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BRAND EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMER BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS IN INTER-STATE BRANDED TRANSPORT COMPANIES

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A B S T R A C T

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between brand experience and passenger's behavioral intention. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey and 120 passengers of inter-state branded companies were the target population. The data was generated through a primary source and a closed ended questionnaire of five-point likert scale was administered to respondent. The study hypotheses were analyzed Pearson's product moment with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The finding of the study revealed that, there is a strong and positive relationship between brand experience dimensions (safety, comfort, driver's competence, travel time and vehicle cleanliness) with passengers' behavioral intention. The study recommended that transport should make sure that they provide comfortable seats, screens and well air-conditioned vehicles to make the vehicle comfortable tor travelers. Again, that drivers should be well trained and must have a good geographical command.

K E Y W O R D S

Brand Experience, Comfort, Passengers behavioral intention, travel time, driver competence

Introduction

The task of attracting consumers' attention is challenging and so organizations should reconsider their strategies, especially their marketing strategies, for a number of reasons. One reason is the growing number of brands and increasing competition among enterprises. The dynamic, global business environment drives companies to constantly seek competitive advantage through the development of innovative products, services, and systems. Underlining the importance of "technology push" and "market/demand pull", a company´s ultimate aim is to develop revolutionary products and services (Brem & Voigt, 2009). Therefore, understanding user behavior, use, and shortcomings of products and services is essential to discover and create "value opportunities" (IDEO, 2009). One of the most important topics mentioned by researchers is related to brand experience when interacting with a particular brand. Koetz (2019) pointed out the need to improve brand experience and reward loyalty

because they work to increase Passengers Purchase Intention and loyalty. By understanding consumers, companies can manage their brand communication strategies in a way that engages consumers the best. Therefore, from the marketing perspective, "understanding consumer behavior is good business" (Solomon et al., 2010).

As many scholars (Amine, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994; Aaker, 1991) state, a positive attitude towards a brand is a necessity in creating brand attachment. Attitude and emotions towards the brand are important, because emotions have been recently recognized as having the most effect in predicting consumer behavior (Johnson & Greyson, 2005). These attitudes and the overall perceived brand image are affected by the consumer's brand experience. When it comes to review of a brand, making promises about a service or product is not enough; the brand promise must consistently be delivered when experiencing the service.

In the transportation industry where services are almost identical and every of them competing on the same front, the need to be distinguished becomes very paramount because on each passing day, passengers are are becoming more service enlightened and sophisticated in their demand and are only set to pitch their tent to companies that gives them more than the expected service. More so, the multiplicity of choice available to passengers is forcing transport requires that transport companies should start thinking out of the box on how to improve passengers experience so as to cash in brand confusion of passengers

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to inquire how brand experience dimensions e,g passengers safety, vehicle cleanliness, passengers comfort, drivers competence and traveling time factor peculiar to transportation service providers influences passengers behavioral intentions.

H_{01}: Passengers safety have no relationship with passenger's behavioral intention

H_{02}: Vehicle Cleanliness have no relationship with passenger's behavioral intention

H_{03}: Passengers comfort have no relationship with passenger's behavioral intention

H_{04}: Driver's competence have no relationship with passenger's behavioral intention

H_{05}: Travel time factor have no relationship with passenger's behavioral intention

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Experience

Brand experience has been defined from numerous perspectives. Verhoef et al. (2009) indicated that brand experience is a multidimensional construct built on a customer's physical, social, cognitive, and affective states, which steams from the customer's attitudinal disposition towards the service provider. Berry et al. (2002) expressed brand experience with pointers to clues sent from an organization to its customers. Brakus et al. (2009) identified four cases in which consumer experience of goods and services occurs: searching for products, shopping for products, receiving services, and consuming products or services.

From the above definition, the current study defined brand experience in the transportation service sector as the attitudinal investment towards the service received as against service expected. In fact, some brand experts relates brand experience to be how satisfied a customer is with a service encounter and the reaction of such experience to either want to continue with the brand or not. This implies that, passengers develop various degrees of attachment or dislike towards the services received and to

extension, the personnel who are directly involved in delivering transportation services. There has been numerous brand experience conceptualization models. E.g, Verhoef et al. (2009), generation of brand experience were social, service encounter, convenience, cost, and previous experience. Brakus et al. (2009) mentioned direct and indirect experience as two basic kinds of product experience in the shopping service. Direct product experience is related to physical interaction between the customer and the product, while indirect product experience is embedded in virtual or advertised products. Hosany and Witham (2010) explored the dimensions of tourists' experience and found that it consists of four major dimensions: education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics. In their scale developed to measure brand experience. In the dining industry, dimensions of customer experience can be understood through restaurant attributes such as food quality, Brand Experience, restaurant atmosphere, and price fairness (Liu & Jang, 2009).

The different views, models and construct of brand experience implies that experience is relative and can differ from industry to industry, sector to sector. As related to the transportation industry, passengers want enjoy their trip. Hence the model of transport experience as suggested by Etuk et al (2021) becomes very germane and they are;

2.2 Safety: In the context of transportation services, Nyongesa and Bwisa (2014) defined passengers' safety as the condition where passengers are protected from harm, injury, risk or other dangers at the service providers' facilities and during transportation to their final destinations. This definition entails that safety in the context of transportation encompasses the personal safety of passengers and their luggage at the facilities of transportation companies and the safety of passengers including their luggage during conveyance to their preferred destinations.

Passengers prioritize their safety and that of their luggage when choosing transportation service providers regardless of means of transportation (Nafiu, Hassan & Alogwuja, 2018).

2.3 Passenger's Comfort: In the context of transportation service, passengers' comfort is the degree to which passengers are comfortable with the seats, travel experience, vehicle temperature and other experiential components of companies while in transit (Njeru, Cheruiyot & Maru, 2019). It is the state in which passengers are relaxed, free of pain, distress, physical or psychological stress when being conveyed by a transportation company to their preferred locations. Travel comfort is an indispensable factor considered by the majority of potential passengers before patronizing a transportation company (Julius & Jatmika, 2019). In fact, it is in the search for travel comfort, among other benefits, that most passengers prefer to travel by air to other distressing means of transportation such as road, rail and sea in most parts of Africa.

2.4 Drivers' Competence: Drivers' competence is the level of proficiency and expertise of transportation companies' drivers from origin to passengers' final destination (Nyongesa & Bwisa, 2014). A driver's competence encompasses his driving skills, length of driving experience and knowledge of travel routes, because only when a driver possesses these minimum capabilities will such a driver be considered competent (Pawlasova, 2015). Divers' competence is essentially important in transportation services because it defines passengers' overall perception of the quality of service offered by transportation companies. As such, transportation companies with more competent and efficient drivers tend to enjoy more passengers' patronage and retention than those without competent

drivers. This is so because an incompetent driver conveying passengers to their destinations will be incapable of guaranteeing passengers' safety and comfort during the transportation process, thereby leading to passengers' dissatisfaction (Budiono, 2009).

2.5 Travel time: Travel time is the time it takes for transportation companies to move passengers from source location to their final destinations (Ojo, et al, 2014). It is the amount of time that it takes a transportation service company to schedule passengers, and convey them to their preferred destinations through their transportation networks. Travel time also has to do with punctuality of transportation service delivery (Noor & Foo, 2014). It is taking passengers to where they need to go at the promised stipulated time without human or technical delays.

Transportation service companies can improve their travel time by ensuring that journeys are scheduled and communicated to passengers in time; passengers and their luggage are processed for conveyance without delay; transportation vehicles are reliable and have adequate spare parts; and drivers follow designated routes with minimal expected time of delivery (Saw, et al, 2020).

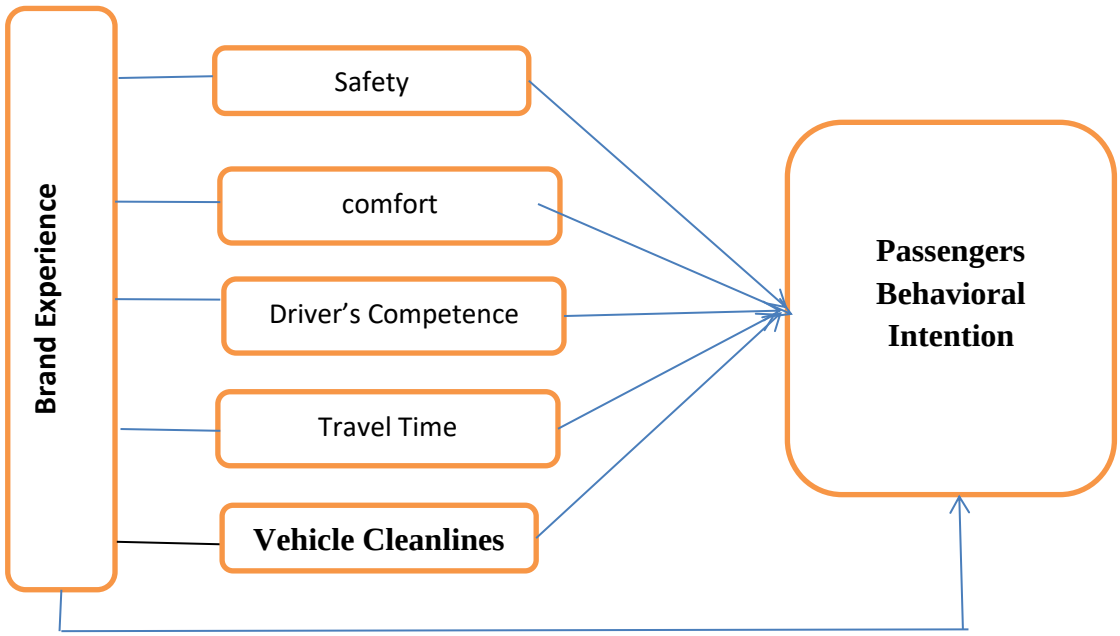
2.6 Vehicle cleanliness: Cleanliness of a vehicle is the degree of cleanliness of the exterior and interior sides of a transportation company's vehicle (Singh, 2016). It encompasses the degree of cleanliness of the interior as well as the exterior of a transportation vehicle, including the smell or fragrance prevailing within it. Vehicle cleanliness is an essential factor in passengers' patronage decision towards transportation service companies, because it contributes to passengers' comfort (Fonseca, Pinto & Brito, 2010). A vehicle with clean interior and exterior coupled with sweet scenting interior fragrance enables passengers to relax and be calm during conveyance to their preferred destinations. As such, transportation companies around the world are rapidly taking steps to improve the cleanliness of their vehicles (Van-Lierop & El-Geneidy 2016). Interior vehicle waste disposal mechanisms are applied to ensure the neatness of vehicle interior; designated vehicle washers are hired to keep transportation vehicles clean before and after the journey; special car fresheners or fragrances are sprayed in transportation vehicles to eliminate bad smell and air-conditioning systems fitted with sweet fragrances are fixed in cars to improve interior smell of cars so as to enhance passengers' experience.

Passengers Behavioral Intention

Walters (1974) defines passenger behavior as: " the process whereby passengers decide whether, what, when, where, how, and which transport company to services to engage" Mowen (1993) provides a different definition by explaining passenger behavior as: the study of the buying units and the exchange processes involved in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of goods, services, experiences, and ideas". This definition focuses on engaging transport company's services in an attempt to include not only a passenger but also other users that patronize transport services.

Schiffman & Kanuk (1997) defined passenger behavior as: "The behaviour that passengers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of a transportation company's services, and ideas." Schiffman & Kanuk (1997) elaborate on the definition by explaining that passenger behavior is, therefore, the study of how passengers make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on transportation consumption-related items. It includes the study of what, why, when, where and how often they use the service. Passenger behavior is seen to involve a complicated mental process as well as physical activity (purchase decision). Passenger behavior reflects the totality of

passengers‟ decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition off goods, services, time and ideas by (human) decision making units



3. Empirical Review

Safety and Passenges Behavior: Saw, Dissanayake, Ali and Bentotage (2020) conducted a study on transportation service expereince and passengers loyalty which sampled 320 respondents from different transport companies found service experrince enablers such as security, safety, comfort, infrastructure quality and ticket purchase facilities have significant and positive relationship with passengers behavioral intention.

Etuket al (2021) conducted a study on Brand Experience and passengers' loyalty of public transportation companies. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. Primary data were obtained from 228 passengers of public road transportation companies using an adapted structured questionnaire. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics while multiple linear regression was adopted to test the hypotheses of the study with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23) software. The findings of the study revealed that passengers' safety, had significant positive effects on passengers behaviorial intention of public transportation companies. Dissanayake, Ali and Bentotage in (2020), their revealed that passenger patronage was significantly influenced by security and safety. Also a study by Nyongesa and Bwisa (2014), revealed that passengers' security significantly and positively influenced passenger post behavioral intention in terms of repurchase, willingness to recommend and loyalty in the public transport sector of Kenya.

Passenger's Comfort and Behavioral Intention:

Oluwaseyi and Olaniyi (2018) conducted a study on the assessment of passengers experience and satisfaction of public transport system in Akure-Owo in Nigeria. Twelve service buses wee identified and study was done with questionnaire and field observation to collect required data. 112 participated

in the study and analysis was conducted using gap analysis. The findings revealed that comfort is a very important item in the choice of a transport service to patronize.

Nwachukwu (2014) considered Comfort, service accessibility, drivers' efficiency and bus stop facilities as dimensions to transportation experience and the study found passengers comfort Comfort significantly rooted in customers attitude towards transportation firms.

(Ojo, Mireku, Dauda & Nutsogbodo, 2014) in their findings stated that most passengers are basically not only concerned with being conveyed to their destinations safely and promptly; but also, the comfortability of the transportation experience is equally an indispensable measure of passengers' overall satisfaction (Ojo, Mireku, Dauda & Nutsogbodo, 2014).

Driver's Competence

Nafiu, Hassan and Alogwuja (2018) did a study on aervice quality and passengers loyalty. The variables considered by the study were drivers'Safety (drivers' competence), fare level and comfortability. The findings of that study show that competence had significant relationships with passengers' perceived satisfaction and reactions.

Study by Nwachukwu (2014) also revealed that drivers' efficiency had a significant impact on overall satisfaction of passengers with intra-city public bus transport services in Abuja. Similarly, the viewpoints are substantiated by the study of Wang, Zhang, Zhu and Wang (2020), which revealed that drivers' Safety had a significant positive effect on passengers' satisfaction and loyalty.

Travel Time and Passenger's Behavioral Intention

Tam and Lam (2011) did a study on the impact of travel time Safety and perceived Passengers Purchase Intention. The study adopted cross-sectional survey reearch design of which 130 passangers was determined using taro Yamen sample size determination. The data was analyzed using infrenstial statistics and structural equation modeling. The findings of the study revealed that travel time is very important to passengers. Passengers want their buses to depart at a promised time and when delay becomes noted, it affects their perception and attitude negatively towards the firm. This scholarly assertion is corroborated by the study of Nyongesa and Bwisa (2014), which revealed that travel time punctuality significantly and positively influenced passenger satisfaction in the public transport sector of Kenya. The assertion is also supported by the study of Budiono (2009), which revealed that travel time was significantly and positively correlated with overall passenger patronage of public bus transportation services in Jakarta. Similarly, the foregoing assertion corresponds with the study of Fonseca, Pinto and Brito (2010), which revealed that travel time (speed and punctuality) had a significant influence on passengers' patronage of public transport services

Vehicle Cleanliness and Behavioral Intention

Van-Lierop and ElGeneidy (2016) study considered the impact of physical appeal of transportation vehicles on passengers intention to patronize. The findings of the study showed that most passengers are conscious of the physical conditions and how clean the vehicles are before engaging in patronage. This entails that vehicle cleanliness, as a dimension of road transportation Brand Experience, can significantly affect passengers' satisfaction and loyalty. This premise is supported by the study of Singh (2016), which revealed that vehicle cleanliness (clean environment inside buses) had a significant positive impact on overall passenger behavior towards public transportation services in

Lucknow City. The premise is also substantiated by the study of Pawlasova (2015), which revealed that vehicle cleanliness significantly influenced passengers´ satisfaction with public city transport in The Czech Republic. Similarly, the premise is corroborated by the study of Wang, Zhang, Zhu and Wang (2020), which revealed that vehicle cleanness had a significant positive effect on passengers' behaviors in terms of satisfaction and re-use intention.

Research Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design was used in this study and passengers of Akwa Ibom transport companies were the target population of the study. A simple random sample method was used to obtain around 120 respondents, who represented the study's attainable respondents. The number of customers to be sampled was determined using the Freund and Williams Formula for sample size calculation in an unknown population. Following that, 120 copies of a closed ended questionnaire structured on a five point Likert scale were gathered for data analysis. The factors were assessed using five items on a five-point Likert-like scale ranging from five to one, as follows: 5 indicates strongly agreement, 4 indicates agreement, 3 indicates undecided, 2 indicates disagree, and 1 indicates strongly disagree. Face and construct validity were used to determine the instrument's validity, while the Cronbach Alpha test revealed acceptable reliability values of 0.767 for Safety, 791 for Comfort, 754 for Driver's Competence, 768 for Travel Time, and 776 for Vehicle Cleanliness. With the help of SPSS version 20.0, the null hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

4. Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Findings

HO_1 There is no significant relationship between Safety and Passengers Behavioural Intention

HA_1: There is significant relationship between Safety and Passengers Behavioural Intention

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.883, and the P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000, as seen in the above

		Safety	**Passengers Behavioural Intention**
Safety	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.883**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.	.001
	N	120	120
Passengers Behavioural Intention	Pearson Correlation	.883**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	120	120

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

Result

We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. This suggests that Safety and Passengers Behavioural Intention have a considerable link. The coefficient of determination (r2 = 0.8) suggests that the dependability of the service provided accounts for 80% of Passengers behavioural Intention. A substantial link is revealed by the significant

value of 0.000 (p0.05). Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding agrees with the findings of Wael (2015) whose study showed a direct significant impact of Safety on Passengers Behavioural Intention.

HO_2 There is no significant relationship between Comfort and Passengers behavioural Intention

HA_2: There is significant relationship between Comfort and Passengers Behavioural Intention

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.807, and the P value (2-tailed) is 0.000, as seen in the above result. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. This suggests that Comfort and Passengers Behavioral Intention are linked in some way. According to the coefficient of determination (r2 = 0.65), Comfort of service providers accounts for 65 percent of Passengers Purchase Intention. A substantial link is revealed by the significance value of 0.000 (p 0.05). Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding agrees with the findings of Wael (2015) whose study showed a direct significant impact of Comfort on Passengers Purchase Intention. The findings are similarly consistent with those of Miklós, Hossam, János, József, and Judit (2019), who discovered that dependability, is an excellent predictor of Passengers Behavioural Intention in their study.

Correlations

		Comfort	**Passengers Behavioural Intention**
Comfort	Pearson Correlation	1	.807**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Passengers Behavioural Intention	Pearson Correlation	.807**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

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

HO3. There is no significant relationship between Travel Time and Passengers Behavioural Intention

HA3. There is significant relationship between Travel Time and Passengers Behavioural Intention.

Correlations

		Travel Time	Passengers Purchase Intention
Travel Time	Pearson Correlation	1	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Passengers Purchase Intention.	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 22220.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.291 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is weak relationship between Travel Time and Passengers Behavioural Intention. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.29) indicates that 29% of Passengers Behavioural Intention can be explained through Travel Time from service providers. The results of hypothesis two contradicted those of Ehigie (2018), who claimed in his thesis that there is a substantial relationship between Travel Time and customer happiness. It also contradicted the findings of Vencataya, Pudaruth, Juwaheer, and Dirpal (2019), who found that Travel Time, is an important predictor of customer happiness.

H_{O4} There is no significant relationship between Driver's Competence and Passengers Behavioural Intention

HA_3 There is significant relationship between Driver's Competence and Passengers Behavioural Intention

Correlations

		Driver's Competence	**Passengers Behavioural Intention**
Driver's Competence	Pearson Correlation	1	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Passengers Behavioural Intention	Pearson Correlation	.789**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

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

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.789, and the P value (2-tailed) is 0.000, as seen in the above result. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. This suggests that Driver's Competence and Passengers behavioral Intention have a strong link. Service Driver's Competence is responsible for 62 percent of Passengers behavioral Intention, according to the coefficient of determination (r2 = 0.65). There is a significant link when the significant value is 0.000 (p 0.05). This conclusion is consistent with Khan, Mubbsher Munawar; Fasih, Mariam (2014), who discovered that Driver's Competence and other Brand Experience aspects had a direct influence on Passengers behavioural Intention..

HO_5. There is no significant relationship between Vehicle Cleanliness and Passengers Behavioural Intention

HA_5. There is significant relationship between Travel Time and Passengers Behavioural Intention. From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.291 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Vehicle Cleanliness and Passengers Behavioural Intention. The coefficient of determination (r2 = 0.67) implies that 67 percent of Passengers Behavioural Intention may be explained by Vehicle Cleanliness (service atmosphere and personnel appearance) (service environment and staff appearance). This conclusion corresponds with the findings of Wael (2015) whose study indicated a direct substantial influence of Comfort on Passengers behavioural Intention.

Correlations

		Vehicle Cleanliness	**Passengers Behavioural Intention.**
Vehicle Cleanliness	Pearson Correlation	1	.291**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Passengers Behavioural Intention.	Pearson Correlation	.291**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 22220.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study evaluated the relationship between brand experience and passengers behavioural intention of interstate branded transport companies. The study through the various reviewed literatures understood that travellers want good travelling experience and are willing to patronize, advertise and get committed to transport companies that offers them a memorable travelling experience. These experiences they have come to agree are domiciled in how safe they and their luggage arrive their destination, how comfortable the they motor, the drivers' competence and interactions during travel, getting to their destination at the promised time and making sure vehicle is in clean both in and out, and there are no mechanical, electrical faults associated with the vehicle. Conclusively, the study opined that to ensue positive behavioural passengers intention, transport companies must provide the passengers with a memorable travel experience

Recommendations

From the findings above and having considered the study concluding remarks, the following recommendations are made to interstate transport companies for better service delivery

i. They should ensure that the safety of their passengers and their luggage is top priority

ii. They should make sure that they provide comfortable seats, screens and well air-conditioned vehicles to make the vehicle comfortable tor travellers

iii. Their drivers should be well trained and must have a good geographical command of the area he is traveling to and also must not be rude to passengers while on transit

iv. They should maintain their vehicles properly and service them as at when due

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