



Road Transport Business and Sustainable Tourism Management: A Case of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited

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Abstract

Road transport is the most exploited means of conveying passengers and goods from one place to another, usually undertaken by use of cars, buses or any other vehicle from the tourist's place of origin to the destination. The purpose of this study was to assess the challenges facing the road transport business of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited with a focus on its Minna-Onitsha route. The survey was administered on staff and passengers boarding the God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited buses from Minna in North Central to Onitsha in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Data were coded using EXCEL and the SPSS packages while analyses were done with the aid of the percentage, mean and the Chi-square technique. Research evidence revealed that the constant quarrels between drivers and passengers, non provision of back up buses during a breakdown, non availability of air-conditioners and delays in taking off from the park as scheduled have compounded the challenges of passengers at God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited. It is however, recommended that as a mark of company policy, buses should depart at scheduled times, air conditioners and back up vehicles should be provided in cases of breakdown of.

Keywords: *Road transport, transport business, sustainable tourism, sustainable management, transport company.*

Introduction

Road transport business refers to that line of entrepreneurship that caters for the needs of commuters by moving passengers and goods from one location to another by road. Olawale (2017) asserts that transport business is one of the hot business ideas in Nigeria today because everyone needs transportation either for business or to travel for leisure. Though a tourist might decide to travel to the destination by air; after reaching the destination, road transportation essentially provides the means by which the tourist explores it. This is usually undertaken by use of cars, buses or any other vehicle from the tourist's place of origin to the destination. According to Stephen and Connell (2006), transport is a fundamental component of tourism and a precondition for travel. It facilitates mobility and the movement of tourists from place of origin (i.e. their home area) to their destination and back. In this modern era road transportation has received tremendous boost with the emergence of fast moving vehicles, which have been recognized for their speed and comfort e.g. the sport utility vehicles. In the estimation of Bhatia (2011), the entire shape of the tourist industry was transformed by the invention of

private cars and coaches, which gave impetus in the ten years that, preceded World War 1. Stephen (2005) posits that in 2003, 694 million tourists travelled abroad (World Tourism Organization, 2004) down from a peak of a significant demand for tourist transport.

In Nigeria transportation by road is seen by many as the quickest way to reach their destinations especially those who could not afford the cost associated with flying. Culpan (2007) reports that road transportation is a very common means of transportation among Nigerians. Most Nigerians prefer travelling by road not because it is the safest, but tends to be the cheapest after water transportation. Bearing in mind that transportation and tourism are both linked together, road transport seems to be the best as it has support services that promote tourism like fuel stations, auto mechanics and even rest facilities. This present study assesses the operations of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited, one of the road transport companies in Nigeria. Generally observations have shown some abnormalities and weaknesses in road transport business in Nigeria and particularly at the bus stations of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited.

According to Ekong (2007), the deplorable state and nature of operation by most transport companies keep posing a challenge on the success of tourism in Nigeria. Many tourists are discouraged due to the insensitivities and ill treatment meted out to them by transport operators while travelling coupled with the after-effect of it on their psychological wellbeing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent does the attitude of staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited affect passengers' loyalty?
2. To what extent does the state of the buses of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited impact on passenger's satisfaction?
3. To what extent does the role of the owners of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited affect passengers' patronage?

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To assess the impact of the attitude of staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited on passengers' loyalty.
2. To determine the effect of the condition of buses of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited on passengers' satisfaction.
3. To ascertain the impact of the roles of the owners of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited on passengers' patronage.

Review of related literature

Significance of Road transport business in Nigeria

In Nigeria, road transport is the most exploited means of conveying passengers and goods from one place to another. Even in other climes, road transport is unarguably recognized as such. For example Akinsanya (2018) contend that road transport in Finland is the most commonly used method of transporting goods, people and services from one point of location to the other. This is also so in Nigeria because most people consider air transportation to be exorbitant and rail and water transportation slow and ineffective. This observation also has given rise to the rising numbers of road transport companies coming in to obtain their own share of the market as they launch their fleet of cars and buses to signal take off. In the perspectives of Olubomehin (2012), the presence of an adequate, reliable and efficient transport system is a critical factor in local economy development. A well developed transportation infrastructure provides

adequate access to local communities, which in turn is a necessary condition for the efficient operation of manufacturing, retail, labour and housing markets. Emmanuel (2013) asserts that the transport sector is an important component of the economy; impacting on development and the welfare of populations. Road transportation penetrates further into the nooks and cranny of the human environment than other means of transportation. According to Owlgen (2020), road transport is the most common and suitable means of transport especially for short and medium distances because of their flexibility, reliability, speed and door to door services, besides supplementing and increasing the efficiency of the other modes of transport. For tourists, especially when it comes to visiting the hill areas and wildlife sanctuaries, road transport is the only means of transportation available.

Road transport and tourism development

An effective and efficient transport system is crucial for tourism development. Rodrique, (2020) emphasizes that tourism, as an economic activity, relies on transportation to bring tourists to destinations and transportation itself can be part of the touristic experience such as for cruises. Nwafor (2019) argues that transportation as an important part of human activity forms the basis of all socioeconomic interactions as lack of transport facilities often hinders economic development. Bad roads, inadequate fleets of vehicles, inadequate trains, overcrowded airplanes and congested ports are common features of developing world transportation system. In corroboration, Ogunbodede (2008) discovered that urban road transport system in Nigeria is inefficient and grossly inadequate even after 46 years of becoming independent from Colonial Rule.

Transportation is an essential service element of tourism, and in some cases it can form the focus of the tourism experience per se (e.g., cruising and scenic train journeys). Various forms of transportation have been associated with the development of tourism and technological developments in transportation, combined with the rise in personal disposable incomes, have led to the expansion of both domestic and international tourism (Page and Ge, 2009). Ononogbo (2020) observes that a major drawback to Nigeria's tourism is the poor situation of roads that makes access to tourism destinations most difficult. In tandem with this finding is Odeku's (2020) study which found that although road transportation is the commonest means of transportation within Nigeria, roads are in very poor condition because of the extent of damage and lack of maintenance, which make them not motor vehicle conducive. Research evidence also shows the challenges of unprofessional conduct such as abuses, quarrels and alcoholism among drivers and staff of some transport companies

in Nigeria (Ononogbo, Adekoya, Idowu and Okunlola, 2018). Situations such as these call for urgent attention because tourists will do all to ensure they abhor unfriendly and unsafe tourist destinations.

Research methodology

In this study, 78 passengers and 7 staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited participated in the survey. Several visits were made to the bus station of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited to administer questionnaires to staff and passengers moving from Minna to Onitsha in South East Nigeria. Questionnaires were administered to both staff and passengers in order to gather important data for accomplishing the research objectives using the convenience sampling technique. The data were subjected to analysis using percentage, mean and the Chi-square analytical technique for the testing of the hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance.

Results and discussion

In table 1, it is reported by passengers that drivers and assistant drivers engage them in quarrels very often. This represents 53.8% of the respondents. This result corroborates the findings of Ononogbo, Adekoya, Idowu and Okunlola (2018), which found that drivers and passengers not only engaged in quarrels but that there was the occurrence of verbal abuses meted out to passengers by staff of Abdulsalam Motor Park, Minna and Etsu Yahaya Abubakar Motor Park, Bida in Niger State, Nigeria. This negative trend in our bus stations negates the prospects of good business enterprise, customer satisfaction and flourishing tourism sector. This shows that the expectations of passengers (customers) of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited are not met because according to Kotler (2000), customer satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to his or her expectation.

Table 1: Analysis of regularity of quarrels between drivers/assistant drivers and passengers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Often	19	24.4	24.4	24.4
	Very often	42	53.8	53.8	78.2
	Not at all	17	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 2: Analysis of alternative buses during a breakdown

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	22	28.2	28.6	28.6
	No	56	71.5	71.4	100.0
	Total	78	100.7	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 2 explains the views of passengers as to whether or not God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited provides passengers with another bus when there is a major breakdown during a journey. Analysis in table 2 shows that 71.5% of the respondents agreed that alternative buses were not provided for passengers after a major breakdown. This is a common experience of many commuters in Nigeria who eventually board another vehicle due to a breakdown in order to meet up with crucial appointments or official deadlines. According to Iproject (2020), breaking down of vehicles and poor services rendered to customers cause dissatisfaction. A dissatisfied passenger (customer) can ruin a business by negative word of mouth. In table 3, respondents in a unanimous response maintained that God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited buses do not have air-conditioners in them. This no doubt does constitute some discomfort in the course of the journeys. Good and functional air-conditioners add positively to the general satisfaction of passengers. In fact as Ruseling (2006) puts it, customer comfort and satisfaction is directly linked to the air conditioning and climate-control systems running on a particular bus. It can mean the difference between return passengers who know the name of their regular bus driver and passengers who will never board a bus again.

Table 3: Analysis of provision of air-conditioners in the buses.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	11	14.1	14.1	14.1
	No	67	85.9	85.9	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 4: Reason for delay before taking off at God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited's Bus Station.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Scarcity of Passengers	7	100.0	100.0	100.0
No				

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 4 captures failure on the part of the management and owners of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited. In this analysis 100% of the staff respondents were of the view that scarcity of passengers was responsible for the delay and waiting experienced by passengers before takeoff. This negative impression would place on God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited a less competitive advantage because as Mishalani, McCord and Wirtz (2006) have discovered, passengers do perceive time to be greater than the actual amount of time waited.

Testing of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the attitudes of staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited and passengers' loyalty.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the attitudes of staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited and passengers' loyalty.

Decision Rule: Reject H₀ if P value is ≤ 0.05 , otherwise do not reject.

How often do the drivers and assistant driver engage passengers in a quarrel?

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Often	19	26.0	-7.0
Very often	42	26.0	16.0
Not at all	17	26.0	-9.0
Total	78		

How often do the drivers and assistant driver engage passengers in a quarrel?

Chi-Square	14.846^b
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.001

Having tested the hypothesis, the result shows a Chi-Square value of 14.846^b, and a critical value of .001. Since P value < 0.05, we reject H₀ and accept the

alternative hypothesis and further conclude at 5% level of significance that there is a significant relationship between the attitude of staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited and passengers' loyalty.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: There is no relationship between the conditions of Ezenwata transport buses on passengers' satisfaction.

H₁: There is a relationship between the conditions of Ezenwata transport buses on passengers' satisfaction.

Decision Rule: Reject H₀ if P value is ≤ 0.05 , otherwise do not reject.

Are the buses air conditioned

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	11	39.0	-28.0
No	67	39.0	28.0
Total	78		

Do they have fire extinguisher in the motor

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	64	39.0	25.0
No	14	39.0	-25.0
Total	78		

Test Statistics

	Are the buses air conditioned	Do they have fire extinguisher in the motor	How far are you satisfied with the availability of buses at God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited Park?
Chi-Square	40.205 ^a	32.051 ^a	7.462 ^b
Df	1	1	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 39.0.

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 26.0.

Having tested the hypothesis, the result shows a Chi-Square value of 40.205^a, 32.051^b, 7.462^b and a critical value of .000. Since P value < 0.05, we reject Ho and accept the alternative hypothesis and further conclude at 5% level of significance that there is a relationship between the conditions of buses of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited and passengers' satisfaction.

Conclusion and recommendation

The tourism sector in any part of the world thrives significantly in destinations where the transport system is effective and efficient. In this study results have given strong insights on the challenges facing road transport business of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited (Minna Onitsha route). They include quarrels between drivers and passengers, non provision of alternative buses during a breakdown, non availability of air-conditioners in the buses and delays in taking off from the park due to scarcity of passengers. In the light of these constraints, the study recommends that regular training programmes should be organized for staff of God Bless Ezenwata Nigeria Limited to build their capacity to respond adequately to the needs of their passengers. To ensure passenger satisfaction and continuous patronage, as a mark of company policy, buses should depart at scheduled times, air conditioners and back up vehicles should be provided in cases of breakdown of buses.

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