a temporal perspective, some authors support the idea that satisfaction refers to the most recent transaction where it is defined as an evaluation or experience in reaction to a particular transaction with a product, episode or service. Other authors define satisfaction as a cumulative

evaluation of experiences with the product made or service done by the consumer, or an addition of all perceived satisfactions. Despite these differences, customer satisfaction has long been recognized as a central concept and an essential objective of all business activities.

For companies operating in competitive markets such as bush cab transportation, loyalty is inherent to survival. Loyalty increases profits by reducing the costs of acquiring new customers, and loyal customers are less price-sensitive and are associated with lower operating costs due to their familiarity with company procedures [12]. According to studies by Rust and Zahorick [13], for consumers, a change of supplier is due to a poor perception of quality and dissatisfaction with the services provided. Similarly, Fornell et al [8] find that dissatisfied customers are likely to spread negative feedback. Conversely, satisfied clients are likely to behave positively. Indeed, there is a direct and strongly positive link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty [14]. Satisfaction has a positive effect on attitude change in the post-repurchase period [15] and these positive attitudes do indeed strengthen the intentions to repurchase. These ideas support the following hypothesis:

H3: Satisfaction impacts customer loyalty.

C. Price as a moderating variable

Price is defined as the consumer's cognitive conception of what must be sacrificed to obtain certain types of products or services [4]. Price is an important factor for the consumer because it is one of the elements for judging the value of a product or service [4], [16]. According to the definition of Zeithaml [4], the lower the price, the lower the perceived sacrifice. According to investigations, price is an important determinant of satisfaction. Indeed, satisfaction is a function of service quality, price, situational factors and personal factors. Investigations show that equity is a determinant of satisfaction [9]. Consumers' perception of fairness relates to the commitment of the supplier and the quality of goods and services offered in relation to the price paid [17]. [17] Furthermore, unfair practices by service providers lead to negative consumer reactions. These attitudinal and emotional reactions result in dissatisfaction and negative purchasing intentions.

In addition to the link between price and satisfaction, investigations have attempted to verify the role of price perception in explaining consumer behavior. According to these investigations, customers' perceptions of price fairness have an impact not only on their satisfaction, but also on behavioral intention [18]. These ideas are based on the following hypothesis

H4: Price perception moderates the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty

Therefore, we propose the global model in the following Figure 1.

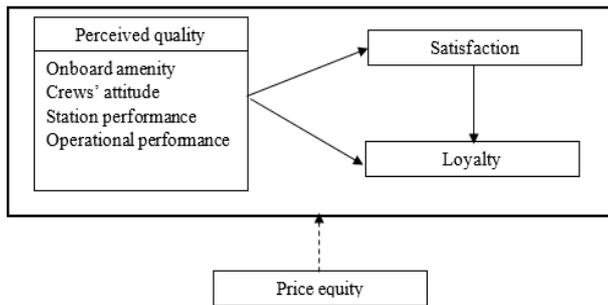


Fig. 1. Example of a figure caption

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Measures

All of the measurement scales we have used are all taken from the literature. We have adapted them according to the context of the study. The items for measuring the quality of service were taken from the work of Wen et al [19] and Bakti and Sumaedi [20]. Price equity is adapted from the work of Martín-Consuegra et al. [1]. The measure of satisfaction is that proposed by Rakotovao and Cliquet [9]. The measure of fidelity is that proposed by Wen et al [19].

In order to establish the validity of the content, the questionnaire was refined by a rigorous pre-test, initiated with the aim of checking the clarity of the questions. During the pre-test, 10 individuals were invited to comment on the questions and their wording. The comments of these 10 individuals formed the basis for the revision of our measurement scales.

B. Context

On the one hand, in the absence of a rail network allowing the movement of people and goods within the country and on the other hand, due to the poverty of the population and/or the exorbitant air fares on domestic lines, taxi-brousses have the monopoly of domestic transport in Madagascar. It is a form of public transport outside urban areas that serves both passenger and freight transport. Consequently, these persons are not allowed to exercise their profession inside the urban area [9].

This transport activity is mainly carried out by private contractors [9], and the vehicles used are mainly freight vehicles that the owners adapt for passenger transport. In areas where roads are in really bad condition, converted trucks are used for passenger transport. All carriers are members of a "koperativa". Several cooperatives serve any destination. In the "parikazy" bus stations, the geographical location where taxi-brousses park, there are no ticket counters for the purchase of tickets. Of course, departures and arrivals take place in these "parikazy" but passengers pay the "fré" directly to the driver. There is a certain seasonality in terms of the number of passengers during the week, but especially during the year [9]. Carriers take advantage of this seasonality by varying fares according to demand. When demand is high, fares can increase by up to double the normal fare.

C. Subjects and procedure

The research was conducted among passengers of taxi-brousses linking Antananarivo and Antsirabe. In addition, the respondents were those who had travelled at least twice on the same route in the same year. To ensure the reliability of the structural equation model, the number of responses must be 5 to 10 times greater than the number of items [21]. In this research, the scale with the highest number of items is the efficiency scale. The minimum number required to validate the scale is at least 25 responses, i.e. 5 times the 5 items. Loehlin [22], for his part, puts forward the idea of a sample of 100 to 200 individuals, and concludes that the model behaves correctly if the sample size respects this condition. Taking into account these methodological recommendations, the difficulties related to the survey, the availability of individuals to question, and the length of our questionnaire, we conducted a face-to-face survey of 112 passengers.

IV. RESULTS

A. Measurement model

Before testing the structural model, the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs must be established.

B. Statistical analysis

The data obtained are processed with SmartPLS 3 software. First, the measurement scale was tested, then a modeling under structural equation was used to test the hypotheses put forward. These analyses allowed the following results to be obtained.

Construit/mesure	λ	Reliability	AVE
Onboard amenity			
Noise level on board	0.844	0.838	0.721
Ride smoothness	0.854		
Crews' attitude			
Clean and neat appearance	0.754	0.872	0.631
Politeness and friendliness	0.747		
Responsiveness of personnel	0.813		
Understand passenger's need	0.858		
Station performance			
Good broadcasting system on stations	0.925	0.947	0.842
Timetable is clear and easy to understand	0.911		
Operational performance			
On-time performance	0.757	0.856	0.666
Safety while using public transport services	0.838		
Security from crime while using public transport services	0.849		
Price equity			
I paid a fair price for the ticket	0.931	0.944	0.808
I consider the company's pricing policy as fair	0.862		
I consider the company's pricing policy as ethical	0.833		
I consider the company's pricing policy as acceptable	0.964		
Satisfaction			
Choosing this service provider was a good choice if I had to redo my choice.	0.917	0.934	0.824
I am satisfied with the service provider's service delivery.	0.897		
Choosing this service provider was the right thing to do	0.910		
Loyalty			
I would like to recommend this bus carrier to my friends.	0.883	0.941	0.842
I would like to take this bus carrier next time.	0.957		
At the same price and quality I would make the same choice	0.912		

Table 1:- Scales of measurement

The reliability test gave results higher than 0.7 (between 0.747 and 0.964), an acceptable threshold according to Nunnally and Bernstein [23] which confirms the reliability of the scales used [24]. Concerning the validity test, Bagozzi and Yi [25] suggest that convergent validity is ensured by the λ above 0.7. Table 1 shows that all the λ are above their recommendations. Moreover, the extracted mean variances (EVAs) are greater than 0.5, which makes it possible to establish the convergent validity of the constructs [24].

We used the square root of the AVE to check the discriminant validity [24], (the values in bold in the diagonal of the correlation matrix of latent variables). According to Table II, these values are higher than those below the diagonal. This means that the relationships between the latent variables are weaker than those between the constructs and their manifest variables. Consequently, the discriminant validity of our constructs is verified.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Crew's attitude	0.794						
Loyalty	0.634	0.918					
Onboard amenity	0.275	0.494	0.849				
Operational performance	0.265	0.737	0.367	0.816			
Price equity	-0.424	0.079	0.370	0.219	0.899		
Satisfaction	0.559	0.837	0.485	0.644	0.137	0.908	
Station performance	0.440	0.649	0.402	0.661	0.072	0.654	0.918

Table 2:- Correlation between the different constructs

C. Structural model

To evaluate the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R²) of each dependent variable, the structural coefficients (β) and the level of significance (t-value) were

examined. The R² values are above the recommended threshold of 0.10 (between 0.474 and 0.835) [26].

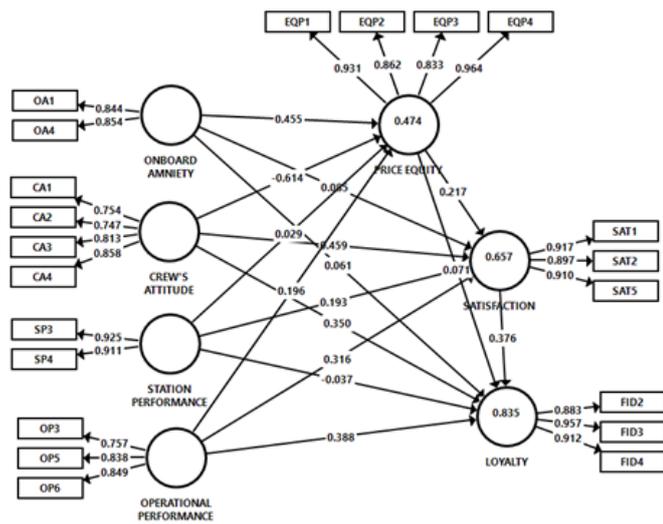


Fig. 2. The structural model

Path	Hypothesis	Structural coefficient	t-value	p-value
Crew's attitude -> Loyalty	H2b	0.230	3.236	0.001
Crew's attitude -> Satisfaction	H1b	0.667	7.816	0.000
Satisfaction -> Price -> Loyalty	H4	0.176	2.158	0.031
Onboard amniety -> Loyalty	H2a	0.071	2.173	0.030
Onboard amniety -> Satisfaction	H1a	0.045	0.347	0.729
Operational performance -> Loyalty	H2d	0.506	5.585	0.000
Operational performance -> Satisfaction	H1d	-0.018	0.136	0.892
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	H3	0.399	7.686	0.000
Station performance -> Loyalty	H2c	-0.076	1.347	0.178
Station performance -> Satisfaction	H1c	0.264	2.067	0.039

Table 3:- Result of Structural Equation Model Estimates

The objective of this section is to examine the causal relationships between, the dimensions of perceived quality, satisfaction and loyalty, as well as the moderating effect of fair pricing on these relationships. The results show that among the dimensions of perceived quality, crew's attitude and station performance impact on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.667, \rho < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.264, \rho < 0.05$), therefore H1b and H1c are confirmed. Concerning the relationship between the

dimensions of perceived quality and loyalty, only station performance does not impact loyalty. Therefore, H2b, H2d and H2d are confirmed ($\beta = 0.230, \rho < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.071, \rho < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.506, \rho < 0.05$). Moreover, satisfaction impacts loyalty ($\beta = 0.399, \rho < 0.05$) which confirms H3. Concerning the moderating effect of price equity, price moderates the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty ($\beta = 0.171, \rho < 0.05$), which confirms H5.

V. DISCUSSIONS

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. Firstly, it makes it possible to test a model that integrates both the dimensions of perceived quality in satisfaction and loyalty. Second, it allows us to test the moderating role of price equity in the link between satisfaction and loyalty.

First, crew's attitude is the most significant determinant of satisfaction. Furthermore, crew's attitude has an impact on loyalty. In service, the human aspect is important in assessing service quality. Indeed, one of the characteristics of service is that it cannot be separated from human interaction. Moreover, in a bush cab transport context, interaction with staff is at different levels. In the first instance, the purchase of tickets and the organization within the bus stations depend on the staff contact. Second, during the trip, passengers have to interact with the driver in case of personal problems, need for short breaks, etc. The second level is the interaction with the driver. These results confirm those found in previous research [19] which confirm the important role of staff contact in service evaluation. This dimension refers essentially to the helpfulness of the staff, the responsiveness of the staff, understanding of the needs of the passengers and, finally, the courtesy of the staff.

Secondly, the On board amniety and operational performance dimensions impact loyalty and not satisfaction. On board amniety refers to comfort outside the vehicle. In fact, comfort is one of the elements used to evaluate service quality. In fact, previous research emphasizes the importance of comfort in the evaluation of service quality [20]. However, if on-board comfort is not included in the evaluation of satisfaction, it affects the choice of whether or not to choose the same company for the next trip. Indeed, in the majority of cases, cooperatives use the same cars for transportation (Mercedes cargo sprinters modified for passenger transportation) and there is no real difference in interior comfort. On the other hand, what counts for the Malagasy passenger is not really comfort since even in daily life, comfort is not part of the Malagasy vocabulary. Moreover, the operational performance dimension refers to the time and safety of the trip. In our study, we surveyed passengers on the lines where robberies and accidents are not frequent. In fact, in Madagascar, the southbound destination (National Road 7) is the most worrisome in terms of safety, no passengers bound for the RN7 have been investigated.

Thirdly, while the performance station dimension impacts satisfaction, it does not impact loyalty. This dimension refers to the physical aspect of the station. It should be noted that for bus-taxi transport, a bus station is used by all cooperatives. While this dimension may be important for the experience in question, it does not come into play in the next cooperative choices since, regardless of the cooperative, the passenger will always be obliged to take the bush cab in the same station.

Fourth, our study confirms the important role of satisfaction in assessing loyalty. Many researchers have provided empirical evidence of a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty [8], [27]. According to these ideas, improving satisfaction levels contributed to customer loyalty in terms of probability of redemption and price tolerance in case of redemption [8]. Furthermore, Cronin and Taylor [27] states that satisfaction is a key determinant of positive behavioural intentions.

Fifth, according to our results, price moderates the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. These results show the important role of price for Malagasy consumers. In fact, given the low purchasing power of consumers travelling by bush cab, price appears to be a major factor in the purchase decision.

A. Managerial and strategic implications

In addition to the theoretical impacts, our results also have implications for bush cab managers. In the service industry, the importance of loyalty is well recognized. Indeed, customer loyalty costs much less than acquiring new customers. Moreover, depending on the industry, an improvement of only 5% in customer loyalty results in a 25-85% increase in revenue [28]. The average company loses half of its customers in five years, so every company should have a successful customer retention strategy that keeps customers [28]. In a highly competitive environment, bush cab operators need to identify the determinants of passenger loyalty. Carriers need to use the results of our studies to improve the elements of quality that impact on customer loyalty, particularly the interaction between staff and passengers. It is recommended to improve the interaction between passengers and staff, whether they are ticket agents or conductors. Cooperatives need to train staff in this regard, and contact staff with appropriate social and interpersonal skills should be recruited to work in taxi-brousses.

B. Limitation and future research directions

One of the limits of the research is undoubtedly the conception of satisfaction. Indeed, in the present research, satisfaction is purely cognitive. It would be interesting to investigate the emotional component of the construct. Finally, a generalization of our results is excluded, because the survey focused on only a few lines. If the survey had been extended to other localities and countries, the results could have been different.

Furthermore, although there is some convergence on the idea of quality of service as a multidimensional concept, the dimensions of quality need to be specific according to the service context, culture and country [29]. On this basis, it is important to try a quality model based on local culture. For our case, we have based ourselves on dimensions of quality presented in the literature, however, it would be interesting to develop a measure of service quality specific to bush cab transport.

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